

---

# CONFERENCE OF AFRICAN STATES

Jane Bukari

**T**HE determined and fierce pressures which imperialism is exerting on the newly independent states in Africa, were clearly to be seen in the campaign which preceded the holding of the recent meeting of the Heads of States of Independent African States, in Accra last month.

Every effort was made to prevent the holding of the Conference. Press campaigns were mounted, especially against Ghana, well known as a leading advocate of African unity. Allegations were made that Ghana was harbouring refugees who were organising to carry out subversive activities in neighbouring states. Another line of attack was to pour scorn on the possibility of any positive achievements coming out of the Conference. So fierce did the campaign

become that the mere fact of holding the Conference at all in Accra, became in itself an anti-imperialist success. Efforts were made to arouse narrow nationalist sentiment by suggesting that the call for Continental Union Government is a device to satisfy the overweening political ambition of one or other of the Heads of State. A number of former French colonies, unfortunately submitted to imperialist pressures, but in spite of all the efforts to prevent it, the Conference took place with 28 States represented, most of them by their Heads of State.

The growth of Continental Unity is seen by the people of Africa as indispensable to them in their continued, unremitting fight against imperialism. Those who work so hard for their unity are not unaware of the many difficulties that lie ahead for them, but they are acutely aware of the yet more serious problems that will face them if they are disunited. They know that the artificial splitting up of the Continent into small states with weak economies and small internal markets, places them at the mercy of imperialism which continuously threatens their real independence. It is through unity that they see the possibility of mobilising sufficient political and economic strength to resist neo-colonialism. The resistance to neo-colonialism has to go on at the same time as the task of ridding the continent once and for all of colonialism and racialist régimes.

The Rhodesian crisis dominated the Accra Conference. It was a constant reminder that the initial impulse for unity is an anti-imperialist one. The dangers and complexities of the crisis emphasised the magnitude of the task of liberating Southern Africa from the rule of Rhodesian white settlers, from the Portuguese Fascists and from South Africa's apartheid régime. The discussions on the Rhodesian crisis occupied the bulk of the time of the Conference. The resolution which was passed was not reached without difficulty.

Two years ago, the O.A.U. established what is known as the Committee of Nine, to co-ordinate assistance to the national liberation movements in Africa. M. Diallo Telli, the Secretary General of the O.A.U. was extremely critical of the work of the Committee, which has not yet succeeded in unifying the various sections of the movements, nor has it yet found effective methods of transmitting aid to them. This remains one of the most serious challenges to the Organisation.

The representatives of ZAPU and ZANU were present in Accra during the Conference and a special sub-Committee was set up to try and reconcile them. It is tragic that they were unable to report

any success, and the two parties remain divided. In spite of these problems, however, the Conference faced up to its responsibilities. The Secretary-General set the dominant note when he declared in his report, that the situation in Rhodesia is explosive and a threat to world peace, but that the British Government has carried out a policy 'in flagrant contradiction to her moral, political and constitutional obligations, but also with her well established principles, as displayed in Guyana and Aden, where she did not hesitate, in face of an infinitely less dangerous situation than that which exists now in Rhodesia, to recall Governments which nevertheless had popular support, under the false pretext that her interests were no longer safe and that her responsibilities as a colonial power made it her duty to keep order and security'. The section on Rhodesia ends with the following declaration:

The extreme seriousness of the situation in Southern Rhodesia and the challenge which it constitutes for the O.A.U. for the achievement of all its liberation aims for the African continent lead the Secretariat to suggest that absolute priority should be given to the situation by the Council in order that the necessary decisions are taken at the proper time.

The Heads of State were not in the least distracted from the central political issue for Rhodesia. In spite of all the attempts to present the main aim as being to stop the unilateral declaration of independence by the white settlers, they cut through this with the demand at the very opening of their Resolution for majority government in Southern Rhodesia.

This is the key demand for which they adopted a resolution directed to the United Nations. Its main features were as follows: Britain should suspend the 1961 Constitution and take over the administration of the territory, if necessary using armed force to do so. There follows the insistence on the release of Joshua Nkomo and the Reverend N. Sithole from imprisonment or detention and all other political prisoners. This is the necessary precondition to the insistence on the holding of a constitutional conference with representatives of the entire population of Rhodesia, to adopt a constitution constructed on the principle of one man one vote, free elections and independence.

With these demands firmly established as the central strategy, the Heads of State went on to consider forms of pressure which could be applied for their realisation. All African States are now committed to the non-recognition of any white minority government in Rhodesia and to extending recognition to a national government in exile if the settlers succeed in the unilateral declaration. The

O.A.U. members were further urged to reconsider their own relations with Britain if she grants or tolerates independence of the white minority régime, both diplomatic and economic.

The Africa Group at the United Nations was empowered to push for the fullest discussion of this resolution in the United Nations, and all African States were urged to give the maximum assistance to the people of Zimbabwe to win their independence. These proposals are of far-reaching character and that section of the resolution which calls for sanctions against Britain in the event of her tolerating a unilateral settler declaration would have a tremendous effect, not only on Britain but on the African states which are in the Commonwealth, because of the extensive ramifications of their economic relations with Britain.

Undeterred by these problems, President Nkrumah expressed the spirit of the O.A.U. Resolution completely when he met Wilson during the latter's two-hour stop down in Accra en route from Salisbury.

In a prepared statement, President Nkrumah outlined the main sections of this resolution and declared that if white minority rule is established and if the Queen remains the Head of such a state in Southern Rhodesia, then Ghana will withdraw from the Commonwealth. Wilson was considerably rattled both by the uncompromising nature of the statement and by the demonstration from the Ghanaian crowd at the airport with placards and slogans expressive of the O.A.U. Resolution.

To opinion in Africa, it seems incredible that the British Government is prepared, after such a resolution by the African Heads of State, to continue to alienate African opinion through appeasement of Smith's racist régime. The feeling on Rhodesia is not one generated from above by Governments, it reflects the deep rooted hatred of the African masses for imperialism and racism. Not only will Britain be judged by what happens now in Rhodesia, there are few remaining illusions about the imperialist sympathies of the present Labour Government, but African Governments too will be judged by their people, and they will be rejected if they fail to live up to the spirit and letter of the Resolution which can be a powerful weapon in helping to unify all the forces working for independence within the country and all those outside whose assistance and whose pressure can force real victory.