

Zero Hour in Southern Rhodesia

WHETHER or not Southern Rhodesia is invited to the conference of Commonwealth Premiers on July 8-15, the British Government will still be faced with a serious dilemma. Either it gives in to the pressure of the white settler minority led by Mr. Ian Smith, the new Premier, or it must accede to the growing demand for human and democratic rights for the African majority. There is no other alternative.

If it takes the first course it is bound to lead to more violence and bloodshed in Southern Rhodesia. The independent African states will be forced into more drastic measures of solidarity. The United Nations will have to face the challenge of translating words into action. And the British people will have to bear the consequences of another "trouble spot" as a result of the Tory attempt to resist Africa's march to freedom.

Sir Alec Douglas-Home would like to give "independence" to the white settler minority, but hesitates to do so because it would arouse great opposition in Britain, worsen the existing relations with the independent African states, weaken the links within the Commonwealth, and isolate Britain even more within the United Nations.

On the other hand the Tories are flatly opposed to African majority rule. They have close economic and political links with the white settler minority, and fear that African majority rule in Southern Rhodesia will have repercussions in South Africa, and will stimulate still further the struggle against the apartheid system.

The tug-of-war over the "right" of Southern Rhodesia to attend the conference of Commonwealth Premiers is a rehearsal of the real battle to come. Strong opposition to this has already been expressed by President Nkrumah (Ghana), Kenneth Kaunda (Northern Rhodesia), Oscar Kambona (Tanganyika), and President Nehru (India), and more protests are likely to pour in before the conference.

Even faced with the most violent repressive measures the African majority in Southern Rhodesia are most modest in their immediate demands. Though Joshua Nkomo and other leaders of the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) have been arrested and placed in detention, they are anxious to reach a settlement by negotiation. In a press statement issued in London on April 17, Mr. George Nyandoro, Secretary General of ZAPU, made the following demands of the British Government:

1. Suspend immediately the Constitution of the Colony.
2. Order the release of Joshua Nkomo and all other political prisoners.
3. Appoint an Executive pending the calling of

a Constitutional Conference.

4. Make available units of the British forces for emergency action against any attempted act of treason by the white minority Smith Government against the Crown.

Unless the British Government gives serious consideration to these proposals there is imminent danger of more violent clashes taking place in Southern Rhodesia.

Never was the situation more serious. With the winning of independence under African majority rule for Nyasaland in July 1964 and Northern Rhodesia in October 1964, Southern Rhodesia (apart from South Africa) will be the "last ditch" of white settler minority rule. Even while holding the post of Deputy Premier to Mr. Winston Field (who resigned in April), Mr. Ian Smith was threatening drastic action: "We might be driven into a position where we have to resort to action which we would be very reluctant to take."

A KEY BASE

British military strategy is also centred on Southern Rhodesia as a key base for action elsewhere in Africa. An editorial in the "Daily Telegraph" on November 7, 1963, pointed out that "in future military security affecting the three British High Commission Territories of Bechuanaland, Swaziland and Basutoland, will be more conveniently managed from Southern Rhodesia."

Tory strategy is to hold Southern Rhodesia as a bastion of white minority rule, at least for the next five years. The Sandys-Whitehead constitution of December 1961 went no further than the provision of 15 African seats out of a total of 75 in the Southern Rhodesian Parliament. In the December 1962 elections only 3,000

Africans voted, as against 72,000 Europeans—though Africans outnumbered Europeans by twelve to one!

Since the 1962 elections the European minority has been able to hold its position only by the enforcement of the most vicious forms of repression against the African majority. During the past year no less than eight "security" Bills have been passed into law, the latest being early last month when the period of "arbitrary detention" (without charge or trial) was extended from three to twelve months.

REPRESSION AGAINST AFRICANS

In the past four months 45 Africans have been shot dead by armed police. In one week in April over 300 Africans were arrested, among them were 60 women carrying babies on their backs. On April 28, 105 African women were fined £20 each or the alternative of three months in

prison, for their alleged refusal to disperse in a demonstration protesting against the banishment of Joshua Nkomo. Joshua Nkomo, leader of the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU), had been arrested and sent to detention in a remote northern region. Also arrested were Josiah Chinamano (founder of the Highfield Community School for African children), and his wife Ruth and other ZAPU leaders.

Even Garfield Todd, a former white Premier, declared towards the end of April that Africans are now "only kept in check by the physical fear of dogs, tear-gas, rifle-fire and imprisonment."

None of these repressive measures have solved the problem for the white settler minority. Since the December 1962 elections there have been three Prime Ministers and three Cabinets.

The new Prime Minister is backed by the most die-hard elements among the white settlers—those who

are determined to declare independence for the white settler minority by hook or crook. They refuse to consider even the slightest concession to African democratic rights, and Mr. Smith has himself declared that he cannot conceive of African majority rule for the next thirty years!

Meanwhile, Southern Rhodesia is faced with serious internal problems and growing international opposition. African unemployment is increasing. More than 1,000 Europeans leave each month, mostly for South Africa. And it is estimated that this year the Budget deficit will be round £5½ million.

CONDEMNED BY ALL

On the international plane the white settler minority government is condemned by all the independent states of Asia and Africa; the socialist countries; the Communist Parties in all countries; and many socialist parties, including the British Labour Party. In the United Na-

tions the 58-nation Afro-Asian group put strong pressure to act upon U. Thant, the Secretary General, who transmitted their request at the end of April, to end the restriction of Mr. Joshua Nkomo.

In Southern Rhodesia there are sharp divisions on tactics (though not on principles), within the ranks of the white settler minority. The Rhodesian Front, headed by Mr. Ian Smith, has 35 seats out of 65. It is known that the former Premier, Mr. Winston Field, would vote against precipitate action, and perhaps one or two others. If only three members of the Rhodesian Front "crossed the floor", Mr. Smith would be defeated.

However, Parliament is in recess, so Mr. Smith is not faced with this challenge. He became Prime Minister four days after Parliament rose, and it is not due to meet again until the end of July. Meanwhile the divisions within the Rhodesian Front (together with the opposition of the

Rhodesian National Party led by Sir Edgar Whitehead), make the position of Mr. Smith extremely unstable.

IN THE WINGS

There is a strong rumour that Sir Roy Welensky is "waiting in the wings" to take over the post of Premier. It is believed that he will rally all sections of the white settlers and advance the fight for "independence" under minority rule.

This situation is a serious challenge to the Labour movement in Britain. If it allows the Tories to concede this demand it will alienate all the independent states in Africa. When Harold Wilson raises the matter in the House of Commons, it will not be enough to rely on legalistic arguments. What is needed is a mighty solidarity campaign from one end of Britain to the other in support of the heroic African struggle for freedom and democracy in Southern Rhodesia.

BOOK REVIEW:

by
Michael Harmel

THE dismal British record at the United Nations and elsewhere regarding South Africa is at sharp variance with the strong repugnance felt towards apartheid by the great majority of British people. The reason for this must be sought in the heavy vested interests held by some of the most influential firms and individuals in Britain and South Africa.

They want to maintain the big profits on their South African investments. Since the essence of the apartheid system is precisely the perpetuation of the cheap labour—high profits situation, this makes British and other overseas investors not only supporters but also collaborators in Verwoerd's criminal Nazi régime.

"Overseas investment is a partner in collaboration. Not only is Britain South Africa's main trading partner, but of some £1,500 million foreign capital invested in South Africa, nearly £1,000 million is British (and £300 million American)."

The great merit of this new publication issued by the Anti-Apartheid Movement is that it carefully documents this central theme with facts, figures and quotations from impeccable sources. Some 333 British companies are listed as having associates or subsidiaries in South Africa—quite apart from the enormous British stake in the gold, uranium and diamond mining industry. In

both Verwoerd's "border industries" plan, designed to implement the infamous "Bantustan" fraud, and in state-run industries, British firms are in partnership with the apartheid government in its plans to implement its oppressive policies.

I.C.I. is in partnership with the huge De Beers diamond monopoly—part of the Oppenheimer empire in African Explosives and Chemical Industries Ltd. which in addition to its other profitable activities is building three ammunition plants for the government to help Verwoerd shoot down the African patriots.

The authors turn the spotlight on to the South African Foundation, a body of

big businessmen and others designed to preserve "the West European way of life and ideals" in Africa. The London committee of this sinister organisation includes a number of senior British financiers and industrialists with far-reaching influence in British economic life, in the House of Commons and the House of Lords.

These men are named in this valuable booklet, and their interests in apartheid identified. The British arms industry, with contracts for £90 million from Verwoerd, the traders who buy from and sell to South Africa—all these form a part of the powerful submerged "South Africa Lobby" in Britain, whose influence is responsible for the tragic policy

which this country is following of sabotaging and hampering international action against apartheid at every turn.

This policy is not only a stab in the back for South Africa's freedom fighters. It is also diametrically opposed to the interests of the British people, doing incalculable harm to relations with the whole of Africa and the rest of the world well.

The British Labour movement must isolate, expose and defeat Verwoerd's collaborators in this country. This publication furnishes invaluable ammunition for this task, which is already a major issue in world and in British politics.

The Collaborators

(by Rosalynde Ainslie & Dorothy Robinson)

BOOK REVIEW:

by
Jack Woddis

DORIS Lessing spent twenty-five years of her life in Southern Rhodesia, for the most part on a

justice, and always the same brand of it, can be limiting". In one sense this can be true; yet it is prob-

essence, by their unnatural relationships with the African people who are forced into subjection as the

liberals, the attempt to help individual cases while leaving the whole rotten system unaffected, far from assisting the victims only

that oppresses another cannot itself be free," warned Marx. This is demonstrated in the series of portraits of the settlers which we are

African Stories

(by Doris Lessing)