

DEAR SIR ROY,

It is six years now since the British Government collaborated with Central African settlerdom in forcing Federation upon some six and a half million clamorously hostile Africans. And for six years now a government geared to the 'maintenance of civilized standards' and pledged to a policy of racial 'partnership' has had the chance to dispel that hostility, to prove its dedication to those principles of Western culture that it sanctifies so strenuously in its speech. Do you, the head of that government, believe that it has done so?

Nyasaland survives in the Federation today as occupied territory, its allegiance as sure and as lasting as the guard at your detention camps and your army of occupation can forcibly ensure. You claim the existence of a Congress-sponsored massacre plot as the excuse for the violence that you yourself have employed to retain the territory. And surely you must grope at an excuse, for no settler in Nyasaland has been killed; though underneath the interminable explanation that you have piled high upon them, lie the bodies of fifty Africans shot by your security forces. The evidence you have offered for the plot so far is flimsy enough, but doubtless you will supply the Commission of Inquiry with less fragile furniture. Do you think that that is likely to acquit you? A people must be driven by suffering headlong beyond hope before it surrenders itself finally to violence. Would a campaign of murder satisfactorily illustrate the loyalty that the Federation has earned from its subjects since its inception? Dominion status should wait upon somewhat more convincing proofs of African allegiance.

Experience of your conspiracies in the past, however, promotes a sedulous scepticism. There have been too many Soviet plots that you alone have been able to discover; whenever African leaders confer, you eavesdrop on a take-over bid by the Kremlin. Does it not seem infinitely more probable that the campaign sponsored by Congress in Nyasaland was no more than a programme of civil disobedience? And who should be blamed for that? Can you say that you ever provided the people of Nyasaland with constitutional passage-ways to political advancement? Six years after your policy of partnership was born, some seven thousand settlers in the territory possess more power than its two million seven hundred thousand natives.

Having seen the strident career of white supremacy receive no

even temporary check during its years of trial, the Africans of Nyasaland may be forgiven for having wondered what constitutional protest was likely to accomplish for them. And as the 1960 Constitutional Conference approached, their distrust must have turned rapidly to terror, as they foresaw themselves sacrificed finally to settler rule. How would you and the members of your government have acted in similar circumstances? Your public admiration of the Boston rebels under George III would seem to commit you clearly enough to the principles of civil disobedience. Is it reasonable to abuse your subjects for drawing encouragement from your example?

Your associates in Southern Rhodesia have followed their leader and thrown themselves head over heels into a riot of repression. They too claim a conspiracy of violence against the State, though it must be admitted that they are either less aware or much less able than yourself, for they have produced no evidence at all and been unable to promise any. Having outlawed the Congress movement and detained its leaders, they have busied themselves in disfiguring the statute book with the most repressive measures that have ever mocked the principles of parliamentary rule. Outdoing even the Nationalists in mutilating the rule of law, the governing party you control has provided itself with powers of arbitrary arrest and made the most elementary African opposition into a criminal offence.

If its objects were to terrorise African sentiment into submission and break the hold that the Congress has upon African allegiance, it has failed ludicrously in both. For far from stilling African hostility, it has inflamed it; while by arresting moderates and radicals alike, it has offered its opponents the obduracy of extremes and united them on the rack of Congress martyrdom. Above all, by preventing the Africans from organizing themselves peacefully for change, it has left only the avenue of civil disobedience open to opposition, and stimulated the very violence against which it now pretends that it was obliged to protect itself. When even boycott is banned as a political weapon, revolution remains the only recourse left the oppressed. Can that be what you and your accomplices actually want?

What in all this have you gained? The shooting of Africans by white territorials from Southern Rhodesia has infuriated Nyasaland beyond the possibility of compromise, and made it difficult for the most sympathetic British administration to

concede the ultimate authority over the protectorates that you demand. Can you really expect to wring dominion status from the Constitutional Conference? When Britain will be standing trial before its Commonwealth? No doubt you can go it alone for a little while, governing Central Africa by the gun till the gun cannot govern any longer and hostility spills over at last into revolution. No doubt too you can postpone that calamity by abdicating to Dr. Verwoerd in a Nationalist-dominated union, a wild final fling of white supremacy. But the price of that postponement would be surrender to a double violence with all escape-hatches locked.

Consider yet, in the few months left of choice, the agony that shadows your present course. It is not only yourself, but the three hundred thousand settlers who fumble after you that you are committing to calamity. But then perhaps one must stare calamity in the face, as you are surely doing now, to recognize its features and find in them the courage to escape. Then indeed the savage stupidity of what you have done will no longer matter, as a new society grows out of the rubble of the old, covering it over in time as a Troy upon Troy, Africa leaving its blood once again on the step below. But however you choose, Africa will endure and advance by its very endurance, a continent climbing slowly on its knees. In the end, it is only your own part of it and the part that should belong to those who follow you that you can destroy.