

feature

# SOME ASPECTS OF LIBERATION



*The following speech was delivered by Julius Nyerere, President of Tanzania at Oxford University, England on November 19, 1975*

I have talked on the American continent, in Asia and Australia, and in very many countries of Europe, about different aspects of the struggle against racialism and colonialism. I have been doing so since five days after the independence of Tanganyika, when I first addressed the United Nations as the Prime Minister of a free country. I continue to talk about colonialism and racialism not only because, like Mount Everest, they are there, but also because, unlike Mount Everest, we must together remove them from the face of the earth. [And I shall be speaking on this subject again today. For Oxford University and its graduates are not unimportant in the development of attitudes; and Britain has more influence in the world than a small, weak, and young country like Tanzania.]

We in Tanzania have no ambition to be the liberators of Southern Africa. Nor do we ask other countries to undertake this task. We do not believe that one country

can ever free another. We do not believe that any people can be given liberty. They can only be assisted or hindered in getting freedom for themselves. Equally, however, we do not believe that a people can ultimately be denied liberty. For man is so constituted that he will not rest unless he feels that he has freedom and the human dignity which goes with it. Otherwise he will, sooner or later, by one means or another, fight for his own freedom within his society, and for the freedom of his society from outside domination. The history of the world, and of every nation, is at bottom a story of man's struggle to reconcile the need for order in a technologically changing society with his demand to associate as a free individual on terms of equality with other men.

Tanzania's interest in the freedom movement of Southern Africa, therefore, does not arise out of any belief that our people have a God-given mission to free others. If that were the case the world would rightly look upon Tanzania as the African danger to its peace; messianic concepts of duty have done more damage to real liberty in the world than any deliberate evil intention. And, as I hope to make plain before I finish speaking, we have not yet solved the problems of making freedom a reality within our own borders.

Yet we are free in one sense. We govern ourselves. We elect our own government and Parliament; we determine the direction of our own development. We make our own mistakes, and achieve our own successes. For Tanzania is one of the many states of Africa which owes its present existence to the world-wide anti-colonial movement after the 1939-45 World War. We campaigned for our independence. We would not have achieved it in 1961 had we not campaigned with determination. But our celebration was not just a consequence of our own efforts. We benefited from the fact that colonialism had become unacceptable to the world; its inconsistency with the principles of human equality and freedom had become widely acknowledged. And even now, our continued independence owes more to broad acceptance of the principles of national freedom than to any defence capacity of our own. So anything which strengthens the acceptance of the principle of national independence is of importance to us; anything which weakens it is of concern to us.

Thus, as we see it, the right to independence either exists for every nation, or it does not exist for Tanzania. Tanzanians have no superhuman virtues which are denied to the people of Rhodesia. The people of Namibia have no less right to solve their problems of disunity for themselves than have the people of Portugal, of Lebanon, or any other long-independent state whose peoples are divided along linguistic or ideological lines. And black men in Dar es Salaam or Lusaka or Lagos, have neither more or less right to human dignity than those of Johannesburg or Pretoria or Capetown. What we claim for ourselves we have to accept as the right of others. While others are denied such rights our own hold over them must be insecure.

But although our weakness and our blackness make obvious our responsibility to support other Africans when they struggle for freedom, the same connection exists for older nations and peoples of other colors. Europe has had the evils and dangers of racialism terribly demonstrated within its own borders. And colonialism in Africa is only an older—and more long-lasting—version of the attempt made by Nazi Germany to occupy, dominate, and control the rest of Europe in its own interests. Africa is not unique in its problems. Nor is it any more possible to confine them to Africa than it was to limit the effects of the European conflict to the borders of that continent. Racialism and colonialism in Africa are of world-wide relevance. The question which has yet to be answered clearly is how the rest of the world is going to react to the freedom struggles in Southern Africa.

For the peoples of Rhodesia, Namibia, and South Africa do not accept their subordinate human status. In South Africa the struggle in its modern form goes back to the formation of the African National Congress in 1912. In Rhodesia the first African Congress was established after the 1914-18 war. And although nationalist organization is more recent in Namibia, the efforts of the traditional African leaders to get redress for their grievances goes back to the beginning of the League of Nations Mandate.

The demands for dignity and freedom made by these organizations were expressed peacefully—and were time and again met with violence. Yet the effort to organize politically continued—and indeed still continues. Serious people are very reluctant to revolt against their government, however unrepresentative and unjust it may be. While there is any hope of change for the better they will normally work for that change within the law as laid down, whoever has made that law. But when all hope of change is denied because the very principle of freedom and equality is denied, and when the laws prevent the peaceful expression of opinion, then the people are confronted with a clear choice. They either acquiesce in their oppression and humiliation or they commit themselves to an armed struggle.

The Lusaka Manifesto of 1969 was, therefore, merely restating the obvious when it said that over the objective of freedom and racial equality "We would prefer to negotiate rather than to destroy, to talk rather than kill. We do not advocate violence; we advocate an end to the violence against human dignity which is now being perpetrated by the oppressors of Africa."

Yet the Armed Freedom struggle had already started. The peoples of the Portuguese colonies had been driven to acknowledge that without a willingness to kill and be killed, their demand for freedom would make no progress. The Rhodesians had come, with even more hesitation, to the same conclusion and were preparing themselves for war. The Lusaka Manifesto was thus a twelfth hour offer to talk. It stated clearly—almost in words of one syllable—"If peaceful progress to emancipation were possible, or if changed circumstances were to make it possible in the future, we would urge our brothers in the resistance movements to use peaceful methods of struggle even at the cost of some compromise on the timing of change."

The Lusaka Manifesto was drawn up by the States of East and Central Africa. It was endorsed by the Organisation of African Unity and the United Nations. The Liberation Movements accepted it. But the Governments of South Africa, of Rhodesia, and of Portugal ignored it.

So the Armed Struggle in the Portuguese colonies was intensified. The preparations for a guerrilla war in Rho-

desia were speeded up. And the result we now know. As a direct consequence of the fighting in Mozambique, Angola, and Guinea Bissau, the Caetano Government in Metropolitan Portugal was overthrown, and the new Army Regime accepted the principle for which the Freedom Movements had been fighting. So the fighting stopped. The independence of Guinea-Bissau—already declared and operative in large parts of the country—was recognized. Frelimo agreed upon a transitional, handing-over period of ten months and negotiated about the details of Mozambican independence. In Angola, however, the damage of the Portuguese struggle to retain power could not be undone; the disunited nationalist forces came together only for long enough to get agreement on a date for independence and then began fighting each other. The people of that unhappy country are now paying the price of succumbing to the tactics of those who seek to dominate others by dividing them.

Independence in Mozambique appeared at first to achieve what the Lusaka Manifesto had failed to do. The Government of South Africa indicated a willingness to talk, on one subject, on the basis we had set out—that is on the basis of how, not whether, majority rule would come in Rhodesia. In accordance with the Lusaka Manifesto the Governments of Tanzania, Zambia, and Botswana, therefore, accepted the responsibility of acting as intermediaries with the Rhodesian Nationalists, with Vorster accepting a similar function with the Smith regime. It is these discussions which gave rise to talk of a detente by South Africa and our denial of detente.

In accepting this function my colleagues and I were facing up to the facts of life in Southern Africa and the tripartite nature of the problem there. Rhodesia is a British colony. For all practical purposes, however, Britain surrendered its power there to a racial minority in 1923; it has consistently refused since then to reassert its authority. Knowing this the African States still refused to recognize the Declaration of Rhodesian independence in 1965. We are against colonialism. We have no objection in principle to a unilateral declaration of independence—that was not the problem. But it was no representative of the Rhodesian people who declared independence in Rhodesia. It was a de facto authority whose power rests on a racial structure of politics and economics and which is committed to maintaining that racialist minority domination. Under these conditions we would have refused to recognize the independence of Rhodesia even had the British Parliament legalised it.

As far as we are concerned, therefore, Rhodesia remains legally a British colony. But in fact, as distinct from theory, it is quite obvious that the issue in Rhodesia will be decided on the basis of comparative power. And the contenders are the minority regime of Ian Smith backed by South Africa and the nationalist movement backed by the other independent states of Africa and non-racialists elsewhere in the world.

When the South African government let it be known that it was willing to accept the principle of majority rule in Rhodesia and implied that it would use its influence to that end, it was therefore logical for the free African border states to investigate further. For Rhodesia cannot survive without South African backing; if that were to be withdrawn it appeared likely that there might be no further necessity to fight for freedom in Rhodesia.

I do not need to go through the twelve months of alternate optimism and realism since then. It has become quite clear that even now Smith is not ready to negotiate meaningfully. He has not accepted the principle of major-

ity rule in Rhodesia. And it would be absurd to expect that South Africa will fulfill Britain's responsibility and will use force to bring about majority rule. South Africa is still refusing even to apply economic sanctions against the illegal regime.

So we are forced back to the alternative strategy outline in the Lusaka Declaration of 1969. This said, "But while peaceful progress is blocked by actions of those at present in power in the States of Southern Africa, we have no choice but to give to the peoples of those territories all the support of which we are capable in their struggle against their oppressors." Unfortunately, but inevitably, the armed struggle in Rhodesia will have to be resumed and intensified until conditions are ripe for realistic negotiations. And the Freedom Fighters of Rhodesia, like those of Mozambique, will demand Africa's support.

We very much regret the need for war. It can only bring dreadful suffering to the people of Rhodesia—both black and white. It will, therefore, leave a heritage of bitterness which will make the eventual development of a non-racial democratic society in that country very much more difficult. But we can no more refuse support to the Rhodesian Freedom Fighters now than Britain could have refused support to the Resistance Movements of Europe during the 1940s.

In the light of Portugal's changed policy, African states also probed South Africa on the independence of Namibia. For South African leaders had been quoted as saying that they accepted the principle of independence for this Trust Territory. And Namibia is under direct de facto South African control. Ian Smith's peculiar stubbornness and the apparent death-wish of the Rhodesian whites could not complicate a move towards genuine independence for Namibia. All that is required is for the South African government to accept the decisions of the United Nations and arrange to pass control of the territory to the U.N. Commissioner for Namibia.

It has now become clear, however, that the South African Government is not thinking in terms of true independence for Namibia. It is not willing to relinquish control to the United Nations; it is not willing to negotiate with the nationalist movement of the territory. Instead South Africa is intensifying its attempt to divide the people along tribal lines, and it is trying to retain control of Namibia at the same time as posing as a convert to the cause of anti-colonialism.

The evidence for this assessment has mounted in the last few weeks. For South Africa has been using Namibia as a base for its troop incursions into Angola and as the staging post for mercenary activity in that country.

For the present, therefore, it appears that in Namibia, as in Rhodesia, the Freedom Movement will have to intensify the armed struggle before any serious negotiations are possible.

In the freedom struggles of Rhodesia and Namibia, the world outside Africa may dislike the methods adopted by the Liberation Movements, but it cannot challenge the aim of ending colonial domination. But we also demand freedom in South Africa. Yet South Africa is an independent state. It is absurd to pretend otherwise. And the whole world has accepted—at least in theory—the principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of independent sovereign states.

Nonetheless, Africa in general, and Tanzania in particular, claims that the world cannot ignore what is happening within South Africa, and that it should act to secure change within that independent state.

South Africa is a tyranny. It is not the only tyrannical

police state in the world, not even in Africa. There are too many of them. Yet we do not urge external intervention in these other states; on the contrary, we have bitterly opposed it. At the height of Tanzania's expressed hostility to the atrocities and the injustices in Uganda, we made it clear that we would nevertheless condemn external intervention.

Nor could we justifiably make a claim to have built a Utopia in Tanzania. We call ourselves a democratic and socialist state. In reality we are neither democratic nor socialist. The Patrons of democracy and the Cardinals of socialism have no idea how much sympathy I have with them when they ridicule and dismiss Tanzania's claim to democracy or to socialism. Democracy and Socialism require a mature and popular awareness of the dignity and equality of men and women; a dynamic and popular intolerance of tyranny; a degree of maturity and integrity in those entrusted with responsibility for the institutions of State and Society; and a level of national and personal affluence which Tanzania and Tanzanians do not possess. Many of our people suffer from permanent malnutrition and all the mental and physical illnesses which go with it; their poverty and general ignorance make a mockery of talk about human freedom. We have the village tyrant and the insensitive bureaucrat. We have the habits of arbitrariness; some as the lingering vestiges of colonial rule, others of our own making. We have judicial procedures which to say the least leave a lot to be desired. We have a law on the Statute Book under which an individual may be detained without trial. We have the traditional prejudice and discrimination against women. We still have a love of exerting authority and an intolerable degree of submission to authority. And we have also a level of incompetence and even irresponsibility which often makes nonsense of our claim to be implementing policies in support of equality and human dignity.

Some of these evils can be accounted for by our inheritance of national poverty and backwardness; others can be explained by reference to the fragility and inexperience of our young institutions; and others by downright evil-mindedness. But whatever the explanation, they are all there. Our people suffer from them. And while they exist we are rightly condemned for them.

But we are seriously trying to build a democratic and socialist state. We seriously believe that we cannot be democratic without being socialist, and vice versa. I think that we have something we can show for our democracy; and something we can show for our socialism.

What we are being condemned for is the gap between our actions and our declared commitment to socialism, and the democracy and personal freedom which are inseparable from true socialism. We are being criticized for failures to live up to the principles we ourselves have proclaimed. We believe this is true of Britain, the U.S.A., U.S.S.R., China, India, and all other countries which call themselves democratic—however they define that word. Our self-criticisms and the criticisms of others are related to the ideals we proclaim and to which our nations are committed.

South Africa has no such gap between its principles and its actions—or if there is a gap it is one about which all free men rejoice. For the South African government is the only one in the world which has, as its fundamental purpose, the separation of men according to their physical characteristics and the perpetuation of domination by one race over another. It is color and accident of birth, the one thing over which no human being has any control, which is the basis of South African tyranny. It does not

matter much what you do—unless you defend the principles of human dignity—what matters is whether you are classified as Black, Brown, or White. That will determine your political and economic life—by order of the Government and in accordance with its doctrines. In this, and in no other way, South Africa is unique. Yet this singularity is so fundamental that it cannot be disregarded.

Racialism as an attitude of mind cannot be eliminated by force. It exists among every people and can be seen in every nation. There are black people in Britain who suffer from racialism; and, despite the evidence of our recent elections, there are white and brown people in Tanzania who experience it. But the societies and state organizations of Tanzania who experience it. But the societies and state organizations of Britain, of Tanzania, of the U.S.A., the U.S.S.R., of India, and so on, all fight against the expression of racialism. And when they give way to it, we condemn them with their own words and their own principles. In South Africa the state propagates racialism; it proclaims it as its philosophy. South African institutions, laws, police, and its economic organization, are all designed for the central purpose of upholding apartheid and the privileged lives which White South Africans have built upon the deliberate humiliation of Non-White South Africans.

South Africa is a sovereign state. But the equality and sovereignty of independent nation states must not be accepted as cover behind which racialism can flourish. For racialism is a poison which spreads from man to man and country to country. The victim of racialism too often becomes a racist himself, and those who sympathise with the victimized are only too prone to take vengeance on others as innocent as themselves. The basic equality of all mankind is too fundamental an issue to the future of the world for other nation states to ignore the racist structure of South African society.

Politicians and statesmen of the developed countries of the world have been agreeing that apartheid is a terrible thing and condemning it in words ever since 1948. But they have continued trade, cultural contact, and diplomatic relations with South Africa, as if it were a normal member of the international community. The words have therefore been regarded as political face-saving; the South African Government has been able to shrug them off as irrelevant. For if you think a man has smallpox you do not mix with him, treat with him, and ask him kindly to cure himself without passing the disease to you. However sorrowfully, you isolate him; and if he refuses to take medicine for his disease you force it down his throat for your own protection.

No other single nation state has the right to intervene militarily in South Africa, and certainly Tanzania is not planning a Liberation War against that country. But the racist government of South Africa is, by its daily actions, preparing the conditions for an internal revolution. For you cannot humiliate and oppress men and women for ever without them asserting their humanity in the only way left open to them, that is, by revolt. So there are now and there will in the future be, South Africans of all colors—who risk torture and death in the fight against the whole structure of the racist society.

We in Tanzania believe that those who are genuinely opposed to racialism should help those who fight racialism. Because South Africa is an independent state, some governments and organizations may feel inhibited from direct support of those who seek to overthrow the South African system. But nothing in international law demands that the rest of the world should support the South African

Government in this conflict of principles and help it in the struggle between racialism and non-racialism. At the very least, they should refrain from strengthening the supporters of apartheid.

Yet all those who invest in South Africa, or trade with South Africa, or otherwise treat it as a respectable member of the international community, are giving support to apartheid and everything which follows from it. Institutions and individuals do not invest in a foreign country out of philanthropy. They invest to make a profit or to get interest on their money. And by investing for these purposes they have bought, (together with the stocks or shares) an interest in what is called "political stability"—which in this case means the maintenance of apartheid. Their interest in this will be the greater the larger the amount they invest and the greater the return on their investment. And the stronger the South African economy, the larger the resources which the South African government can devote to upholding racial privilege.

The more South Africa can attract outside investment, therefore, the more allies it obtains—quite regardless of any fine words about opposition to apartheid. And investment is attracted by high returns. So the greater the surplus South Africa can extract from the labor of its working people, the greater will be the attraction to new investment. Far from undermining apartheid, foreign investment's contribution to expanding the South African economy makes the intensification of exploitation on racial grounds the more inevitable. We would hear a great deal less of the argument that economics must be separated from morality if the dividends from South Africa were to fall.

The investors in South Africa, and the traders with South Africa, help to pay the cost of apartheid. They contribute to the growth of the economy of apartheid at the same time as they benefit from it. And in the process they are themselves corrupted by apartheid; they are participants in it however far distant they may live and however non-racial they may be in their personal relationships.

Opponents of apartheid and of racialism as a state doctrine have no honest choice but to isolate South Africa. By doing so they will be at least refraining from adding to the present strength of the South African state. That seems to be the least which a non-racist can do to help those who are, and will be, fighting racialism on our behalf and at great cost to themselves.

In talking about Southern Africa today I have said nothing which is new or startling. For I have no magic solution to the problems of entrenched racialism, and I cannot foresee the details of the future course of the Liberation struggle in that area. All that I have been trying to do is to explain the situation as we see it in Tanzania and to indicate the manner in which we shall support the struggle for human dignity in that area of our continent and those three countries.

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