

WHY NKOMO WAS OUSTED

“Deserted the people through fear”

THE Rev. Ndabingi Sithole, interim president of the new Zimbabwe African National Union of Southern Rhodesia, has issued a statement explaining the deposition of Mr. Nkomo, former president of the proscribed ZAPU.

Mr. Sithole had been national chairman of the banned party, and in that capacity had visited London and the U.S.A. on Mr. Nkomo's behalf. He was appointed by Mr. Nkomo as leader of a 'government-in-exile' in Tanganyika when the last Southern Rhodesian Government banned ZAPU for subversive activities.

We reproduce below the text of the statement:

“MR. Nkomo is very much afraid of going to jail. This causes him to evade taking the necessary political decisions which any leader in his position is expected to take. The white settlers have exploited this fact to full advantage. Because of this fear Mr. Nkomo has deserted the people at the time when they most needed bold leadership that does not count the cost.

“When ZAPU was banned on September 20, 1962, Mr. Nkomo was in Lusaka. Much against the advice of UNIP and his supporters, Mr. Nkomo fled to Dar-es-Salaam, leaving his sheep to be scattered by the wolf. Mr. Nkomo publicly stated that he did not want ‘to rot in jail’. Meanwhile hundreds of his supporters went to jail.

Infamous Exodus

“When he was finally forced to go back to Southern Rhodesia and face detention, after 10 days of chopping and changing, the psychological moment had been missed. Mr. Nkomo was greatly shaken and undermined. Since then the people have been saying: ‘How can we get our independence with such a cowardly leader?’ While in detention, Mr. Nkomo's fears were also clearly demonstrated. He arranged for a private plane to take all the members of the central executive secretariat

out of restriction, but they refused to jump the restriction.

“When Mr. Winston Field threatened to go it alone if Britain did not grant Southern Rhodesia independence under the present Constitution, Mr. Nkomo's fears were once again aroused. As he put it himself, ‘if Mr. Field declares Southern Rhodesia independent, we (the members of the executive) shall be bundled up’. This explains in part the infamous exodus of the executive from Southern Rhodesia to Dar-es-Salaam last April.

Law unto Himself

“In many cases members have found themselves deceived and have become embittered against Mr. Nkomo. On several occasions he had assured the central executive that he had received assurances from some independent African countries that if he wanted to form a government-in-exile he would be welcome. Last April, to get the members of the central executive out of the country, although much against their better judgment, he told them that this was on the advice of Tanganyika, and that Tanganyika had agreed to the formation of a government-in-exile in Tanganyika. But when the members of the executive arrived in Dar-es-Salaam they found that this was not the case. Instead they found that Tanganyika's only concern was: ‘If you leave the people

you are leading, who is going to lead them? Who is going to organize them?’

“Mr. Nkomo had become a law unto himself, and as such dealt severely with anyone who disagreed with him, who criticized his leadership, and who suggested any radical change in the present leadership.

“On July 6, at a rally held in Harare, Salisbury, he publicly named 10 hard-core nationalists as his chief enemies. Among these were Enos Nkala, Neny Hamadziripi, and Moris Nyagumbo, all of whom have served terms of imprisonment varying between two and four years for political reasons; and this act has infuriated many people.

“Mr. Nkomo has held many secret meetings with district branch and district leaders and demanded on threat of suspension their apology for their criticism of his leadership, but these leaders have remained adamant.

The Suspension

“On June 28 the executive arranged in Lusaka with Mr. Nkomo for a full meeting to be held on July 10 in Northern Rhodesia. While we were preparing to leave Dar-es-Salaam we received the following cable from Mr. Nkomo: ‘In view of Marondera's activities when here recently and activities of one or two members of national

executive in Dar-es-Salaam meeting of executive on 10th stopped until mess cleared”.

“We sent the following cable to Mr. Kaunda: ‘Please inform President Nkomo if in Northern Rhodesia that executive determined to hold meeting as planned chance of clearing up mess if any greater as executive together’.

“In reply to this we heard over the radio that four members of the executive in Dar-es-Salaam—Messrs. Sithole, Takawira and Malianga—had been suspended by Mr. Nkomo. The following day we received from Mr. Nkomo the following cable: ‘Messrs. Sithole, Takawira, Malianga and Mugabe, you are hereby suspended until decision of conference of people’s representatives. You will be informed of the date and place of conference.’

Arbitrary Action

“We took the greatest exception to this arbitrary, unconstitutional and undemocratic action. At a meeting of the seven members of the executive in Dar-es-Salaam we pointed out that Mr. Nkomo had messed up all of us, and had become aware and afraid of our censure of him, and hence his frantic effort to neutralize us. We pointed out that no conference could be held in Southern Rhodesia since ZAPU was banned. This was merely one of Mr. Nkomo’s stunts. We rejected his suspension, denounced his leadership, and deposed him from leadership. We felt Mr. Nkomo was already beginning to whittle down other people’s freedom of speech before we have even got that freedom. Mr. Nkomo’s actions have been most inconsiderate in relation to his colleagues, and have proved that he is only responsible to himself and to no one else.

Impulsive Indecision

“When ZAPU was banned last year, without consulting him, he just announced to the world that he had appointed Mr. Sithole to lead the party-in-exile. Six days later Mr. Sithole accepted reluctantly the appointment, which meant being away from his wife and six

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Nkomo is Gone

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children. Only a few days ago Mr. Nkomo, knowing that Mr. Sithole was in a foreign country, cabled President Nyerere that he had suspended Sithole. It was on Nkomo's orders that Sithole had remained outside his country; now it is Nkomo again who has chosen to interfere with Sithole's normal activities in Tanganyika.

"Last April Mr. Nkomo, under false presentation, induced Mr. Robert Mugabe, who was out of custody on heavy bail, to jump the bail and come to Dar-es-Salaam. In complying with Mr. Nkomo's wishes Mr. Mugabe had involved himself in an offence against the law. As if this were not enough, Mr. Nkomo has cabled President Nyerere that he has suspended Mr. Mugabe. This apparently was intended to cause difficulty for Mr. Mugabe so that he is in trouble both in Southern Rhodesia and in Tanganyika.

Witch-hunts

"In the same month Mr. Nkomo induced Mr. Takawira to jump his bail and come out to Dar-es-Salaam. This has naturally placed Mr. Takawira in a difficult position in relation to Southern Rhodesia. Having placed Mr. Takawira in this mess, Mr. Nkomo cabled President Nyerere that he had suspended Mr. Takawira, thus endeavouring to incapacitate him in Southern Rhodesia and the country in which Mr. Nkomo himself has dumped him.

"Immediately ZAPU was banned, Mr. Nkomo, without consulting the Tanganyika Government, let alone his colleagues, announced his intention to form a government-in-exile. He was however, later forced to retract that statement.

"We all desire the unity of the

African people of Southern Rhodesia, but Mr. Nkomo's flight from Southern Rhodesia to Tanganyika with the whole central executive, his unfounded assurances regarding the formation of a government-in-exile, his constant refusal to meet his whole executive, his arbitrary suspension of the four members of the central executive, his public denunciation of hard-core nationalists in Southern Rhodesia, let alone his indecision, vacillation, impulsive and irrational pronouncements, and his fear to face the music are among the factors that threaten the unity we all seek to maintain as we face the white settlers, who are determined to deny us the independence of our country which is rightly ours by birth.

"Mr. Nkomo had to be halted in his innumerable witch-hunts, which have resulted in his being denounced by many people at home. We want to feel assured that whoever lead the people shall be a man who is bound by the Constitution, who consults his executive, and who respects the wishes of his followers.

"While people elect their leaders, they reserve the right to criticise them, and if need be, to change them. If popular criticism results in denunciation, suspension and witch-hunt by the leaders, then such leaders are not worth their salt, and such leaders should give way to a better calibre of leaders who will not handle the affairs of the party on a personal and arbitrary basis.

"This is the judgment we pronounce on Mr. Nkomo; and we shall pronounce the same judgment on any leader who aspires in future to set himself above properly constituted authority, we believe the true unity of the people of Zimbabwe is founded on fundamental principles rather than on personalities."