

Liberation of the Southland

The Crucial Tasks before Africa

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LIKE A FLASH OF LIGHTNING, the storm over the criminal Smith regime has illuminated the crucial issue before all Africa today—the liberation of the South. Of course all Africans with the slightest spark of patriotism bitterly resent the daily hardships, humiliations and enslavement of their oppressed brothers and sisters in the Portuguese colonies, Zimbabwe, the Republic of South Africa and South West Africa. But this is more than a question of sympathy and sentiment. In truth the whole future of our continent, of all African states, is in the balance.

Africa cannot long continue half-slave, half-free. White colonialism, whether based in Salisbury, Lisbon or Pretoria, is not only an unendurable insult to the spirit of Free Africa. It is an ever-present danger to the independence and progress of every African state. The unholy alliance whose capital is Pretoria is the most dangerous centre of anti-democratic and anti-African intrigue, of neo-colonialist economic penetration, on the whole of the African continent.

It is from here that Oppenheimer's Anglo-American Corporation and other financial and mining octopuses spread their tentacles to Zambia, the Congo and elsewhere in the North. African poverty in the North drives hundreds of thousands of contract labourers to the South African mines to live in prison-like compounds and risk illness and accidents for beggarly pay. Thus the South African Randlords have a vested interest in continuing poverty in Basutoland, Swaziland, Bechuanaland, Malawi and everywhere in Africa.

It was from amongst the Whites in the Republic and Rhodesia that Tshombe brought hired murderers to drown the Congo in blood.

The African countries cannot close their eyes to the massive military build-up, with the direct aid of the imperialist countries of the anti-African regime in the South. The Republic of South Africa is currently spending R2300 million (£115 million) a year on its armed forces which are equipped with United States and

British tanks, French and British armoured cars, British, French and American aircraft, and British naval vessels including helicopter carriers. Although military service is restricted to members of the three million white minority, armed groups (including the 30,000 strong militarized police and part-time units like the skiet-commandos) total over 113,000, according to the British Institute of Strategic Studies. This is a fantastic proportion for peace time of the white men of military age in full-time or part-time military units. If, say, Nigeria mobilized on the same scale she would have over two million men under arms.

South Africa and Portugal are linked by open or secret military alliances to the United States, Britain and other Nato powers. In particular the West German government, many of whose senior personnel are linked with Verwoerd and Vorster and many of their lieutenants by former Nazi associations, is taking a particular interest in elaborating joint plans for the production of weapons of mass destruction and for a common all-African military strategy in conjunction with the Unholy Alliance of Lisbon, Pretoria and Salisbury.

Southern Africa, especially the Republic and South West Africa, has attracted some of the most reactionary figures in the world: top Nazis seeking sanctuary from Nuremberg and other trials of war criminals; diehard white supremacists from Kenya, Algeria and other African countries whence they have fled from the the victorious advance of the African Revolution, still nursing dreams and feverishly plotting for revenge and a come-back; fascist refugees from as far afield as Hungary and Cuba.

Southern Africa is a source of grave danger, therefore, for Africa. It is, indeed, a source of fascist contamination all over the world. Verwoerd and Ian Smith are the heroes and the hope of fascist groups in Britain, of the Ku Klux Klan and the Goldwaterites in America, of right-wing elements in the Australian government. They represent the decaying but still dangerous remnants of the theory of world domination by the white master-race that had its origins in the British and other West European empires, that reached its ultimate lunacy in Hitler's extermination camps and that should have been buried with his corpse in the ruins which he had brought to Berlin.

A PRICELESS ASSET

Just as Southern Africa enslaved is a deadly menace to the freedom and progress of Africa, so Southern Africa free would be

a priceless asset for our continent in the urgent tasks of regeneration, of united peaceful construction, which face all of our people. With an industrial potential equal to that of the rest of the continent combined, a liberated South Africa would overnight help to transform the tremendous problems which today face all who plan or who think of the industrialization of our countries, the development of transport, education, scientific agriculture and health services and similar projects on an all-continental scale. So important and dynamic is the contribution which the free South can and will make that discussions or planning of all-African unity in many fields is bound to lack reality.

It is for reasons such as these that the future of the unliberated Southern territories is of far more than indirect or sympathetic interest to the peoples of all Africa. It is their own future, their independence, their security and future prosperity which are at stake. That is why Smith's attempt to perpetuate white minority rule in Zimbabwe has correctly been assessed as a declaration of war against Africa. That is why there has been a storm of anger throughout the Continent directed not only against Smith and his accomplices in crime, but also against the British authorities who permitted the crime, connived at it, and if not driven, reluctantly by African and world pressure, would still like to shed a few crocodile tears, accept 'an accomplished fact' and allow the Smith regime to get away with it.

Throughout the negotiations with the Smith regime, during the stormy session at UNO when the African representatives correctly walked out on Wilson, and in all their public declarations, the British government have consistently reiterated that the 'Rhodesian crisis' is Britain's responsibility. This is an ambiguous phrase. It is certainly true that the British government—both the Conservatives and the present Labour administration—are directly responsible for what has happened. They concocted and approved the notorious 1961 Constitution designed to ensure a continuance of minority white rule for the indefinite future, and in terms of which Smith's Rhodesian Front was returned to office by an overwhelming majority of the settler vote. They permitted the Smith clique to install a regime of police terror, to outlaw the Zimbabwe African People's Union, and other liberation movements, and to detain Mr. Joshua Nkomo and thousands of other African patriots as well as white elements who sympathized with the Africans. The 'rebellion' of November 11th, 1965, when Smith unilaterally declared 'Independence', was no secret conspiracy. For a very long

time he and his colleagues had quite openly been preparing for and threatening that very action.

Although British imperialism is responsible for what has happened in Salisbury, we can never agree that the future of Zimbabwe or any other African territory should remain the responsibility of the British government. We can never agree, both on principle and for practical reasons. On principle, we must say that the many years of so-called responsibility by Britain, France and other European countries was never anything but disastrous for our countries and our peoples, and we simply will not tolerate any more of it. And on the practical side, let it be said that though it was so well-advertised in advance, Smith's action found the British authorities completely unprepared to deal with it realistically and effectively. Denunciations of his regime as 'rebels' and 'traitors' have had as little effect on his thick hide as a pea-shooter against a rhinoceros. And so far as economic sanctions are concerned, one finds it hard to believe that Mr. Wilson was serious when he told the Lagos 'Commonwealth' meeting that he expected them to bring about the collapse of the regime in 'a matter of weeks'. Certainly the cutting off of oil supplies, if it is efficiently implemented, would seriously disrupt the economy, but such measures alone cannot put an end to Smith's police state. Verwoerd's Republic, though cautiously avoiding too close an identification with the 'Rhodesians', is an open gate through which essential supplies are continuing and will continue to reach the outlaws in Salisbury. This brings us to reconsider the problem of 'sanctions', not only against the Rhodesian but also against the South African regime.

MILITARY AND OTHER SANCTIONS

For many years Britain, the United States and other imperialist countries have stubbornly resisted the application of economic sanctions against apartheid. When such measures were proposed by the African, Asian and socialist countries at the United Nations and elsewhere, the imperialists claimed that such measures could never succeed in the objective of changing the regime. Yet now these very countries express the greatest confidence that identical measures will be completely successful in changing the Smith government.

The apparent paradox is not very hard to understand. The blanket term 'war' in reality covers a wide spectrum of relations between nations, war being as Clausewitz pointed out in his cele-

brated dictum 'a continuation of policy by other means'. The breaking of diplomatic, commercial and other relations with countries is an almost invariable accompaniment of a state of war; but it is possible to conceive of the breaking off of such relations as an intermediate step without actually being accompanied by armed hostilities. To put it in another way: there is no hard and fast dividing line between 'sanctions' on the one hand and violent conflict on the other. Military measures are the ultimate sanction.

The manifest differences between the African and other anti-apartheid countries on the one hand, and the imperialist bloc on the other, concerning international measures both against Salisbury and Pretoria, appear superficially to relate only to the *means* of ending these racist dictatorships. The imperialists argue that economic sanctions would cause suffering to the poor Africans in South Africa; that military measures would lead to bloodshed in Zimbabwe. By implication the African states are made out to be callous to suffering and bloodthirsty; the imperialists are by contrast (so they would have us think) very humane and practically pacifists.

These arguments are being advanced at the very period of history when the American invaders, with the full backing of Britain, are conducting one of the most ruthless wars in history: a war involving indiscriminate slaughter of the civilian population of both South and North Vietnam. They are employing such tactics as bombing populated areas from the air, poison gas, and massive destruction of food crops and the burning of villages, with the objective of forcing a small nation to submit to foreign domination. These 'pacifists' have been fighting, in some part of the world or other, practically continuously since the end of the Second World War—indeed for the past century and more. They are the last people in the world to claim that they are opposed in principle to military solutions.

Arguments based on alleged reluctance to cause hardship or to use force are in fact of little relevance to the ending of the white minority dictatorships in the South of Africa. These regimes are daily causing the most extreme hardship and starvation to millions of people, and they are only maintained by the continuous and intolerable use of force and terror on a mass scale against the population.

The truth is that it is not really a difference regarding 'means' which separates the imperialists from the African states regarding the south. It is a difference about *aims*, about the 'policy' to be 'continued by other means'.

The *aim* of all African states, as that of the overwhelming majority of mankind, is to replace the white minority despotisms in the South with majority governments—which in each case means government predominantly by the representatives of the African indigenous population who form by far the greater part of the population.

The aim of the imperialists is to preserve as much as they can of the structure of monopolization of resources and of forced African labour which makes the Southland such a huge source of golden profits to them.

Regimes like that of Smith and Verwoerd carry out the job of administering and policing this type of structure very well and enthusiastically. Imperialism is reluctant to abandon them, lest they might be followed by radical, patriotic governments which would proceed with far-reaching measures to restore the national wealth to the people, raise living standards—and thus deprive Western investors of their super-profits.

At the same time, it is recognized by most sections of imperialism (though not of course by the white Southern Africans) that these regimes are not indefinitely viable and will sooner or later have to be abandoned altogether. They are incurably tainted with the outspoken racial arrogance which, in its present neo-colonialist phase, 'the West' is so anxious to disavow. The crude anti-Africanism of Verwoerd and Smith, their followers and supporters, has become an acute embarrassment to the salesmen of the new line ('colonialism is dead; the West is the friend of the New Africa')—a line already difficult enough to put across even without such dubious associates.

But this general conclusion has been reached reluctantly and half-heartedly. It is bitterly resisted by that section of monopoly capitalism (represented by the British South Africa Company gentry headed by Lord Salisbury and Julian Amery) and the 'South Africa Lobby' in the United States, (whose most outspoken representative is millionaire Charles Engelhardt, but also includes such giants as General Motors, Ford and Chrysler) which has a substantial investment stake in Southern Africa.

So far as public opinion is concerned, it is true that apartheid and white supremacy have been vigorously condemned in resolutions of the Labour Party and trade unions in Britain, Civil Rights leaders in the U.S., and by broad sections of humanitarian, religious and liberal opinion. But it is equally true that white chauvinism, sedulously cultivated over a very long period of Britain's imperial hey-day and the prolonged and still-continuing

heritage of Negro slavery in the United States, remains a potent political factor in both these mutilated bourgeois democracies. (That is one of the reasons why the Labour government has been so desperately anxious to carry the Tory leadership along with it at every phase of the Rhodesian crisis; they lack the courage to campaign vigorously against racialism—hence their notorious policy on Commonwealth immigration, a craven surrender of principle—and are terrified of a Tory appeal to the voters to ‘stand by our kith and kin in Rhodesia’.)

These are some of the main reasons which explain the curiously ambivalent policy of British imperialism and its partners towards the crisis precipitated by Ian Smith. Little as they are enamoured of Smith, and much as they would like to have had a more skilful and less unruly and crude neo-colonialist administration in Salisbury, they are not prepared to see a truly representative and radical African administration in Zimbabwe which would spell the end of the ‘Zambezi line’ and the beginning of the end of apartheid. This explains the heavy emphasis placed by Wilson on the ‘constitutional’ formalities of Smith’s ‘rebellion’—the complaint is not that Smith runs a police state which grossly oppresses the African majority, but that he has committed treason against the Queen. It explains why he keeps repeating that Africans in Zimbabwe ‘are not ready’ for majority rule (compare his statement, when leader of the opposition, and still talking like a Labour man, ‘no constitution is defensible which fails to allow the people of these territories to control their own destinies. . . . We have bitterly attacked the Southern Rhodesian constitution for that’). It explains, above all, why he insists that the solution of the Rhodesia crisis is Britain’s sole responsibility, that it shall not be resolved by military sanctions (which might provoke an unmanageable African uprising), and is frenziedly manoeuvring, with trips to and fro by the Chief Justice, official and unofficial feelers to white businessmen and tobacco farmers and even to Smith and elements of the Rhodesian Front itself, to try and patch together some sort of compromise administration, headed perhaps by some discredited figure from the past like Roy Welensky.

In a word, ‘sanctions’ are preferred to military action of the type which British governments have always used without hesitation against rebellious colonies, because they leave the door open to negotiations and a future sell-out which will postpone indefinitely the transfer of power to the African majority.

THE ROLE OF THE AFRICAN STATES

Here, then is the essential conflict between the imperialists and the African countries; not an argument about means, military or otherwise, but about ends—though as pointed out above both issues are very closely related. The African masses can never accept that their brothers in Zimbabwe are 'not ready' to resume the independence of which they were deprived by Rhodes's hired mercenaries seventy years ago, or that the white minority dictatorship should continue a day longer. They couldn't care a damn whether Mr. Smith is loyal to Her Majesty or a rebel; but they care passionately that he is enslaving Africans, keeping Mr. Nkomo, who should be Prime Minister, in a concentration camp, and buttressing up apartheid, the mortal enemy of all Africa.

Africans have—for a long time before Smith took the plunge—seen that precisely this situation was coming. Their leaders and spokesmen have raised it time and again, at the Organization of African Unity, at the United Nations General Assembly, and at the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference, throughout 1964 and 1965. They demanded suspension of the 1961 constitution and independence under a one-man-one-vote government. They warned Britain of the most serious consequences should African majority interests be once again betrayed.

When Smith did take the plunge, African reaction was immediate and unambiguous. At a special meeting of the O.A.U. they demanded that Britain take immediate military steps to crush the 'slave-owners rebellion'—failing which, within a specified short period, they would break off diplomatic relations with the United Kingdom. Great demonstrations took place in support of these demands in various African countries, and a number of Union Jacks were burnt in public.

No doubt these very sharp reactions helped to stiffen the British government's attitude to some extent. They led to an acceptance of oil sanctions, originally rejected both by the government and the Tory opposition. They compelled the British, unwillingly, to bring the matter before the United Nations—in order to forestall, as Wilson confessed in Parliament, the matter being brought there by others.

All the same, however well justified by the situation, the O.A.U. ultimatum to Britain, and the subsequent course of events, cannot but lead to some searching questions. Over thirty states agreed that diplomatic relations should be broken off. All honour to the nine states (including two Commonwealth countries, Ghana and

Tanzania) which honoured their commitment. But what about the others? It is very correct to take strong action when it is justified by events of profound importance, such as the Rhodesian crisis. But to threaten strong action and then to fail to carry out your threat is both foolish and humiliating. It would be better not to make the threat in the first place.

Going still deeper into the situation, since the situation south of the Zambezi in reality concerns the African states far more closely and directly than it does Britain, why was the O.A.U. demand limited to British military intervention? Smith's action, as we have said, was a declaration of war against Africa. Why, except for a token (but nevertheless perfectly proper) mobilization by Ghana, have no steps been taken by our leaders to prepare and plan those African military measures which would be able to answer the Smith racialists in the only language they understand?

Like so many other aspects of this profoundly revealing and illuminating Zimbabwe crisis, it has thrown a bright light both on the strength and the weakness of the Organization of African Unity and the independent states which make up its membership.

Its strength is the unanimity of mass feeling and understanding on such great all-African issues as the liberation of the Southland, compelling every leader (always excepting that incorrigible Black Englishman, Dr. Banda) to adopt in public a firm patriotic stand.

Its weakness is not only the economic (and hence military) backwardness which makes the inevitable showdown with the whites-only regimes seem such a formidable proposition. The history of our times—Cuba, Algeria, above all, invincible, heroic Vietnam—is full of examples of the dictum that determined fighters for the freedom of their country can overcome the superior weapons and technology of oppressors.

Our people do not lack patriotism and determination. What they lack is the leadership and the unity of purpose to enable them to carry through the liberation of our continent to its logical and essential end.

TWO TRENDS IN AFRICA

The 'Rhodesian' crisis, like every major crisis which has faced our peoples during the few short years of the first phase of independence, has revealed, behind the formal unity achieved at meetings of heads of state, two completely different and, in the end, incompatible trends within Africa itself.

There is the trend which, when fundamental African interests

are involved, is prepared to stand up and resist imperialism, colonialism and neo-colonialism, even at the costs of temporary sacrifices and hardships.

And there is the trend which is prepared to sacrifice fundamental African interests, perhaps even to sell out the hard-won independence of our peoples, for the sake of maintaining 'good relations' with Paris, London or Washington, and for the sake of dollar, franc and pound aid—'aid' which often gets no further than the greedy hands of opportunist politicians, bureaucrats and parasites.

We know that we have many patriotic, clear-headed and resolute leaders in Africa, men like Presidents Nkrumah and Nyerere whose uncompromising stand over Rhodesia has shown their dedication, and given Africa reason to be proud of them. Nor are we forgetting the skilful and principled stand of President Kaunda, in the extremely difficult situation which the heritage of imperialism has placed his country and his people.

But we also will not forget, or forgive, those who were tried in this crucial period and found wanting, who stood by shamelessly without protest when Wilson said Africans were 'not ready' to govern themselves, agreed with a period of British 'direct' rule after Smith goes, and connived to prolong African enslavement and save the face of the imperialists.

It is impossible to overlook the relationship between these two trends in African governments and the class forces which they express. Certainly it is incorrect and un-Marxist to transfer mechanically to Africa, in one's thinking, the historically formed, 'polarized' and hardened class relationships and contradictions which are so well-established a feature of the West European and North American political scene. Nevertheless the steadily clarifying picture—despite notable exceptions—is that the minority, privileged classes and groups in Africa, backward-looking tribal chiefs and feudal emirs who feel their status dwindling with the development of the New Africa; the profiteering merchants, capitalists and Western-orientated intellectuals, including the generals groomed at Sandhurst and St. Cyr, are the least patriotic elements in our continent. It is they who offer the greatest danger to the modernization, unity and complete liberation of our continent, who act as a barrier and even a potential fifth column in the all-important, and far from completed anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist revolution.

The Rhodesian crisis, precisely because it was and remains such a profound challenge to Africa, has dramatically brought out this vital question. And so long as Africans are denied equal rights in

Zimbabwe or anywhere in the South, that challenge will remain, a vital threat to our independence, a standing and intolerable humiliation and reminder of our weakness and disunity.

It is above all the working classes, the urban proletariat and the vast mass of poverty-stricken rural people, who are most vitally interested in ending this scandal, in struggling against the political-ideological and economic remnants of colonial servitude which are rooted in reactionary social strata. It is time for the workers, peasants and revolutionary intellectuals all over our continent to wake up, to organize themselves in effective and dynamic mass movements, including the most advanced elements, the Marxists, so as to clean their countries of treacherous and corrupt neo-colonialist regimes, and establish patriotic national administrations. Such administrations are not only essential for the immediate advance of living, health, administrative and educational standards of the masses; they are essential also if our countries are to meet the inescapable threat, challenge and opportunity that lies in the South.

The road to African freedom, progress and unity begins at home, in each African country; but it is a road that must lead, before victory is achieved, through Salisbury, Pretoria and Cape Town.

The Imperialist Stake in Apartheid

A Correction

P. Tlale writes:

Regarding my article 'The Imperialist Stake in Apartheid' (AFRICAN COMMUNIST No. 23) there is an error in Table I (p. 28) showing South Africa's foreign liabilities. The figure for indirect investments in the private sector at the end of 1963 is given as £583 million. It should read £383 million. On page 34, line 14 from top, a figure for American direct investments in S.A. manufacturing industry at the same period is given as \$518 million. It should read \$158 million, as shown in the immediately following Table V. Please convey to readers, with my apologies, these corrections.