

BRITAIN & THE CRISIS IN RHODESIA

Military Intervention —the essential factor

AFTER THE ILLEGAL DECLARATION of independence by Ian Smith on November 11, 1965, the British Government replied by imposing economic sanctions and appealed to United Nations members to join in a world-wide economic embargo against Rhodesia to "restore the rule of law by bringing to an end the rebel government."

At the same time, however, the British Government rejected outright the use of force from any quarter against the illegal regime and has adamantly maintained this position despite mounting pressure from Afro-Asian states and the United Nations. By adopting a sanctions policy only — long recognised to be ineffective — and rejecting the use of force as the right solution to the crisis, British policy over Rhodesia now turns its back on its original professed intentions, namely, the elimination of white minority rule and replacing it with African majority rule.

It is true that an effective trade embargo of Rhodesian tobacco and sugar, including oil, might cause Rhodesia to lose a sizeable source of her export earnings and inflict some damage to the Rhodesian economy. But the effect of such an embargo would certainly be felt long after the impact of illegal declaration had receded as much depends not upon international agreement through the United Nations, but immediate co-operation of individual states, especially those on Rhodesia's borders. Though Rhodesia's economy will be affected as a result, no internal revolution or significant change against the Smith regime can be foreseen, especially with South Africa and Portugal (and time) on his side.

Tobacco is Rhodesia's biggest single export, accounting for sales of £39 million out of a total trading revenue of £119 million in 1964. Britain, which is Rhodesia's largest customer, brought around half the total crop at a cost of £20 million. With a ban on tobacco in British markets, it will not be difficult at all for Rhodesia to find customers when tobacco auctions begin next March. Prices will be down and not all the crop may be sold. And a single year's crop failure does not

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Rhodesia on the road
to democratic rule,
the objective Britain
must not shelve

destroy an industry. Further, with the assistance of South Africa, Portugal and Spain, the Smith regime will find some ways of assisting farmers faced with difficulties in repaying loans advanced on the 1966 crop or those having difficulties in getting loans.

A similar observation can be made about Rhodesian sugar. The forfeiture of the preferential Commonwealth price might make it difficult to export the crop (worth £4 million last year) at a profit. But already subsistence crops are being planted instead of both sugar and tobacco. Indeed, to meet foreign exchange losses from the sugar — tobacco boycott and from Commonwealth preferences, the Smith government has imposed import and currency controls which will affect British exports to Rhodesia rather than cripple the economy.

WILL THE APPLICATION OF OIL SANCTIONS bring Rhodesia's economy to a halt and thereby topple the rebel regime? A boycott of tobacco and sugar may not cause a strain to countries imposing it, as there is a current world surplus which will, however, be nearly exhausted when the embargo starts to hurt Rhodesia. In the case of oil, even if Persia (which now supplies most of Rhodesia's 400,000 tons of annual imports), and other Middle Eastern countries are ready to deny themselves a minor market, there are enough independent oil producers in the world who will not be choosy. Potential sources for Rhodesia are Portuguese Angola and parts of South America. Rhodesia has the advantage of having its own refining at Umzali near the Portuguese Mozambique border, which is supplied with crude oil by a 180-mile pipe-line from the Mozambique port of Beira. A blockade of Persian oil means that Rhodesia must switch to Angolan oil, which will be a potential export shipped to Beira round the Cape. And South Africa could meet Rhodesia's demands by having Rhodesian supplies consigned to the Republic and then reconsigned to Beira. Lourenco Marques, or trucked into Rhodesia.

In any case, Kariba hydro-electric power and the Wankie colliery reduce Rhodesia's dependence upon oil to a bare quarter of its energy needs. Cutting off oil from Rhodesia inevitably hits Zambia. In a wider context, an economic war might

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break out in Southern Africa which could escalate into armed international conflict. The Benguela railway and the Lockheed airlift would have to cope with products other than oil and copper exports. South Africa and Portugal will no longer let their balance of payments problems stand in the way if economic assistance to Rhodesia is imperative to maintain white supremacy south of the Zambezi. An effective sanctions policy on Rhodesia to overthrow the rebel regime would require an urgent naval blockade of the whole of Southern Africa and a total boycott of all goods and services. It would also need to devise effective alternative means of supply for Zambia.

The recent tightening of the Smith-Verwoerd-Salazar axis after UDI clearly negates the sanity of a British and United Nations sanctions policy to change the present course of events in Rhodesia. Besides, there has never been any doubt in the "axis" powers and Britain of Rhodesia's economic strength to withstand economic sanctions that the world might impose. Rhodesia has a broadly based and diversified economy. Serious gaps in the implementation of sanctions exist and these will assist Rhodesia's economy and consolidate the regime they are attempting to overthrow. First, Rhodesia's sterling balances of £24 million are not frozen and it is already known that over half this amount was transferred before UDI from London to Switzerland and South Africa. Without international co-operation these external reserves will be used by the rebel government to pay for imports from Britain or any other country for months ahead. Second, lack of British initiative to co-ordinate at all levels Commonwealth and United Nations programme of economic sanctions makes it difficult to implement existing sanctions.

MORE SERIOUS IN BRITISH POLICY as manifested in economic sanctions is its lack of precise definition of its primary objective — in legal and practical terms — since UDI, first as regards action against the rebel government and second, as regards the basic question of African majority rule. The Southern Rhodesia Act, 1965, gives Britain sole powers to impose economic and other measures against a rebel Rhodesia. Imposition of economic sanctions

alone, which will apparently fail to inflict a penalty against rebels, is an open admission of the authority of the illegal regime. And sanctions merely test that authority as a *fait accompli*, to be brought to amiable terms in future negotiations rather than seek to break it and bring it to the judgment of the courts. Economic sanctions as in the modern recorded cases of Ireland, Italy, China, and Cuba are insufficient to lead to a change of regime or even a major change of national policy. If British policy is still rapid constitutional development to African majority rule, a swift arrest of the illegal leadership and a return to legality ought to be its logical accomplishment. A rebellion cannot be brought to heel without physical action.

Military intervention by Britain, the Commonwealth and the United Nations is supported here as it provides a realistic approach to illegal action and the means to fulfill the primary objective. From a military point of view, Rhodesia is a small country and cannot provide a prolonged resistance organised internationally. The intensity of the struggle is reduced by the fact that the extent of Mr. Smith's control over the Rhodesian army is a marginal one. Recently, for example, he ousted the Army Chief of Staff and Chief of the Air Staff because of their vehement opposition to UDI. Their successors—a General and an Air Vice-Marshal—hold similar views and it was their allegiance to the Queen that withheld them from taking action against the Governor, Sir Humphrey Gibbs who is, on behalf of Her Majesty, their military superior as Rhodesia's Commander-in-Chief. Further, UDI has crystallised the struggle that continues (the results of which are unknown) between Sir Humphrey Gibbs and Mr. Smith for the loyalty of the armed forces.

The question of loyalty of the armed forces is an irrelevant one either in the case of British or international military intervention. It is, indeed, relevant to Mr. Smith as he is aware of divided loyalties even after the purge and his forces in combat might be reduced to a mere handful. But even if the whole Rhodesian army were on his side, Rhodesian forces are insignificant in comparison with any international army, as assessed by the Institute of Strategic Studies after UDI.

There are, according to the assessment 3,400 armed men in Rhodesia—as against, for example, 2,500 in Zambia, 9,000 in Ghana; 34,000 in Ethiopia and 180,000 in the U.A.R.—two-thirds of whom are African; and some have been disarmed as “unreliable.” Mr. Smith relies on his Minutemen. In addition to regular forces—two battalions (one of them all white), a Special Air Service Squadron, and six squadrons of aircraft—there is a Territorial Army of four battalions, territorial reservists of at least another four, plus, 2,000 white police and 20,000 white police reservists.

REGARDLESS OF THE SOURCES of an inter-

national force against Rhodesia military intervention is logistically practicable. On the British side, a lot is heard about the expected refusal of the British soldier to fire on his colonial kith and kin. But the reverse might be true. Rhodesia is a British colony and if British soldiers seek to subdue a rebellion, they would fire back as they would if faced with an armed mob in England. None the less, to avoid another Curragh incident, Britain would have immediate military support from the United Nations.

Strategically, vertical envelopment would be feasible. There would be at least three brigades required, with a follow-up of another two and this is an excessive estimate. Expeditions of short-haul aircraft like Argosies would be flown from Tanzania to Lusaka from where helicopter-borne and airborne operations could be launched. Unlike an economic war, dangers of armed intervention by South Africa and Portugal would most likely be averted.

The immediate objective of the armed forces would be control of strategic centres, chief sources of power (Kariba and Wankie colliery), telecommunications, protection of the Governor, Sir Humphrey Gibbs as well as release of Joshua Nkomo and other political detainees and arrest of rebels. Damage would be inversely proportional to the number of troops deployed and the operation undertaken within not more than a week.

International control would make provisions relating to the administration of the territory. The 1961 Constitution of Southern Rhodesia would be suspended. Government would be vested in an executive council for at least six months while a representative constitution incorporating objectives of democratic African majority rule was being devised. Internal conditions that would otherwise be disrupted by economic sanctions would be strengthened for rapid economic and social development.

The course of events in Rhodesia for which Britain is responsible raises questions of doubt and anxiety in the consciences of mankind—as to the sincerity of British policy and action towards the development of Rhodesia to democratic rule. And democracy, regardless of difficulties to define it embodies, in a wide sense, *consent of the governed* without regard to race, colour, or creed. This principle ought to take precedence over all other considerations. When Her Majesty's Government fails to enforce just processes of law and reason, there inevitably appears to be a connivance with its colonial leadership and deceit of international judgment so as to maintain domination of 4,000,000 Africans by 200,000 Europeans. After all what has been done cannot be undone, Britain will go down in history as chief architect in the construction of the colour curtain among the nations. Without immediate firm action in Rhodesia, a more violent situation will occur that will hurt the cause of inter-racial and international co-operation for generations to come.

The Exile

*Perseveration is a theory I prove
Every time I leave
My country. In my difference from others
Tall krantzies cut clean through me with
their echo
Table Mountain, Hex River
Distances that give my love its tune,
The aloe's intimate accordance with the sun.*

*But the mixing of people
Out of simple friendliness and courtesy
And the friendships between individuals
Forged out of interests in common
And not the colour of skin, the cruel
Channelling of one or another Apartheid law
Loads me with regret for the history I am.*

*Whenever I travel I am faced once more
With the architecture of heaven
And the anatomy of hell;
Like two snakes they plait themselves
Into a glittering ring
That coils about me smothering my freedom
Till I burn in my bones like a tree in a
storm.*

*To purge the night from my nailed estate
I have to bridge a full-featured nightmare:
The abyss in my land between black and
white
And jail or death is the price for that.
O my country, I have tried in vain to forget
The red brand of your shameful darkness,
The dear deep shapes of your prodigious
light.*

*Only when your ice-making separateness
Crawls back into a hole of the sun
Shall I find peace who now am forced to
roam
Crossed with an anguished tenderness,
The disgrace of those who stayed to fatten
And the lean way of those who stayed to
blast
The high walls that keep their country poor.*

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