



When he was appointed Prime Minister of Britain in October 1963, Lord Home renounced his titles and sat in the House of Commons as Sir Alec Douglas-Home. He has only recently left the Commons to return to the House of Lords.

Africans could throw off the yoke and rule themselves?

To cut a long story short, the agitation became such that Britain could not stay the compulsion towards independence except by force. That was rejected. So, for Zambia and Malawi, independence constitutions were framed and granted to both countries. Naturally they provided for majority rule by Africans, because the European populations were minute. If the Africans in either country made a mess of independence, it would be their own funeral.

In Southern Rhodesia (thereafter to be Rhodesia), the white population had no intention of running the risk to the wealth and political stability of the country involved in majority rule by Africans who were clearly not ready for the responsibility.

There was a case – and the Rhodesians made it – for Britain to give independence to the powerful and successful white minority.

But that had not been our colonial and Commonwealth practice, and where we had done so in the case of South Africa the result had been very unhappy. So we decided to proceed by improving the conditions of the franchise so that Rhodesian Africans could gradually – by improving their situation in relation to income, property and education – qualify for economic and political partnership with the Europeans on a common voters' roll.

Decision to improve conditions of franchise

Key moment

The 1961 constitution for Rhodesia was a key moment in the country's history. It was accepted by the white government. It was accepted by Dr. Nkomo, who was representing the Africans at the London conference. All seemed to be set fair for evolutionary African advance to majority rule.

Then the tragedy happened. Dr. Nkomo, when he returned to Salisbury, went back on the document he had signed. From that moment the Europeans became more and more suspicious of the Africans' intentions. They went slow on African advancement and, as one independent country after another in Africa tore up the constitutions that Britain had given them and substituted one-party rule, the extreme whites were able to say "we told you so".

From that moment things went from bad to worse, until Mr. Smith made his Declaration of Independence in 1969, and passed a new constitution through the Rhodesian Parliament. No one could deny that it was an illegal act.

large African tribal areas reserved for African farming. There was a cloud "the size of a man's hand" there, for the Africans began to say with some truth that the European settler had taken all the best land and left them with the poor soil. The whites retorted that, if only the blacks would learn husbandry, they would make a good living.

But, by and large, relations were good. In the early years, the Africans were confined to a voting roll of their own, but by 1961 a constitution had been drawn up that gave promise over the years of a truly multiracial society.

Federation

Meanwhile, for good economic reasons, Southern Rhodesia was made the basis of a federation that included Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland. Had the association been economic only, trouble would probably have been avoided, but it was made political. Several features contributed to friction. The proportion of Africans to whites in Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia) and Nyasaland (now Malawi) was much greater than that in Southern Rhodesia, while the fact that Salisbury in Southern Rhodesia was made the capital of the federation led to jealousy and resentment.

But the most powerful influence on the Africans of the two northern territories was the surge to complete independence of the other countries of Africa. Ghana, in particular, was looked upon as a model to be emulated, for had not the extrovert and patriot Dr. Nkrumah proved that