

ZAPU — ALLIES IN REVOLUTION

By the time this article appears in print, we expect the Wilson Government to have sold out to the illegal Smith regime in Rhodesia. If agreement between Smith and Wilson is not conclusive it will not be for the lack of effort at a dishonourable compromise by Mr. Wilson. It is timely, therefore, to know more about the real opposition to White Supremist rule in Rhodesia.

This brief history of the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) is published with a view to informing our readers of this opposition.

Zapu, we have no doubt, will form the first democratic government of a free and independent Zimbabwe.

HISTORICAL

The history of the Zimbabwe African People's Union, the main organ of popular resistance to the Smith regime in Rhodesia, can be traced back to the formation of the first African National Congress in Southern Rhodesia after the first world war, inspired by the foundation of the African National Congress of South Africa in 1912 in protest against the formation of Union in 1910. The Rhodesian ANC of this early period never managed to get its roots down amongst the masses of the people and remained a minority movement until, after a few years, it ceased to function.

A.N.C. YOUTH LEAGUE

Renewed impetus was given to the national liberation movement in Rhodesia by the spread of the African independence movement throughout the African continent after the second world war. In 1955 an African National Congress Youth League was formed in Rhodesia, under the leadership of George Nyandoro and J.R.D. Chikerema. In 1957 this developed into the full fledged African National Congress with Joshua Nkomo as its President,

James Chikerema as Vice-President, and Georges Nyandoro as Secretary-General.

It is significant that both Nkomo and Chikerema, as well as a number of other leaders of ZAPU, received their education in South Africa. Nkomo attended schools in South Africa, and later obtained a degree in social science by correspondence through the University of South Africa. Chikerema studied at the University of Cape Town until his political activities attracted the attention of the South African Police, whereupon he fled to Rhodesia. A considerable portion of the leadership of ZAPU has thus had active contact with the liberation movement in South Africa, one of the most ideologically and organisationally advanced in the whole continent of Africa, and this has undoubtedly been of great importance in the development of ZAPU as the leading force in Rhodesia.

TRADE UNION BACKGROUND

Nkomo, Nyandoro and Jason Moyo had considerable experience in the Trade Union Movement before they entered the political arena. In 1951 Nkomo

became General Secretary of the Rhodesia Railways African Employees Association, which had taken the lead in the strike movement of 1945, and had become one of the most powerful organisations in the country. By 1952 Nkomo had organised 22 branches of the union with a membership of 2,600. Nyandoro, a scion of one of the chiefly families of Mashonoland, had played a leading role in the organisation of workers in the urban areas and later was mainly concerned with the organisation of resistance among farmers and rural workers, against the land and cattle restriction laws of the Rhodesian Government.

FORWARD EVER – BACKWARD NEVER

Under the slogan "Forward Ever, Backward Never", the African National Congress advocated a policy of national unity of all the African people, overcoming tribal and racial barriers alike. The Congress opposed the pass laws and other discriminatory legislation, and pledged to establish a democratic Rhodesia based on the policy of one man one vote. From the beginning the ANC was open to members of all races, and a number of whites, Asians and Coloureds, took out membership cards and associated themselves with the country's premier African organisation.

In 1959, following the political disturbances in Nyasaland, the Rhodesian

Premier, Sir Edgar Whitehead, later to claim recognition as a „liberal“, alleged that a campaign of violence and subversion was being planned in Southern Rhodesia, and he used this excuse to declare a state of emergency, banning the ANC and arresting and detaining several hundred of its leaders, including George Nyandoro, James Chikerema and Jason Moyo. Nkomo was abroad in Africa at the time. Chikerema smuggled a letter out of jail, asking Joshua Nkomo to stay abroad until such time as he was called back by the people.

During their incarceration, Nyandoro, Chikerema, Moyo and others kept the fires of freedom burning; and in prison they drafted the Constitution and policy for a new organisation – the National Democratic Party.

NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY

On January 1st, 1960, the National Democratic Party was formed as a successor to the ANC, and despite the emergency and threats of arrest, Nkomo returned to Rhodesia to take up the position of President. The NDP retained for the most part the policies and even the leadership of the old ANC, proclaimed its unalterable opposition to the Central African Federation, and called for the establishment of a free Rhodesia based on universal suffrage. The NDP too was banned on December 9, 1961. Eight days later

the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) was formed.

In 1961, the British Government, under pressure both from inside and outside Rhodesia to promote African advancement, came forward with a new constitution designed to create the illusion of African participation in government while at the same time preserving real power in white hands. The constitution, which eventually came into force, provided for the creation of a Parliament of 65 members, 50 elected on a predominantly white roll and 15 on a predominantly black roll. Educational and financial qualifications restricted the African electorate to a mere 12,000 out of a population of four million, while practically every adult white became enfranchised. The NDP at first hesitated over the prospect of having African representation in Parliament for the first time, but eventually rejected the fraud constitution and re-dedicated itself to the struggle for one man one vote.

ZAPU BANNED

The struggle sharpened in Rhodesia, and mass action in the form of strikes and boycotts took place in many centres. Police violence against the people met with equally violent response, and there were a number of incidents of burning of houses of Government stooges and informers. In September, 1962, the Rhodesian Government banned ZAPU, and the organisation went underground, the leadership pledging that they would allow no new political party to be formed.

With the banning of ZAPU the Rhodesian Government placed all members of the leadership, including Joshua Nkomo, James Chikerema and George Nyandoro under restriction. They were released in 1963.

The Executive then decided that five of its members should be stationed outside the country to conduct the organisation in the open, while the rest would stay to organise underground. Soon after this decision, however, the President and all the executive members remaining in Zimbabwe were arrested and detained.

Thus Vice-President Chikerema, together with George Nyandoro, Jason Moyo, George Silundika and Edward Ndhlovu – then stationed in Tanzania – were charged with the responsibility of running ZAPU both externally and internally, that is, of co-ordinating the external operations of the

James Chikerema with President Boumediene of Algeria: Others in the photo are Tambo (ANC), Noko (ZAPU), Mondlane (FRELIMO) & Amilcar Gabral Sec-Gen, PAIGC.



movement with its internal underground activities.

When in 1963 a split developed amongst the leadership of ZAPU, a group led by Rev. Sithole formed the opposition ZANU, which remained as a legal organisation until 1964, when it too was banned under emergency regulations.

BROAD SUPPORT

ZAPU has support from the non-African communities. Prominent Whites like former Premier Garfield Todd, is a declared supporter of ZAPU. Leaders of the Coloured and Asian communities are in restriction, in the Gonakudzingwa area together with Joshua Nkomo.

At the first tri-continental conference held at Havana, ZAPU representatives attended in the name of the Rhodesian people. The delegates at this historic conference, which was attended by organisations from Africa, Asia and Latin America, after condemning the Smith-Wilson conspiracy against the African people of Rhodesia, passed a resolution recognising the Zimbabwe African People's Union as the "only Liberation Movement and the only authentic representative of the African people of Zimbabwe." The Conference proclaimed its "active solidarity with the people of Zimbabwe who are engaged in a life and death struggle", and called upon all socialist and independent countries, and all progressive organisations in Africa, Asia and Latin America to provide aid to ZAPU, including all facilities necessary to intensify the struggle to "achieve victory against British colonial rule and imperialism". A special committee consisting of representatives from the United Arab Republic, Cuba and Vietnam, together with a representative of Zimbabwe, was set up, with headquarters in Cairo, to work for the implementation of the resolution.

ZAPU TAKES TO ARMS

As the tri-continental conference declared, the people of Zimbabwe are engaged in a life and death struggle, and have been ever since the illegal Smith Government declared its unilateral independence in November of 1965. The African people, under ZAPU leadership, embarked on a programme of mass strikes and demonstrations, the moment UDI was declared. When their protests were drowned in blood by the Smith butchers, who indulged in an orgy of



Joshua Nkomo, President of ZAPU, now in detention.

violence, mass arrests, torture and brutality, ZAPU resorted to more militant action. They have never had any confidence, either in the bona fides of the Wilson Government or in its policy of sanctions. The absence of offensive action from the British has compelled ZAPU to take up arms in order to liberate the country from the illegal Smith dictatorship. In the struggle launched jointly by the ANC and ZAPU freedom fighters in Zimbabwe in August 1967, many brave Zimbabwe - an sons have already lost their lives. Despite this, the fighting and underground re-organisation goes on.

THE FUTURE

The prospects for the revolution in Zimbabwe and the confidence the ZAPU leadership has of eventually dislodging Smith and his illegal regime in best summed up by George Nyandoro, ZAPU's dynamic Secretary-Ge-

neral who said when interviewed by Sechaba (See Vol.2.No.5.):—

"Our revolution will be a complete success! There is no question about it - we shall go on fighting until we are in complete control of our affairs. One need only look back at history, and see how the Algerians fought for their independence against 400,000 French troops in occupation. Today, Algeria is independent. The total settler population of Zimbabwe is only 25,000, but time and again we have been told that the Rhodesian and South African defence forces would prove invincible. We have already disposed of this fallacy forever, in the battlefield in the autumn of last year. Like all peoples fighting for their own liberation, we are armed not only with weapons, but with our own inner, immovable determination to liberate ourselves whatever the odds."

LONG LIVE ZAPU!