

The Commonwealth COLLAPSE or DISINTEGRATION?

by FRANCIS WANYEKI

What holds the Commonwealth together today in a world torn by ever increasing waves of crisis might tomorrow be the Commonwealth's downfall. South Africa was expelled from the Commonwealth five years ago and since that time no member state has left the organization. While South Africa was forced out because its social policy does not conform to the principles on which the commonwealth is built, some states may eventually leave the organization because British policy does not accord with similar principles. It has been argued that dissatisfied members of the organization should move that Britain be expelled from the Commonwealth but this is quite unrealistic. It goes without saying that for economic, financial and military reasons, there is no Commonwealth without Britain and it is no wonder therefore that dissolutioned members would rather leave than remain in an organization whose principles are contrary to the principles under which the organization ought to flourish.

Much credit has been given to the Canadian Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson, for his efforts in bringing the two racial groups of the organization to a compromise during the Prime Minister's Conference in Lagos and later in London. This credit however, should not be pushed too far. While it is true that he succeeded, his success lies only in the fact that he managed to delay the day of the clash and not in the solution of the Commonwealth dilemma. It's not surprising, therefore, that the pledge on the destruction of Smith's rebel government proved so empty.

Smith's recent discriminatory bill is a good proof that negotiations with him are impossible except on a basis of complete sell-out. It should be clear by now that the regime is only interested in preserving white supremacy and that it will

not be deterred simply by a reduced standard of living that the limited economic sanctions are effecting.

For those who believe in the Commonwealth as a multiracial association, it is difficult to understand why the costly military forces on which Britain is supposed to rely for international influence cannot be used to suppress a rebellion of 200,000 Rhodesian rebels.

Britain's insincerity in the Commonwealth was clear a few months ago when it promised Zambia £14 million aid on a condition of a satisfactory political settlement (When Zambia was on the brink of withdrawing from the Commonwealth). This is complete blackmail and I don't expect

the commonwealth will be preserved by this type of political trickery!

It is now clear that economic pressure above is not going to coerce the Rhodesian rebels into changing their political rebellion. Nothing short of total blockade can destroy the economic base of the regime. If Britain is sincere in its motives, complete mandatory economic sanctions should be enforced as an alternative to the direct use of force - otherwise we are entering a long period of inconclusive attrition unless some form of intervention is used to bring an end to the rebellion.

Is Britain going to act only after Rhodesia declares itself a Republic and joins the Union of South Africa?

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