

CENTRAL AFRICAN FEDERATION

(I) THE ATTACK

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IMAGINE yourself a liberal white American with dollars to invest and you want to know officially some basic facts about the Central African Federation. You will no doubt be told that it is a group of three British territories lying within the tropics south of the equator—namely, Southern and Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland—covering an area (485,000 square miles) larger than either the Union of South Africa or the American States of New York, California and Texas put together. It has an eminently healthy climate, as most of its land lies at an altitude of over 3,000 ft. above sea level. Its population is 7,260,000 consisting of 251,000 Europeans (to increase at the present immigration rate to 2½ million by 1980), 6,980,000 Africans and 30,000 Asians and Coloureds. It has enormous natural resources, a sufficiently diversified economy with copper mining as the mainstay, and a buoyant export trade in copper, chrome, tobacco, tea, lead, zinc, asbestos and tung.

Its government is geared to the maintenance of civilized standards—that is, European standards. But being dedicated to a policy of racial partnership which is enshrined in its Constitution, the country has a unique and immensely significant position in Africa, if not in the world. For it is the only country settled by Europeans which has deliberately adopted a policy of racial co-operation, as opposed to the South African policy of "apartheid" and the British Colonial Office policy of handing over power to inexperienced African politicians and therefore betraying the white man's trust and mission of civilizing the African. . . .

You will be told all that. But you will never be told that this Federation is a country where lips which mouth "partnership" are betrayed by hands which manipulate "apartheid".

This fact ought to be properly understood. First, because it is going to affect the trend of political events in Central Africa in the next decade. And secondly, because the slogan of "partnership" is so skilfully bandied that it has created a false halo around this so-called multi-racial State in the heart of

Africa. Both at home and abroad liberals have hailed its "partnership" policy as the only hope in white-settled Africa. So strong indeed is the myth that prominent men who have vociferously protested against "apartheid" in South Africa have come out on the side of the Federation, without even stopping to see whether "partnership" in theory tallies with "partnership" in practice, or to reflect on what constitutes "apartheid"—the word or the deed.

This misconception is dangerous. It is nevertheless understandable. The slogan of "partnership" arose in Central Africa at a time when the South African "apartheid" machine was thundering in full gear. It was a happy contrast to the shattering, undisguised fury of "apartheid". But it has distorted the true perspective of Central Africa.

There is no consistency between "partnership" in the abstract and "partnership" in the concrete. A cursory glance at the Federal Constitution would show that the term is of little significance even theoretically. First, it is not part of that section of the Constitution which is legally enforceable. Secondly, it is not even defined. It imposes no *definite* obligation, even morally, on those who wield the sceptre of power. And it has often been repudiated by European politicians, including Government spokesmen, who claim it is an imposition of the Colonial Office. Even where it has been found expedient to use the slogan, it has been subject to so many varying interpretations that it is utterly absurd to regard it as a political policy or theory at all.

The word "partnership" appears in the third clause of the Preamble to the Federal Constitution. This clause reads:

"And whereas the association of the Colony and territories aforesaid in a Federation under Her Majesty's sovereignty, enjoying responsible government in accordance with this Constitution, would conduce to the security, advancement and welfare of all their inhabitants, and in particular would foster *partnership* (my emphasis) and co-operation between their inhabitants and enable the Federation, when those inhabitants so desire, to go forward with confidence towards the attainment of full membership of the Commonwealth. . . ."

In any other context this "partnership and co-operation" would be a meaningless platitude without elucidation. And in this context it is just that. But even if this "partnership" were a little less nebulous than it is—if, for instance, it was half as definable as "apartheid"—it would still be difficult to reconcile it with the actual terms of the Federal Constitution, in which the supremacy of the white race is distinctly underlined.

The prevailing conception among all European political parties is that it must be a partnership that holds up whites as seniors and blacks as inferiors, at least for the foreseeable future (which is a popular Rhodesian euphemism). The former Prime Minister, Lord Malvern, put it graphically in his analogy of the partnership of the rider and his horse!

The terms of the Federal Constitution concede this. The Federal Parliament consists of 35 members. Twenty-nine of these are European, six Africans. Three of the Europeans are nominated by Governors (in Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland) or elected (by the predominantly white electorate in Southern Rhodesia) to represent African interests. Except for the two nominated members from Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, all Europeans are elected under an individual franchise. The two African members from Southern Rhodesia are elected by the Colony's whole electorate, consisting of about 70,000 Europeans and (now) about 560 Africans—which clearly indicates who calls their tune, and how they must dance to be successful politicians. The present African members for Southern Rhodesia are both members of the ruling (Federal) Party, and were returned with the party's support.

In Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, which are Protectorates, only British subjects (in practice Europeans) have the franchise. The four African members were elected by African bodies set up by the Government—the African Representative Council and the African Protectorate Council respectively.

The racial distribution of seats is therefore roughly 26 white and nine (including the three white representatives) black. The scale is in favour of white.

The territorial distribution is 17 for Southern Rhodesia, 11 for Northern Rhodesia and seven for Nyasaland. This is in favour of the country with the largest white population. (Note: Nyasaland, which has the largest population, has only seven seats and Northern Rhodesia, which contributes the bulk of federal revenue, has only 11.)

However, Africans are often enjoined to put faith in the spirit rather than the letter of the Constitution, and to believe that "partnership" is really guiding the Government's hand. But a spirit to be understood must be expressed in something tangible. And the spirit of the Federation can only be measured by what it has done since its inception. In terms of "partnership and co-operation" the record of the past three and a half years is

not particularly reassuring. Session after session in Parliament African members from Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland have talked themselves hoarse pleading with the Government for an earnest of good faith, asking for no more than the abolition of racial discrimination in the federal sphere in a spirit of "partnership". With deepening disillusionment and frustration, the African people have seen their spokesmen rebuffed, rebuked and humiliated. The Government has invariably told them not to ask for the moon, because "partnership" does not mean the removal of racial restrictions or the adoption of a policy of racial equality.

The Federation's policy could be more appropriately defined as the benevolence of a benignant aristocracy. This can be more easily explained by reference to some of the things the Government has done and the way it has done them. It has opened post offices in "Native locations" and "Native reserves" in Southern Rhodesia, for the first time in the Colony employing Africans as postmasters "to serve their own people" in "their own areas", at less than a quarter of a European postmaster's salary. It has decided to admit Africans to the Federal Civil Service at inferior salary scales and conditions of service to those of Europeans (except for doctors). A black lawyer with the same training, qualifications and experience as a white one must get less than the white. A black schoolmaster with a degree must have a lower rating than a white schoolmaster, even if he is not a graduate. An African State registered nurse and State certified midwife must be graded below the white one, even if the white has lower qualifications.

But these are positive steps in the programme of "partnership". Legislation extending the franchise to Africans is being enacted, although it will ensure that power remains in "civilized" hands, that is, white hands. The franchise will be based on a two-tier roll, most adroitly conceived. The higher tier, the real repository of power as it will elect the majority of the members of Parliament, will demand very stiff qualifications (which only Europeans have the opportunity to attain). The lower one will allow lower qualifications, thus admitting more Africans as well as all the voters on the upper roll. This will elect a minority of the M.P.s. In effect, the scheme will give "civilized" persons two votes each, and Africans one emasculated vote each.

This is the substance of the partnership which a benevolent aristocracy is prepared to concede.

It would be puerile to single out the ruling party for criticism. In the Central African context this is as far as the most liberal of the liberals could go. And who are the liberals? Either they are the Capricorn Africa Society and the Inter-racial Association of Southern Rhodesia, or they do not exist. The Society, through its doughty Colonel David Stirling, advocates a more complicated multiple franchise which can give directors of large companies, high court judges or university professors as many as six votes, and an African primary schoolmaster with a standard six certificate, nothing. And while not standing for racial discrimination, it does not approve of mixed schooling for white and black children at the primary and secondary levels until the latter are more elevated culturally and socially. The Association is even less demanding. Except for a few minor modifications, like relaxing (not abolishing) the pass laws or improving African housing in the locations and broadening (not lowering) the franchise qualifications, it asks for nothing much. Its approach to the racial problem is essentially gradualist, as is that of all other liberal groups, including the governing group. On the whole, the liberals are satisfied with the Government's record, and like the ruling and opposition parties, they do not want the present political, economic and social set-up to be upset. Indeed the concensus of white opinion is that African political and social progress must not be a conscious process propelled by doctrinaire ideals, but a by-product of economic development within the compass of European control.

This is the perspective in which African dissatisfaction must be seen. Opposition to Federation is still strong. But it would be an exaggeration to claim that African reaction is uniform throughout the three territories. It is strongest in the North and weakest in the South. There are historical explanations for this, and it is worth while referring to them briefly.

Southern Rhodesia (area: 150,333 square miles) was occupied by Europeans by conquest at the turn of the century. It was annexed by Britain and granted self-government in 1923. Since then it has had an all-white Parliament, elected on a franchise which excludes effective numbers of Africans through high qualifications. At present these include a minimum income of £240 per annum or fixed property worth at least £500, and a high standard of education in English (ascertainable by test). So far just over 560 Africans have been placed on the voters' roll, as compared with about 70,000 Europeans.

As a corollary of conquest, African chieftainship was smashed and its power completely wiped out, being replaced by direct white rule. The administration had all the rigorous, in some cases ruthless, discipline of the conqueror. A rigid colour bar was instituted between white and black. The land was divided racially. Black workers in town were herded into locations. Post offices, banks, railway stations and other public buildings had separate entrances and counters for white and black. All social contact between the races was forbidden, that between white women and black men on pain of imprisonment and banishment. There was to be no association except on the basis of master and servant, superior and inferior. And the country's economic machine was geared to this set-up. With the coming of Asians, and the growth of the Coloured or Eurafrican population resulting partly from illicit intercourse between white men and black women, a buffer arose which widened the gulf between Europeans and Africans.

There are now about 178,000 Europeans in the Colony, 2,290,000 Africans and 13,200 Asians and Coloureds. As in South Africa, the Asians and Coloureds are exempt from the pass laws and liquor restrictions. But unlike South Africa, they use European entrances to post offices, banks, etc., and live in European areas, though in separate suburbs. Their schools are under the European Education Department. For all practical purposes they are an appendix of the European community, and they generally share the Europeans' prejudices and arrogance towards Africans.

The net result of this policy has been to break (though only temporarily) the morale of the Africans and strip them of their self-confidence, so that they are less cohesive politically and more amenable to liberal European leadership than are their contemporaries in the northern territories. Both the Capricorn Society and the Inter-racial Association (indeed the Federation itself) have more African support south than north of the Zambezi. There are African members in both the Federal and United Rhodesia Parties in Southern Rhodesia. Limited as their objectives are, these organizations offer the Southern Rhodesian African something that he has not got, and generally something that his counterpart in the north has, like the right to obtain European liquor, or freedom from the pass laws.

Northern Rhodesia (area: 287,640 square miles) is a Protectorate. It came under the British through treaties voluntarily

signed by African Chiefs. The wealth of its copper mining industry has attracted large numbers of whites into the territory in recent years, and its present European population is about 66,000 (Africans: 2,110,000; Asians and Coloureds: 7,100).

Although officially it is still administered through the Colonial Office, its local white political ties are very strong, and the racial climate is just a little more temperate than it is in Southern Rhodesia. However, through years of imperial control (keyed to indirect rule), the Africans have developed a more cohesive and confident political consciousness, which has been greatly accelerated by the growth of militant trade unionism on the copper mines. Nevertheless, white nationalism is on top. The country's Legislative Council has 12 elected European members, four Africans nominated by the Governor from a panel recommended by the African Representative Council, and two Europeans nominated to represent African interests. Four of the elected Europeans also sit on the Governor's Executive Council (on which there is no African), three of them holding portfolios. One nominated European holds the portfolio of African Education and Social Services.

Few Europeans regard Northern Rhodesia as their permanent home, and the Government and political parties are making determined efforts to induce miners to settle in the country after they have made their money.

Socially, Northern Rhodesia is a replica of Southern Rhodesia. Africans are excluded from practically all European hotels (except the Ridgeway in Lusaka, perhaps the most expensive in the country). There is the same segregation in residential areas, entrances to public buildings, etc., and separation of black from white, Indian and Coloured. Through a series of boycotts and defiance campaigns the African National Congress has made a few breaches in the racial barricades. It has succeeded in breaking down racial partitions in post offices, and in forcing some business firms to stop serving Africans through hatches. And the Congress here is perhaps the most significant political factor in the Federation. The bulk of the 35,000 Africans running the £116-million a year copper mining industry, which accounts for more than half of the Federation's revenue, are Congressites. But the Federal and territorial Governments are well aware of this fact, hence the sharp and violent reactions to the pressure which forced the Northern Rhodesian Government to invoke emergency measures. There is not the slightest

doubt that the Colonial Office is handing over to the settlers in Northern Rhodesia. But it is not certain that the *nunc dimittis* will be sung in serenity. African freedom forces are growing stronger every day, and the white settlers (and the British Government) must look forward to a long spell of stresses and strains.

This is equally true of Nyasaland. Formerly the most peaceful of the three territories, this Protectorate is now a hotbed of an exclusive African nationalism. Lack of large scale industries like mining has enabled it to maintain its African character by keeping its white population low—there are now only about 6,800 Europeans and 9,800 Asians and Coloureds, as against 2,580,000 Africans. But the imposition of Federation by the British Government and the consequent domination of European settler influence in Nyasaland's affairs have so embittered Nyasaland Africans that the possibility of their being reconciled to the Federation in its present form must be ruled out.

Nyasaland is the smallest (37,000 square miles, excluding 12,000 square miles of water), the least industrialized and the poorest of the three territories. But its African population is at present the most nationalist-minded in Central Africa.

The country came under British protection in 1891 "with the consent and desire of the Chiefs and people", according to the Imperial Proclamation. This has been the focal point of Nyasa nationalism, which has also been encouraged by the fact that Europeans in Nyasaland have never regarded the country as their permanent home. Indeed the majority of them have been planters (estate managers), civil servants and employees of commercial firms (all expatriates). The Asian traders have also been similarly disposed. Thus Britain's imposition of Federation against their concerted opposition has left the Africans deeply shocked. So childlike was the Africans' faith in Imperial pronouncements that they had hoped Britain would protect them even from the territorial and political ambitions of Rhodesian white settlers. Now they stand aghast. And they are wondering whether the treaties signed by their forefathers are worth the paper they are written on. The feeling of betrayal is deep. It is doubtful whether even a Socialist Government in Britain would succeed in recapturing the lost confidence. For it was a Labour Government in fact that engineered Federation. And from all indications it is unlikely that the Socialists will indefinitely refuse to grant dominion status to the Federation,

as a penance for their original mistake, if the Tories go out of office before performing that task. Already too much power has been transferred from London to Salisbury.

As in Northern Rhodesia, settler opinion is on top in Nyasaland, though to a lesser extent. Last year the European settlers and other non-Africans were granted the vote. Africans have as yet no franchise. The Lennox-Boyd Constitution last year also gave British subjects six seats (all filled by Europeans) on the Legislative Council, Africans only five. Two of the European members also sit on the Governor's Executive Council. There is no African. Nyasaland settlers are also represented in the Federal Cabinet.

But the most terrifying thing to Nyasas is the fact that Rhodesian settlers, with their inflexible attitude to colour, have now begun running Nyasaland's affairs. Nyasaland's health services, postal services, railway services and others are now controlled from Salisbury. Appointments of Africans to jobs in these departments are now subject to the racial ideologies of those at the top. And there is a great deal of talk among Rhodesian settlers about the need for unifying the native policies in the three territories, in other words, adopting the Rhodesian one. Such unification of policy would obviously lead to the introduction of segregation in Nyasaland's post offices, banks and cinemas, where members of different races use the same entrances and stand in mixed queues. Only in Nyasaland can an African be served in a railway dining saloon together with whites, or sit beside a European on a bus. And only in Nyasaland could a pub open its doors to Africans, Europeans and Asians at the same time. All that will be a thing of the past. Much of it already is.

But Britain's surrender to the settlers in Central Africa will mark the real beginning of the African freedom struggle in these territories. West African independence (Ghana and others to follow) and the freedom marches of Africans in other parts of the Continent are bound to influence the Africans in the Federation. There is no doubt about that. There is a danger, however, that in their frustration the Africans will turn to an extreme racial nationalism and start a hate-back and hit-back campaign, which might intensify the racial conflict. It is a tragedy that Britain has completely ignored this possibility.