

Nyasaland: The Case for Secession

In order to understand and to appreciate the aspirations and the demands of the Africans of Nyasaland, it is important to bear in mind the following cardinal points. In the first place, Nyasaland is not an extension of Europe and it will never be. The struggle of the Africans of Nyasaland, therefore, must not be regarded as an isolated event. It is part of the struggle of the Africans all over the Continent of Africa to be free from humiliation, oppression and bondage as a result of foreign rule. Secondly, African problems must in the long run be solved by Africans themselves. The Africans, as and when it is necessary, may want outside help and outside manpower. It must however be clearly understood that outside help and outside manpower must not, and will not, be allowed to dictate the form of government under which Africans, in their own country, must live and die.

Then of course there is this important fact. The Africans of Nyasaland regard themselves as a people, and like any other people, they are determined, in terms of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the United Nations Charter, to both of which Britain is signatory, to have the right to choose the form of Government under which they shall live and die and also the right to a dignified existence at least in their own country. Fourthly, but by

no means least in importance, Nyasaland became a Protectorate as a result of the trust the chiefs put on the good intentions of the British Government. They believed up to 1953 that the British Government was helping them to develop to Self-Government. I am convinced that if at the time when they were fooled into protection by the British Government they had been aware of the hideous intentions of the latter, they would have resisted coming under her protection.

When, therefore, the British Government imposed Central African Federation in the teeth of bitter African opposition, the Africans of Nyasaland had no alternative but to continue their resistance against this new but more dangerous form of oppression. They sent a delegation to Britain, and after their views had been ignored and their demands treated with contempt, they launched non-violent positive action as a means of expressing their opposition to the Government scheme. As part of this action, they boycotted the Coronation celebrations and withdrew their labour from going to Southern Rhodesia and South Africa where for years, as recruited labour, they have been building the apartheid cities of Johannesburg and elsewhere. They also decided, among other things, to discontinue co-operating with the Government by not participating in Government Legislative, Executive and other councils while the chiefs also joined in this non-co-operation with the Government as a protest against the imposition of Federation.

This peaceful action by the people of Nyasaland was met with ruthlessness unworthy of the good name of the British people. Eleven non-violent peaceful demonstrators were shot dead by the so-called forces of Law and Order brought in from the Rhodesias and Tanganyika. Many arrests were made and chiefs were deposed. Two of our people have since been deported, after serving their prison sentences, to malarial places in the country. An old sick chief (Chief Gomani) was ruthlessly evicted from his home and consequently later died, while the Reverend Michael Scott who was with him at that time, was deported from the country.

In order to break the Congress from without, laws were made to make it difficult for public meetings to be held and for the Congress to raise funds from the public. A law, on a Southern Rhodesian pattern, was passed in the Legislative Council (of the 19 members, only three were Africans nominated by the Governor), giving powers to the Governor to prevent Africans from other territories from entering the country. Under this law African politicians from the two Rhodesias have been prevented from entering Nyasaland, thus making it difficult for us to organise ourselves inter-territorially. European demagogues, however, have been free

to come to the country and pour abuse on the Africans. From within attempts were made to break the Congress by infiltrating it with spies and informers.

In spite of all this, however, the Congress did not die. It was too deeply rooted in the minds of the people to collapse so easily, and in 1956 the Chiefs and other Provincial Councillors voted members of the Nyasaland African Congress to the five seats in the Nyasaland Legislative Council. This they did in spite of the fact that just the day before, the salaries of the chiefs had been increased and in some cases doubled and there were many Government candidates, some of whom had campaigned with government funds and transport.

Yet the Congress realized that without effective and disciplined organization, it was impossible for forces of oppression to realize and accept the extent of the opposition of the Africans of Nyasaland against the Central African Federation. Hence the calling of Dr. Banda, after the expulsion from the organisation of such reactionary and double-faced politicians as Mr. Wellington Manoh Chirwa (Ex-Federal Member of Parliament), and Mr. T. D. T. Banda, who had used for his own personal purposes £400 given to him for the Congress by well-wishers at the time of the Ghana Independence celebrations.

Dr. Banda fulfilled the purpose for which he was called back to lead the Congress. Thousands came to join the Nyasaland African Congress and equally thousands came to cheer him at a time when Governors and the Federal Prime Minister were boycotted. In him, the people of Nyasaland had found the honesty, determination, sincerity and the courage needed in a leader.

The support they gave him, however, gave the lie to the propaganda spread by the British Government to the effect that opposition to the Federation in Nyasaland was not shared by the ordinary men. Embarrassed, they tried various methods to break up the morale of the people. Troops were sent into Nyasaland from Salisbury and went up and down the country under the disguise of carrying 'normal exercises' and policemen began arresting people and beating them whenever they gathered to cheer Dr. Banda. Before the state of emergency, about three hundred such people had been arrested and several fabrications of so-called unlawful meetings had been made by the government.

All this did not work to destroy the morale of the people and they continued to rally behind their leader. Even the present state of emergency has not succeeded in doing it, as Lord Perth learnt when he had hoped that the so-called moderate Africans he had been scheduled to meet when he visited Nyasaland were going to sup-

port Federation. Hence the massacre plot story which, whatever the evidence produced by paid Macharias, is a cover for suppressing the Congress and the opposition to the Central African Federation which the Congress stood for. However there was a massacre story fabricated in connection with British Guiana in 1953 and in connection with Ghana in 1948. There were also stories manufactured in connection with the so-called Grivas diaries. But just as the British Government now recognises Dr. Cheddi Jagan as the *de facto* Prime Minister of British Guiana and Dr. Kwame Nkrumah as a respected Prime Minister in the Commonwealth, and Macmillan had to sit shoulder to shoulder with Archbishop Makarios before he could settle the Cyprus question, the Africans of Nyasaland are determined that come what may, a day must come when Dr. Banda must be recognised as the Prime Minister of an independent Nyasaland.

Why do the Africans of Nyasaland oppose Federation? In the first place I would like to emphasise that Nyasaland was viable before she was forced into the Central African Federation. She balanced her budget, had a surplus and indeed could have developed on her own. This was admitted by the Financial Secretary in the Nyasaland Legislative Council in March last year and was reiterated by the Governor during his leave in Britain in the same year. It was Southern Rhodesia which was on the verge of economic ruin and wanted the money from the copper in Northern Rhodesia to save her. It is not because of economic reasons therefore that Nyasaland was forced into the Central African Federation. The European settlers made no secret about their intentions. They would not tolerate the existence of Ghanas (Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia) in the neighbourhood of Southern Rhodesia. Whenever economic reasons were advanced as the reason for the inclusion of Nyasaland in the Federation, it was only to fool and woo the British public who would have objected to the creation of the Central African Federation if the real motives were made known to them.

Some of those who support the forced existence of the Central African Federation say that it is necessary in order to preserve civilisation in that area. This can only be interpreted as a calculated and positive insult on the nine independent African states, for this savage assertion can only imply that these states are regarded as not capable of preserving civilisation within their boundaries. Indeed if what happened in Nyasaland recently - mass arrests of people, the shooting of innocent women and children, the banning of the Congress and the ransacking and burning of African villages and homes - is what is called civilisation, then the sooner we are

allowed to have nothing to do with it the better for Nyasaland and Britain.

Others say that if the Central African Federation were allowed to break up, British influence would be brought to an end in Africa. To these people it must be clearly understood that if Britain persists in handing over by force the three million Africans of Nyasaland to the few settlers in Central Africa, not only will she lose the friendship and respect of these Africans of Nyasaland but even that of the whole of Africa. If Britain wants to be respected in Africa, then there must not be one form of democracy for her people and another for people in the colonies. The best and easiest way of losing the friendship of Africa is to indulge in this type of hypocrisy and to condone and support the brutalities and such savage acts as were committed in Nyasaland by the white settlers of Central Africa.

To the Africans of Nyasaland, Central African Federation is the perpetuation of the Southern Rhodesian European domination over the Africans of Central Africa. The treatment given to Africans in Southern Rhodesia is no different from that of South Africa and indeed in some cases it is even worse. In the Southern Rhodesian Parliament there is not a single African member and the Europeans who are governing the country have made it clear that if the number of the few Africans on the voters' roll shows signs of increasing, legislative steps will be taken to prevent this from happening. The Federation itself, which virtually means the surrender of power by Britain to settlers in Central Africa, is nothing but the entrenchment of Rhodesian whites in the area. In an assembly of 59, there are only 12 Africans and these are elected or nominated in such a way that only those who are acceptable to the Europeans can be elected. A set-up in which 47 Members of Parliament represent 300,000 Europeans, and 12 Africans are said to, but do not in fact, represent the 7,000,000 Africans, cannot be accepted by Africans of Central Africa even if it is rubber-stamped by the British Government or blessed by its apologetics.

To retain the friendship of the Africans of Nyasaland therefore, the British Government must immediately withdraw foreign troops and police from the country, release Dr. Banda and all the detainees, lift the state of emergency and allow the Congress to function normally as the political movement of the people of Nyasaland. Then a new constitution must be given to the country providing for the secession of Nyasaland from the Central African Federation. The present Nyasaland constitution whereby 3,000,000 Africans are represented by 5 members and about 7,000 Europeans by 18 members in the Legislative Council, and whereby in an Execu-

tive Council of eight members there is not a single African, is not satisfactory and completely objectionable. The Congress, and in this respect it is supported by the Government-created Provincial Councils, demand that there must be an African majority in both the Legislative and Executive Councils, with the latter being elevated to cabinet status. This must be done so that at the Conference in 1960 on the future of the Central African Federation, the representatives of the Government of Nyasaland shall be drawn from among those elected on the basis of One Man One Vote and answerable to the people of Nyasaland, and not from among the Civil Servants nominated and dictated by the Colonial Secretary through his nominee, the Governor.

Only when these demands and desires of the African people of Nyasaland are satisfied will there be peace and lasting goodwill in Nyasaland. To think otherwise is to indulge in wishful thinking, for the Africans of Nyasaland are determined that their country must be independent and only an independent Nyasaland shall decide, if she so wishes, what form of association, and with which of her neighbours, she shall enter. She will also be in a position to help the Africans of Rhodesia, South Africa and the Protectorates let alone those of other parts, in their struggle for freedom. Towards this objective we have dedicated our lives and no force on earth will change our minds. However often we suffer setbacks, we shall ever march forward. Backward we shall never turn.

Ghana, 5th May, 1959.

M. W. Kanyama Chiume

(Member, Nyasaland Legislative Council: Publicity Secretary. Nyasaland African Congress.)

DOCUMENTS

1. Declaration adopted by the Emergency Meeting of the Steering Committee of the All-African Peoples' Conference held in Conakry, on the 15th - 17th April, 1959:

(1) In response to the urgent appeal of African nationalist leaders of Nyasaland, the Rhodesias and the Belgian Congo for aid and assistance against the brutal offensive of the forces of imperialism and colonialism let loose on the peoples in these territories, and conscious of our responsibility to our fellow African Freedom Fighters, the Steering Committee of the All-African Peoples' Conference convened a special Emergency Meeting in Conakry, Guinea, on April 15th. 1959, the first anniversary of Africa Freedom Day.

(2) Shocked and horrified by the reports of the accredited representatives of the Nyasaland National Congress, the S.R. National Congress, the Movement National Congolais, the Congolese Democratic Party (Abako) and the Cameroons Progressive Union, this meeting declares its solidarity with our

brothers and comrades imprisoned or exiled and demand their immediate release. We also sent a message of sympathy to the relatives of the unarmed and defenceless men and women killed for no other crime than supporting by non-violent means the demand for racial equality, human dignity and national independence.

(3) We indignantly reject and refute the slanderous allegations against the A.A.P.C. and tales of massacre by the Nyasaland Congress leaders concocted by those whose hands are stained with the blood of the black martyrs of liberty, in order to find a scapegoat for their wicked deeds for which they shall one day be brought to account, and reaffirm our adherence to the resolutions of the Accra Conference.

(4) We appeal to the independent African States, to our brothers in Asia, to Africans and peoples of African descent, to the religious leaders of the world and to all true friends and champions of African Freedom to join with us in condemning the wanton brutality of the authorities in the Federation of Central Africa, especially in Nyasaland and the Belgian Congo, and to render every assistance - financial and moral - to relieve the sufferings of those in distress of our brothers in these territories.

(5) In conformity to the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we request the members of the United Nations to make a clear and unequivocal declaration whether or not they unconditionally support the legitimate aspirations of the African Freedom Fighters for self-determination and independence. Those who are not with us in this hour of crisis shall not only be considered the enemies of the colonial peoples of Africa, but the independent African States as well. For, as the resolution of the Accra Conference warns, as long as there remains one imperialist stronghold on this African Continent, the freedom and security of every independent African State is faced with the danger of aggression.

(6) The situation demands our constant watchfulness and vigilance. All-imperialist intrigues, manoeuvres and acts of subversion aimed at discrediting the independent African States and undermining their tranquillity and security must be unmasked and exposed as part of a concerted plan by the colonialist powers to keep Africa divided and weak.

(7) Not unmindful of the tragic events in Algeria where our comrades are defending themselves against the armed violence of French imperialism, this Emergency Meeting of the Steering Committee of the A.A.P.C. therefore calls upon all workers by hand and brain, all tillers of the soil, all progressive and patriotic intellectuals, the women and youths of Africa, to close their ranks, unite their forces and discipline themselves for the final liquidation of colonialism and racialism by means of non-violence, non-co-operation, i.e., the strike, economic boycott wherever necessary and possible.

(8) We categorically reject the claim of those imperialists who assert that Africa is a part or continuation of Europe, and we denounce and repudiate those African misleaders who would have our Continent continue to be misruled from London. Paris, Brussels. Lisbon or Madrid, under any guise or form.

We proclaim and support the African Personality within the African Community.

Forward to independence now!

Long live the unbreakable unity of the African peoples!

Long live the All-African Peoples' Conference!

2. *Emergency resolution of the Steering Committee of the All-African Peoples' Conference, held in Conakry, Republic of Guinea, 15th to 17th April, 1959:*

After studying the political situation in the African territories which are concerned in the present resolution, and this in the light of the reports given by the accredited representatives of the said territories,

Considering the extreme gravity of the situation in these parts of Africa.

Recalling the main objectives and the resolutions of the Conference held in Accra from 5th to 13th December, 1959.

(Resolutions A and B concern the Belgian Congo and Kamerun).

(C) *Nyasaland*

Alarmed at the failure of a cowardly British Government to meet its obligations towards its African wards and that, instead of defending them, it connives at and condones the ruthlessness of a white minority in mowing down unarmed Africans in their own country,

Shocked by the arbitrary mass arrests of African leaders and the suppression of the African political movement, the Nyasaland African Congress (and the Zambia African Congress of Northern Rhodesia) as well as the use of Jet Vampires in terrorising the villages,

(1) *Appeals* to the British people to condemn the disgraceful behaviour of their Government which has brought shame to their country, and calls upon the British Government to halt this wholesale massacre of Africans and to punish those responsible for perpetrating these acts of barbarism contrary to the principles and objectives of the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

(2) *Demands* the removal of troops from Nyasaland, the lifting of the emergency, the immediate release of Dr. Hastings Banda and other nationalist leaders and the calling of a Round Table Conference to negotiate new constitutional arrangements for the immediate independence of Nyasaland outside the imposed Central African Federation.

(3) *Requests* all the independent African States to convey the horror and disgust of the people of their respective countries to the British Government for connivance of the Governor and other officials in the use of violence against our African brothers in Nyasaland.

(4) *Calls upon*

(a) all the independent African States to raise the question of the oppression and denial of self-determination to Nyasaland in the United Nations and to reject the contention that British atrocities in Nyasaland constitute the domestic concern of Britain. '

(b) the members of the Commonwealth of nations to press Britain to halt these atrocities in Nyasaland and to resist the admission of fascist Central African Federation to the Commonwealth,

(5) *Expresses* solidarity with our fellow Africans in the Federation and sends our condolences to the relatives of the victims of the trigger-happy fascist thugs who, in order to maintain the domination of a white minority over a black majority, have resorted to Hitlerite methods, in a desperate effort to delay their inevitable down.

(6) This Meeting *denounces* all the black traitors, imperialist stooges and Quislings in Nyasaland who, in this time of crisis, when the forces of reaction are let loose upon our race, have deserted to the side of the colonialists to pick up parliamentary or other rewards for selling out their people and country.

(D) *Southern and Northern Rhodesia*

(1) *Calls on* the British people to force their Government to use its veto powers to disallow the discriminatory and repressive Bills that are going through the Southern Rhodesia Parliament,

(2) *Calls on* the Southern Government to lift the ban on the African National Congress and that All political prisoners be released unconditionally forthwith,

(3) *Demands* that a Commission of Enquiry to inquire into and report on the circumstances that led to banning and arresting of Congress leaders, be set up for both Southern and Northern Rhodesia.

(4) *Calls on* the African independent states to bring before the United Nations Organisation the treatment of the African people in Southern Rhodesia by the settler-controlled Government there.

(Resolutions E and F concern Algeria and the African Mali Federation of Sudan and Senegal.)