

A CENTRAL AFRICAN REPORT

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The British Labour Member of Parliament recently deported from Central Africa by order of the Federal Government.

THE granting of dominion status to the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland in 1960 would be a tragedy of the first order. Very few of the 7 million Africans are in favour of Federal independence, and there are probably none in Northern Rhodesia or Nyasaland who would express support for such a development. And in Nyasaland, the opposition to Federation has reached a stage where it can no longer be ignored. Spokesmen of the Church of Scotland have confirmed that hostility to it is not confined to an educated few. Masses of Africans genuinely fear that Federation will mean domination by the European minority of Southern Rhodesia.

There has already been too much equivocation about the much anticipated conference in 1960 to discuss the future of the Federation. It is important that this speculation be ended by a clear statement of policy by the British Government that there is now no likelihood that dominion status will be granted in 1960. For it is only by such a statement that it will be possible to begin wooing the support of Africans in Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland towards a policy of understanding with the Europeans.

Such a statement is made more vitally necessary by the recent declarations of the Federal Prime Minister, Sir Roy Welensky, who has said that 'in certain circumstances the Federal Government would go it alone and declare independence'. After a barrage of questions in the House of Commons, the Colonial Secretary, Mr. Alan Lennox-Boyd, grudgingly conceded that the Federal Prime Minister had no legal right to take any such action. But the Africans need more than this to convince them that the British Government, in league with Welensky, is not going to sell them down the river.

The British Labour Party has already made clear that dominion status should not be granted until the majority of the adult population in Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland agree, and the Labour Party has also said that there should be an unequivocal statement that the objective of the Federation is complete democracy and equal rights for every citizen. As an immediate demand, the Labour Party also asks for a revision of the Federal

franchise to ensure genuine African representation in the Federal Parliament.

These are the declarations which really worry Sir Roy Welensky. For if Federal independence is postponed, a future Labour Government might so amend the Federal Constitution as a stage towards its stated objective of full democracy that within perhaps only a year or two Africans would be the main political force in the Federation.

In Tanganyika the recent elections have shown what can happen to a political party which does not accept democracy. The United Tanganyika Party was completely overwhelmed by the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU). It is noteworthy, however, that TANU put its emphasis on a non-racial policy and has been co-operating very closely with the Asian Association and a number of Europeans to this end. Under the leadership of Mr. Julius Nyerere, Tanganyika is moving away from the ideas of qualitative franchise and special privileges for the minority races towards a democracy in which all citizens, irrespective of colour, are guaranteed individual rights.

This example of progress towards democracy is particularly relevant to the Federation. For the Europeans in Central Africa, the shadow of Tanganyika is an ominous reminder of the power of African aspirations. To the Africans it is an inspiring symbol. As Mr. Nyerere gets more power and responsibility in Tanganyika, he will become increasingly interested in the fate of Africans across the border in the Federation. He is a much more serious threat to Sir Roy Welensky than even Dr. Nkrumah himself.

Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda speaks for the mass of the Nyasas when he demands the right to secede. It is noteworthy, however, that he is not against federation as such, but against federation with the wrong people. He is, for instance, in favour of federating with Tanganyika, because there is no threat of domination from that end. The British Government has been talking vaguely of allowing further constitutional advance to the Nyasa people. The new constitution should have been announced early in January; but even if the proposals, when they do come forward, allow for an African majority on the Legislative Council, the opposition to Federation is so strong that the Africans will still demand secession. If they continue this demand they must be allowed to secede. No Federation could be successful if over one-third of its people are unwilling partners to it. And it is likely that if Nyasaland is to be allowed to secede, the Northern

Rhodesian Africans will want to follow. If Britain fulfils its obligations to Northern Rhodesia as a Protectorate, it should also allow the territory to secede and perhaps join Nyasaland in a new federation of East and Central Africa.

A few years ago Africans in Uganda and Kenya were concerned about plans for a federation of East Africa. These fears have evaporated with the growing strength of African political organizations in Kenya and the corresponding diminution of White power. They now speak in favour of East African Federation and, like Mr. Nyerere, they would welcome an African Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland being joined with this. As an economic unit it would be quite strong, as the cash crops of Uganda and Tanganyika would balance the copper of Northern Rhodesia. And it would be open to Southern Rhodesia to join, if the people of the colony accepted the democratic basis on which it would be established.

Fears have been expressed that in the event of Africans having the political power in these territories, European standards would be swamped and the European immigrants expelled. In the nations which have recently emerged from colonialism, however, there are now more Europeans than there were before independence. Of course, many of them are not in India or Ghana as permanent settlers, but even so those Whites in Central Africa who have an economic contribution to make would be readily welcomed by Africans. Indeed, below the surface of racial discrimination and antagonism, I am sure there is a great deal of good-will between the races which could come to the surface as soon as the political obstacles were removed.

On the Northern Rhodesian Copperbelt, both the African and the European mineworkers' unions took great pains to convince me of their anxiety to work together. And in the recent strike of White workers, the African union backed up their fellow trade unionists and not the management. The problem of African advancement is also being tackled jointly by these unions, not separately. The cynics will say that this is merely because the Europeans want to ensure that no Africans advance into skilled jobs, by insisting on the rate for the job clause. But in my opinion this cynicism is very much overdone. I felt, after attending a joint committee of the two unions, that there exists a very real anxiety to bring the races together. The spirit of good-will was quite extraordinary and was expressed by rough-handed White trade unionists who said: "Our future is

tied up with the Africans. Although on the surface there appears to be enmity, when we get down below we know that we rely on each other." Mr. Lawrence Katilungu confirmed this by saying: "Racial antagonisms will not be ended by political campaigns, but through the joint industrial struggle".

There were other examples of industrial co-operation between the races, in particular the agreement between the African and European railway workers' unions on African advancement. The Federal Government's refusal to sit down with the two unions to find a way of implementing the agreement that Africans should be allowed to take on some of the so-called skilled jobs in the administration, shows up sufficiently the hypocrisy of the Federal Government's repeated boasts about partnership. When it looks like becoming a reality, Welensky sabotages it.

This is the impression which the Africans have, and recent actions by the Southern Rhodesian Government do nothing to increase their confidence. The Bill to establish multi-racial trade unions seemed more of a threat to the African bodies than a move to give Africans equality. For without guarantees that Africans should be allowed to take on skilled jobs, the right to join a European trade union is worthless. They would, in fact, become second class members of a European trade union, in the same way that they are second class citizens on a European elector's roll. The African trade union movement would be destroyed. Africans regard these moves towards multi-racialism as hollow gestures which in fact have the effect of consolidating European rule. The non-racialism which Africans advocate—that is, equality between all Rhodesians of whatever colour—is a much more realistic policy. What multi-racialism does is to generate a superficial and artificial structure in society which is not workable because basically it is not at all genuine.

The measure to ban the Southern Rhodesian African National Congress has also to be considered in this context. The Congress movement was the only African political organization in the territory, though it also had some twelve Europeans in its membership. The accusation that it was led by power-hungry, disreputable men does not bear examination. The leaders whom I met were responsible, able men, some of whom made a considerable sacrifice by their service to the movement. Mr. Paul Mashonga, for instance, one of the leading businessmen in the African suburb of Highfield, had spent a sum running into four figures to help Congress, as well as handicapping his own business interests.

Congress enjoyed support from most of the leading Africans, including Mr. Herbert Chitepo, the only African barrister. The authorities cannot shrug it off as having been a trivial organization led by irresponsible men. By the Unlawful Organizations Act they have forced it underground, where it is likely to become a more serious threat to the security of the State.

But the Southern Rhodesian Government has not limited itself to the mere banning of its indigenous Congress. The Nyasaland and the two Northern Rhodesian Congresses have been banned permanently in Southern Rhodesia. A curious position arises. For instance, Mr. Harry Nkumbula, the President of the Northern Rhodesian African National Congress, was recently elected to the Legislative Council. If he travels to Salisbury on official or other business, he can be clapped into jail immediately by Sir Edgar Whitehead.

The Amendment to the Native Affairs Act is also repressive in character and discriminatory against Africans. There are penalties for insolence to officers in the Native Reserves which 99 Africans out of a 100 will not be in a position to pay. Meetings of Africans over 12 in number will need the special permission of the District Officers.

Although the power has not been exercised at any time since 1923, the British Government can still reserve such discriminatory laws. Under clause 28 of the Southern Rhodesian Letters Patent, 1923, legislation which discriminates against Africans may be held up by the order of the Governor, instructed by the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations. In fact, under clause 30, the British Government has power to veto legislation introduced into the Southern Rhodesian Parliament. This power, as far as is known, has never even been threatened by the British Government, but during the period of the Labour Government it was a recognized practice for Southern Rhodesian bills to be forwarded to London for some prior consultation. That has not taken place with recent measures.

Until recently the British public was under the impression that Southern Rhodesia was essentially a liberal country and not to be compared with the Union of South Africa. But this illusion is fast dying, as a result of events for which the Government of the Colony alone must be held responsible. The European settler administration conducts itself as though it had virtual independence of action. It has not, and is not likely to attain it within the peace of the law until it can show itself capable of

governing itself for the justice of all.

Meanwhile, events in Central Africa move towards a climax. The publication of the Devlin Commission Report has underlined the brutality employed by the Nyasaland authorities to silence African antagonism towards Federation; while its firm dismissal of the 'massacre plot' has cast the gravest doubts upon the ethics of the Emergency and the continued incarceration of the acknowledged African leadership.

Mr. Macmillan's announcement of a Commission of Inquiry on Central Africa is regarded in Labour circles as a cruel political trick. The Commission is not a Parliamentary one: the Parliamentary representatives will be in a minority, and almost all of the other members of the Commission will be governmental nominees, chosen either by Mr. Macmillan himself or by Sir Roy Welensky. There is no likelihood that the African representatives on the Commission—five in number—will have any respect or following among the African population of the territories, as they will be nominated by the various administrations for their talents as mouthpieces. It is intolerable, of course, that any attempt should be made to assess African opinion in Central Africa while African political organizations are unlawful in Southern Rhodesia, while a State of Emergency exists in Nyasaland and the Congress is banned, and while some of the leading African politicians in Northern Rhodesia are rusticated.

There is no question of Labour's changing the principles of the policy it has repeatedly announced for Central Africa; particularly the statement, made in March 1958, which was described by Mrs. Barbara Castle in her article in the last issue of *'Africa South'*. Labour is opposed to any compromise with Welensky. Even though his original demand for dominion status in 1960 may be modified, Labour would hardly agree to any transfer of power from the territories—such as control over the police—to the Federal Government. There has now been recognition within the Labour Party that future conferences on Central Africa must, in fairness to the Africans, include the question of secession. The right of the Africans in Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia to secede if they wish to is being finally recognized.