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NOTE VERBALE DATED 26 APRIL 1979 FROM THE PERMANENT MISSION OF BENIN
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The Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of Benin presents its compliments to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and has the honour to transmit to him herewith for publication as a document of the Security Council the text of a statement on "The Elections of Ian Smith" submitted on 25 April 1979 to the States Members of the United Nations by Dr. Callistus Dingiswayo Ndlovu, representative of the Patriotic Front.

Annex

THE ELECTIONS OF IAN SMITH

A briefing to United Nations Members:
By Dr. Callistus Dingiswayo Ndlovu

Representative of the Patriotic Front

25 April 1979

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(a) The context of the Smith elections

The régime of Ian Smith has just completed staging its much publicized elections of 72 blacks and 28 whites to its so-called biracial parliament. The Smith elections like those conducted by apartheid South Africa in Namibia, were held in defiance of the United Nations. After failing to enlist the co-operation of the international community in the implementation of their respective constitutional gimmicks in Namibia and Zimbabwe, the South African and Rhodesian régimes went ahead with unilateral constitutional arrangements chiefly designed to make southern Africa safe for apartheid and the continued exploitation of black people in South Africa itself, Zimbabwe, and Namibia. South Africa has code-named this plan "Fortress Southern Africa", a scheme designed to subject the African subcontinent under a South African military and economic sphere of influence.

Both conceptually and concretely, "Fortress Southern Africa" is a blatant attempt by apartheid South Africa to extend its military and economic domination over the whole of Africa. By accepting the results of the elections in both Zimbabwe and Namibia, the world will be endorsing South Africa's imperialist designs on Africa as a whole. Before the collapse of Portuguese rule in Africa, the South African régime maintained its domination of the African subcontinent through a triangular defence arrangement that linked herself, the Rhodesian régime, and Portugal. Under that arrangement South African troops were stationed in both minority ruled Zimbabwe and the two Portuguese colonies of Angola and Mozambique. After the collapse of Portuguese rule in Africa, the triangular defence front became untenable, and South Africa then sought to retain its dominance over the region through an adjusted arrangement which called for controlled political changes in Namibia and Zimbabwe where neo-colonial puppet régimes dependent on South Africa herself would emerge. The manoeuvre by South Africa was called détente in southern Africa. By adopting such a "pro-majority rule" position, South Africa sought not only to sponsor puppet rule in Namibia and Zimbabwe, but also to gain herself acceptability from the Organization of African Unity (OAU), and indeed the international community.

In this scheme of things, South Africa linked a solution of the Rhodesian problem to the solution of the problem of Namibia. Seen in this light, Smith's so-called internal settlement and South Africa's Turnhalle arrangement in Namibia are products of an over-all South African strategy to entrench minority rule in the two countries, disguised under the façade of majority rule constitutions which, in practice, leave strategic institutions of power in the hands of white minorities. Hence any endorsement of either of these moves amounts to endorsing South Africa's domestic policies on Africans. The fact that blacks may emerge as leaders of government or heads of State is meaningless in terms of real power, because they will be mere front-men for the real evil that is apartheid South Africa.

The threat by Abel Muzorewa that when he comes to "power" his régime will try to unseat President Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia should not be taken as idle talk. Muzorewa is saying what South Africa means by "Fortress Southern Africa".

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Any country that recognizes the régime that results from Smith's elections must understand that it is recognizing South Africa's creature.

The constitution under which these elections were held is illegal. Hence the elections themselves have been pronounced illegal and unacceptable by the United Nations Security Council. Because they evade the real issue, namely the transfer of power to the majority, the elections are irrelevant. The freedom fighters do not recognize them, so do the people of Zimbabwe as a whole.

In the West, Smith's elections have been given a wide and favourable coverage by the press. Not only as the African voter turnout been described as large (63 per cent of the 2.8 million projected voters). The conduct of the elections has also been praised as fair and democratic. In the analysis that follows, we wish to examine those elections:

(b) The environment of the Smith elections

1. Before one examines the voting in Smith's elections, one must note that these elections were conducted under conditions of martial law (covering 94 per cent of the country) and a state of emergency (over the whole country). Under these conditions any person engaging in activities openly opposed to what the régime wanted to accomplish in the elections, was subject to arrest (if he/she was lucky) or to summary execution by firing (if he/she fell into the hands of Smith's soldiers). The total mobilization of over 100,000 armed men by the régime during the elections, and the activation of units of pro-régime military auxiliaries or private armies loyal to African parties contesting the elections emphasized these risks to opponents of the elections. The role of private armies in driving people to polling places and forcing people to vote for certain parties was widely reported by the Reuters News Wire Service, and also by our observers on the scene.

2. It should also be noted that the Rhodesian régime did not register African voters before the elections were held in fear that such an exercise would be boycotted by most blacks. In the absence of a registered list of voters, the régime came up with an imaginary figure of 2.8 million African voters. This figure was considered safe no matter what the voter turnout was. Although officials of the régime have claimed that the 2.8 million figure was determined through census figures and school records, this figure falls far short of the real number of Africans (with a minimum age of 18) qualified to vote in a country whose population is anywhere between 7 million and 9 million.

The inaccuracy of the estimated total number of voters given by the régime is underscored in the voter turnout of two constituencies of Mashonaland West and Mashonaland central where it was in each case above 100 per cent. Given this evidence it is absolutely ludicrous to take what is an imaginary number of voters in the country and use it as a base for determining the percentage turnout of the elections. Thus the claim that there was a turnout of 63 per cent of the voters in the elections is as uninformed as the belief that every African who voted did so voluntarily.

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3. Even if we were to say the 1.8 million African voters in a population like that of Zimbabwe is substantial, we still find that in the context of those elections, there are a number of factors that must be accounted for in assessing the character of those elections. To begin with it must be noted that about 500,000 blacks in the country live either in protected villages or under some form of direct military control, over and above the constraints of martial law itself. There are also about 350,000 migrant workers, most of whom are Malawians, and the rest are Mozambicans who entered the country before Mozambique became independent. The evidence at our disposal shows that in the protected villages, the voter turnout was almost 100 per cent. The same also applies to the voter turnout among farm labourers and mine workers who are largely made up of migrant workers (who should not have voted in normal circumstances). This high voter turnout among inmates of protected villages and migrant workers is easy to explain. Inmates of protected villages and people living under direct control of the Rhodesian army were not in a position to exercise an independent political preference. Migrant workers, most of whom are farm hands, are totally under the control of their employers, and because their movement within the country is restricted because they are aliens, they are exactly in the same position as inmates of protected villages. Given this state of affairs, both inmates of protected villages and migrant labourers were forced to vote by their captors. These two sectors alone accounted for at least 25 per cent of the total vote in the elections.

4. It has also been noted that the voter turnout in the urban areas was generally higher than it was in the rural areas. The economic strangle-hold of the settler régime over urban and peri-urban workers through its pin-prick control mechanisms carefully institutionalized over the years by legislation like the Land Tenure Act (now theoretically repealed), the Industrial Conciliation Act, and the Native Registration Act, makes it difficult for African workers in general to act independently of their employers. The reports that many white employers provided their black employees with transport to polling places is a mild way of saying that employers compelled their employees to go and vote. Refusing to go and vote when one's employer released one to go and vote, would have been tantamount to going on strike, and as such an offence (punishable by summary dismissal from employment under the provisions of the Industrial Conciliation Act and its ancillary legislation). The evidence that among employed Africans, the voter turnout was much higher than among unemployed town dwellers, supports the charge that white employers forced their employees to vote under penalty of dismissal from employment.

5. There are about 500,000 displaced peasants now living as squatters or refugees in the urban areas. These victims of the war live in shanty towns whose shelters are put up at dusk and torn down at dawn (at the orders of Rhodesian authorities). Until the election campaign began, the burden of feeding and clothing these desperate people was exclusively shouldered by church groups like Christian Care and other philanthropic organizations. But when the campaign for elections came, leaders of groups in the so-called internal settlement began to fraternize these refugees by making food and clothing available to them. The régime itself also suddenly became interested in their

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lot, although it did nothing to improve their lot materially. By providing these helpless people with food, clothing and other favours, parties to the so-called internal settlement were trying to win their votes in the elections. In fact, it is suggested that as the régime and its allies became uncertain of the rural vote towards the election day, they encouraged many peasants to flee their homes for the shanty towns in the urban areas, where they could be easily forced or organized to vote. Thus when the election day came, the various parties to the so-called internal settlement returned to the refugee shanty towns to collect their IOU's. On its part, the régime merely told these people that if they did not vote, they would be evicted from their shanty towns. In the face of such threats, the refugees in the shanty towns had no choice but to vote. Their vote was a significant part of the urban voter turnout in Salisbury in particular.

6. It has been widely reported that 14-year-olds were seen voting in many polling areas. Most of these children were brought to the polling areas to vote, by their teachers who were under orders from the régime (under penalty of dismissal from their jobs) to see to it that their pupils voted. Because most schools in the rural areas have been closed because of the war, most of the school children who voted are pupils in urban government schools. Fourteen-year-olds who voted, made their preferences on the basis of the teachers. These are some of the irregularities that Ndabaningi Sithole is complaining about, although his complaints against the election are unprincipled and selfish. The fact that teenagers below the age of 18 years were allowed to vote makes nonsense of the estimated number of 2.8 million voters that the régime announced was the total number of Africans qualified to vote. The role of teachers in the elections, and particularly their control over the votes of their pupils explains the rather lop-sided vote for Muzorewa in Mashonaland central, Mashonaland West and other areas where teachers who support him literally delivered the votes of their students to the Bishop. In the context of his sellout role in the elections, Ndabaningi Sithole's complaints that elections were characterized by a lot of irregularities are valid.

(c) The role of observers and the conduct of the elections

If the above characterization of the environment of these elections is accurate, how could observers have failed to see that the conduct of the elections was neither free, fair, nor democratic? These elections were not free because of the role of the armed forces and the overt pressures applied upon black voters in the five days of elections. They were based on an undemocratic constitution that permitted white voters to vote, first for the 28 white seats, and second, for the 72 black seats. In fact, when put in ratio form the white vote to a black vote was worth 11:1 in that whites who are 4 per cent of the population elected 28 per cent of the parliamentary seats alone, and then also voted along with blacks who are 96 per cent of the population to elect 72 Africans to parliament. In short every white voter had 11 votes while every black person had one. This means that the elections were neither fair nor democratic.

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The answer to the question why observers in general seem to have failed to find anything irregular in the elections lies in part in the ignorance of the observers about the country and in part in their commitment to supporting minority rule in southern Africa. One particular American group of observers from Freedom House appears to have been granted undue credibility by the Western news media. Because two members of this group have, in the past, associated with the civil rights movement in the United States, namely Allard Lowenstein and Bayard Rustin, the press has sought to attach undue credibility to their assessment of the elections at the expense of reason. First of all, even if Allard Lowenstein's record in the civil rights movement is commendable, this does not make him an expert on Zimbabwe. Lowenstein, a former United States Congressman showed himself to be very naive recently when he came back from Southern Africa claiming that he could work out a deal on Zimbabwe that would achieve the resignation of Ian Smith from the so-called transitional administration, preparing the way for the Patriotic Front to enter the internal settlement. In other words, he thought that the stumbling-block to any settlement was the presence of Smith in the so-called transitional régime, not the nature of the constitutional details of the so-called internal settlement itself. A person capable of such gross naiveté about the issues could not be expected to make a balanced judgement of Smith's elections. Secondly, Bayard Rustin, a black American, is a man who has not supported any relevant black cause in the United States in the last 15 years. He might have been remotely connected with Martin Luther King Jr. during the civil rights days, but today he has practically no credibility in the black community.

The rest of the observers were people who have supported Smith throughout his defiance of the international community. These people could not be expected to criticize the conduct of Smith's elections.

Conclusion

Many Western commentators want the world to judge Smith's elections independently of the constitution on which they are based. This is absurd. The Patriotic Front rejected the so-called internal settlement because it did not settle anything. And because we rejected the constitution of the so-called settlement, we consider the elections resulting from it irrelevant and, therefore, null and void. In the opinion of the people of Zimbabwe, the vast majority of whom did not vote (or if they did, they did so under the gun), Smith's elections were a farce that solved nothing. No constitution, or election, which does not enjoy the active support of the Patriotic Front has any future in Zimbabwe.

THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES! VICTORY IS CERTAIN!
