

We are Determined to be Free

says N. Sithole

(National Chairman of ZAPU, Southern Rhodesia)

LORD Hailey in his voluminous AFRICA SURVEY to which distinguished Western Scholars of great international stature have contributed maintains that the concept of self-determination was not born in the African but in the Western world. This, of course, is an insult to the entire continent of Africa.

The principle of self-determination is inherent in all living and moving things. Get hold of even a chicken, and you immediately interfere with its freedom. The chicken struggles backwards and forwards and sideways in an effort to get out of your grip so that it can move in the open air in pursuit of self-determination.

The principle of self-determination was there long before imperialists and colonialists even set foot on the African soil, and it will continue to be there long after they have quit Africa as a ruling racial group.

No where in any part of Africa did the white man introduce democracy. Wherever the white man has been in power, he has denied the non-European any democratic way of life. The kind of democracy they had introduced everywhere in Africa was "government of the Africans by the white people for the white people."

There is nothing wrong with government of Americans, by Americans, for Americans; government of the French, by the French, for the French, government of the British, by the British, for the British; and government of Asians, for

Asians, by Asians, similarly there is nothing wrong with government of Africans, by Africans for Africans.

Our human personality has been so thwarted, and frustrated, and abused; that we have now taken human dignity as one of the cardinal principles in our political theory and practice.

Only those who know what it means to be relegated to the realm of flora and fauna because of their lack of Caucasian pigmentation can appreciate our dedication and devotion to the difficult task of salvaging African human dignity which has been sinking in the mire under the unceasing bludgeonings of imperialism and colonialism.

I feel uplifted, elevated, rejuvenated, and invigorated to see all over Africa the African personality coming forward in full force, and pushing out of Africa its adulterers and rapers. Our human dignity is in great danger unless we rule ourselves everywhere in Africa.

In brief, what I am trying to state here is: that in seeking to retrieve our lost self-determination, to establish democracy, and to restore the human dignity of the African people, this Conference is not seeking the things of the Western World, but of the African world.

Our human dignity was not invested in the factories of the West. Self-determination is not the monopoly of the West. Democracy is equally not a monopoly of the West. People all over Africa, as elsewhere in the world, like to rule themselves,

to do the ruling themselves, and to rule for their own benefit.

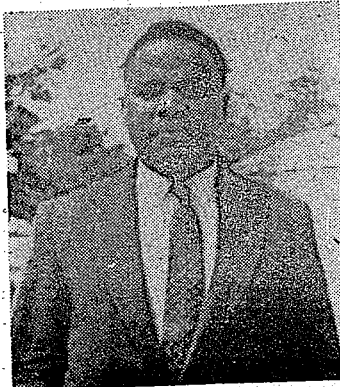
In other words, they want rule of themselves, by themselves, for themselves. We the freedom fighters are therefore fighting to recover those things dear to those who have gone before us, dear to those who are still living, and dear to those who are still to be born.

We are fighting to recover those eternal values of life denied to us for centuries. It is this comprehensive outlook, this larger spirit of humanity and brotherhood which bind free African to unfree African, and unfree to free African.

There is an African *we-feeling* which baffled even the cleverest of Western economic theories, and when African historians shall come to write the history of African liberation they will find the success of the entire movement of the liberation of Africa owed its success to this inexplicable behaviour of a brother never resting until he has freed his brother.

This is the greatness of our Africa. "History has forced us to become, to put it in Biblical language, our brothers' keepers, or to become our brothers' liberators, to put it in current Pan-Africanist language.

Early in February, 1961, a new constitution for Southern Rhodesia was forged on the anvil of white supremacy. The voters were divided into A and B voters. The former were to be virtually European, and



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the latter African voters. Representation in the Legislative Assembly was to be 50 Europeans and 15 Africans. This meant that the legislature was to be 77 per cent European and 23 per cent African in a country that is 90 per cent African and only 10 per cent European.

At three successive Congresses of the National Democratic Party, the new Constitution was rejected. Mr. Joshua Nkomo, Z.A.P.U. President, then referred the whole matter to the country, and a special referendum was held; 476,000 voted against the Constitution, but only 500 voted in favour of it.

Then Mr. Nkomo took up the issue with the British Government, but they ignored this on the ground that the referendum was not official although it had been highly democratic.

Then in February, 1962, Mr. Nkomo took up the issue with the United Nations who came to the conclusion that Southern Rhodesia was not self-governing, and therefore the British Government could still intervene, and suspend the new Constitution, but the British Government remained adamant.

The African majority and the United Nations majority could not move either the Southern Rhodesian Government or the British Government one way or another.

The Southern Rhodesian Government then embarked on a "claim-your-vote" campaign hoping to register between 50,000 and 70,000 African voters for the B Roll! But the African people boycotted the registration, and only less than 10,000 registered under great economic and official pressures from their employers and government officials.

The Government was disappointed, and so the police took a tough line against the Zimbabwe African Peoples Union. On 20th September, 1962, the Zimbabwe African Peoples Union was banned like the Southern Rhodesian African National Congress in 1959 and the National Democratic Party in 1961.

Over 300 Z.A.P.U. leaders were placed in restriction for three months. This included Z.A.P.U. President, Mr. Nkomo. Over 2,000 Z.A.P.U. supporters were arrested, detained and imprisoned.

In October, 1962, the Southern Rhodesian case came before the Fourth Committee of the United Nations which called on Britain to use her powers to see that the ban on Z.A.P.U. was lifted, and that the leaders were released from restriction, but this was to no avail.

By 81 votes to 2, with 12 abstentions, the United Nations passed a resolution urging Britain to suspend the new Constitution and convene another constitutional conference, but this also fell on deaf ears.

Meanwhile the African people made a strong vow that they were not going to recognise the ban, and that they were not going to form a new political party since this would be to recognise the ban. They decided to work underground. Up to now the African people are not in the mood to form another party.

In 1959 their Party was banned; in 1961, another of their parties which had been raised on the ashes of the first was also banned; and lastly, the third one—Z.A.P.U.—was banned last September. As one of them put it, "We are not going to form another party to be banned at the pleasure of the white man. Better to resist the present ban than to form a new one."

With Mr. Nkomo and his lieutenants safe in restriction, and also 300 other leaders and more than 2,000 Z.A.P.U. supporters in detention, imprisonment or restriction, Sir Edgar Whitehead, the then Premier, changed the election date from April, 1963, to December 14, 1962. It was a real handicap match! But the Africans, though leaderless, effectively boycotted the elections. Out of 10,000 African voters only 1,500 did actually vote so that the present Parliament represents virtually the white electorate.

The political downfall of the ruthless Sir Whitehead was welcome to the African people, but the sweep into power of the white-sup-

remacist Rhodesian Front has struck more terror and despair in many of the Africans so that they shall witness more desperate acts on their part. The following things happened at the recent Southern Rhodesian elections:

1. Only European-led Parties participated.

2. The Central Africa Party which was a mixture of Europeans and Africans was altogether eliminated as was the Liberal Party in Northern Rhodesian elections, and thus demonstrating the fact that European Liberalism, which in reality diluted white supremacy, has no room in today's African politics.

3. The United Federal Party which was also based on European liberalism—a strange concoction of despotic paternalism, hypocrisy and camouflaged herrenvolk—was defeated. Of their 29 seats, 15 are held by whites and 14 by Africans.

4. The Rhodesian Front openly went to the electorate with the battle of white supremacy, and they swung the U.F.P. European supporters to their side. They had also put up 15 African candidates, but none got in on their ticket. They got 35 seats—all white. Now, with this white-supremacist Party firmly in the saddle "our problem becomes clear but more difficult".

I now wish to draw the serious attention to the following problems that now confront the Africans in Southern Rhodesia. Some of the things happening in Southern Rhodesia is precisely what happened in South Africa in 1948.

General Field Smuts had been regarded by Britain, the United States and the European people in general as liberal in his policies although he saw to it that oppressive laws were made on the pretext that they would never be actually used against the Africans since, of course, he was so liberal.

But when he was finally ousted in 1948, and when Dr. Malan took over, the same laws were effective-

ly used against the African people. The judiciary and the police became part and parcel of the party machinery. It was the so-called liberal-minded General Field Smuts who laid the snake's eggs, and it was Dr. Verwoerd who hatched them.

In Southern Rhodesia it was the so-called liberal-minded Sir Edgar Whitehead who laid the eggs of oppressive legislation and tried to hatch them but failed. It now remains for Winston Field, the new Premier of Southern Rhodesia to hatch these eggs of oppression. To do this, he will have to strengthen the present police state considerably.

The trigger-happy, white police and police reservists are delighted that an apartheid party is now in power. They see another South Africa, and they will play it the South African way. This is one of the important results of the last election. Ideologically, and practically Southern Rhodesia has been brought much nearer the Republic of South Africa than she has ever been before.

With the emergence of African governments in Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, with the imminent break-up of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland which helped South African mercenaries to pass through to Katanga, and with the weakening of Sir Roy Welensky's position, South Africa, though she would not be interested in adding to her problems another batch of 4,000,000 Africans and thousands of English-speaking whites who are already a thorny problem to the Boers of South Africa nevertheless will welcome the opportunity of supplying white-supremacist Southern Rhodesia with finance, soldiers and military equipment in order to create a white buffer state between the black governments to the North and herself in the South.

Already there is talk of a NATO type of alliance between South Africa, Southern Rhodesia and Mozambique, and obviously this is an alliance against the independent

African States as independent.

Already the new government in Southern Rhodesia shows clear markings of apartheid. Their separate community development schemes which they have already announced smack of the loathed Bantustans of South Africa. Their avowed policy of black areas, white areas, and multiracial areas, and their pledge to the white electorate and to the country that they are not going to revoke the iniquitous Land Apportionment Act which is the cornerstone of African exploitation, oppression and humiliation, leave the Africans in no doubt whatever that the whites in Southern Rhodesia have come to believe that they can only survive as a ruling racial minority if they adopt the apartheid policy of South Africa.

As a matter of fact the new Government has already announced that they have no intention whatever to hand over to the blacks. The Government of the country, they have affirmed, must remain in "civilised hands" which is another way of saying "in the hands of the white man." In other words, the African people have been bluntly told not to look for an independent African state in Southern Rhodesia.

Arising from the results of the last elections in Southern Rhodesia, we are now faced with the problem of Southern Rhodesia becoming independent under white minority rule. Two possible courses may be attempted.

First, the British Government under the constant pressure of the white settlers, and in an attempt to create a home for those whites in Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia who may resent having to live under a black government, may grant independence to Southern Rhodesia before the establishment of a fully representative government.

Second, the white settlers may decide on a "go it alone" policy and declare themselves an independent state with all the sovereign powers of a state.

Either course would lead to an independent Southern Rhodesia, and if this happens, we shall have no alternative but to declare our-

selves also independent. If 250,000 foreigners can declare themselves independent, we feel we have not only a moral, but also a natural right to declare ourselves—4,000,000 of us—independent."

When I was in London recently, I was reliably informed that the British Government was toying with the dangerous idea of granting independence to Southern Rhodesia before that country had a full representative government, and, naturally, I was deeply disturbed and perturbed, and on behalf of my people I issued the following statement:

"The danger now facing Southern Rhodesia is the possibility of Britain granting independence to Southern Rhodesia under white minority rule. We shall regard such a step as a declaration of war on the African people of Southern Rhodesia, and we will not hesitate to form a government-in-exile, and as a government-in-exile we shall enlist material aid from other governments in and outside Africa. If fair constitutional means are denied to us, we shall be prepared to solve the problem with our blood."

It is important to note that when Mr. Richard Butler, the British Minister responsible for Central Africa, was asked in the House of Commons to give an assurance that he would not grant independence before a fully representative government was established in Southern Rhodesia, he answered that since Southern Rhodesia was in the Federation, the question of Southern Rhodesia's independence did not arise.

When later I asked him about this rumour of the British Government giving independence to Southern Rhodesia under white minority rule, he said the British Government had not decided on anything of the kind.

He might have had other reasons for answering so evasively, but I was imposed that in either case he gave no assurance that the British Government would not give inde-

pendence to Southern Rhodesia before the establishment of a fully representative government.

With the imminent break-up of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, since the British Government has now publicly conceded to Nyasaland's secession, and since now the predominantly African government of Northern Rhodesia, and the white supremacist government of Southern Rhodesia are all dead against the existence and the continuation of the Federation, the question of Southern Rhodesia's independence becomes more pressing.

If Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia become, as they must, independent, then Southern Rhodesia must also become independent. Independence for Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia will mean independence for the majority of the people, whereas independence for Southern Rhodesia will mean independence for only a small minority—less than 10 per cent—of the population.

This is why I feel that we are now faced with a very grave problem which, unless handled properly, may have to be solved with our very blood. We can no longer be non-violent to a point of enslaving ourselves.

We can longer be pacifist to a point of establishing oppression of 4,000,000 people by 250,000 whites. No. It cuts against life itself. It deprives life of its very meaning.

So much is tied up with the imminent break-up of the Federation, and I feel myself impelled to make certain observations if the problem facing us is to be solved without resorting to the last measure of dedication and devotion to the task of emancipating our people.

When the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland winds up sooner or later certain powers which had been vested in it will have to be vested elsewhere.

Since the Federation was created by an act of the British Parliament, two things are likely to happen when the Federal liquidation takes its full course.

First, each of the three territories may assume all the powers that were previously exercised by the Federal Government, and in this case this would mean that each of the three territories was fully independent.

We have no quarrel with an independent Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia, but an independent Southern Rhodesia under a white minority government would start a new chapter of a bloody resistance.

Second, Britain, as creator of the Federation, may hold back certain powers previously held and exercised by the Federal Government from Southern Rhodesia until the country has a fully representative government. This is not only fair, but practical in that it would avoid a bloody solution to the problem now facing us.

Perhaps I should explain to this Conference why we, in Southern Rhodesia, believe that a bloody course is now inevitable unless there is a timely intervention in the affairs of Southern Rhodesia. Both history and logic are driving the African people to that course since other courses are now closed.

(1) The present position in Southern Rhodesia places 4,000,000 Africans at the mercy of 250,000 whites. The African people can no longer wait for a change of attitude on the part of the whites who are determined to be in full political control by hook or by crook.

The will to rule themselves and the terrific pressures exerted by other African countries which have become independent and which are about to get their independence, do not allow the Africans in Southern Rhodesia to remain folding their hands waiting for freedom to drop from Heaven like manna.

(2) The present government is unashamedly based on *white supremacy* which is another expression for the apartheid policy of the Republic of South Africa, and it is impossible to imagine the politically awakened Africans of Southern Rhodesia watching sheepishly the creation

of another South Africa in the land of their birth. The increasing wave of sabotage, arson and petrol bombing serve to indicate the growing mood of desperation among the African people.

(3) Under the present circumstances Southern Rhodesia can only be ruled by the police, the police reservists, the army, male and female, as if now the case.

This means that the present government can only rule by oppressing and suppressing the African people in a continent where more than two-thirds of the African countries are fully independent. A great explosion is everywhere imminent in Southern Rhodesia unless there is a timely intervention.

Under the present laws of Southern Rhodesia no leaders of a banned party may lead a new party for at least five years. African leaders cannot afford to wait that long. The irresistible push of the masses, the will to rule themselves rather than to be ruled and the force of history and logic forbids them to wait that long.

They must, of necessity, go underground and work from there until the will of the people smashes to pieces this oppressive minority rule. It is the sacred duty of the African leaders and the African masses to pursue their legitimate political aspirations, and to carry this noble and God-ordained pursuit to its logical and historical conclusion.

Either we are free, or we are fighting to be free.

We cannot suspend the historic struggle for the convenience of a handful of white foreigners. Our motto is "Forward ever, Backward never," as other African countries have done."

Because of this critical and most unsatisfactory position obtaining in Southern Rhodesia, acting on behalf of my President, Mr. Joshua Nkomo, I have had to make the following demands to Mr. Richard Butler on behalf of the voteless African people of Southern Rhodesia:

1. A new constitution based on adult universal suffrage is absolutely necessary. The solution to political problems in Tanganyika, Nyasaland, Northern Rhodesia, Kenya and elsewhere in Africa has been the granting of the vote to the majority of the people of that particular country.

2. After granting adult universal franchise, there should be a short period of self-government preceded by free elections wherein the majority shall participate. This will ensure a smooth transitional period from dependence to full independence.

3. During this period of self-government, Britain should hold certain powers which are held at present by the dying Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, and these powers shall be surrendered only when the country becomes fully independent.

4. After a period of self-government based on free majority elections, independence should be granted to Southern Rhodesia, and then the people themselves will determine the future of their country according to democratic principles. The future of Southern Rhodesia must never be determined by 250,000 whites at the expense of 4,000,000 Africans.

I believe that a course of this nature would have the needed effect of redirecting the people's minds from the present disruptive channels to more constructive ones. People cannot be denied constitutional channels, and at the same time be expected to be non-violent. The powers-that-be cannot have it both ways.

If there will be constitutional means of solving the present problem, then we are entitled to expect a peaceful solution; but if there are no constitutional means, then everything else points to wide-spread economic disruption and unnecessary bloodshed.

I feel strongly that the task of helping to emancipate African countries still under the heels of colonialism and imperialism, can be achieved by

(a) pointing out to independent African States the dangers

now facing the African people of Southern Rhodesia;

(b) appealing to independent African states to help materially and immediately the people of Southern Rhodesia who are determinedly fighting to liberate themselves;

(c) appealing to Britain and the Commonwealth Nations to face squarely the iniquitousness and the dangerousness of constitutionally placing 4,000,000 Africans at the mercy of 250,000 whites;

(d) appealing to the French Community to use their good offices with Britain; and

(e) appealing to the United States of America to use her good offices with Britain.

I believe, that the freedom-hungry and freedom-seeking African masses, supported by the cosmic force to rule ourselves, and supported by the highest and noblest of principles which command the respect and co-operation of all those who love freedom not only for themselves but for others as well, can help us in this our bitter struggle.

The final answer is to be found with every African man and woman, and every African boy or girl, who refused in thought, word and deed to be ruled by foreigners, but who asserts his or her full right to the many blessings of freedom and independence, and who therefore dedicates himself or herself to the glorious task of freeing himself or herself from frustrating structures of foreign rule.

The problem Africans in Southern Rhodesia are facing was well summarised by Dr. Kwame Nkrumah who said:

"The repressive measures enacted in the Central African Federation are similar in spirit and application to the anti-Sabotage Bill of Verwoerd's apartheid Government of South Africa.

"Both types of legislation seek to muzzle the political opinions of the oppressed Africans. But the Africans of Southern Rhodesia continue to raise their voices against injustice, oppression and undemocratic rule."