

II) KAUNDA'S DILEMMA

A review of Richard Hall's book, The High Price of Principles: Kaunda and the White South, Hodder & Stoughton, 1969, 35s.

by Geoffrey Wood\*

Richard Hall has presented us with another entry in the reading-list of Harold Wilson's conscience, alongside Frederick Forsyth's The Biafra Story. The tenets of a Western liberal-democracy mean very little when an elected leader can so assiduously deny the principles for which his party once stood over the only two major issues of foreign policy in which Britain had the chance to take the leading world role - U.D.I. in Southern Rhodesia, and the Nigeria-Biafra war.

This book will make those committed to Zambia and the future of black independent Africa, even more committed; it will persuade the floating voter - still intent on preserving the code of tolerance for which the last war was fought. But in the last resort, will it, could it make any difference?

The image of the stereotyped journalist has been discarded for this exercise; the author is not intent upon dazzling us with rhetoric but tries rather to convince us with an array of penetrating arguments supported by undocumented evidence. (There are ten footnotes, seven of which refer to other sections of the book).

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The author skilfully weaves a number of themes: the domestic politics of Zambia, Southern Rhodesia, South Africa and Britain; the international and commercial aims of South Africa and Britain; and Pan-Africanism - symbolising the desire to attack the legacies of colonialism and achieve black majority rule from Southern Sahara to the Cape. From this impressively wide-ranging field of vision, Hall focusses on events in Zambia and Kaunda's dilemma, a dilemma which existed before U.D.I. but which was enormously exacerbated by it. Zambia has now become, in Hall's phrase, 'the battleground for conflicting ideologies', where the South African desire to create strategic buffer states north of the Zambesi is confronted by the Pan-Africanist determination to remove apartheid constitutions to the south. With Malawi now caught within South Africa's sphere of influence, we are reminded that Zambia becomes the outpost of black Africa and one which is physically, economically and militarily vulnerable. Its resources - rich in copper but poor in skilled manpower, administrative competence and military strength - are increasingly supplemented spiritually, if not economically, along lines of support which run not to Britain but to Tanzania and China. In this respect, Angola and Mocambique are openly hostile neighbours - Mobutu and Congo-Kinshasa can only be uncertain friends after the previous antagonism of Moise Tshombe. Hall could have pressed this case still further if he had included Tshombe's previous support from Nkumbula and Zambia's minority party - the African National Congress - which is thought to favour a reconciliation with the South, following the example of Banda in Malawi.

Bottomley's fright at Zambia's Independence celebrations is amusingly described: the row over the British South Africa Company's compensation was reaching its climax, and Bottomley, in office only ten days as Commonwealth Secretary, had read one file on it. He arrived by plane in Lusaka to discover that the proposals he brought were totally unacceptable. Decisively, he announced that he would immediately fly back to receive instructions from his master - only to be reminded that it would be quicker to telephone. Funny, but revealing both pathetic ignorance and an untarnished faith in his leader. Oh, to have been a fly with ears on the wall of

that tent when Bottomley told Emrys-Evans that the going-rate for the B.S.A. Company's mineral rights had slipped from £50 million to £4 million (half of it taxable) in ten months. But Bottomley is not singled out as a scapegoat for the British government's ineptitude and eagerness to sidestep every major confrontation with Smith. After his visit to Southern Rhodesia early in 1965, 'Bottomley was notably more cautious'. He had gained shrewd insights into the militancy of Kaunda and other African leaders. Hall traces the friction between Bottomley, who was less prepared to court the favour of the Tories, and Wilson - later remarking that Bottomley 'had no illusions about Smith's determination to cling to power and regarded the missions to Salisbury as degrading.' In contrast, Wilson's preoccupation with domestic politics appears to have been compounded with an ignorance of the historical events which clearly demonstrate the white Southern Rhodesians' 'determination to cling to power'. If there is an omission by Hall, it is the failure to emphasise the previous difference between Zambia's protectorate constitution and Southern Rhodesia's self-governing constitution; and the particular impact of an expatriate settler community in Southern Rhodesia contrasted with the expatriate, profit-oriented activity on the Copperbelt in what was Northern Rhodesia. The story of Federation politics hinges on the desire to remove profits from copper to the South and to reinforce the expatriate interests in the South. Kaunda's successful fight for independence prevented a similar expatriate self-governing constitution north of the Zambesi, but he could never retrieve the previous loss of revenue from copper, let alone confiscate the benefits. It is for the protection of this investment that Smith declared U.D.I.; and with Hunter fighter planes, bought with Federal revenue, that he protects it. Wilson underestimated the tenacity with which Smith and the 200,000 thorns in his side would cling to this.

Kaunda, it emerges, was far more sympathetic to Wilson's dilemma than vice-versa. Kaunda was prepared to allow Wilson time to increase his majority to enable him to tackle the vested interests of British commerce and the white minority sympathisers in the Conservative Party. To do this Kaunda had to jeopardise his own credit-rating, particularly with the more militant members of his cabinet.

Kapwepwe, for example, was eager that Britain's promises of military aid for Zambia should be ignored, to leave the way clear for an O.A.U. force. Thus, Wilson had adeptly passed the problem of retaining cabinet solidarity onto Kaunda. The Zambian President summed up the situation very succinctly: 'what is good politics in England may be bad politics in Africa.'

But this is only one of Kaunda's dilemmas. The others are well described by Hall: the reconstruction of external communication links in the attempt to eliminate dependence on the South; the ironic increase in dependence on imports from South Africa as a result of boycotting Southern Rhodesian goods (Wankie coal excepted); resisting pressure to perform a 'buffer' role for South Africa; the ideological imperatives of allowing nationalist guerilla forces to operate from Zambian soil and the continual threat of reprisals from the South; the scepticism of Western aid-donors and investors as demonstrated by the pipeline from Dar es Salaam to Ndola and the Tan-Zam railway, with the consequent reliance on Chinese aid. All this on top of the usual, but no less severe problems confronted by any newly independent state in Africa or elsewhere: the tensions created by tribal militancy; shortages in qualified manpower bequeathed by the colonial regime; disparity of income and consumption between the urban and rural sectors; the prospect of rising imports and rising inflation; the probability of declining prices for copper, Zambia's major foreign exchange earner; and providing satisfaction for ideological demands, reflected in increasing state participation in the industrial sector and the promotion of rural development. The list is endless. In short, Zambia has had a raw deal - ditched by Britain and left vulnerable.

The ground that these arguments fall on cannot be all stony. The message is clear - the intransigence of the British government has left Zambia isolated, and no subsequent Conservative government will remedy that. The damage has been inflicted, but some individuals may repair some of that damage. It will be a shame if Richard Hall's unveiling appeals only to the converted, but the latter can shout from the rooftops, too.

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