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RHODESIA - REQUEM FOR A NATION?

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Twenty-five years ago, the entire mass of the African continent was held and administered by the western powers---from the Cape to Cairo, from Dakar in the West to Juwara in the East. Today, those same western powers have withdrawn from three-quarters of the continent. North of the Zambesi, numerous African states struggle with the awesome, unfamiliar, and sometimes alien responsibilities that independence has thrust upon them.

You are well aware of the tragedy that accompanied independence in many of these countries, or was a prelude to independence. The breakdown in civil law, in justice, in government---the massacres in the Congo, the massive corruption in Nigeria, the Communist infiltration of Tanzania, the Mau-Mau atrocities in Kenya, the murders in Rwanda and Burundi, In Ghana the abolition of civil liberties is almost complete. President Nkrumah has elected himself President for life; the judiciary has been abandoned, and representative government has become a fraud.

Ghana, the first of Britain's African colonies to achieve dependence started on the road to independence with three quarters of a billion dollars. Today, the government is bankrupt, depending on trade with Communist China and the Soviet Union for what little revenue her meagre exports can bring in,

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This, then, is the pattern of independence in Africa---widespread ruin, misery, and bloodshed for millions of Africans. The glittering promise of independence---Africa for the Africans---has become a fraud and a mockery throughout the continent.

Rhodesia remains the sole hold-out against irresponsible nationalism---
Why?

In my view, there are two primary reasons. First, Rhodesia has been self-governing since 1922 and has had a vigorous and imaginative legislative government ever since. This has created a political stability and permitted the country to advance to the point where she is now the second largest industrial power in Africa.

Secondly, and this perhaps more important, the Rhodesian (and I include white and coloured) views with alarm and dismay the pattern of violence, corruption, and chaos that has attended the advent of independence in many countries to the north. It became painfully clear what would happen in their own country if independence came on the basis of majority rule---one man, one vote.

Independence came to Ghana in 1957; to Nigeria in 1960; to Sierre Leone in 1961; to Tanganyika in 1961; to Uguna in 1962; to Zanzibar and Kenya in 1963; to Malawi and Zambia in 1964. For eight years, Rhodesia has been the looking glass, reflecting the march of nationalism, assessing its worth and its consequences. With the exception of Uguna and possibly Kenya, the Rhodesian feels it has been a sorry spectacle.

Is it any wonder that Rhodesia, a dynamic, industrialized, self-governing nation should shudder at the prospect of independence based on majority rule---without adequate preparation? "WITHOUT ADEQUATE PREPARATION"---these are key words in the attitude of the Rhodesian. I met no-one in Rhodesia who would not concede that some day there will be universal suffrage in his country. I met no-one who would not concede the right or wisdom in the principle of majority rule.

What I did encounter was a firm resolve to resist any directive from the Commonwealth Office in London, thousands of miles away, that independence should come at a specific date. What they will not concede is the notion that a country with four million coloured people, doubling its population every sixteen years, people who seventy-five years ago were slaughtering each other in the jungle with a tribal savagery that had few parallels in African history---the notion that these people can overnight take on the complexities of administration, can maintain and further the fantastic development that has sparked the Rhodesian economy in the past ten years.

Does this mean that the white Rhodesian wishes to perpetuate his dominant position, denying forever the African's undeniable right to political, social, and economic equality? No, most decidedly it doesn't.

Keep this in mind: there are less than a quarter million white people in Rhodesia. There are four million coloured people. Majority rule---the one man, one vote---would engulf the white population. Thus, the white Rhodesian's belief that there is a moderate, reasoned approach to the universal franchise.

In 1961, the Rhodesian Government adopted a new constitution. This constitution received the approval of the British Government and nationalist leaders like Joshua Nkomo. That constitution contained certain safeguards:

Africans for the first time would have access to the polls through a qualified franchise.

Africans could stand for Parliament.

No discriminatory legislation could be enacted.

No part of the constitution could be altered without the consent of all main racial groups.

At the time, Mr. Nkomo, a militant African nationalist said, and these are his exact words, "We feel the new provisions have given us a certain amount of assurance that the country will not pursue policies which mean that Africans would perpetually be unable to control their country".

Mr. Nkomo subsequently denounced the Constitution and went on a rampage, in rivalry with another nationalist group, to intimidate African voters who had been enfranchised by the new voting laws.

In the Rhodesian Parliament today, there are fourteen coloured Africans and one European elected by Africans---in a Parliament of sixty-five seats. Over sixty thousand African voters are now eligible to cast their votes. They have met minimal educational and financial requirements,

The white Rhodesian is convinced this is the only meaningful road to independence. He is convinced the day will come when coloured representation in Parliament will exceed white. But that day will come only when Africans have achieved that economic and political maturity which will enable him to be a responsible and independent voter---not the illiterate pawn of nationalism.

The qualified franchise in Rhodesia is conditional on minimal educational and financial requirements. Over sixty thousand coloured Rhodesians have achieved these standards. The question, of course, is this: having established standards, is the Rhodesian Government forging the educational and economic climate where these standards are attainable?

In 1965, over six hundred thousand African children were in primary schools---a record unmatched anywhere in Africa. A crash program is underway to build secondary schools. Fifty-eight were opened in 1964; twenty in 1965. These include mission schools financed in part by the Government and those paid for entirely by the administration,

In 1966, over twenty million dollars will be spent by the Government on African education. This amount comes from personal and company taxes, levied on the white population. All but one thousand of the eighteen thousand teachers in Rhodesia are coloured. Within the limits of her financial resources, and they are still limited, Rhodesia is striving to provide education for all Africans who desire it. Surely this record gives the lie to those who charge that Ian Smith is determined to keep the African in ignorance.

With education, the economic advancement of the African is limited only by the ability of the nation to provide job opportunity. Rhodesia, despite an impressive program of industrialization, is still largely dependent on the land. No country in Africa holds such promise in this respect. Through a bold and imaginative program of land development, hundreds of thousands of acres are being reclaimed and reformed. This is especially true in the Lowveld, the south-east corner of Rhodesia where fertile ground has been brought to productive life by giant irrigation schemes. The africans are encouraged to share in this land reform---to invest in farms that can yield substantial cash crops.

The agricultural potential of Rhodesia is enormous. Five years ago, Rhodesia was an importer of sugar. Today, she meets her own needs and is now a formidable power in the world market.

Significant progress is being made in the production of wheat, cotton, and citrus fruit. Her beef production is enormous. Incidentally, over two-thirds of Rhodesia's beef production is now in the hands of Africans. Great tracts of land are being developed; for example, five hundred thousand acres are being reclaimed and developed on the banks of the Sabi River. This development has a potential that will provide a good livelihood for five hundred thousand Africans and their families.

This, then, is the program for advancement for the African population of Rhodesia. It is a responsible, progressive, and humane approach. If the rest of the world can show tolerance and restraint, it is an approach that can and will work.

Unfortunately, the policies of the Ian Smith Government have been linked with the Apartheid of South Africa. There is no conceivable identity between the two; the white people of Rhodesia are essentially British with a fundamental regard for human rights and human dignity. They came to Rhodesia or were born there with only one objective in mind---to build a way of life that would give a reasonable measure of security and contentment. The popular conception of the Bwana, living in luxury, using the coloured man merely as an implement to provide for his comfort, is viciously false. True, there is a high standard of living. But those same standards are attainable by the coloured people. Many in business and in the professions have done so.

People will ask - what about the censorship? What about the detention of African nationalists like Joshua Nkomo? What about the ban on outside broadcasts? What about the emergency powers that permit the Government to adopt extraordinary measures against troublemakers? Gentlemen, this is not a campaign against civil liberties. They are measures to maintain law and order in a land where lawlessness and disorder, if unchecked, can lead to unbelievable atrocities,....,not only against the Whites but against those Africans who have, and continue to, repulse the blandishments of nationalism.

We are quick to forget what happened in Kenya and the Congo. Or what happened most recently in Nigeria, where Africa's most respected statesman, President Belewa, was slaughtered. The world muttered words of sympathy, but where was the great indignation that should have descended on the perpetrators of this crime? For taking measures to prevent exactly the same thing happening in Rhodesia, Ian Smith stands condemned as despot. We condemn the Ian Smith censorship, yet the freedom of the press in that country is still a principle.

In other African states---Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Zambia---one of the first moves by the new independent governments - the establishment of government news agencies.

In those countries, the news is suppressed and is government controlled. In many countries, it is Communist controlled and Communist orientated. Take, for example, the subtle but simple approach of the Russians. While Canada sends teams of External Aid experts, while America pours three hundred million dollars in aid to Africa, the Soviets are winning the minds of Africa. In any African country that wants it, the Tass News Agency will install teletype machines in the offices of newspapers. They will take the staff to a training school in Prague and train them to assess and interpret the Tass wire copy. All this is provided free---even the service when it is in operation is without charge.

Unimportant you say! Consider Nigeria, When the race riots occurred in Rochester, New York, in the summer of 1964, the leading Nigerian newspaper carried a headline - "ONE THOUSAND NEGROES KILLED". The American Embassy protested. The next day there was a correction: "ONE THOUSAND NEGROES NOT KILLED". What made the greatest impression on the impressionable African - that headline or the American aid worker doling out food in some remote part of the Nigerian jungle? This is what we should be worried about; this is what we should be condemning; not the White people of Rhodesia.

They are simply striving to maintain standards of civilization that we all cherish. Imagine, then, their complete bewilderment, their hurt, and their astonishment.

The measures taken against Rhodesia---the economic sanctions--- are, of course, having a serious effect. Whether they will be successful is questionable. Their effect is certainly apparent, but the harm to the African may be far more serious than to the white Rhodesian.

In the African work force of seven hundred thousand, well over two hundred thousand are from outside states---from Malawi, Zambia, and Mozambique. Workers from Zambia and Malawi in particular, are major contributors to the economy of those countries, because of the wages they send back to their families. If sanctions slow the economy to a point where unemployment is inevitable, then, of course, these workers will have to return home. Ian Smith has already raised this possibility.

Consider, if you will, the prospect of one hundred and fifty thousand workers pouring back into Malawi---the old Nyasaland, or a hundred thousand going back to their homes in Northern Rhodesia, now Zambia. The effect on the economies of these two countries would be enormous. But this is the side effect of sanctions.

And if sanctions do not work, how long can the demands of African membership in the Commonwealth for military action be contained?

At the last meeting in Lagos, Britain's Harold Wilson was successful in persuading the more militant members that sanctions should first be given time to work. How much time? If they do not work, are we going to sanction military action? For let there be no mistake. Military action against Rhodesia will mean war, It will mean British soldiers fighting and killing their own kind, and being killed in return. It will be a senseless confrontation from which there can be no victor.

If I came away from Rhodesia with any firm impression, it was this---they will fight to preserve their independence. Rhodesia is preparing for that eventuality. She has the most efficient and modern fighting force in Africa---men in uniform and thousands in reserve. Her police force, again numbering in the thousands, is in effect a fighting force. She would be a formidable foe for any country---especially Great Britain.

Ian Smith answered the threat of armed intervention in these words: "If we are to leave our country, we will go out fighting, not crawling away on our hands and knees". Anyone who brushes aside the deadly seriousness of that intent or gains comfort from the illusion that Mr. Smith is without the support of the white Rhodesian is guilty of a tragic error in judgement.