



Editorial Notes:

# Kick the Smith Gang Out!

'THE BALL IS IN YOUR COURT,' says Smith to Wilson. As far as they are concerned, the future of four million Africans is something to be hit back and forth in a sort of game between the clique of white racialists in Salisbury and the imperialists parading themselves as a socialist government in London. The masses in Zimbabwe—and the rest of Africa and the world—are supposed to look on admiringly while the white bwanas play tennis with their future.

The issue is falsely presented, both in Salisbury and Whitehall, as one of independence for 'Rhodesia'. Mr. Smith and his clique are not anti-imperialists; they are rabid white racialists who are demanding a free hand to practise exactly the same sort of colonialism as that of the Verwoerd gang south of the Limpopo. British imperialism is not opposed in principle to this demand. Britain has never cared about or defended the rights of Africans or any other peoples she pretended to protect; in 1909 the Westminster Parliament, in adopting the South African Act, handed over to Smuts and Botha exactly what Smith is

demanding today: a Constitution for white domination with 'safeguards' for African rights which history has proved to have been completely worthless. Smith and Co. are only in office today by virtue of the disgustingly undemocratic 1961 constitution imposed by Westminster against the strongest protests of the leaders of the African majority.

What is at stake is not whether Zimbabwe shall be ruled by the 'Rhodesia Front' or by the Colonial Office; it is genuine independence—i.e., the transfer of power to the elected representatives of the majority. Certainly, the pressing and immediate need is to kick the Smith gang out of office in Salisbury. But it is a grave mistake to think the alternative is a return to colonialism; and a dangerous illusion to imagine that British imperialism, whether by force or by negotiations, can be relied on to achieve a democratic solution based on majority rule.

Let us briefly glance back on the origins of the present crisis.

### **RHODES AND THE CONQUEST OF ZAMBIA**

The conquest of Zimbabwe by the British imperialists at the end of the nineteenth century constitutes one of the most sordid chapters in the Scramble for Africa.

Lobengula the legendary king ruled over a peaceful kingdom which desired nothing but to be left alone. But this was not to be.

The discovery of diamonds in South Africa in 1867 and the still more important discovery of gold on the Witwatersrand in 1886 turned the whole of Southern Africa into a battlefield between the imperialist powers of Europe. The struggle between Britain and Germany was already beginning to be a major factor in international politics. All the territories bordering on the Witwatersrand became the object of all sorts of schemers and adventurers aided and abetted by either Britain or Germany.

The most notorious of all was Cecil Rhodes. This man, who made millions of pounds through ruthless exploitation of the Africans, hated our people. So much so that the educational and other trusts created after his death were specifically to benefit all nations except the Africans out of whom he made his money. As head of the British South Africa Company he planned and executed the diabolical plot for the destruction of Lobengula and his kingdom which was thereafter named Rhodesia. The manner in which this was done has left a deep searing wound in the hearts and minds of all Africans.

We cannot in this brief survey go into all the tragic details of this part of the history of Zimbabwe. But by 1890 the British South Africa



Co. incorporated in London had with the help of paid mercenaries conquered Zimbabwe. Despite great skill and courage the military machine of Lobengula was smashed by modern arms. The British government throughout pretended it had nothing to do with the enterprise. In fact the plan to overthrow the kingdom of Lobengula had the blessing of the government of the day from beginning to end. The services of Cecil Rhodes to British Imperialism were suitably recognised thereafter.

The British South Africa Company ruled the country from 1890 to 1923. During that time all the practices with which we are familiar in South Africa were applied to the Africans in Southern Rhodesia. The common law of South Africa, Roman-Dutch Law, was adopted. The flow of White settlers from South Africa was encouraged. The 150,333 square miles of Southern Rhodesia were parcelled out to White settlers who more often than not were given land seized from Africans for nothing. 48 million acres were thus placed under White ownership of which to this day only under one million acres is under cultivation. 40.4 million acres were 'reserved' for use by the Africans. Then there are the so-called Native Purchase Areas consisting of 4½ million acres under control by the government Land Board. These are areas 'purchased' by the government allegedly to relieve the land shortage among the 4 million Africans. The notorious Land Apportionment Act (counterpart of the 1913 Land Act of South Africa) pegs the land position in this unjust fashion making the question of Land Reform and distribution a crucial one in Zimbabwe.

With most of the best land firmly wrested from the Africans the Settlers proceeded to create their state on the model of South Africa.

The Pass system was introduced in 1895. The hut tax and poll tax followed. Labour recruitment and regulation came next. The colour bar was rigorously applied in all aspects of life sometimes even more viciously than in South Africa. And on the basis of cheap labour development proceeded apace. Gold, asbestos, chrome, iron ore, coal were discovered and exploited. Tobacco which is today the biggest money-earner was cultivated.

In 1923 the British government assuming direct control of the territory promulgated a new constitution which placed political power in the hands of the White minority. More discriminatory laws followed. Commercial and trade opportunities were limited to Whites. Education and technical skills of all kinds were reserved for the White settlers. Thus the country today spends £100 per annum on each White child and £8 per annum on each African child. This amounts to an expenditure of 4½ million pounds on education for 4 million Africans and 10 million pounds for 220,000 Whites. There are only two big hospitals



for Africans in Bulawayo and Salisbury. Whites have excellent health facilities which with one of the highest standards of living in the world they do not need in any case. Tobacco farming is reserved for Whites in practice, and there are no marketing facilities for other products produced by African farmers.

The settlers were even allowed to control their own army. It is significant that with the exception of South Africa and Southern Rhodesia the imperialist powers have always retained direct control of the army in their colonies. In other words the imperialists recognised the White minorities in both countries as a social support for their policies of oppressing and exploiting the indigenous population.

All this was done even whilst the British government in solemn declarations repeated over and over again that it regarded 'African interests as paramount' in Southern Rhodesia. This double-talk has never ceased to this day.

## **AFRICAN REVOLT**

The African people never accepted defeat. Three years after the rule of the British South Africa Company began they rose in revolt. The uprising was mercilessly crushed.

Then early in the twenties they formed the Southern Rhodesia African National Congress and the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union. Both these organizations campaigned for the rights of the African people without much success before the Second World War.

The defeat of Hitlerite fascism by the Soviet Union and the emergence of the Socialist World, set the stage for the gigantic changes in the world. The colonial system in Asia collapsed. New stirrings of struggle appeared in Africa.

The trade union movement pioneered by the I.C.U. revived in Zimbabwe especially among railway workers under the leadership of Joshua Nkomo. With the help of young militants such as Chikerema and George Nyandoro the African National Congress of Southern Rhodesia was re-established on a new basis under the leadership of Joshua Nkomo.

The White settlers refused to recognize that the balance of power on the world arena had changed in favour of the oppressed people. A new plot was hatched to forestall the march to freedom of the people in Zimbabwe. British imperialism and its agents—the White settlers created the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland in 1953 in the teeth of African opposition. This Federation was a device whereby the policies and practices of Southern Rhodesia could be extended to Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland. It was considered that the social



support of the White settlers together with the copper of Northern Rhodesia and the labour of Nyasaland would form a solid basis for rule in Central Africa for generations to come.

What the imperialists conceived as a means of maintaining their rule turned out to be the instrument of their defeat.

Tremendous political agitation and organisation of the masses took place centred on opposition to Federation. This found expression in Zimbabwe. General strikes, boycotts and other mass campaigns by the African National Congress followed. The White settlers replied with their usual weapons. In terms of the Unlawful Organizations Act, the African National Congress of Southern Rhodesia and other organizations (e.g. the A.N.C. of South Africa) were declared illegal and various leaders were detained without trial. The National Democratic Party was formed.

### **THE 1961 CONSTITUTION**

Side by side with repression attempts were made from time to time to improve the image of the racist Southern Rhodesian regime. Thus in 1961 a new constitution was adopted which provided for 15 African members of parliament in a house of 65. A huge campaign was launched to induce Africans to accept this humiliating constitution. A so-called 'build a nation' publicity stunt was run. The people's organizations opposed and defeated these manoeuvres.

The National Democratic Party was banned and the Zimbabwe African People's Party was founded to continue the struggle for freedom. The settler government introduced still more repressive legislation. The Unlawful Organizations Act was amended. A Preventive Detention law was passed. The Law and Order Maintenance Act was promulgated . . . all in 1962.

In 1964 the Federation finally collapsed and Malawi and Zambia emerged as independent African states. Rhodesia remained unfree. Fearful of change the White settlers entrusted their destinies to the most reactionary section of the ruling class, namely, the Rhodesian Front led by Mr. Ian Smith—an admirer of South Africa's Dr. Verwoerd and of Salazar. The Rhodesian Front government rounded up hundreds of African leaders and detained them in detention camps notably at Gonakudzingwa where Chibwechitedza Joshua Nkomo is held. Simultaneously they announced their intention to achieve independence for Rhodesia under White Minority Rule. The settlers wanted to repeat the tragedy of 1910 in South Africa. Instead they might produce a farce.

Throughout the past 70 years the British imperialists and the White



settlers of Rhodesia have jointly shared in the oppression and exploitation of the Africans. Being a world imperialist power Britain is more sensitive to the changes that have taken place on the world arena. The tactics of imperialism have changed. Mr. Macmillan, the British Premier, had indicated this clearly in the famous 'Winds of Change' Speech delivered appropriately enough in Capetown in 1961. It had become necessary for imperialism to appear to accept the end of open colonialism whilst retaining economic interests intact. Direct political control had to give way to a neo-colonialism in which the imported civil service and administrators would be replaced by elected leaders, and reliance placed on economic levers and blackmail to maintain dependence.

Looked at from the point of view of the monopoly capitalists of London or Paris, this retreat seemed reasonable enough. In return for the sacrifice of some soft jobs in the colonial service and intangible dreams of empire, they ensured, for a while at any rate, the continuance of high profit-rates on their investments which had always been the prime purpose of colony-grabbing. But from the point of view of the white minorities in African countries, it did not seem reasonable at all. They had always been the most loyal agents and servitors of imperialism. In return for the comforts and privileges of a caste aristocracy, they had for many years acted in the unpopular and sometimes dangerous capacity of policemen, to 'keep the natives in their places'. The neo-colonialist strategies reduced their privileges and endangered their status. They considered that they were being betrayed. Hence, the white South Africans, the white Kenyans, the white Algerians, and the white 'Rhodesians' (or 'Rhodesites') resisted the new strategies of London and Paris, and won strong support in this process from diehard imperialist and jingo elements in the metropolitan countries.

### **ECHOES OF HISTORY**

It is in this situation that frenzied flights are taking place of Prime Ministers to and from London to Salisbury, and acrimonious 'negotiations' going on in public about (but without the participation of) the African people, in an atmosphere loud with echoes of Munich and the 'Union of South Africa' betrayal of 1910.

Here in microcosm is the image of modern imperialism reflected. A small 'European' minority grown rich on the forced labour and stolen resources of Africans in an African country, violently resisting the efforts of the indigenous majority to claim their birthrights to the government and the wealth of their motherland. Wilson talks sanctimoniously of not using force—but who is using force and violence



in Zimbabwe? As in the neighbouring Republic, faced with a challenge to minority power and privilege, the White Supremacist regime has reacted with Verwoerdian ferocity.

The African organizations have been outlawed, hundreds of Africans sent into exile and restriction without trial, Todd and other White liberals who have sided with the Blacks placed under restriction, the press intimidated and the most outspoken daily paper suppressed because it dared to voice the grievances of the Africans. Ferocious Vorster-style laws have been placed on the statute book in terms of which militant forms of political opposition are turned into 'crimes' and many Africans have been sentenced to death because, the legal avenues closed, they have resorted to 'illegal' and on occasion violent methods of asserting their claims.

Smith is a racist and a reactionary every bit as vicious as Verwoerd. He stands for the continued domination of the 200,000 Whites over the 4,000,000 Africans in Rhodesia. He has openly boasted that, despite claims that the 1961 constitution 'opens the way' to majority rule, there will never be an African majority government 'in my lifetime'. To bargain with such a man is like bargaining with Hitler. His pledges will prove to be no more than scraps of paper. Should he himself attempt to honour them, he will be removed with as much celerity as Todd, Whitehead and Field were removed before him when they tried to tone down the demands of the white extremists. Any agreement with Smith will be no more enduring than Munich.

And quite as shameful. Let us be quite categorical—*any* agreement with Smith means a final and complete betrayal of African rights. Once the 'Rhodesians' are granted 'independence' under the 1961 Constitution, or any variant thereof which leaves power in the hands of representatives of the white minority, they will use that power to entrench themselves and monopolize citizen rights and economic opportunities for themselves. Any 'safeguards' inserted as a sop to the left-wing of the Labour Party, to humanitarian and religious circles, or to world opinion, will be as worthless as similar 'safeguards' have proved in South Africa over the past hundred years.

In 1853 when the Cape Colony was first granted 'representative government' there was no formal colour bar in the constitution. Any man could vote for and sit in the old Cape parliament—provided he has the necessary property and educational qualifications. The white colonists were quite happy—for hardly any men of colour, as they knew very well, had or could get enough property and schooling to qualify. When, in the course of time, the numbers of non-white voters grew uncomfortably high, the Cape Parliament (headed, incidentally,



by the self-same Cecil Rhodes) merely changed the constitution to raise the qualifications.

The 1910 Constitution of the Union of South Africa contained a number of 'entrenched clauses' which, it was said would always safeguard the voting rights which non-whites had in the Cape Province, but in South Africa today (always observing the letter of the law!) the successive white governments have successfully whittled away these former rights until the 12 million Africans and the 500,000 Indians have no representation at all in Parliament or any other sphere of government, while all that is left of the Coloured vote is that some Coloured men in the Cape Province are allowed to choose, in a separate election, four whites to speak for them in a House of Assembly of 156 members.

Nor can any reliance be placed on the concept of guaranteeing African rights by international treaty—a Tory idea which, at one stage was refurbished by Wilson in order to stall and prolong the 'negotiations'—and promptly rejected by Smith. Such a treaty could be of no value if it depended on the imperialists to implement it. Look at the case of South-West Africa.

The United Nations as long ago as 1946 came to the conclusion that South Africa had violated the League of Nations mandate and demanded that South-West Africa be placed under U.N. trusteeship. But no action has been taken to enforce repeated U.N. resolutions, and there is no guarantee that even when the present long-drawn-out proceedings at the International Court of Justice at The Hague are completed, anything will be done to implement a decision unfavourable to South Africa. In fact, there is not even overwhelming confidence among observers that the court will return a verdict against South Africa. International treaties are only meaningful if the parties to them are determined to enforce them.

It can hardly be supposed that the British government is so politically innocent as to be unaware of these hard realities. They know that surrender to the demands of the Smith settlers' committee in Salisbury would be such a blatant sell-out as to inflict irreparable damage on what remains of Britain's international reputation. It would immediately precipitate the final collapse of the ramshackle British Commonwealth. It is such considerations—and not any genuine concern with African rights—that keep Mr. Wilson and his colleagues in a flurry of plane flights, stratagems, proposals and counter-proposals, in a series of desperate attempts to avert or postpone a showdown.

### **NO MIDDLE ROAD**

Neither the British Labour Party nor any other British Party—with the sole, honourable exception of the Communist Party—faced the real



issue of Zimbabwe. The 'middle road' so anxiously sought in endless talks in London, Salisbury and now proposed in Malta, just does not exist. There are only two alternatives: a sell-out to Smith and Co. as demanded by Lord Salisbury and the British Fascists who made Smith their hero when he visited Britain; or kick the Smith gang out and transfer power to an independent, African Zimbabwe under a democratic, one-man-one-vote constitution. To date, there is not the slightest indication that Mr. Wilson is prepared to consider this alternative—the only way out acceptable to the four million, 16-to-one African majority in Zimbabwe, and to the whole of Africa and practically the whole world as reflected in the U.N. resolution on this theme.

Instead of respecting the same emphatic view when informed of it by Mr. Nkomo—who was brought from his place of detention for the interview, and promptly returned to it afterwards, Mr. Wilson took the opportunity to give a lecture to the man with whom, instead of Mr. Smith, he should have been negotiating independence with as majority leader. By his own account Wilson tried to 'work on' Nkomo, Sithole and other African leaders—to get them to help operate the insulting and fraudulent 1961 constitution. We find it difficult to exercise restraint in commenting on the thick-skinned insensitivity and racial arrogance which permits Mr. Wilson not only to try to bully patriots on such an occasion, but even to come back and boast about it in the British parliament. How could a Labour man sink so low as to play the police nark and try to get patriots to sell the very principles for which they are being martyred? How could a self-proclaimed socialist—who never suffered or sacrificed for his principles—have the thundering impudence to lecture better men than he, who are at present sacrificing bitterly for theirs? It would have been more appropriate and dignified for Wilson to have gone more humbly to the African leaders, not to teach but to learn.

If the British Labour Government were seriously concerned with democratic principles and African rights they would not be spinning out a series of endless negotiations, acts of appeasement, and conjurers' tricks with Royal Commissions and terms of reference, as if Smith and Co. were a major world power instead of an unrepresentative little gang who speak for a settler population equivalent to that of a medium-sized English town—and not all of them at that. If they meant business, there would have been no such absurd nonsense. Instead of promises that even in the event of an illegal and unilateral declaration of 'independence' there would be 'no use of force' (what could be better calculated to encourage such a desperate act?) the mere threat of such 'rebellion' would have seen the British Lion roaring into action.

At the very time when Wilson made this promise to the white



Rhodesians, British troops were in action in Aden, where—with far less justification, indeed with no justification—Britain had suspended the constitution, arrested the elected leaders of the people and hundreds of their supporters, and imposed martial law.

When British imperialism considered the progressive policies of the Jagan government in British Guiana not to its liking, it similarly sent in troops, dismissed the elected government, and unilaterally imposed a trick constitution designed to ensure that Jagan's People's Progressive Party would not be returned to office. It is now negotiating 'independence' with the more favoured Burnham government, under the same fraudulent constitution.

Nor should anyone think that the Labour Party has more scruples about this sort of conduct towards 'rebellious' colonials than the Tories. It was under Labour that Britain deposed and banished Seretse Khama of Bechuanaland. Labour also backed a savage colonial war in Kenya and jailed Jomo Kenyatta and hundreds of other patriots.

Why doesn't the British government act the same way in Rhodesia? Why don't they fly in troops, suspend the rotten 1961 Constitution; arrest Smith and his 'Cabinet' as rebels and inciters of violence; release Nkomo, Sithole, Todd and all other political prisoners and detainees; convene and organize a constituent assembly on the basis of universal adult franchise to draw up a proper independence constitution?

Africans could be forgiven for thinking that the British Labour government, whose proposals on Commonwealth immigration shows them hardly less afflicted by racialism and colour-prejudice than their Tory opposite numbers, is soft on the Smith gang merely because they happen to be white.

No doubt there is a strong element of colour-prejudice involved. With a dicey majority in Parliament and a strong element of white chauvinism among the electorate which (as the last general election showed) the Tories do not scruple to fan and exploit, the opportunist and unprincipled British Labour Party is terrified of a confrontation with the 'kith and kin' in Zimbabwe—most of whom, incidentally, are probably not of British but of South African origin.

But it would be an over-simplification to imagine that racial and colour affinities alone can account for Britain's appeasement of the white settlers. As a matter of fact, by encouraging them in their intransigence, Britain is exposing them to an eventual day of wrath from the African masses which is likely to be far more painful than a relatively peaceful intervention by British troops now. If the white 'Rhodesians' do not want to adjust themselves to being ordinary, unprivileged



citizens of an African state, they could be assisted to emigrate; and if the British are so worried about the financial and material loss thus suffered by their 'kith and kin'—though they have done pretty handsomely out of Africa already—let Britain pay them compensation. This is not an insoluble or even a very serious problem. In fact it is not the main problem at all.

### **THE ZAMBESI LINE**

The main problem for British imperialism is that white 'Rhodesia' is an essential element in the whole imperialist grand strategy of maintaining the 'Zambesi Line' as the last-ditch defence of colonialism in Africa.

It is an essential link in the Pretoria-Salisbury-Lisbon axis, secretly supported and openly financed and armed by NATO and Anglo-American imperialism for the containment of the African Revolution and the protection of the enormous profits which—independence notwithstanding—'Western' monopoly capitalists continue to drain out of our continent.

A victory for the cause of human liberty in Zimbabwe would be a shattering blow at the forces which seek to strangle Africa, to keep her people impoverished and backward labour-cattle for the greater profit of foreign monopolies. It would bring the tidal wave of the African Revolution to the banks of the Limpopo River, to the gates of the very citadel and stronghold of colonialism in Africa—the fascist republic of South Africa.

That is the essential reason why (with the unqualified support of the United States of America) Britain is battling might and main to maintain or at least prolong the status quo in Salisbury. That is why, with unparalleled hypocrisy, while uttering pious platitudes about their concern for African rights, Wilson and his colleagues, obedient servants of international imperialism, are determined to postpone for as long as they can the establishment of an independent African Zimbabwe.

At the bottom of all the double-talk, deliberate complications and confusion of an essentially simple and straightforward situation lies the hidden reality—the tremendous involvement of imperialist fortunes in the maintenance of the apartheid regime in the South. As P. Tlalé points out in his important study in this issue of our journal, South Africa today has become a key area for the whole structure of international capitalism.

But if it is a key area for imperialism, it is equally—perhaps even more—a key area for the forces all over Africa and all over the world who are striving for freedom, peace and a better life. All of us, wherever



we may be, must act now to help the liberation forces to kick the Smith gang out of office and defend the rights and freedom of our brothers and sisters in Zimbabwe. This is more than a moral duty. It is our own rights and freedom that are at stake.

*November 9th, 1965*

---

## **Pioneer Marxists of South Africa**

IT IS HALF a century since the formation in South Africa of the organization which made a spectacular break with all political traditions of the country up to that time, and which led directly to the formation of the Communist Party of South Africa. This organization was the International Socialist League which held its first national conference on January 9th, 1916.

In the period before the First World War, African national strivings were making their first organizational emergence in the formation of the African National Congress (grappling with the iniquitous Land Act); the embryo African working class was making its first tentative essays into the field of industrial action; and the White trade union movement and the South African Labour Party, though leading militant wage struggles among organized White workers, operated as though the South African situation was an exact replica of the British scene—from which their most militant leaders had been transplanted—and as though the African population was non-existent.

The White trade unions and their political wing, the Labour Party, had been established by immigrants, and many of the South African craft unions were branches of their British parent bodies. The Labour Party was the party of an aristocracy of labour, with a standard of living far above that of the masses of African workers, and with a policy of trying to entrench Whites in the skilled trades and stop any African encroachment.

It was the outbreak of the war that, indirectly at first, precipitated socialists into facing up to the need for an inter-racial unity based on sound socialist principle. The war engulfed the country in a wave of hysteria. Though in 1913 the South African Labour Party had affiliated to the International Socialist Bureau and had endorsed the Stuttgart anti-war policy of international socialist parties, immediately the war started the right-wing element in the party pressed for official support of the government's war policy. The Administrative Committee of the Party, under the chairmanship of W. H. Andrews, the outstanding



labour leader of the day, later to become the chairman of the Communist Party, passed a resolution protesting against 'the capitalistic governments of Europe fomenting a war which can only benefit international armament manufacturers' rings and other enemies of the working class' and appealing to the workers to organize and refrain from participation in 'this unjust war'. That resolution was passed, but then the right wing of the party began to work on the branches to stand behind Creswell in his offer to the Government to 'see the war through'. The war policy was fiercely contested at the annual conference of the Party, and by then the movement was split into pro- and anti-war sections.

In September 1914 the War on War League was formed. The majority of its leading members were also members of the Labour Party and tried for a while to remain within the party. By the time a packed Labour Party conference outvoted the militants by 82 votes to 30 and decided to support the Botha-Smuts Government wholeheartedly in the prosecution of the war, the need was not just for an anti-war group but for a political party to preach the doctrines of international socialism.

For, inside the Labour Party the issue of the relations between White and African labour had come to a head. The Party conference that adopted a pro-war policy also had before it a resolution on party membership. Creswell was the author of this draft which read 'Membership of the party shall be open to all persons of either sex of the age of 18. It is undesirable to admit Coloured persons to membership who have not given practical guarantees that they agree to the party's policy of upholding and advancing white standards.' W. H. Andrews launched a fierce attack against this approach. 'The working class of this country are the African people,' he said, 'and if this is really a Labour Party and not a middle class party', we must admit the African. The decision was left in abeyance because the main issue at the conference was the war. Three of the party's leading officials and a militant group of members left the conference hall and the Party.

The anti-war section assembled to form an International League dedicated to uphold the principles of socialism in the party, but the victorious right-wing hounded them out of the movement by demanding loyalty pledges for the duration of the war. On September 10th, 1915, appeared the first issue of *The International*, organ of the International Socialist League in which the editor, Ivon Jones announced 'Here we plant the flag of the New International in South Africa'. The League's objects were to propagate the principles of international socialism and anti-militarism and to promote international Socialist unity and activity. Eight Labour Party branches joined the League.



## **The Parting of the Ways**

A subsequent editorial in *The International* was headed 'The Parting of the Ways'. Internationalism, it said, which did not concede the fullest rights which the African working class was capable of claiming would be a sham. One of the justifications for withdrawal from the Labour Party, was that it gave them untrammelled freedom to deal, regardless of political fortunes, with the great African question.

The I.S.L. held its first national conference in Johannesburg on January 9th, 1916. S. P. Bunting came forward with a petition of rights for the African worker. 'The League affirms', his draft said, 'that the emancipation of the working class requires the abolition of all forms of native indenture, compound and passport systems, and the lifting of the African worker to the political and industrial status of the White.'

Pursuing this vital issue in the columns of *The International* Bunting wrote, 'The solidarity of labour fails the moment it is divided on race, colour or creed.'

The International Socialist League began to make contact and common cause with African political movements, which in the closing years of the First World War were entering a period of renewed militancy, of strikes and anti-pass protests. When 152 striking African sanitary workers were imprisoned, the Government cast about to take action against the 'instigators' of the strike: Five leaders of the African National Congress and three members of the International Socialist League were arrested and charged with incitement to violence in the same court dock.

When 40,000 African miners stayed in their compounds and refused to go on shift, the I.S.L. issued its famous 'Don't Scab' leaflet: 'White workers! Do you hear the new army of labour coming?'

While the Labour Party rushed to the government offering to raise battalions for use in case of African risings, the International Socialist League was helping to found the Industrial Workers of Africa. This body circulated the first Marxist leaflet in Zulu and Sotho: 'There is only one way of deliverance', it said, 'Unite as workers, unite. Let there no longer be any talk of Basuto, Zulu or Shangaan. You are all labourers. Let labour be your common bond.'

More and more under revolutionary Marxist leadership the League was turning its back on the white chauvinist tradition of the Labour Party, and advancing towards the revolutionary position of the developed Communist Party for the overthrow of the white supremacy state and the national liberation of the oppressed African people.



## **The Russian Revolution**

The League's journal, *The International*, edited by D. Ivon Jones, showed profound Marxist understanding of the Russian revolution. Already, at the time of the February 1917 revolution that overthrew Tsarism, an editorial stated: 'This is a bourgeois revolution, but it comes at a time when capitalism is on the decline. It cannot be a repetition of preceding bourgeois revolutions.' In August these prophetic words were followed by another leader in praise of Lenin ('Each week brings fresh evidence of his correctness . . .') and the October Socialist Revolution was hailed as 'the greatest revolution of all times'. These insights were all the more remarkable hailing from so far-away a corner of the world as South Africa.

Even before the formation of the Third (Communist) International, the League had written to the British Section of the International Socialist Bureau, advocating the formation of a well-knit united executive comprising the revolutionary anti-militarist movements in all countries. Early in 1920, the I.S.L. became one of the foundation members of the Communist International.

In 1921 delegates of the I.S.L. and several other Marxist groups held a conference in Johannesburg and agreed to unite in the formation of a 'strongly disciplined and centralized Party'. This agreement proceeded later in the same year to the foundation of Africa's first Communist Party, the Communist Party of South Africa. The Party from its inception, though enjoying formal legality, was always under fire from the Smuts government and its successors. But it fought back courageously, and militantly, organizing the masses around their daily demands, immensely raising the political level and consciousness especially of the oppressed people and their national liberation organizations, tirelessly fighting every manifestation of the racial discrimination, national discrimination and arrogant chauvinism which dominate the South African scene, and advancing the banner of unity in the struggle for a free South Africa.

The Party drew vitality from its roots among the masses, producing great African leaders of the calibre of Albert Nzula, Moses Kotane, J. B. Marks and others who made major contributions not only to the Communist and Trade Union movements but also to the national liberation movement in which they were universally respected leaders. And in addition to such well-known figures were hundreds of rank-and-file workers and peasants trained and brought up in the struggle by the Communist Party who have given wonderful examples of honest leadership and courageous, self-sacrificing conduct in the forefront of every struggle of the workers and oppressed people against



pass laws and national oppression, for better wages, land and freedom.

Since the neo-Nazi Nationalist Party government passed the Suppression of Communism Act in 1950, the Party has been banned and even to advocate or defend Communism or 'any of the objects of Communism' made a punishable offence. The Communists have given their answer. In the ranks of the underground South African Communist Party, and playing their part in the national liberation movement and Umkonto we Sizwe, ever close to the masses in the factories and in the rural areas, they are carrying forward the struggle against the brutal tyrants and murderers of the Verwoerd-Vorster regime. They are working ceaselessly to build unity of Communists and non-Communists in the national liberation struggle, to avenge the hundreds of comrades who have been tortured, jailed and done to death by Vorster's gorillas, to win a free South Africa.

We look back on fifty years of revolutionary Marxist organization in South Africa confident that Jones, Bunting, Andrews and their comrades built on sound foundations. The Party they established has survived and will survive every storm to march in the front ranks in the overthrow of colonialism and the building of a free and a socialist South Africa.

---

## **A NOTE FROM JACK WODDIS**

I was a little surprised on reading in the latest issue of the AFRICAN COMMUNIST the contribution on the discussion on democracy by Alex Chima. As I read this article it increasingly dawned on me that certain parts seemed vaguely familiar and, when I reached p. 69 I was pretty certain that I was reading whole paragraphs which I myself had written on a previous occasion. On checking my book, 'Africa, The Way Ahead' I found that my suspicions were well founded. The whole of the penultimate para on page 69 of the AFRICAN COMMUNIST appears on p. 57 of my book; and the rest of p. 69, the whole of p. 70, and para 2 on p. 71 are taken directly from pp. 20-21 and 22 of my book.

I am naturally a little flattered that an author should find my book so useful, but I do feel, with all due respect to Alex Chima, that he might at least have made some acknowledgement when using direct quotes, or, alternatively, that he might have changed the wording even if he wanted to utilise my ideas.