



Editorial Notes:

# Rebels against the Crown

IN 1916, AT EASTER, a body of Irishmen, headed by the poet Patrick Pearse and the workers' leader James Connolly, raised the banner of independence in Dublin. They marched, armed, into the general post office and occupied it. They issued a stirring proclamation declaring Ireland a Republic, free of English rule after centuries of alien domination.

Britain immediately declared that they were rebels against the Crown.

Although it was in the middle of the first world war, troops and resources were found to crush this 'rebellion'. With the utmost severity the rising was put down. Pearse, Connolly and the other leaders who were captured were executed.

It took many more long years of struggle and sacrifice before Irish independence was won and the Republic recognized.

Even today, Britain occupies the six northern counties of Ireland.



In November 1965, a group of European adventurers in Salisbury issued a grotesque parody of the American Declaration of Independence. Smith and his fellow-conspirators represented less than one sixteenth

of the inhabitants of the African territory they were supposed to be administering on behalf of Britain.

The British government declared that they were rebels against the Crown.

Apart from the usual colonial operations, Britain was engaged in no war at that time, and still is not.

The total white population of 'Rhodesia' is less than that of a medium-sized English town; its armed forces, by world standards, are negligible.

Yet no military measures whatever were taken by Britain against the 'rebels'. No steps were taken to arrest Ian Smith and his so-called Cabinet and put them on trial for treason.

Instead the British government has entered into a long series of secret negotiations with representatives of the Smith usurpers.

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It may be objected that there is no real parallel between the Irish and the Rhodesian events. Of course, in many senses that is true.

The Easter Rising of 1916 was a heroic and patriotic action, expressing the will and aspirations of the great majority of the Irish people and enjoying the sympathy of freedom-loving people throughout the world. The Smith gang are acting from ignoble motives of greed, to preserve their unjust privileges. They are regarded with hatred and contempt by the overwhelming majority of the people of Zimbabwe and the world.

But the parallel is that both in 1916 and now we are dealing with what are declared to be acts of treason and rebellion against the British Crown.

Why were there bullets and fierce repression for Connolly and Pearse; mild reproaches and half-hearted, ineffective 'sanctions' against the Smith gang?

Is it that times have changed; that the imperialists have become 'soft' and are no longer prepared, for humanitarian reasons, to use force? One has only to recall what happened yesterday in, say, Malaya or Kenya or Cyprus; what the British are doing now in Aden; what the Americans are doing in Vietnam with British backing; to realize that these people have by no means become pacifists.

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Treason and rebellion are supposed to be serious crimes, far worse, say, than theft and robbery.

Could one imagine a Government entering into private 'talks' and 'negotiations' with the representatives of a gang of robbers who had

just pulled off a big haul? Talks about what? the public would ask. About sharing the loot? Surely the only negotiations could be about when and where the gangsters would surrender to be tried in Court; anything less could only cause the collapse of the government in a storm of ridicule and contempt.

Yet the Smith gangsters have pulled off one of the biggest 'hauls' ever; an entire African country with four million enslaved people and considerable wealth and assets. Instead of arresting these super-criminals, the Wilson government is negotiating with them. What about? Smith has publicly declared that he is not prepared to discuss any relinquishing of the power he and his accomplices have assumed, to rule Zimbabwe, to seize African land, to suppress Africans and lay violent hands on their leaders.

The only thing they could be negotiating about is the terms of a suitable 'formula'. A formula that would serve two essential purposes—Firstly: Smith and the white minority to retain power. Secondly: some sort of minimal face-saving formula for Britain—the gracious recognition by Smith, perhaps, of the Queen as titular head of state and the British Governor-General as her representative.

In return for these meaningless 'concessions' Britain would be enabled to call off sanctions, restore the profitable trade with Rhodesia, and declare the crisis of U.D.I. at an end.

Everybody knows that such talks and such an agreement would solve nothing. The essence of the problem is not the constitutional relationship between Britain or the Queen and the so-called government of Rhodesia. It is the arrogant assertion by a quarter of a million whites that they are a master race entitled to hereditary rule in perpetuity over four million Africans.

But the talks do serve a useful purpose for Smith and the British. Like the futile 'sanctions'—made into a farce by the steady stream of oil and other essentials pouring across Beit Bridge from the Republic—they are a means of postponing any sort of decision. They prolong the status quo and buy time. And—with returns on Southern African investments running at over 25 per cent a year—time is money; big money.

For 25 per cent profit Labour Britain is prepared to overlook a small matter like treason against the Crown.

They are prepared, also, to forget all the admirable sentiments they once expressed about the moral abomination that is apartheid, the threat it poses to peace, the need for international sanctions and other action to end it.

Fortunately there are still some principled Labour people in Britain who stick to genuine socialist principles. The British Communist Party

and Lord Brockway, on behalf of the Movement for Colonial Freedom, have both condemned the negotiations with Smith, and demanded genuine independence under a constitution based on universal adult suffrage.

As far as Africa is concerned, there is no patriot anywhere in our continent who does not regard the talks and all that went before them as a betrayal of British promises to defend African interests in the South.

## **Independence for Lesotho**

THE INDEPENDENCE OF Lesotho on October 4th should be the occasion for general rejoicing and celebration. Unfortunately this notable event takes place against the background of yet another betrayal. It sees the handing over of power in Lesotho not to the representatives of the majority of the people, to the leaders of the Basutoland Congress Party and the Marematlou Freedom Party, who together with the Lekhotla la Bafo, the Communist Party and other patriots had fought so long and hard for independence. Instead, power will be placed in the hands of the 'National Party' of Chief Leabua Jonathan, which played no part in the independence struggle, which gained a minority of the votes in the last election, and enjoyed moral and financial backing from the surrounding Republic and Bonn Germany.

The situation in Basutoland urgently demanded the holding of fresh general elections before the transfer of power took place.

At the last elections the B.N.P. polled only 56.6 per cent of the votes cast. The B.N.P. and M.F.P. polled over 51.6 per cent of the votes. Thus the B.N.P. owed its slender majority (two seats in a National Assembly of sixty) entirely to the split between the two patriotic parties, a tragic division which has now, perforce, been healed.

This is not merely a question of which rival group of politicians should hold office in Lesotho's first independence government since the days of King Moshoeshoe I. It is a fundamental matter of whether Lesotho will be able, or will even try, to maintain genuine independence in the face of the major threat—the Republic of South Africa which surrounds this small and mountainous African state on all sides, and which has openly proclaimed its intention of absorbing it in its 'Bantustan' designs.

For Lesotho, formal independence marks the beginning and not the end of the real struggle.

British imperialism, the supposed 'protector' of Lesotho, began its 'protection' in the last century by handing over the most fertile part of the country, the farmlands west of the Caledon River, to the Boer

Republic of the Orange Free State. It has continued in that tradition ever since, sacrificing Basotho national interests to the insatiable appetites of white South Africa.

Complete economic stagnation—not a single industry has been begun under British rule—resulted in chronic unemployment. Half the Basotho men are always away from home, working and being grossly exploited in the Republic, on the mines and farms and in the factories. Every town and village in the country has recruiting agencies for the ‘Witwatersrand Native Labour Association’ (not as some might guess from its name, a trade union, but an ‘association’ of mine owners to transport Africans to work underground).

The only banks in Lesotho are South African banks; the only currency South African rands and cents; the only commodities manufactured in the Republic. The Republic controls Lesotho’s customs and exports.

The British, without consulting the Basotho, agreed to a degrading and outrageous proposal whereby all aircraft leaving the country have to submit to landing and being searched and cleared by the Republican authorities. Since there is no way of entering or leaving the country except through or over the territory of the Republic, this means a virtual veto by the Verwoerd government over who (including Lesotho citizens) can come into or go out of the country. And it has already been used to stop Basotho from leaving for abroad or even returning home.

Britain has countenanced countless infringements of Basutoland’s integrity and sovereignty by the fascist government across the border. The South African police (as in Bechuanaland and Swaziland) have regarded the country as their province, coming and going at will, censoring mails and literature, suborning the loyalty of Basotho citizens, even seizing and abducting refugees. Basotho citizens working in the Republic have been denied any rights or protection, including trade union rights; and treated, in fact, exactly as the Republic treats its own African population, with the utmost contempt for their human dignity which no citizen of a free country would or should tolerate.

**If Lesotho independence does not mean immediate and radical steps to put right this degrading position in relation to the Republic, then it means nothing at all.**

One would have thought that the very first steps of an independent administration would be to begin to redeem the national interests from the abject state to which they have been reduced by nearly a century of callous neglect, downright betrayal and preference for the interests of white South Africa (and its British shareholders) over those of the Basotho nation.

It would be the first concern of an independence-loving administration in Lesotho to rid the country of all the humiliating marks of subjection and subordination, not only by Britain but, above all, and in the first place, by the Republic. Lesotho would have her own customs, currency and financial system; she would embark (with such friendly assistance as would be readily forthcoming in so high a cause) on a crash programme to build industries and other sources of employment; she would insist on the right of her citizens to come and go without let or hindrance—just as, for example, landlocked Switzerland has transit rights for her people over or through neighbouring countries. She would protect her citizens at home and abroad. And she would immediately look to her defences and her borders against any possibility of infiltration or invasion. Such are the hall-marks and essentials of a sovereign independent country.

Unfortunately, one would look in vain to Chief Leabua Jonathan for the slightest sign or possibility that he will embark on any such dynamic programme to secure the independence of his country. It is typical that when his deputy chief Maseribae was insulted at the Bloemfontein bank where he keeps his money, he did not even show the pride of a private citizen, let alone a 'Prime Minister' and an African Chief. Instead of immediately withdrawing his account, he humbly apologized and went round to the 'Natives' entrance. When there was a shortage of mealies in Lesotho as a result of the drought, Jonathan did not, as he easily could, make an international appeal; he appealed to Verwoerd and made political capital for him.

As Mr. Ntsu Mokhehle, Leader of the Opposition, pointed out in the independence debate in the National Assembly:

. . . that independence called for here is not Basotho independence. This is a type of independence that Verwoerd would like to have in order to control this country . . . If you are led into independence by such a friend of South Africa (Jonathan's 'legal adviser') who never forgets in any document he advises you people to write you should state, in most servile and submissive terms, your slavish preparedness for friendship with South Africa, how can we trust that this is a genuine independence you are calling for . . .

. . . You (Jonathan) already have some of your South African friends there behind you, to support you and to hear how fast and successfully you are moving towards their political, economic and military incorporation.

This is the crucial question of Lesotho's independence.

In the hurried 'negotiations' held in London in July, the leaders of the patriotic Parties representing the majority of the electorate pleaded that there should be fresh elections before power was transferred. It was not an unreasonable request; indeed the British have repeatedly refused to relinquish power to minority governments. That was the excuse

on which they rigged the Constitution of Guyana, to remove the Jagan government which they did not like.

In this case the plea was reinforced by the important and highly relevant circumstances.

(1) That since the last elections, the Congress Party and the Marematlou Freedom Party have at last united their forces against the common enemy and would not again allow Jonathan in on a split vote;

(2) That the Paramount Chief, Motlotlehi Moshoeshe II, seeing the grave dangers facing his people, has taken the new and unprecedented step of holding pitsos (traditional meetings) throughout the length and breadth of the country to warn them against the unpatriotic policy of the B.N.P. and its links with Verwoerd;

(3) That in consequence of these events the eyes even of those who voted B.N.P. in the last election have been opened and there can hardly be any doubt whatever that it would suffer a crushing defeat in new elections—if these were held.

Leabua Jonathan and his group, however, are hardly likely to hold anything approximating fair elections once they are in power. Already, even before they got into office, they were found guilty of rigging ballots in some constituencies, in Court proceedings, and new elections were held. Even now, while the British are still supposed to be in control of security, they are using public money to hold party rallies from which opposition supporters are violently ejected. One can just imagine what hope there would be for 'fair elections' once this group has got full control over the police and security; nor is it at all to be excluded that they would call for help from across the border to suppress their town people.

Yet the British colonial office officials rode roughshod over all such objections. They refused to consider fresh elections. Everything had been stage-managed in advance; the presence of the B.C.P. and M.F.P. delegates, though they spoke with one voice and represented the majority, was virtually disregarded and their proposals ignored. As a result they withdrew from the Constitutional Conference, branding it as 'a carefully rehearsed pantomime . . . a travesty'.

Even the Paramount Chief, Moshoeshe II, was not allowed to take part in the discussions. As a result he refused to sign the independence agreement, which now bears the signatures only of the British Secretary of State, Mr. Fred Lee and Chief Leabua Jonathan. This makes the agreement itself of dubious legal validity.

The indecent haste shown in this matter by the British government, and the circumstances surrounding these events, have confirmed the

Basotho people in their conviction, reinforced by their whole history, that yet another betrayal of their interests has been engineered.

The latest move is that Moshoeshe, returned to Maseru, has called at a giant national Pitso for a referendum before independence takes place, and the majority parties have appealed to the Commonwealth Secretariat and the United Nations.

But, in the long run, the winning, consolidation and maintenance of genuine independence for Lesotho does not rest with Westminster or the United Nations. It rests with the Basotho people themselves. It was never Queen Victoria who kept the national soil free from the Orange Free State or the Cape Colony, or from ownership by European settlers. The British 'gave' half the country, as we pointed out above, to the O.F.S., they once 'gave' the whole country to the Cape. If the Basotho were not united under Moshoeshe I, if they had not fought and resisted, up to the stronghold of Thaba Bosiu, their position would have been as that of Zululand or the Transkei is today.

The coming of formal independence in October sees the Basotho in a good position to defend the heritage of the founder of the nation. If nothing else, the events have shown the leaders of the main patriotic parties the wisdom of the advice of the late Josiel Lefela and the Communist Party of Lesotho, and they have in practice taken important steps towards unity. The patriotic and enlightened stand of the Paramount Chief has aroused a new spirit of blazing resistance and determination among the people.

It is this spirit of unity and resistance which has to be reckoned with by the schemers in Pretoria and Maseru. Aroused and vigilant, the Basotho will not be tricked into watching passively the sale of the motherland. If Verwoerd wants to incorporate Lesotho as a Bantustan he will have to fight for it.

And if he wants to try anything like that, he should remember that the sons and daughters of Moshoeshe have twelve million ardent allies in the Republic.

### **. . . and Botswana**

MORE TROUBLE AWAITS the South African racialists on their Western border, when Bechuanaland becomes Independent Botswana on September 30th.

Verwoerd has even less chance of pulling off a 'Bantustan' coup in this vast though thinly populated territory. It is true that, unlike Lesotho, there is a substantial population of white settlers, mostly South African citizens, who could form a potential fifth column.



But, though he can be criticized about many things—and here one thinks particularly of his failure in the pre-independence period to protest against the shabby British treatment of refugees from apartheid—there is no doubt that Premier Seretse is firmly set against apartheid, and determined to better the lot of the Tswana people both in Botswana and under the rule of the Republic.

Seretse Khama also has the great advantage that his territory has at least a bridge to link up with the rest of free Africa, the narrow common border with Zambia. This opens up great potentialities, particularly in the economic field; and no time should be lost in improving communications and links between the two countries.

At the same time there should be no illusions about the reality and the extent of the menace across the border. Although not perhaps to the same extent as Lesotho, Botswana is dangerously dependent on the Republic. The departing British have left it in the same position regarding customs, currency, finance, imports of manufactures, and employment openings. It also lacks any regular defences against military attack.

Naturally the immediate concern of the independence administration will be to take urgent measures to uplift the pitifully low standards of living, health, education and public services to upbuild the young nation.

But no illusions should be harboured that—so long as apartheid and the fascist practice of white supremacy exist in the neighbouring Republic, South-West Africa and Rhodesia—the path to genuine independence will be smooth and unchallenged.

Here, as in Lesotho, the price of liberty is eternal vigilance. And the formal declaration marks not the end, but the beginning of a period of struggle and challenge; a signal to awake.

## **The Communist Party: 45 years**

JULY 29TH MARKED the forty-fifth anniversary of the foundation of the Communist Party of South Africa.

They have been years of bitter hardship for our country and our people.

Whether under the rule of Smuts's United Party, or the neo-Nazi Nationalist Party of Malan, Strijdom, Verwoerd and Vorster, they have been years of pass-laws, landlessness, starvation wages and harsh repression for the great majority of South Africans.

The South African people know that whenever they have stood up and fought for their rights, in town or in country, in the trade union

movement, the national liberation movement, the Communists have fought with them in the front rank.

The Nationalist Party government has declared that Communism is a crime, and that the Communists are therefore all criminals.

But the masses of the South African people, the workers, peasants, democrats and patriots, have learnt to know two generations of Communists from their deeds. Our country will not forget the founders of the Party, men like Bill Andrews, father of the labour and trade union movement; S. P. Bunting, passionate defender of the rights of the oppressed non-white majority; Ivon Jones, brilliant and far-seeing Marxist. It will not forget the men who dedicated their lives to building trade unions and the African National Congress: men like the late Albert Nzula, the martyred Johannes Nkosi, Moses Kotane and J. B. Marks. Nor can the people of our country forget those who are now serving life sentences or other long terms side-by-side with their non-Communist comrades-in-arms; heroic Communists like Govan Mbeki, Ahmed Kathrada, Bram Fischer and scores of others.

To mark the forty-fifth anniversary of the foundation of the Party, thousands of copies of the underground bulletin *Freedom* were distributed throughout the country. The bulletin appeals for unity of working people in town and country; unity of Africans, coloured people, Indians and all democrats; unity of Communists and non-Communists, to resist apartheid and win the fight for freedom.

From the leaders of the Communist Parties in the Soviet Union and other socialist countries; from Britain, France and other capitalist countries, warm messages of solidarity and tribute to its unflinching struggle were sent to the South African Communist Party on the anniversary.

Such a Party, which has become a part of the life and the history of our country, will not be destroyed by persecution, nor will it ever submit to the brutal despotism of the race-obsessed thugs who hold power today.

Long after the victorious people of South Africa have swept apartheid and white supremacy from the face of the land, the record and the achievement of the Communist Party will be honoured and celebrated.