

Africans blast British at Lusaka Commonwealth meeting

The African members of the British Commonwealth have decided to turn the Commonwealth Conference into a head-on confrontation with the British over London's anti-industrialization policy for Africa and over the use of the pro-British regimes of Abel Muzorewa in Rhodesia and P.W. Botha in South Africa to enforce the policy.

The Nigerians and Zambia President Kenneth Kaunda have taken the lead in this effort. The day before the conference opened on Aug. 1 the Nigerian government nationalized the holdings of British Petroleum amid reports that Nigeria, Britain's largest trading partner, had begun a broad economic attack against the British.

Kaunda, who is chairman of the Commonwealth meeting taking place in the Zambian capital of Lusaka, has leveled a stream of blistering attacks against Britain's Thatcher government, as well as previous British governments extending back to 1965.

An interview with Kaunda published in the July 30 *Times of Zambia* the day before Thatcher arrived in Lusaka was headlined "KK Lashes Thatcher." Most significantly, Kaunda attacked Thatcher and past British governments for having attempted unnecessarily to turn the struggle for independence of the British colony of Rhodesia into an East-West conflict. On July 27, the day Queen Elizabeth II arrived in Zambia for a nine-day official visit, Kaunda warned Thatcher that "the continent of Africa will be up in arms against her and her Government" if she tries to push British policy down Africa's throat. The Zambian press is characterizing the British government as "arrogantly racist." The *Zambia Daily Mail* said that "it is unfortunate to have a head of government such as Mrs. Thatcher who is so racially biased."

In another anti-British move, Kaunda called an unscheduled meeting of the heads of state of the five frontline African countries supporting the struggle for independence being waged in Rhodesia by the Patriotic Front. The meeting began July 30 and included President Agostinho Neto of Angola and President Samora Machel of Mozambique, both countries which are not members of the British Commonwealth and are strongly

opposed to British policy. The meeting, which conspicuously ended the day before the Commonwealth Conference began, was called to work out a common policy on Rhodesia.

British plans

The African decision to challenge the British has thrown Thatcher's strategy for the conference awry. Britain had sought to avoid any decision being taken on the Rhodesia question, leaving Mrs. Thatcher's hands free to engineer recognition for the pro-British government of Muzorewa after the conference. The Africans' firm statement on the question, plus their demand that Thatcher put her cards on the table, has made it impossible for the recently elected Tory leader to play according to her scenario.

The British had intended to use the Commonwealth Conference to tighten IMF controls on Africa, preventing backward and impoverished African countries from adopting a viable high-technology development strategy. The British system condemns Africa to be a mere supplier of raw materials.

The content of British conference policy was leaked by the July 24 *Financial Times* of London, which reported the contents of a confidential background paper that was prepared by the Commonwealth Secretariat in London and reflects the thinking of Commonwealth Secretary General Ramphal. The paper says that private capital markets can no longer solve the economic crunch hitting the non-oil producing developing countries. It proposes that "the role of official agencies, particularly the IMF, is especially important in this context."

Zambia is only one country which is bitter about IMF efforts to blackmail its government. In return for a much-needed credit tranche earlier this year, the IMF demanded that goods purchased with the credit come from South Africa. Now South Africa, under a series of pretexts, is refusing to ship the desperately needed food and other products to Zambia. It is understood that Zambian capitulation to British policy would quickly change the mind of the South African government.

Muzorewa question

Also on the agenda of the Lusaka conference is the question of the Muzorewa government in Rhodesia. The British hope to gain acceptance for a Rhodesian government that will not only not threaten the British IMF policy, but will actually serve, along with South Africa, to enforce that kind of policy on the rest of the continent. Mozambique and Zambia have been repeatedly attacked by Rhodesia, for example, while Angola has been repeatedly attacked by both South Africa and Rhodesia.

In his press interview Kaunda also hit Thatcher's fixation with "Soviet influence" in southern Africa. "I understand she is very frightened of Russian influence in this part of the world.

"It is very sad, because when people become frightened they lose their reason. I hope she hasn't reached that stage.

"In the end what we've always been trying to avoid, East-West confrontation, is taking shape. All because of certain stupid decisions by successive British Governments. ..."

Kaunda went on to add that it is "incredible" that he is now blamed by the British for going to the Soviets for arms for self-defense when it was these British policies which forced him to such a step.

The *Times of Zambia* added that Thatcher "demonstrated the blind and pusillanimous arrogance that has marked successive British governments' attitudes to Rhodesia." The *Zambia Daily Mail* pointedly said that the southern African problem is made worse "when a British Prime Minister openly supports rebels who have been condemned by every sensible person in the world."

The Nigerian nationalization

The Nigerian move against British Petroleum, of which 51 percent is owned by the British government, was not expected, and has already been denounced as "naked political blackmail" in the pro-British *New York Post*. The British were openly hoping that the Nigerians would choose simply to cut oil production as a way of protesting British policy, which would have fed into the overall energy-austerity scenario being pushed by British-influenced policy circles internationally.

As a result of the nationalization, Nigeria has acquired an immediate additional 250,000 barrels per day of output which it can market in direct state-to-state deals if it wants, thus circumventing the control over the marketing process of the oil formerly handled by BP.

—Doug DeGroot

Pretoria's apartheid

South Africa's historic Malthusian policy of apartheid received a sudden new impetus in legislation which came into force July 13. The change is murderous, a shift from limiting the growth rate of cities to depopulating them, banishing millions of blacks to "tribal homelands" where it has been arranged for them to die. This is a part of the larger British strategy of reducing world population to perhaps only one billion by the year 2000.

An important feature of the policy that is about to inflict such horror on the African population is a synthetic fuels program adopted a decade ago by South Africa's "Nationalist" government, and imported as a model for the U.S. Carter administration's energy policy.

The new South African apartheid law increases by five times the fine imposed on an employer who is caught employing Africans in an urban or white farm area if the Africans lack official permission for their departure from the tribal areas called bantustans. The law condemns perhaps two million of nine million Africans now in such areas to return to the bantustans, where primitive agriculture provides less than subsistence, malnutrition is the rule, and starvation is on the rise. Mass firings have occurred since passage of the law; Africans are calling this "a time of weeping."

Minister of Apartheid Piet Koornhof has made a show of magnanimity by giving large categories of illegal workers some months in which to have their status regularized. Few of them—except for live-in domestics—will succeed, because their sub-tenancies in overcrowded townships like Soweto are necessarily *sub rosa* and do not meet the criteria laid down by the new law for "available housing."

The new law is only the leading edge of a sweeping reorganization of labor policy which is being carried out by Prime Minister P.W. Botha and his circle of British Tory-oriented advisors and party associates. Most of the reorganization is embodied in reports, issued in early May, by two parliamentary commissions, the Wiehahn commission on trade union policy and the Riekert commission on control over the influx of Africans from the bantustans.

The combined recommendations represent a major new step in the devolution of the South African economy, underway since the 1974 oil price increases, away from industrialization and city-building in favor of mere raw materials export.

The thinking behind the Wiehahn report is that the policy of reserving skilled jobs for whites should be