

SOUTHERN RHODESIA EXPLODES

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Two weeks after telling the settlers that "no one in Southern Rhodesia need be afraid that what has happened in the Congo could possibly happen here", the Prime Minister of Southern Rhodesia, Sir Edgar Whitehead, called all able-bodied white men to join a new army reserve and a special constabulary. These will form new security forces to maintain peace and order, or, in other words, to suppress any future African riots. Sir Roy Welensky, Federal Prime Minister, has called upon Europeans to join the three European divisions of a new army inspired by the riots in the Congo. The Federal Government will spend an additional £3 million on this army and on equipment. None of the three territories of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland spends as much as £3 million on African education. Last year Southern Rhodesia spent only £2,641,000 on African education.

It is interesting to note that Sir Roy's three white divisions were the first indication that the army is now being organized for the defence of white people against Africans in the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. Two years ago Sir Roy Welensky spoke of a "Boston Tea Party" should the Federation fail to get its independence; and it can be assumed that he meant by that the possibility of some settler rebellion against Great Britain. Now the army and the police, in the name of maintaining peace and order, will be used to keep the Africans down.

Confused by the consequences of his own foolhardy policies, Sir Edgar Whitehead took the drastic step of declaring a racial war and arrested three leaders of the National Democratic Party—Mr. Michael Mawema, president-general, Mr. Sketchley Samkange, treasurer, and Mr. Leopold Takawira, chairman of the Harare Branch—in order to show that he was tougher than Mr. Harper, leader of the opposition Dominion Party, when it came to dealing with Africans. After all, the National Democratic Party had forced Sir Edgar to accept a constitutional conference. He had seen African intellectuals, business men and tribesmen rally behind the NDP banner, and his fingers must have twitched to slap down African nationalism shortly

before his intended election next May. The extent of African support for the NDP shocked him, and he immediately summoned all white people to form a laager inside of which to defend white supremacy.

The editor of the *'Evening Standard'*, a Salisbury newspaper which supports Sir Edgar's Government, wrote soon after the Prime Minister's broadcast that called all settlers to rally in self-defence against the Africans:

"The picture given to the dispassionate observer is that the white man in the Rhodesias is ringed with hostile forces and is preparing to withstand the siege. It is the 'laager' complex and unfortunately the Prime Minister's broadcast aggravated it. Please do not let us lose our heads. The situation between the races is critical. The races must get together to see whether the causes of complaint and grievance can be removed. But ringing ourselves with security forces in a laager will not do that. It will only make the situation more critical."

There can be no question at all that Sir Edgar Whitehead himself sparked off the riots which led to the killing of twelve Africans in Bulawayo. He was just carrying his policy of intimidating African political organizations to its logical conclusion. First there was the sudden swoop on the offices of the N.D.P. and the houses of its leaders. Then followed the arrest of three top leaders of the party. Astonished and angered by the arrests, Africans at once demanded to see Sir Edgar Whitehead. He promised to come and address them, and then sent his police instead. A disciplined mass estimated variously between 20,000 and 100,000 people tried to march to his house. Police and soldiers stopped them. Africans spent two days without food and in the bitter cold of July nights waiting for the Prime Minister. He sent a message to say that the meeting had been banned, and his troops exploded tear-gas into the crowd, till the infuriated crowd began rioting. Children were sent home from schools in Highfields and Harare; but in support of their parents, they joined in the riots and became the most obdurate opponents of the police and soldiers.

In Bulawayo a meeting of the N.D.P. advertised for Sunday morning was banned on Saturday night, but Africans were not advised of this. Police used their batons and tear-gas freely on the gathered crowd, riots broke out and, before they were quelled, twelve Africans had been killed by security forces and European residents. While fires raged in the African townships,

the police sealed off the European areas to protect white lives and property from Africans, till the frustration and bitter despair of the rioters burnt itself out within a ring of bayonets and guns.

There are more than 500 Africans who were arrested during the racial flare-up. The figure reminds one of the 500 leaders of the African National Congress arrested and detained on February 26th, 1959. Among those arrested are Africans who have worked for the principle of partnership, knowing well that it was never the intention of the governing United Federal Party to implement it. They include Stanlake Samkange, vice-president of the Central Africa Party.

Sir Edgar Whitehead said in Parliament afterwards that the N.D.P. was guilty of "the calculated distortion of history" and that their arguments were "becoming more and more blatantly militant and anti-European."

"The theme is that Africa is only for Africans, that Europe is for Europeans, and that all Europeans should go back to Europe. This coupled with the insistence that the land belongs to the Africans, plus the parrot cry of 'one man one vote', is the core of the movement." (*Evening Standard*, 26.7.60.)

Leaving aside the accuracy of certain of these observations, which seem to have been hatched in Sir Edgar's personal cloud-cuckoo land, or the iniquity of others, conceived by the mother of parliaments herself, it seems much more likely that the leaders of the N.D.P. were arrested to save Sir Edgar the embarrassment of sitting together at a constitutional conference with African representatives whose policies are opposed to his. He never wanted a constitutional conference; it was the N.D.P. delegation to the Commonwealth Relations Office that put forward the idea.

Sir Edgar knew full well that the N.D.P. was busy preparing for that conference, and he wanted to destroy any chance of tabling evidence and arguments to dispute his own. He knew that the whole African population was behind the N.D.P. He was astonished at the support the party was getting from African intellectuals, some of them in the process of being turned into a "shock-absorbing middle class" housed in segregated African areas. And if he did not allow himself to believe it before, he must now know that despite his attempts to suppress it—through the Unlawful Organizations Act, the Preventive (Temporary Provisions) Detention Act, the Public Order Amendment Act,

the Subversive Activities Act, the Native Affairs Amendment Act, and all the other laws directed against African politicians and organizations—hostility to the blind rule of race is growing all the time.

Sir Edgar's answer to the racial tension that he himself has helped to create is to arm all whites, to carry out a crash programme of house building and to ease unemployment. That is not what Africans want. They want nothing less than a democratic government for themselves and for their children. They are not looking for the removal of pin-pricks. They want the vote, for they know that without it neither they nor their children will enjoy either peace or advancement.

In Southern Rhodesia, as in the Belgian Congo, there are no African commissioned officers in the police and army. There is *de facto* job reservation, which hasn't even the courage to come out into the open as in the Union of South Africa. And there is a fancy franchise which, while not mentioning race, so discriminates against Africans through the high financial, property and educational qualifications demanded for the ordinary voter's roll, that there are today 70,000 voters out of a European population of 211,000 and 2,500 voters out of an African population of over 2,000,000.

Sir Edgar has now asked the British Government to remove from the Southern Rhodesia Letters Patent, 1923, powers reserved for the British Government to disallow laws discriminating against Africans. He has also proposed a second chamber consisting of settlers and "stooge" Africans elected or appointed by the Government. This was rejected by the N.D.P. delegation to London in their memorandum:

"(c) The only alternative way to effect an acceptable government is not the substitution of the proposed second chamber for the reservations in the Constitution, but the substitution of majority rule for the said reservations. Nothing less will do."

Southern Rhodesia has had self-government since 1923. Since that time its Parliament, as in the Union of South Africa, has been the exclusive preserve of the white man. With Sir Edgar and Sir Roy calling all white men to arms, Africans see no chance of sharing power; and the recent arrests ordered by the Prime Minister of Southern Rhodesia only re-enforce their view.

It was this state of hopelessness that prompted Mr. Joshua Nkomo, Director of International Affairs for the N.D.P., and

the Hon. Mr. R. S. Garfield Todd, former Prime Minister of Southern Rhodesia, to send a memorandum to the Secretary for Commonwealth Relations. This memorandum stated among other things:

“Because of our deep concern to see harmony between the races and justice and opportunity for all citizens, we ask . . .

1. That an immediate statement be made to the effect that Her Majesty's Government will intervene in the affairs of Central Africa to establish democratic governments so that the will of the people is implemented.

2. That the Constitution of Southern Rhodesia be set aside and a democratic order substituted for it.”

The United Kingdom Government has a clear legal right to suspend the Constitution of the self-governing Colony of Southern Rhodesia. The British Government did this in British Guiana in October 1953, because Ministers there were accused of threatening and plotting violence. Now, while the Government of Southern Rhodesia is arming whites against Africans who demand and organize for effective political power, can the British Government refuse to intervene and yet disclaim all responsibility for what may result?

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