
SOUTHERN AFRICA

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THE arrest by the Smith regime of the leader of the Zimbabwe African National Union, Rev Ndabaningi Sithole, at the beginning of March seems to have been deliberately aimed at wrecking the negotiations for a settlement in Rhodesia. Whatever Smith's motives, the possibility of agreement being reached was in any case remote. Nor was the climate improved by the murder later in the month of Herbert Chitepo, obviously the work of the white racists' dirty tricks department. It is apparent that any agreement reached between the contracting parties at this stage and under the prevailing conditions would represent a grave set-back to the cause of liberation, not only in Zimbabwe itself but throughout the whole of southern Africa.

For any agreement to be lasting, there has to be a meeting of minds. There are no signs to date of any such thing. All the recognised and representative liberation organisations in Zimbabwe, Namibia

and South Africa have reiterated their demand for majority rule on the basis of one man, one vote, in a unitary integrated state. But in January 1975, the Rhodesian Premier Smith stated unequivocally that 'the government had no policy to hand over the country to black majority rule' (*Star* weekly, January 18). And last November, immediately after South African Premier Vorster had asked for six months to show what he could do, he reassured his followers at a political meeting in the Transvaal that the whites in South Africa would never hand over political power to the blacks.

I want to say it deliberately and in a spirit of the greatest friendliness to all the leaders of the black people—if there are people who are raising your hopes that there will one day be one-man one-vote in the white parliament for you, then they are misleading you, for that will never happen (*Guardian*, November 17, 1974).

The Nationalist government of South Africa has always based its policies on the argument that there is not, and never can be, a single South African nation. As Dr Verwoerd put it in the House of Assembly on February 8, 1966 (the year of his assassination):

The Nationalist Party adopts the attitude that we in South Africa have to deal with a variety of nations which cannot be combined to form one nation. They are different in character, they have different origins, they are different in outlook, different in colour and different as far as their standards of civilisation are concerned. In other words, in this country we have different nations which are totally different from one another. . . . We as the Nationalist Party have unambiguously adopted the attitude that happiness for and good relations among the people of southern Africa can only be achieved by means of separation in every sphere, *inter alia* in the political sphere as well.

Premier Vorster has carried on where Verwoerd left off. In a press interview last September he said: 'Where there are vast regional populations of different races and cultures and levels of development, then separate development on a multinational basis is the way to avoid friction and protect each other's identity.' He even had the temerity to add that 'events in Mozambique, Angola and Guinea-Bissau have proved our policy of separate development to be right' (Johannesburg *Sunday Times*, September 15, 1974). For some inexplicable reason, Vorster does not, however, consider multinationalism to be suitable for Rhodesia. In his much publicised interview with Liberia's President Tolbert last February, Vorster said:

In principle, what his government considered to be a solution of the problem in Rhodesia was that 'Rhodesia must be governed by civilised people, regardless of race' (*Times*, February 17, 1975).

This is the policy of the opposition Progressive Party in South Africa. What, it might be asked, is the difference in principle between Rhodesia and South Africa? Rhodesia also has 'different races and cultures and levels of development'. Why, then, does not Vorster argue the case for Bantustans in Rhodesia? Especially as, according to a recent report from Salisbury, Smith is coming round to the view that 'there might be agreement if the African majority "seeks an outlet for responsible political aspirations, within their own areas on a provincial basis"' (*Morning Star*, February 25, 1975).

What all these exchanges reveal is that all the hocus-pocus about apartheid, separate development, government by civilised people, preservation of national identity, etc, is merely a series of verbal disguises to cover up the racists' determination to maintain white domination to the bitter end. Vorster preaches multiracialism for Rhodesia simply because he thinks the whites are too few (under 300,000 out of a total population of over six million, with the gap between whites and blacks increasing all the time) to survive for long as an independent and dominant entity in Rhodesia. He is advising Smith to come to terms rather than lose everything.

Vorster has adopted the pose of 'honest broker' in the Rhodesian conflict for the same reason that he peddles detente between South Africa and the rest of independent Africa—to disarm the forces of liberation and revolution which have made such tremendous advances in recent months and years. When the Caetano regime was ruling the territories of Mozambique and Angola, Vorster voiced no criticism of its policies, and participated quite happily in the unholy alliance with Rhodesia and Portugal which he conceived to be the best way to maintain white supremacy throughout southern Africa.

The events of April 25 last year shattered the illusions of the South African racists and their imperialist backers. Not only was Portugal freed from fascist tyranny, but the Portuguese colonies were speeded on the road to independence. Guiné Bissau is already seated at the United Nations as an independent country; Mozambique and Angola are scheduled to follow suit this year. South Africa, formerly shielded by buffer states right up to the Zambesi, now had the major sectors of its northern borders exposed to direct contact with potentially hostile territory.

But above all, the white racists of southern Africa have been shaken by the conclusive proof of the effectiveness of guerrilla warfare. The brave freedom fighters of PAIGC, MPLA and FRE-LIMO showed that they were more than a match for the forces of

the enemy. In Rhodesia and Namibia too the freedom fighters have been making progress, despite all the official denials. The automatic assumption of white supremacy in every field has been shattered. Off the battlefield black opposition to apartheid continues to grow in the teeth of all the ferocious measures of repression by the Rhodesian and South African governments. Not only has South Africa itself been racked by strikes as hundreds of thousands of blacks fought for improved wages and living conditions; in addition, the stream of recruits to the guerrilla forces throughout southern Africa has threatened to swell into a flood.

The entire pressure by Vorster and the imperialists to achieve a settlement in Rhodesia is based on their desperate desire to stop the revolution in its tracks. Any sort of agreement which put an end to the fighting in Rhodesia would leave only South Africa's African National Congress (ANC) and the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) still under arms. And with Rhodesia quiet, Vorster and his backers hope the remaining fires can be damped down.

To secure the co-operation of independent Africa in these plans, Vorster and the imperialist powers are beating the anti-communist drum. The mythical Soviet threat to the Indian Ocean is combined with anti-communist agitation against the liberation movements of southern Africa in a campaign to arouse fears in the independent African states that further support for the freedom fighters would be against their own interests. And there is evidence that as a result of Caetano's collapse and the oil crisis, both Britain and the United States have moved southern Africa up to a place nearer the top in their list of foreign priorities. Military, political and economic blackmail are being openly directed against countries like Zambia and Tanzania, not only by Vorster but also by the imperialists.

At the very moment when the freedom forces of southern Africa have reached their greatest strength and notched up their greatest successes, any settlement anywhere in southern Africa which is not based on majority rule *now* will prove to be a disaster for the liberation movement. There must be an effective transfer of power.

And one final point. To date, though the illegal regimes in Rhodesia and South Africa have been taking part in the negotiations for a settlement, both South Africa's ANC and SWAPO have been studiously excluded from the discussions. These two organisations speak for the overwhelming majority of the oppressed black peoples of southern Africa. Any attempt to fashion 'peace' without them or behind their backs is obviously not only a fraud but also doomed to failure.