

# British Labour and Africa

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THE LABOUR GOVERNMENT'S ROLE in relation to Africa, especially Rhodesia and South Africa, has brought into the forefront of attention the question of the relations of British Labour and the African liberation movement.

In any discussion of this question it is important to remember that the labour movement in Britain in the broadest sense, the nine million trade unionists, the six million members of the Labour Party, as well as the militant section of the working class represented by the Communist Party and its supporters, active within the trade unions, but excluded from direct participation in the Labour Party, is composed of a great variety of elements and trends. No generalization about the policies of the Labour Government should be regarded as covering the outlook of the working class as a whole or even of the majority of the British labour movement. In many respects the Government's policies in Africa have been as vehemently opposed by numbers of active socialists and members of the Labour Party as by national liberation fighters in Africa. Nevertheless, from the point of view of the African people as a whole it is inevitably the policy and action of the Labour Government which is regarded as the voice and expression of British Labour. And it is this which it is the purpose of the present article to examine.

In a previous article which appeared in THE AFRICAN COMMUNIST of April-June 1963 entitled 'Right Wing Labour and Africa', a careful examination was made of the record of British Labour in relation to Africa up to that date. The correctness of the analysis made in that article has been fully demonstrated by the present experience of the Labour Government.

### 1: LENIN ON LABOUR IMPERIALISM

Exactly half a century ago Lenin in his famous book on imperialism, published in 1916, as well as in many other studies, especially his *Imperialism and the Split of the Labour Movement*, laid bare the roots of the reactionary degeneration in the upper

leadership of the West European labour movement, and the consequent retarding of the transition to socialism in the advanced industrial countries of Western Europe and North America.

Lenin found the roots of this diseased development in the role of colonialism. He showed how the economy of these countries was more and more built on colonial super-profits. This economic basis affected the whole political structure. The hunt for colonial super-profits, for the domination of the widest territories to exploit, using them as an outlet for the ever-expanding export of capital, as well as a source of raw materials and market for industrial goods, became the driving force of the policies of the great imperialist powers. This was the driving force leading to world war for the re-division of the world. At the same time the flow of colonial super-profits made it possible for the ruling class to buy off the parallel threatening advance of the labour movement by corrupting an upper section of the working class, especially the leadership, with a small share in the spoils.

The truth of Lenin's analysis was abundantly demonstrated by the experience of the first world war. Whereas previously the difference between reformist and revolutionary theories and policies within social democracy and the labour movement had appeared as only a theoretical or tactical difference, now right-wing social democratic leaders, dominating the majority of the labour movement in all the leading imperialist countries except Russia, threw the principles of international socialism overboard and came out into the open as Labour imperialists. Previously the shameless theories of what became known as 'Fabian Imperialism', promulgated in their booklet *Fabianism and the Empire* in 1900, was regarded as an outrage by the entire labour movement and social democracy, including by such opportunist leaders as Ramsay Macdonald who resigned from the Fabian Society in protest. By 1914, however, the dominant right-wing leaders openly aligned themselves with their own imperialist masters in each country against the rival groups of exploiters and called on the workers to slaughter one another in the interests of the ruling class.

During the years between the two world wars the truth of Lenin's analysis was further demonstrated. Already during the war of 1914-18 the first signal example of the role of official Labour as executioner of the colonial freedom struggle and simultaneously of socialism, had received a historic expression when, after the bloody suppression of the Irish Easter uprising, whose 50th anniversary we celebrate in 1966, the Labour Party leader Henderson, as Minister

in the War Cabinet of Lloyd George, authorized the execution of James Connolly, the outstanding pioneer of socialism in Britain and Ireland.

The first Labour Government of Ramsay Macdonald in 1924 conducted a murderous bombing offensive in Iraq, and threw the leaders of the young Communist Party of India into prison through the Cawnpore Trial. It was characteristic of the method adopted to involve left-wing spokesmen in the Labour Party in these proceedings (a technique which is being repeated today) that the left-pacifist William Leach, a retired Bradford worsted manufacturer, as Under-Secretary for Air (the Air Minister General Thomson was in the House of Lords) had to answer with embarrassed incoherence in the House of Commons, to defend the bombing of Iraqi villagers for the crime of non-payment of taxes.

The second Labour Government of Ramsay Macdonald went even further and threw 60,000 Indians into prison for the crime of demanding national independence, as well as conducting the famous Meerut Trial against the communist and trade union leaders of the Indian working class. It was under the second Labour Government that brutal attack against African strikers, with firing by armed police and numbers killed or wounded, took place in various African colonies, as in Gambia in 1929 and the Gold Coast in 1930. These preliminary experiences of the role of Labour imperialism are important when we come to consider the present stage of its governmental role in the conditions of today.

## **2: IS LENIN'S ANALYSIS OUT OF DATE TODAY?**

Today we have entered into a new period in the record of colonialism and the national liberation movement.

The old colonialism of direct rule of colonial territories is approaching its end, even though very obstinate rearguard actions are still being fought in the remaining territories, especially in the southern region of the African continent. As President Nkrumah has shown in his important new book on *Neo-Colonialism*: 'Existing colonies may linger on, but no new colonies will be created.' But, as he goes on to point out: 'In place of colonialism as the main instrument of imperialism we have today neo-colonialism.' With abundant illustration he shows how, within the framework of newly independent states, the methods of neo-colonialism, which he describes as 'the worst form of imperialism', have intensified actual colonial exploitation.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the terms of trade. The *Financial Times* on July 19th, 1965, that is, during the period of the present Labour Government, noted the increasing 'bonus' which the imperialist countries are drawing from primary producing countries.

The broad position is that since 1957 alone—and the primary producing countries as a whole were losing ground on the terms of trade front for several years before that—the industrialized countries have derived a saving of the order of \$7,000m. per annum from the decline in their import prices. The rise in their export prices has added some \$3,000m. to \$4,000m. to their own foreign exchange earnings over the same period. So they can be said to have enjoyed a bonus of some \$10,000m. to \$11,000m. per annum at the expense of the rest of the world—a bonus they have done nothing to earn.

Since the under-developed countries are almost all primary producers, this process has not merely tended to cancel out the increased foreign aid the industrialized countries have made available for helping them forward in recent years. It must have largely cancelled out all such aid. For taking official bilateral assistance, aid provided multilaterally through international organizations and private investment together, the total flow of assistance to the less developed regions from the West is still not much in excess of \$10,000m. per annum, if as much.

Thus the supposed 'new' 'philanthropic' policies of 'aid' and 'development' have covered a reality of increasing colonial exploitation.

The colonial super-profits are still drawn in abundance by the imperialist countries, not only from the remaining colonies, but also from the newly independent countries so long as these are not yet strong enough to defeat the strategy of neo-colonialism.

Hence the basis for corruption of the upper stratum and leadership of the labour movement in the imperialist countries, that is, for Labour imperialism, continues also today in the period of the disintegration of the old colonialism and the advance of national liberation. Blindness to this reality of the modern world was typically expressed in John Strachey's book *The End of Imperialism*, published in 1959, when he claimed that Lenin's teachings had been disproved because after the dissolution of the Empire Britain had continued prosperous and able to maintain the structure of social reforms. He had not understood that through neo-colonialism the economic-political structure of Britain today still continues to confirm Lenin's thesis.

The understanding of this continuance of the reality of colonial exploitation, and consequently of the basis for Labour imperialism, is of vital importance for the present period and for the question

of the policy of the present Labour Government in relation to Africa. This analysis is the more necessary today, because the disintegration of the old colonialism and the advance of national liberation since 1945 gave for a while the opportunity for the Labour imperialists to endeavour to put on a new face. Their current line became to disclaim and deplore the 'old imperialism', and to proclaim themselves the true friends of the colonial and newly independent peoples. On this basis Lenin's analysis is today declared to be out of date.

This is an old familiar gambit. With each new development of capitalism and imperialism the teachings of Marx and Lenin are always declared to be proved obsolete and no longer operative. Yet in fact the general principles continue to operate so long as the basic economic system of class division, class exploitation and colonial exploitation continues. It is only the forms which change and require to be analysed afresh in each new concrete situation.

The third Labour Government of Attlee and Bevin, during the year 1945-51, had held office during the period of the rapid change of the entire world situation since the second world war, finding expression in the extension of the socialist world, the break-up of the colonial system and the victories of national liberation with the establishment of an extending series of newly independent states. In this situation the third Labour Government sought to describe the advance from colonialism as a special achievement of the Labour Government and a gift of freedom conferred by it on the formerly oppressed colonial peoples. On this basis the modern Labour Party leadership, successors of those who used to boast 'we love our Empire' in the words of J. H. Thomas, or speak with Herbert Morrison of 'the jolly old Empire', now endeavour to present the Labour Party as the true friend and champion of anti-imperialism and of the newly independent nations.

The alleged foundation of this claim is false.

Historically it was the victory of the peoples over Fascism, and in the first place the decisive role of the Soviet Union in that victory, and the advance of the socialist camp to embrace over one-third of the world's population, which profoundly weakened imperialism and made possible the triumphs of the national liberation movement in compelling imperialism to retreat and winning the establishment of an extending series of new independent states. In this world advance the defeat of Toryism and the return of a Labour parliamentary majority by the British electorate in 1945

was one significant expression, but not the cause or main initiating factor of the popular advance taking place over the world.

In reality the Attlee-Bevin Government, at the same time as yielding to the advance of national liberation where the available forces of imperialism were insufficient to defeat it, as in the case of India, continued the method of colonial wars of repression elsewhere, as in the simultaneous long-drawn war against the Malayan liberation movement. This parallelism of two concurrent lines or seeming contradiction is the characteristic picture of the strategy of modern imperialism. The picture of the official Labour Party policy and leadership as the champion of anti-colonial liberation is based above all on the picture of the 'gift' of freedom to India. This picture ignores the historical reality of the previous Labour Government's endeavour to crush the Indian national movement with the imprisonment of 60,000 of its fighters, or the no less revealing fact that the Labour Party election manifesto of 1945 contained no mention of any intention to establish the independence of India. In other words, the recognition of Indian independence was compelled, as all expert testimony has since admitted, when the revolt of the Indian armed forces alongside the popular upsurge reached a point which made it impossible for the imperialists to mobilize sufficient forces to crush a revolt of 400 million. But the consequent recognition of independence was accompanied with the disastrous parting gift of partition, the full legacy of which still makes itself felt today in the current war of India and Pakistan.

On the other hand, when it was a question of the six million of Malaya, against whom overwhelming forces could be concentrated, the most brutal colonial war was conducted. It is in accordance with this understanding of the real balance of forces that in the case of Africa this third Labour Government did not give independence to a single African nation, but followed the familiar method of combining repression of the national movement with constitutional concessions to win over a section of the leadership to collaborate with imperialism.

The full record of the third Labour Government of 1945-51 in relation to Africa has been traced in the article already referred to in the article in *THE AFRICAN COMMUNIST*, April-June 1963.

It is characteristic of the contrast between this mythical picture and the real character of the role of the third Labour Government in relation to Africa and the colonial sphere that during the subsequent Tory Government the late Aneurin Bevan, in a debate

in Parliament roundly attacking the Tories and describing how they had been compelled to give way to the national liberation movement only after first seeking to suppress it and imprisoning its leaders, cited Kenya and Kenyatta, Cyprus and Archbishop Makarios, and went on to instance Kwame Nkrumah and Ghana as a similar example, when he was interrupted and cut short by a reminder that it was the Labour Government which had imprisoned Nkrumah and the subsequent Tory Government which had released him and recognized the independence of Ghana.

Nevertheless, during the succeeding 13 years of Tory rule, although in practice imperialist policy pursued was bi-partisan, this propaganda picture was assiduously presented of the official Labour Party leadership and policy as the enlightened champion of the aspirations of the colonial and newly independent peoples, and as pledged to the ending of every form of imperialism and imperialist exploitation, and to the promotion of the interests of the newly independent nations by an increase of aid and development to constitute a higher proportion of the national income.

The experience now of the first year of the fourth Labour Government has since 1964 brought these claims to the test of practice.

### **3: THE RECORD OF THE WILSON LABOUR GOVERNMENT**

This preliminary survey of the preceding record of British Labour in relation to Africa and the colonial liberation movement is important for estimating correctly the policies pursued by the present Labour Government.

There is no doubt that the defeat of Toryism after 13 years of rule and three previous successful elections in a row, and the return of a Labour parliamentary majority, even though narrow, represented a significant movement of public opinion and aroused wide expectations of favourable changes of policy in Britain.

These expectations were not just confined to wide sections of the labour movement in Britain, but also affected opinion among a proportion of the leadership and membership of the national liberation movement. Their leaders had had close personal contact with the leaders of the Labour Party, and had received many assurances of future co-operation in policy. Labour had officially denounced the Commonwealth Immigration Act of the Tory Government as a surrender to racialism. Labour had given an official pledge to stop the sale of arms to South Africa. Labour had officially denounced the Constitution devised for British Guiana as

a fiddle designed to remove from office the popular national leader Cheddi Jagan. Labour had officially called for an increase in the proportion of the national income to be devoted to aid and development. Prominent Left spokesmen of the Labour Party, like Anthony Greenwood and Barbara Castle, had been actively associated with popular anti-imperialist movements such as the Anti-Apartheid Movement and the Movement for Colonial Freedom. Harold Wilson had been elected Leader of the Labour Party by the support of the Left and Centre against George Brown who received the support of the right wing.

However, the editorial of THE AFRICAN COMMUNIST of October-December 1964 wisely warned:

Now it is in office, it is the Labour Party's own deeds rather than its words which will count. And the acid test of Labour's integrity and sincerity will be its African policy.

The outcome was to prove the justice of this warning.

At the very outset the technique employed by Premier Wilson in the composition of the Government was significant. Precisely the left spokesmen who had been most vocal in criticism of imperialism and most actively associated with anti-imperialist movements, were given positions in the imperialist machine such as would not only gag them from expressing anti-imperialist sentiments but compel them to undertake the official duty of defending imperialist policies in the colonial sphere. Thus Anthony Greenwood was made Minister for the Colonies, and Barbara Castle was given charge of Overseas Development. This meant that Anthony Greenwood as Minister for the Colonies had the task of conducting a colonial war in Southern Arabia in defiance of the expressed resolution of the United Nations Assembly which demanded by a vote of 90—11 that Britain end its repression and withdraw from Aden. Similarly he had the task of maintaining the Constitution and elections in British Guiana which Labour had officially denounced, and putting forward an Order-in-Council to remove Premier Jagan from office. In the same way Barbara Castle had the task, whatever her subjective wishes, to present proposals not for increasing the finance available for aid and development, but for an actual decrease in the financial allocation proposed.

This was in fact a familiar technique copied from previous Labour Governments. In the same way, as we have already seen, Macdonald had made the Left pacifist Leach Under-Secretary of

Air to defend the bombing in Iraq. Attlee had made John Strachey Minister of War to defend the war in Malaya.

The technique is important, not so much for the fate of the individuals concerned, as for the strategy of simultaneously gagging and disorganizing the left wing in the labour movement in order to prevent an effective anti-colonial fight against the Government's policy.

The expectations aroused in some sections by these appointments to key positions in the imperialist machine of Ministers who had been previously prominent as spokesmen of left-wing anti-imperialist opinion only proved a failure to understand the normal working of the political system of British imperialism.

Policy in any special department, such as Overseas Aid, especially a department which is regarded as concerned with welfare and therefore of secondary importance, is determined not by the subjective wishes of the Minister placed in charge but by the policy of the Government as a whole. The policy of the Government as a whole, in the case of a Tory Government, or a right-wing Labour Government, is determined by the general interests of British imperialism. From the outset the strategy of the Wilson Labour Government was geared to the most zealous upholding of the interests of British imperialism; the military alliance with the United States; the continuance of the commitments of NATO, SEATO and the cold war; the maintenance of Britain's military world power, and especially the most loudly proclaimed strategy of maintaining Britain's military strength 'East of Suez', that is, in the Middle Eastern Gulf area and in South-East Asia, with the continued maintenance of the bases of Aden and Singapore. From this point of view East Africa is also seen as of key strategic importance in relation to the Indian Ocean.

#### **4: WHAT HAPPENED TO 'AID' AND 'DEVELOPMENT'**

This strategy inevitably involved crippling burdens on Britain's economy, heavy overseas military expenditure, a chronic threat to the balance of payments, and the consequent necessity to impose cuts and increased taxation at home, to intensify colonial exploitation, and to limit any non-military overseas expenditure for 'aid' and 'development'. The Ministers in charge of specific departments could only act in accordance with the requirements of this general policy.

The demand of the Labour movement had been for the reduction of military expenditure and the increase of economic aid for the developing countries.

The practice of the Wilson Labour Government has been an increase of military expenditure and the reduction of overseas economic aid.

The 1965 Budget saw the increase of arms expenditure by £121 million and the reduction of development grants and loans by £8½ million. The total allocation for 'overseas economic aid' in 1965-6 is £103.8 million or a reduction of £9.2 million on the previous year's total of £113 million. Interest rates on loans were increased from 5 per cent to 6¾ per cent.

It is true that in June 1965, when the Government was faced with a difficult situation in the Commonwealth Premiers Conference, Barbara Castle announced in Parliament on June 21st a new plan for 'interest-free loans' to 'selected' Commonwealth countries. The dangling of the carrot in the hope of securing subservience from the dissenting representatives at the Commonwealth Premiers Conference was obvious to all. The Commonwealth Conference took place from June 17th to June 26th. The offer of interest-free loans to 'selected' Commonwealth countries was made on June 21st at the most critical point of the negotiations. The fact that it was a carrot which was being dangled, and not a real increase of aid, was shown by the terms of Barbara Castle's statement:

We naturally cannot afford to extend these very liberal terms to all developing countries. Since interest-free loans will take the place of loans which would otherwise have been made under the waiver arrangements, *there will not be any additional burden on Britain's balance of payments during the first few years of the loans.* (italics added)

In place of the Labour Party's proclaimed aim of allocating 1 per cent of the national income for overseas economic aid to developing countries, the White Paper on Overseas Aid published in August 1965, after adding in every form of Government sponsored export of capital to make a gross total of £189,600,000 'overseas aid' for 1964-5 admitted that this represented two-thirds of 1 per cent of the gross national product.

## **5: ARMS AND SOUTH AFRICA**

Nowhere was the real character of the imperialist policy more significantly demonstrated than in relation to Africa. Outstanding in this respect were the key tests of South Africa, including the Protectorates, and Rhodesia.

In South Africa the widely publicized announcement of a ban

on the export of arms from Britain to South Africa was soon revealed in practice to be full of loopholes. Exception was specifically made at the time of the announcement for the fulfilment of the contract for 16 Buccaneer military aircraft. But in fact the exceptions were far wider. The Annual Report of the Anti-Apartheid Movement in October 1965 noted that the ban:

explicitly excluded the supply of arms under 'existing contracts' and, as we now know, under the various secret provisions of the Simonstown military agreement between the two countries. As a result of these exclusions a substantial volume of arms shipments have been made to South Africa in the past year . . . South African military personnel are still being trained in Britain and nothing has been done to discourage the growing flow of British capital and technical know-how and British skilled manpower to South Africa for the development of its armaments and aircraft industry. Top British military and airforce personnel visited South Africa as part of a 'normal' Imperial Defence College course, while Britain trains South African nuclear scientists in her nuclear establishments.

The Report concluded that the net result 'not only made nonsense of the British embargo, but actually undermined the embargoes being pursued by other countries'. The Report further showed how in a variety of fields there has been 'a step-by-step retreat of the Labour Government' from the earlier commitment of the Party to complete opposition to apartheid.

## **6: THE ACID TEST OF RHODESIA**

The crucial battle over the Labour Government's policy in Africa is now centred on Rhodesia.

The racialist coup of the white supremacists on November 11th, 1965, to proclaim illegally and unilaterally the independent sovereignty of their already existing *de facto* white racialist dictatorship, was not a bolt from the blue. It had been publicly announced and prepared for long beforehand.

The Labour Government had received warnings from every side on the urgent need to take quick and decisive action to forestall the coup and end the white racialist dictatorship by suspending the constitution, releasing the African national leaders and convening a constitutional conference for the establishment of democratic independence on the basis of adult suffrage. In the United Nations the issue had been repeatedly raised. Already in 1963 Britain had exercised the veto on this issue in the Security Council. In 1964 the United Nations delegation to London from the Colonialism Committee had condemned the then Tory Government for its

condonation of the racialist dictatorship in Rhodesia, while simultaneously laying down that Britain held sole responsibility for Rhodesia as a supposed domestic affair. The African Governments had made ceaseless representations. The Commonwealth Premiers Conference in June 1965 came close to breakdown on Rhodesia; and a single communiqué was achieved only on the basis of recording separately that the 'responsibility' lay with Britain, but that 'the British Prime Minister was urged by other Prime Ministers' to take action 'within three months'. In October the Conference of the Organization of African Unity at Accra adopted the unanimous resolution of the leaders of the 28 African States represented, calling on Britain to use force if necessary. On November 5th the United Nations Assembly adopted by 82 votes to 9 a resolution calling on Britain to 'take all necessary measures, including military force' to bring about immediately in Rhodesia the suspension of the constitution, the release of political prisoners, and the convening of a constitutional conference, based on adult suffrage, with a view to fixing the earliest possible date for independence. This was within six days of the *coup*.

Nevertheless, the Labour Government refused to act in time. Instead, the Government conducted a charade of endlessly protracted and meaningless negotiations with the leaders of the white racialist government, based on a supporting vote of 1½ per cent of the Rhodesian population, while the leaders of the African 95 per cent remained in detention without protest from Britain. Worse. The Labour Government guaranteed in advance not to use force against the racialist dictatorship. The Commonwealth Secretary, Bottomley, after his ten-day visit to Rhodesia in February 1965, stated in parliament on March 8th, 1965, that 'there will be no attempt by the present British Government to use military means to force through constitutional changes and bring about African majority rule'. This was the green light for Smith to go ahead. On November 1st Premier Wilson went further. He stated that the British Government would use force only against 'subversion' in Rhodesia, whether from 'African or European extremists'. Since the 'European extremists' were already maintaining a dictatorship, and a dictatorship does not need to conduct subversion against itself, this meant that the British Government had announced in advance that it would use force only against the Africans, in the event of these struggling to overthrow the dictatorship. This gave the final guarantee for Smith. On November 5th he proclaimed his

State of Emergency. On November 11th he carried through his *coup*.

Subsequently the attempt has been made by apologists of official Labour policy to excuse the protracted negotiations, which so obviously played into the hands of Smith, on the grounds that they succeeded in delaying U.D.I. and therefore gained time. This plea is as false as the similarly notorious plea of Neveille Chamberlain and the defenders of Munich that Munich, however disastrous in the outcome, bought time for Britain. Of course the opposite was the case. The advantage went to Hitler. So here the advantage went to Smith. The protracted negotiations and procrastination of the British Government gave Smith time to complete his preparatory measures and mobilize his forces for his *coup*. Indeed, already in a speech on August 27th, 1965, Smith was boasting of the success of his technique in outmanoeuvring the Labour Government. He referred to the 'incredible remarks' made by Bottomley that 'Britain had averted a unilateral declaration of independence by Rhodesia last October'. On this Smith commented:

I can only say that if the British Government seriously believed we were on the edge of taking independence last October I am agreeably surprised at how effective our technique at bluffing the rest of the world has been. We knew at that time we were not ready.

What of the action of the British Labour Government after the *coup*?

The coup of November 11th was an open challenge to Britain, to all the peoples of Africa and to the whole world. But the response of the Labour Government showed the same refusal to take decisive action. On the one hand, the Smith Government was formally declared to be deposed and illegal, and guilty of 'rebellion' and 'treason'. Strong words. But no action followed to arrest or remove them. The formal proclamation of the Governor deposing the Smith Government was never even published or reported in Rhodesia. Thus a 'Governor' remained who could not govern or even communicate with the citizens of Rhodesia; while a supposedly non-existent government which was declared to have been deposed continued to govern. A situation appropriate for comic opera, but not for a serious struggle for African freedom. The citizens of Rhodesia were called on to refuse to obey the illegal government; but no alternative government was offered them to follow. When the African leaders set up an alternative government (unfortunately at the outset, two—a situation at the

time of writing still requiring to be sorted out), the British Government refused recognition.

Similarly in relation to the economic sanctions imposed the same half-hearted approach was revealed.

The British Government has not taken the three steps which might have produced immediate and drastic results. It has not completely frozen Rhodesia's London balances, nor interfered with the supply of oil, nor imposed a general ban on exports (*Financial Times* 13.11.65).

It was understood that the Government was holding oil sanctions in reserve as a card to play in order to counter any demand in the United Nations for more positive action. In other words, the first consideration was not how to defeat the racist dictators in Rhodesia, but how to defeat the African and socialist majority in the United Nations. This was most glaringly revealed when Wilson in his speech to Parliament on November 12th, immediately following the *coup*, painted before his hearers in vivid terms the horrors, not of the sufferings of the millions of Africans under the heel of a racist dictatorship, but of a hypothetical entry of 'the Red Army' into Africa.

This experience of Rhodesia has dealt a powerful blow to the illusions of those sections who may have looked to the leaders of Labour imperialism as a supposed ally in the struggle for African freedom. Thereby has been proved the truth that the battle for African freedom can only be fought by the African peoples themselves, with the support of all the progressive forces of the world, the socialist nations, all the newly independent states, and the genuinely anti-imperialist sections in the imperialist countries, including in the British labour movement.

## **7: THE BATTLE FOR AFRICAN FREEDOM AND THE BRITISH LABOUR MOVEMENT**

This battle of the African peoples and world democratic forces against imperialism and the reactionary policies of the British Labour Government, now so sharply demonstrated in relation to Rhodesia and South Africa, is not without its expression also in Britain.

Lenin, in his analysis of the corrupting influence of imperialism in the Western labour movement, always distinguished between the upper strata and leadership of the labour movement, who were thus corrupted, and the masses. He never included in this analysis of imperialist corruption the Western working class as a whole. Against the opportunist and reactionary trends of the Labour

imperialists, supported by backward and short-sighted sections of the working class, the most tenacious fight has been consistently conducted by the socialist workers, with the Marxists, today the Communists, in the first place, to awaken the workers politically and win them for joint action in the common anti-imperialist struggle on the basis of the understanding that the alliance with the liberation struggle of the peoples oppressed and exploited by imperialism is not only an elementary duty of international solidarity, but the indispensable condition for the future victory and liberation of the British working class.

Today, in face of the reactionary imperialist policies of the Wilson Labour Government, shown equally in the 'East of Suez' strategy and over South Africa and Rhodesia, the opposition of wide sections of labour and democratic opinion has found expression. Resolutions, meetings, demonstrations and marches have expressed this protest. While the Labour Government has continued to leave the leaders of ZAPU to remain in detention, the mass demonstration organized on November 7th by the British Communist Party in honour of the October Revolution received with thunderous applause the address of the London representative of ZAPU, Nelson Samkange; and when John Gollan, General Secretary of the British Communist Party, and Samkange, representing ZAPU, publicly embraced on the platform, this gesture won an ovation from the audience. The 29th National Congress of the Communist Party is due to receive the greetings of fraternal delegates from ZAPU and from the South African National Congress. These are visible expressions of the alliance in the common struggle. The broadest expression of this alliance is manifested in the Anti-Apartheid Movement, with the participation of many leaders of trade unions and M.P.s, as well as in a host of other forms.

The battle of the African peoples for the completion of African liberation, which is reaching such a height in Rhodesia and South Africa, needs to be the active concern of all socialist and working-class fighters in Britain. This is the true role of the British Labour movement. The recent phase of surrenders to the racialists and colonialists by the dominant right-wing leadership of the Wilson Labour Government represents a temporary though shameful phase in the history of British Labour, and will finally be defeated by the joint victory of the African people, the socialist peoples and also the progressive working class and democratic forces in Britain advancing alongside to the liberation also of Britain from the yoke of imperialism.

*November 18th, 1965.*