



XVIII Struggle in Zimbabwe (Rhodesia)

"If we win first, our territory will be a rear base for you," said a young Zimbabwe military cadre fighting with FRELIMO guerillas in Tete province. "And if we win first," replied a FRELIMO cadre, "you can be sure that our territory will be your base." That was in 1969, and it would have been a bold man who predicted the overthrow of Portuguese fascism five years later, or that FRELIMO would be the first to win. The odds were that Ian Smith's racist government in Rhodesia would be the first to collapse. The young Zimbabwean was Josiah Tongogara, later General Tongogara, commander of the main resistance forces inside Zimbabwe.

I met him a few days after he had been released from a Zambian jail to join the ZANU-ZAPU Patriotic Front delegation to the Geneva Conference on Rhodesia (October 28-December 14, 1976).¹ Many of the veterans of armed struggle in Zimbabwe served their apprenticeship with FRELIMO forces in Tete province from 1968 onward. If the 1960s was the decade in which Britain's African colonies got their independence, the late 1950s had been a period of feverish political agitation to ensure that this came about. Among those agitating in Rhodesia from 1957 onward was young Tongogara.

On February 29, 1959, the South Rhodesian African National Congress was banned. Under "Operation Dawn" the police made a sudden swoop and about 500 national, provincial, and district branch leaders were arrested. I managed to skip across the frontier into Zambia, where, on January 1, 1960, the National Democratic Party [NDP] was formed. I immediately joined up. In October of that year Joshua Nkomo was elected NDP president. The party quickly attracted nationalist forces formerly associated with the banned ANC, but it was in turn banned in December, 1962, when the Rhodesian Front party [later to be headed by Ian Smith] came to power and confiscated all funds and material assets. As a substitute, the Zimbabwean African People's Union [ZAPU] was immediately formed, again under the leadership of Joshua Nkomo, who at that time could operate legally in what was then Southern Rhodesia. I became a district chairman of ZAPU in Zambia.

The following year ZAPU was also banned. Nkomo and the whole national executive fled the country.

At the time of which Josiah Tongogara was speaking the all-Rhodesian-Nyasaland Federation was very much a subject of the day. In 1962, the British government granted new constitutions which would ensure black majority rule to Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland (later Malawi). It was becoming increasingly clear that Southern Rhodesia was intent on going its own way with the tacit support of elements within the British Conservative Party government. On August 8, 1963, there was a split within ZAPU. Those pressing for more vigorous action—including armed struggle—formed the Zimbabwean National Union (ZANU), headed by the Reverend Ndabaningi Sithole.² Its more militant program attracted young activists like Tongogara.

In 1964, I became provincial secretary of ZANU and the following year I went to Tanzania for military training. On November 11 of 1965, Ian Smith made his Unilateral Declaration of Independence, confirming indefinite racist minority rule—and our worst suspicions. In 1966, I left for advanced military training in Nanking where the Chinese comrades gave special courses in guerilla training with elements of classical warfare. Returning at the end of that year, I became chief of the Intelligence Section of the ZANU Revolutionary Council—our military planning body.

Between 1967-73, I was in charge of all military operations [directing them from 1968 onward from areas inside Zimbabwe but with easy access to a rear base in Tete province in Mozambique]. In 1973, I was appointed ZANU Chief of Defense, charged with executing overall military strategy. This task I performed until being arrested during a visit to Zambia in March, 1975, and again after my release in late October, 1976.

I asked about the Zimbabwean People's Army (ZIPA)—when and why it was formed? Outsiders who followed the Rhodesian-Zimbabwe scene had been intrigued in early 1976 by the emergence of ZIPA and a "Committee of Eighteen" which did not appear to claim allegiance to any of the known nationalist parties.

When I and the others were arrested in Zambia, there was no ZANU leadership left. After consultations which the Zambian authorities, under pressure from Tanzania and Mozambique, allowed to take place even in our place of detention, we agreed to unite the armed forces of ZANU and ZAPU to form ZIPA, under the joint direction of a committee to which each side would contribute nine members.

As to whether the fact that ZAPU military cadres tended to be trained in the Soviet Union while those of ZANU were trained in China—Tongogara himself had been back to Nanking for two refresher courses since his 1966 visit—did not pose a problem, he replied:

This is not a big problem. Of course cadres trained in China hear plenty of adverse criticism of "revisionism" and "social imperialism"; those trained in the Soviet Union hear the same sort of things about "Maoism." But we ensure that on their return they go through a recycling and are oriented to Zimbabwe problems, to our struggle. We do not permit dissensions between others to influence our problems. We have enough of our own. At the end of a course, the Chinese usually say: "Well, we've taught you what we know. Now it's up to you to go back and apply what you have learned to your own conditions. This is the line we follow."

The development of military activities followed the course of events in the neighboring countries. Thus Zambia became independent on October 24, 1964, and, after a period of consolidation, President Kenneth Kaunda permitted the Zimbabwe guerillas to use operational and training bases inside Zambia. Thus the first armed action took place in 1966 across the Zambian border in northwestern Zimbabwe. As the FRELIMO extended their struggle into Tete province in 1968, a new base area became available there and a new front was opened up in the northeast. From then on new fronts opened up in a clockwise direction according to the battlefield fortunes of FRELIMO, the guerillas attacking from the east as FRELIMO's liberated areas expanded south, from the southeast when Mozambique attained full independence and, finally, from the southwest and west when Botswana threw in its lot with the "front-line" states (Mozambique, Zambia, Tanzania, Angola, and then Botswana) and allowed the Zimbabwe freedom fighters to install bases and sanctuaries. It took some ten years from the firing of the first shots for guerilla activity—some of it still at a very low level—to be engaged in virtually the whole perimeter area. As is inevitably the case when it comes to the crucial decision of to fight or not to fight, there are those who hesitate and draw back at the last moment.

There were plenty of sincere nationalists who reasoned that Britain, after all, was not a fascist state like Portugal. A democracy

with a free press, it had yielded to outside and internal pressures to grant independence to sixteen of its seventeen African colonies. Even though Britain had no inhibitions about jailing the new leaders for "terrorist activities," the pace for demanding independence quickened! Hastings Banda of Malawi, Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya, and Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia had all tasted the bitter fruits of British colonial prisons; Sir Seretse Khama of Botswana had spent long years in exile. But in the end, independence had come about by constitutional means. Why not so in Southern Rhodesia? The banning of the South Rhodesian African National Congress acted as a catalyst for many nationalist leaders. Among them the Reverend Ndabaningi Sithole, who also turned up at the Geneva Conference claiming to represent ZANU, although he had been replaced as president by Robert Mugabe. His name, however, has its place in the history of the nationalist struggle. He described the banning of the ANC as:

My biggest shock. . . . Over 500 national and local leaders were whisked away from their homes to jail where they were detained, some for a few months, others for many months, and still others restricted for four years. I had had great hopes for the ANC. I had been in the process of setting up branches in Chipinga district. But now the whole thing dried up in my hands. . . . The excuse given for the ban was that the ANC had a plot to kill white people in Rhodesia. Nothing could have been more incredible to me. . . . One thing that remained clear to me was that the white man was simply determined to destroy the African nationalist movement. The white man was simply determined to see white supremacy in the saddle for all time.³

Sithole joined the National Democratic Party as soon as it was formed and was elected its treasurer-general, which led to his being sacked by the Ministry of Education from his job as head teacher of a primary school. When the NDP was banned and ZAPU formed, he became its national chairman with Joshua Nkomo as interim president. Later, he, Joshua Nkomo, Robert Mugabe, and others were sentenced to one year in jail, followed by five more years in "detention"—covering 1964 to 1970. It was while they were in "detention" that what they had most feared and most agitated against took place—Ian Smith's Unilateral Declaration of Independence.

How was Ian Smith able to get away with this, in the face of British denunciation of Salisbury as a "rebel regime," the imposition of United Nations economic sanctions and other measures to isolate Southern Rhodesia from the international community? What did the Ian Smith regime have that the other sixteen British colonies, territories, and protectorates in Africa which received their independence in the 1960s did not have? The answer perhaps is chrome, that precious metal so vital for modern industry and of which Zimbabwe possesses so high a proportion of the world's known reserves. There seems to have been great reluctance on the part of Britain to take the decisive steps which would permit those reserves to fall into black hands. When the issue of making complete economic sanctions against Rhodesia mandatory was brought to the United Nations on March 17, 1970, both Britain and the United States used their vetoes to nullify the resolution. The United States even violated UN resolutions by continuing under the Byrd amendment to import chrome from the rebel regime, thus greatly weakening the effect of sanctions.

The United States had divided the world up into three main sectors according to strategic raw materials which either did not exist in the industrialized northern hemisphere, or existed in insufficient quantities: Latin America, Africa, and Southeast Asia. The raw materials included copper, bauxite, cobalt, chrome, manganese, and tin. The implication was that these areas must not be permitted to fall into "non-Free World" hands. Ian Smith was not slow to pick up the cue. He was the champion of the "Free World" in Rhodesia, barring the way to "Communism," defending the "values of Christian civilization," and (in private discussions) protecting the world's richest stockpile of chrome! Only this explains the tenderness with which he was handled by Britain, which had not hesitated to send troops to put down left-wing guerillas in Malaysia (where tin was in danger) or against the "Mau Mau" in Kenya. But there was never any question of strong-arm methods against the rebel Smith regime, which at most represented some 280,000 whites as opposed to over 6 million blacks.

The result of Britain's "soft" handling of the Smith regime brought about the opposite results to those intended. It persuaded even those who could be considered "moderates," like the Reverend Sithole and Bishop Muzorewa, who headed the African National Council (temporarily set up as a legal "umbrella" under

which ZAPU and ZANU could maintain contacts within Zimbabwe), that armed struggle was the only possible means of attaining independence. But however much the "moderates" verbally supported armed struggle and used the threat of it to improve their bargaining position, they were not men to go into the bush and endure the hard, dangerous life of guerilla warfare. It was only dedicated, ideologically motivated cadres who could do that. It was the old, old story of the West—and certainly the United States was deeply involved in Britain's handling of the Rhodesia situation—rejecting solutions most favorable to their interests in the hope they could pull off some better deal later on. The result was an inevitable radicalization of the struggle. The victories in Indochina, then in Angola and Mozambique, convinced Zimbabwe patriots that not only was armed struggle the only road, but that victory lay at the end of that road, even though it might be long.

While traditional nationalist leaders discussed matters among themselves—and at times with the Smith regime—and others languished in jails in Zimbabwe and even in Zambia, a younger generation pushed ahead with the armed struggle. Among these was Dzinashe Machingura, a former biochemistry student, now Deputy Political Commissar of ZIPA and one of the leading strategists of the armed struggle. He was twenty-eight years of age when he arrived for the final stage of the Geneva talks, straight from the battlefield, to reinforce the position of the Patriotic Front delegation. In a long discussion with the author which included many comparisons between the struggle in Zimbabwe and that in Vietnam—about which he was well informed—Dzinashe Machingura made the following points:

The Geneva Conference came about as the direct result of armed struggle. We have to intensify that struggle. We are no longer just fighting for majority rule but for real national independence and the transfer of power to the Zimbabwean people. From the beginning of this year [1976] we stepped up our military activities, first by infiltrating small armed units equipped with only rifles and submachine guns. But as the fighting progressed we employed bigger units of platoon- and then company-size, equipped with better and heavier weapons.

This was possible because we have the support of the mass of our people. All factors indicate that we are heading for ever-greater

victories. In fact we are now preparing to go over to the strategic offensive. We have reached the point where we no longer speak of "support from the masses" but of their actual participation in armed struggle.

Smith reacted to the growing support for armed struggle as minority regimes have always acted under such circumstances. On the pretext of "protecting" the villagers from "terrorists," they were to be herded into glorified concentration camps known as "protected villages." There have been "freedom villages" in Malaysia, "strategic hamlets" in Vietnam, *aldeamentos* (rural settlements) in Angola and Mozambique—all with the same objective of separating the guerilla "fish" from the "water" in which they swim. At the same time the death penalty was introduced for anyone actively aiding the freedom fighters with food or information, or passively aiding them by not reporting their presence to the nearest authorities. By mid-1976 about 500,000 of the 3,500,000 blacks living in the Tribal Trust Lands (that half of the territory which was allotted to black farmers) were locked up inside "protected villages."

A Dutch journalist, by pretending he was something else, managed to get inside some of the "protected villages" and, when we met in Mozambique, he gave me the following picture:

People from ten to twenty villages of the same ethnic grouping are concentrated in one big "protected village." Houses are huddled together and grouped around a raised watchtower. This is manned day and night by guards from the Rhodesian security forces armed with automatic rifles. There is a dusk-to-dawn curfew and any stragglers are shot on sight. The whole area is surrounded by electrified barbed wire. Electricity is used for two purposes only. To power a searchlight in the watchtower, and for the barbed wire. There are two entrance-exits and everyone is searched on entering and leaving. Overnight absences are noted and unless an absentee can give a good and authenticated reason, his name automatically goes on the black suspect list. If the villagers show too much nostalgia for their old villages and try to return, these are burned to the ground. In one "protected village" a truck with its tailgate down drove slowly through the streets with the "bag" of the previous night's curfew-breakers—half a dozen black bodies.

Obviously as in Vietnam, this also had the opposite of the intended effect. A tug-of-war started, the guerillas helping the villagers to break out, the security forces trying to round them up again. But Smith's forces were too thinly spread to keep this up for long. Kumbirai Kangai, a member of the ZANU Central Committee who also came to Geneva with the "reinforcing delegation" toward the end of the conference, said that Smith had stopped building any more "protected villages"; that they had proved the most "fertile soil" for recruiting guerilla fighters and that many of them had been "heavily infiltrated by freedom fighters." In the sparsely populated western part of the country, "protected villages" no longer existed. Smith was concentrating his efforts in the more densely populated eastern areas.

It was the failure of the "protected village" scheme which paved the way for an apparent spectacular retreat by Ian Smith. His regime in 1970 had divided the country's 97.5 million acres of land "equally" between white settlers and the black Zimbabweans. After deducting 7.5 million acres for national park land, this left 45 million acres of the best land for the 280,000 whites and 45 million acres of the poorer land for the over six million blacks. On March 1, 1977, Smith's Minister of Land and Natural Resources, Mark Partridge, introduced a bill to reduce the proportion of land set aside for the whites to a mere 500,000 acres. Twelve members of Smith's Rhodesian Front—including the powerful Deputy Prime Minister, Mr. Ted Sutton-Pryce, promptly said they would vote against the bill and were expelled from the Parliamentary Caucus. Coming on top of the removal of some of the racial discrimination measures in bars and restaurants, it was too much for the old guard to stomach. "We must move with the times. Let us do so cheerfully and intelligently, and with good hope for the future," said Mr. Partridge bravely, in introducing the bill. To the "ultras" who claimed the government was violating the very principles on which unilateral independence was based, Ian Smith replied: "In the abnormal times in which we live, party principles need updating from time to time."⁴ He could not have paid a more flattering tribute to the success of the freedom fighters. Nor to the failure, one after another, of the various measures his regime had taken to try to stave off the inevitable. In this connection, I asked Dzinashé Machingura what success Smith was having with the 3,500 black

troops, by then mobilized into his armed forces and being increased.

Smith no longer trusts them. All main operations are now carried out by white troops under white commanders. We have managed to win the support of most of the black troops. They contact us. Sometimes we encourage them to desert, but in some cases we tell them to stay where they are for the time being. They are well placed to tell us of enemy movements.

The ANC had obviously been a temporary makeshift to provide some representation in Salisbury. Its president, Bishop Abel Muzorewa, had never been in serious trouble with the Smith authorities but could not be involved in directing military activities. Therefore I asked Machingura whether ZIPA was intended to replace the ANC.

Once the fighters realized the incompetence of the ANC leadership in supporting armed struggle, they decided to organize themselves, to reconstitute themselves into an army that would fight for the independence of the Zimbabwe people. The combatants from both former ZANU and ZAPU [both were supposed to have dissolved their organizations when the ANC was formed in December, 1974] agreed to form a joint military command that would lead the armed struggle. After agreeing on this, they approached the Liberation Committee of the Organization of African Unity and the front-line heads of state, who recognized and actively supported this joint command. The latter was set up on the understanding that the liberation of Zimbabwe could only be achieved through hard and protracted armed struggle. Also we agreed that the traditional leadership of the Zimbabwean independence movements had divided the people. If we were going to successfully prosecute armed struggle we could not be a party to either of the two rival ANC factions—the Muzorewa faction or the Nkomo faction. We realized that the time for personality politics had long passed. It was this approach which had divided the Zimbabwe people.

In answer to my question as to whether ZIPA should be regarded as exclusively a fighting force under the guidance of an overall political body, or whether it combined political and military functions, Dzinashé Machingura referred me to a fundamen-

tal interview he had given to the Mozambique news agency, AIM, on September 22, 1976.

ZIPA is an army in the traditional sense of the word. But it is a unique and revolutionary army in the sense that it has a strategic role of transforming itself into a political movement. The ZIPA structure accommodates the shouldering of both the military and the political tasks of the revolution. We have a political department exclusively charged with the responsibility of shouldering the political tasks that are normally handled by a revolutionary political organization. . . .

But we have to establish a formal political structure in order to give better political direction to the armed body which is now fighting inside Zimbabwe. Moves to do this are already well under way, moves to transform this organization into a revolutionary vanguard for the people's struggle.

This reply had been given before the setting-up of the formation of the Patriotic Front, formed at the urging of the front-line heads of state on the eve of the Geneva Conference, so that ZANU and ZAPU delegates would speak with one voice. Joint presidents of the Patriotic Front were Robert Mugabe, as head of ZANU, and Joshua Nkomo, head of ZAPU.¹ I asked whether this was now the "revolutionary vanguard" to which Machingura had referred.

Many thought that the emergence of the Patriotic Front just before the Geneva Conference was a tactical move. In fact we would like to develop it into a wider front, into the basis for a National United Front. ZANU and ZAPU are the two main national liberation groups. Now that they have come together from a political viewpoint they have become the nucleus for a future United Front.

As Machingura later appeared at a press conference given in the name of the Patriotic Front, together with ZANU and ZAPU representatives, it appeared that the process of transforming the Patriotic Front into a political umbrella organization under which ZIPA would operate was developing quickly. One of the positive aspects of the Geneva Conference was that it provided a forum (or at least corridors) where ZANU and ZAPU leaders, fresh from exile, from prison, and from the battlefield, could meet for the first time in many years and hammer out new policies, forge new unity. I asked whether there were already stable liberated zones in Zimbabwe.

At this stage we speak of "semi-liberated zones." These are areas over which the enemy has no control whatsoever. Of course he can parachute some troops in and evacuate them by helicopters but he no longer tries to move in over the roads. Our political and administrative structures are not yet fully developed in these zones but the masses are fully mobilized and completely support our freedom fighters, themselves taking part in armed activities. If we announce fully liberated zones, it would present the enemy with a pretext to bomb and strafe any form of life in those areas. They already use this pretext to bomb Zimbabwe refugee camps inside Mozambique.

I asked how Dzinashé Machingura evaluated such attacks. Was Ian Smith's intelligence so faulty that he really believed the refugee camp at Nyazonia—confirmed as such by the UN representative at Maputo—was a guerilla training camp? (A total of 670 refugees had been killed in the attack.) Were the repeated thrusts into Mozambique really directed at Zimbabwe guerilla bases or at "punishing" Mozambique for its forthright and unabashed support for ZIPA and the Patriotic Front? And what was the truth behind Smith's claims of guerilla "terrorist" attacks against the African population, the murder of white clergymen, and similar reports?

One of Smith's desperate last hopes is that he can internationalize the conflict. These two questions are: (1) A ten-member co-ordinating committee was set up in January, 1977, to unify ZAPU-ZANU, with Joshua Nkomo and Robert Mugabe both members. Jason Moyo, charged with setting up the committee and who played a key role in the preparatory work was killed by a . . . letter bomb on January 22, just after the first phase of the unity talks ended. Agreement was reached that the common aims of the struggle were the destruction of colonialism, imperialism, racism, and capitalism as the first step towards building a democratic state. Long term aims envisaged the construction of a scientific socialist society. Further talks aimed at complete fusion of the two movements were scheduled and postponed several times, but finally got under way in Maputo on November 17, 1977. . . . The Smith racists hoped that FRELIMO would react to the first big attacks by a counterattack into Rhodesia. They would then have cried "Communist aggression," hoping the West would come to the rescue. This did not happen so new tactics were tried. A series of hard hit-and-run raids deep into Mozambique territory, aimed not at our bases but at strictly civilian targets in flagrant violation of Mozambique's sovereignty. These

they hoped would force Mozambique to ask for Cuban and Soviet help. This would have given Smith the pretext to ask for U.S. help which, after his discussions with Kissinger, he seemed confident he could expect as long as the pretext was solidly enough founded.

Such attacks were also meant to show that to support the Zimbabwan freedom fighters and look after Zimbabwan refugees was to invite attacks by Smith's armed forces. The hope was that the People's Republic would cease its support for our guerillas because it would lose any all-out war with Rhodesia. On the second question, since the Smith regime brands us as terrorists, they have to produce something to justify this definition. We are a people's army, not terrorists. Civilians are not targets of our attacks, but the Smith regime has organized commando groups, known as the Selous Scouts, who masquerade as freedom fighters to carry out atrocities intended to discredit us at home and prepare the climate abroad to internationalize the war and stamp out "Communist terrorism." These commando terrorist actions are quite widespread, but not so much in the semi-liberated zones where we are in control and people can easily distinguish between our real freedom fighters and the bogus ones sent in by Ian Smith.

Two months after this conversation an article by David Ottaway, datelined Maputo, appeared in the *Washington Post*. It was headlined: "Rhodesian Raids May Press Mozambique to Ask Soviet Aid." The opening paragraph stated:

Western diplomats here are openly warning that the continuing forays by the Rhodesian army deep inside Mozambican territory may soon cause President Samora Machel to seek substantial Soviet and Cuban assistance to bolster this country's meager defenses. "We may see this happening much sooner than we think," a diplomat said. Some diplomats are convinced that one of the prime aims of the white-minority Rhodesian government in carrying out repeated incursions is to provoke Mr. Machel into calling for help from Cuba and the Soviet Union to strengthen Rhodesia's own bid for overt South African and U.S. backing.

The involvement of South Africa and the superpowers would have the effect of turning the struggle between whites and blacks in Rhodesia into an open East-West confrontation that could give a new lease on life to the besieged government of Prime Minister Ian Smith.⁵

The David Ottaway report also refers to "incursions by special white and black commando" units which had taken a heavy toll

of lives. In this connection there was an interesting document found among the personal effects of Gustavo Marcelo Grillo, one of four American mercenaries captured in Angola, who was tried together with three other Americans and nine British in Luanda in June, 1976. Grillo was sentenced to thirty years imprisonment. The document was in the form of a circular/letter from a certain David Bufkin, a leading recruiter of mercenaries in the United States. For mercenary eyes only, the letter warned that money for Angolan operations had dried up but that Rhodesia offered good prospects. Bufkin listed the four main branches of the Rhodesian armed forces as the Regular Army, the Special Air Service (which he likened to the Green Beret special forces in the United States), the Depot Police, and a fourth group, "currently unidentified," but which Bufkin said you could only enter after having graduated through the S.A.S. "They paint themselves black, speak the language, and actually filter into the terrorist camps."

It is not too far-fetched to believe that as Machingura and other ZANU-ZAPU leaders—including Robert Mugabe and Joshua Nkomo—asserted, it was these commandos who were carrying out the indiscriminate murders. One of the attacks in which three missionaries were murdered occurred shortly after the Most Reverend Donal Lamont, Roman Catholic Bishop of Umtali near the Rhodesian-Mozambique border, was sentenced to ten years in jail for having failed to report the presence of guerillas in his episcopate and of having encouraged others to do the same. In general, as Mugabe and Nkomo pointed out, the freedom fighters had correct relations with the various religious denominations, the leaders of which frequently denounced the atrocities and iniquities of the racist regime in Salisbury. "It is the Smith regime which treats such people as enemies, not us," said Machingura.⁶

This brought us to the question of who the real enemy is. That the Smith regime was the immediate enemy was clear. But would its disappearance achieve the aims for which ZIPA and the Patriotic Front were fighting? Machingura again referred me to his AIM interview:

Our society is essentially a colonial society and, as such, we have to wage a national democratic struggle to overthrow national oppression. The national democratic resolution will serve to solve the

principal contradiction in Zimbabwe, which is the domination and oppression of the vast majority of the Zimbabwean people by a small minority—a racist, reactionary clique of whites.

All those who are opposed to the liberation and independence of the Zimbabwean people are our enemies. These include the Smith racist regime, the imperialist powers that back it, puppet Africans serving the Smith regime, and all those who are opposed to the independence of the Zimbabwean people. The target of the bullets of our freedom fighters is the system of exploitation and capitalist enterprises and the armed personnel which serve to perpetuate them.

Dzinashe Machingura explained that ZIPA was already an army of several thousands and could quickly be expanded into double that size. Many hundreds had deserted from the Smith army but only a few had been able to bring weapons with them. "Some governments find it a burden to support an army only half the size of ours," he said. "We can maintain such an army because of the mass support from our people. We get food and clothing and, short of arms and ammunition, everything we need from the people. The only factor inhibiting rapid expansion of the armed forces is lack of arms."

The guerilla forces continued to expand rapidly throughout 1977, nourished by a movement away from the "protected areas." David Martin of the London *Observer* reported from Francistown in Botswana, on May 29, 1977, that African refugees were fleeing into Botswana at the rate of 800 per week. One third of them were between sixteen and twenty-five years, many of this age group demanding to join the guerillas. 12,000 such refugees had been airlifted out to Zambia during the first five months of 1977. From there, those who want to take up arms are sent to training camps, in Zambia if they are pro-ZAPU, or to Tanzania if they are pro-ZANU. In fact, as Martin pointed out, most of those coming to Botswana are from Matabeleland, just across the frontier and from where Joshua Nkomo draws his main support. A people of great warrior traditions, the young men were a precious source of recruitment for ZAPU during 1977 as Nkomo tried to increase his forces to make them numerically comparable with those of ZANU. Just prior to Martin's visit to Francistown, where the main refugee camp is situated about fifteen kilometers inside Botswana,

seven Selous Scouts had infiltrated the camp and were arrested.

By mid-May, 1977, Robert Mugabe stated that ZIPA fighters were operating in over two-thirds of Zimbabwe and were fast expanding in both scope and intensity. This was confirmed in the guarded communiqués from Salisbury and by the introduction of stringent censorship of foreign correspondents' despatches in the third quarter of 1977. Even before total censorship was introduced, authentic battlefield news was almost impossible to obtain or communicate. The Australian journalist, Bruce Palling, described the situation as it was when he left Salisbury in mid-June:

Rhodesian authorities are tightening their grip to a strangle hold over the western news correspondents trying to cover the growing guerilla war. Since UDI (Unilateral Declaration of Independence) in 1965, at least seventy correspondents have been expelled or prohibited, but lately the pressure has been intensifying to keep news reports firmly on the government side.

The most effective weapon the authorities have are the tough new regulations that journalists have to sign in order to become accredited defense correspondents. At present, the Information Ministry in Salisbury grants facility trips to individual correspondents to visit the "operational area," which is, in fact, the entire countryside. In such cases, correspondents are expected to submit their reports to the Combined Operations Headquarters for censorship. Under the new scheme, the only foreign journalists based in Salisbury who will be eligible for military accreditation are those who have taken up Rhodesian residence—not a tempting course of action when all residents must do military service after two years in the country . . ."

Bruce Palling states that in the four and a half years prior to his despatch, "only one correspondent has managed to witness a clash between the guerillas and the Rhodesian security forces." He also cites the case of a British-born Rhodesian journalist, representing a London newspaper, who had gone "underground" to avoid being conscripted into Smith's armed forces. For an example of the ideal type of foreign correspondent from Smith's viewpoint and how the newspaper-reading public gets its news on Rhodesia, there is a fascinating piece by British journalist Chris Mullin:

As it was in Vietnam, so it is in Rhodesia. Meikles Hotel [Salisbury] has now replaced the Continental Palace [Saigon] as the center of action. Rhodesian whites have now replaced Americans as the authors of neatly typed press handouts, laying on the occasional out-of-town junket. If anything the situation in Rhodesia is worse than that in Vietnam. For a start there are far less correspondents. Few readers of the *Daily Telegraph* will, for example, have realized that the paper's Salisbury stringer—Brian Henry—is the same as the *Daily Mail's* Peter Norman who is the same person as the *Guardian's* Henry Miller. And that all these people are in real life called Ian Mills who, as it happens, is also the BBC correspondent.

There is no suggestion that Mills is anything other than a very competent reporter. It's just that he's so busy keeping all his different outlets supplied that he simply doesn't have time for any inquiring journalism. The most he can do is to take whatever handouts are available from all sides and faithfully transmit them to his various outlets with whatever comment he can garner from his various sources over the telephone . . .⁸

An insight into the harsh reality of the situation in Rhodesia appeared in October, 1977, when Finance Minister David Smith announced that the Rhodesian dollar was to be devalued by three per cent against the South African Rand and six per cent against other currencies. Explaining the reason the Standard Bank of Rhodesia and its economic bulletin issued on October 13 stated:

There is a clear limit to the economy's ability to withstand the pressures to which it is now being subjected, with fifteen per cent of the Gross Domestic Product being devoted to the shooting and economic wars . . . Over the past year the damage to the economy has switched from being temporary in character to permanent and structural in nature . . .

By that time the war was costing almost one million U.S. dollars per day, according to the bulletin. The Gross Domestic Product would fall by seven per cent in 1977, instead of an earlier estimate by the same bank of a drop of five per cent, and in the first seven months of 1977, manufacturing production had shrunk by 5.7 per cent. Capital investment which had fallen by almost 19 per cent in 1976 was expected to fall further in 1977. Another reason cited for decreasing production was "the exodus of skilled Europeans fleeing a military and political situation which they

could no longer tolerate . . ." Amongst the signs of the time quoted by the Zambia *Daily Mail*, commenting on the devaluation, its October 14 issue noted that: "One of Salisbury's biggest and newest department stores, MacKay's opened only sixteen months ago at a cost of 800,000 U.S. dollars, announced it will close after Christmas."

More than anything that the foreign correspondents were *not* allowed to report, the bulletin of the Standard Bank represented the grim shadow of events to come, the total collapse of the Smith regime. The picture it painted was completed by the statistics of rapidly increased departures over arrivals of Europeans. In the first eight months of 1977, 11,685 Europeans left the country and 3,972 had arrived which would mean a net loss of over 9,000 by the end of the year. Those who leave are those with the skills; those who arrived are the unskilled who would find it difficult to make a start in life anywhere else but in a country so desperate for European replacements as is Rhodesia. Many of them are Portuguese bitter at having lost their privileged status in the former Portuguese colonies. Their asset to Smith is that they lust after revenge by indiscriminate torture and killing of the blacks. But having lost out in their own colonies, Smith knows it is an illusion that they can make any real contribution to shoring up his condemned regime.

Chapter XIX The Geneva Conference

For the first time in thirty-seven years of reporting, including covering innumerable international conferences, I wrote a gloomy first dispatch predicting the failure of a conference before it had even started. I am normally an optimist on such matters, and used to the protracted ups and downs of negotiations such as those at Panmunjom to settle the Korean war (two years), the 1954 Geneva Conference on Indochina (three months), the Paris Peace Conference on Vietnam (four and a half years). But after having visited all the delegations before the Conference on Rhodesia started in Geneva on October 28, 1976, I wrote:

The Zimbabwean liberation movement is relying on victory through its widening armed struggle and not the conference on black majority rule set to open here October 28. The British-sponsored negotiation effort will almost certainly fail. Its very agenda is beset with irreconcilable differences between the position of the racist Ian Smith regime and the joint Patriotic Front delegation headed by Robert Mugabe of the Zimbabwe African National Union and Joseph Nkomo of the Zimbabwe African People's Union. The Patriotic Front is negotiating in Geneva on behalf of the Zimbabwe People's Army, which is waging a guerilla war against the white settler regime in Salisbury. . . . The rock upon which the Geneva Conference appears about to crash is the "Kissinger Plan," the "package deal" product of the Secretary of State's September shuttle diplomacy efforts. Rhodesian Prime Minister Ian Smith says he bought the entire package, which he insists Kissinger assured him had been approved by the five front-line presidents.

Smith asserts he is at the Geneva Conference only to implement the Kissinger deal, a blatant neocolonial scheme in which the armed power of the state would remain in the hands of the white minority. The fact that the front-line presidents (of Mozambique, Angola, Tanzania, Zambia, and Botswana) have jointly repudiated the plan, which also calls for an immediate end to armed struggle and lifting of international sanctions against Rhodesia, is attributed by Smith to a Kissinger double cross.¹

At that time we did not know that the front-line presidents had not even seen the Kissinger plan but had been vaguely informed that the great shuttler had succeeded in persuading Smith to accept majority rule.

Soon after the conference started, Smith's foreign minister (and former defense minister) Pieter Van der Byl called in the press to present photos of dead and mutilated Africans as "proof" of terrorist atrocities. A big man with an oversize head and steely blue eyes, Van der Byl was soon ill at ease under a barrage of sharp questions. The sharpest was also the shortest: "Does majority rule mean one man, one vote?"

"No," snapped Van der Byl. "We stand for responsible majority rule." He refused to define this on the grounds that it might be a negotiable matter at the conference. But in the Rhodesian press room next door there was ample literature on that and related subjects.

"Responsible majority" as in force at the time the Geneva Conference started meant that Europeans, coloreds, and Asians must prove they earned an annual average of 2,772 U.S. dollars (in the Rhodesian dollar equivalent) and owned property worth 5,544 U.S. dollars. They must have completed not less than four years of secondary education. Africans must prove they earned an annual average of 924 dollars, owned property worth 848 dollars, and had completed not less than two years of secondary education "of prescribed standard." The House of Assembly—according to the Constitutional Act approved by Ian Smith's parliament on November 17, 1969—consisted of sixty-six members, of whom fifty Europeans represented their 280,000 of the population and sixteen Africans represented their 6,000,000. Only eight of the sixteen were directly elected, the remaining half to be nominated by "electoral colleges" comprised of "chiefs, headmen, and elected councillors of the African Councils in the Tribal Trust Lands in Mashonaland and Matabeleland respectively. . . ." A very original concept of "responsible majority rule." The upper house, or Senate, was comprised of twenty-three members, ten Europeans elected by the European members of the House of Assembly and ten African chiefs, chosen by an electoral college consisting of members of the Council of Chiefs. Five of these African Senators are chiefs in Matabeleland and five are chiefs in Mashonaland. What could be fairer? Numerical equality between white and black senators, and between black senators from the two predominant tribal groupings! But just in case the balance did not work, the president was empowered to appoint the remaining

three Senators "acting on the advice of the Cabinet and they may be of any race."

There was no evidence throughout the Geneva Conference that Mr. Smith had departed from this original concept as to how majority rule could be exercised. In a three-paragraph statement on the first working day of the conference, Ian Smith devoted the first two paragraphs to "commiserating" with British Chairman Ivor Richard and the British government after all it had done "not only in Rhodesia but in many other parts of the world in spreading Christian civilization" for the "insults" of the nationalist speakers who had preceded Mr. Smith with their opening statements. In the third, he stated that the previous month he had announced his government's "acceptance of the joint Anglo-American proposals to settle the constitutional future of Rhodesia which were put to us by the American Secretary of State. The proposals provide for an early meeting between government representatives and Rhodesian Africans to determine the membership of the Council of State as the first step in establishing the interim government. . . ." Work on this, he indicated, should start immediately.

From the beginning to the end of the Geneva Conference the exact contents of the "joint Anglo-American proposals," and the Kissinger "package deal," were never disclosed. The conference got bogged down trying to decide whether "majority rule" would come into force in two years, as Ian Smith maintained Kissinger had proposed, or in a far shorter period, as the nationalist leaders demanded. Never had Kissinger's wizardry in the art of ambiguity and his ability to be "all things to all men" been used to greater effect in sowing bewilderment among all involved. This is how Ian Smith in a nationwide address September 24, 1976, presented the results of having been shuttled by Kissinger following the final Kissinger-Vorster-Smith meeting in Pretoria. After referring to the series of meetings and asserting that "pressures on us from the 'Free World' would continue to mount" to introduce "majority rule," Smith continued:

Dr. Kissinger assured me that we share a common aim and a common purpose, namely to keep Rhodesia in the Free World and to keep it free from Communist penetration. In this regard, of course, Rhodesia is in a key position in southern Africa. What happens here will inevitably affect the entire subcontinent. . . .

Before I spell out these proposals in detail there are some general comments I should make. The proposals represent what, in negotiating parlance, is usually called a "package deal"—which means that some aspects are more readily acceptable than others. First, on the positive side, as soon as the necessary preliminaries have been carried out, sanctions will be lifted and there will be a cessation of terrorism. Dr. Kissinger has given me a categorical assurance to this effect and my acceptance of the proposals is conditional upon the implementation of both of these undertakings. In the light of previous experience there will be some understandable skepticism regarding the undertaking that terrorism will cease, but on this occasion the assurance is given, not only on the authority of the United States government, but of the British government as well. . . .

Kissinger had had no contact whatsoever with those who directed battlefield operations, nor had he received any such assurances from the front-line heads of state; and the British government mumbled and bumbled to the effect that it had given no such assurances. Kissinger had absolutely no mandate to speak for the United Nations, which had imposed sanctions, but he had apparently mesmerized Ian Smith during the shuttling process.

Having given you the general background, I shall now read the actual terms of the proposals put to me by Dr. Kissinger. Paragraph six, relating to economic aid, is an agreed summary of a longer paper.

1. Rhodesia agrees to majority rule within two years.
2. Representatives of the Rhodesian government will meet immediately at a mutually agreed place with African leaders to organize an interim government to function until majority rule is implemented.
3. The interim government should consist of a Council of State, half of whose members will be black and half white, with a white chairman without a special vote. The European and African sides would nominate their representatives. Its functions will include: legislation; general supervisory responsibilities; and supervision of the process of drafting the Constitution.

The interim government should also have a Council of Ministers with a majority of Africans and an African first minister. For the period of the interim government the Ministers of Defense and of Law and Order would be white. Decisions of the Council of Ministers to be taken by two-thirds majority. Its

functions should include: delegated legislative authority; and executive responsibility.

4. The United Kingdom will enact enabling legislation for this process to majority rule. Upon enactment of that legislation, Rhodesia will also enact such legislation as may be necessary to the process.
5. Upon the establishment of the interim government, sanctions will be lifted and all acts of war, including guerilla warfare, will cease.
6. Substantial economic support will be made available by the international community to provide assurance to Rhodesians about the economic future of the country. . . . The aim will be to expand the industrial and mineral production of the country. . . .

There was much more about international aid and a trust fund which would enable Rhodesia to "expand the industrial and mineral production of the country"; guarantees of investments and the "remittance overseas of an individual's liquid resources"; and other thinly veiled measures of a scheme the CIA had been trying to promote for some months prior to the Geneva Conference: the financing of whites who wanted to emigrate. Smith continued:

In our discussions in Pretoria, my colleagues and I made it clear that Rhodesians were not enamoured of schemes to buy them out—they were looking for a solution which would mean that they could go on living in their homeland. We were assured that the other parties to the proposal strongly supported this contention. Accordingly, whatever plan is produced to assist those who decide to leave, the incentive should be aimed at making it worthwhile for Rhodesians to stay.²

So much for what the public was told! The composition of the Council of State which would have the real power during the transition period seemed ominously similar to the existing Senate, and it was unthinkable that the nationalists—even the moderates—would agree to the army and police remaining in the same white hands as those who were doing their best to exterminate them. Or that the guerillas would lay down their arms on a vague promise of a very spurious-looking "majority rule" within two years. Or that the international community would agree to call off sanctions in exchange for a Kissinger-Smith promise!

At his Geneva hotel headquarters, Bishop Abel Muzorewa, a small, gentle owl-like man, assured me that everything—includ-

ing the conference—that affects man "must be God-inspired and God-centered" and that "all man's needs must be served with Godly concern. . . . In being a militant, I am also doing God's work. . . ." More to the point, because of his good contacts in Salisbury from whence he had come directly to the conference, he had brought with him the résumé of the briefing given by Ian Smith's deputy, Ted Sutton-Pryce, to the Cabinet, on what had really been agreed with Kissinger and which would be Smith's negotiating position at Geneva. That such a document could be leaked was easily understandable after a few days at Geneva. A former prime minister, R. S. Garfield Todd, released a few months before the Geneva Conference from four years of forced residence for opposing Smith's racist policies, turned up at Geneva as a negotiations' adviser to Joshua Nkomo! A steady trickle of white Rhodesian business people visited him in his room at the Intercontinental Hotel to urge him to stand firm for real majority rule. They had no fears for a future under a black regime. Like Garfield Todd they had excellent relations with many of the militant Zimbabwean nationalists and knew they were not racists.

Although the opposition to Smith within his own government came mainly from the right, there were others who considered he was being unnecessarily pigheaded and was set on a disaster course. It was through such realists that the ten-point document came into the hands of Bishop Muzorewa. It has to be read in the light of the first five points of Smith's public version:

1. The present government will appoint the proposed Council of State which will be kept small, with an equal number of white and black members, with the Prime Minister as chairman.
2. A two-thirds majority vote must be obtained for any change in the composition of the Council of State to ensure that the whites remain in complete control.
3. Justice, Internal Affairs, Defense, and the Army and Air Force Chiefs, plus the Police, remain the same as they are now.
4. The Council of State appoints the Cabinet in which Africans will have a majority and a black chairman, but the Council of State will have to approve anything they want to change. [It is unclear whether this refers to legislative or constitutional changes or to changes in the composition of the appointed cabinet—W.B.]
5. The present government will be suspended during the period of interim government. [Bishop Muzorewa added the comment: "In fact it will be 'on ice.'"]

6. Sanctions will be lifted as soon as the Council of State is formed.
7. This all means that if after two years we do not agree on a Constitution, we can revert back and the present government will take over again.
8. Terrorism is to cease immediately.
9. Majority rule does not mean *black* majority rule. It is majority rule of the people on the voters' role, *as it is now*. [Emphasis added]
10. European secretaries of all the ministries remain the same—i. e., European.

When I asked Robert Mugabe whether these ten points corresponded to his own information about the Kissinger "package deal," he replied: "We are simply not interested in it. What has Kissinger to do with our affairs? We have not come here to discuss his ideas as to what is good for our people. Nor to negotiate with Ian Smith. We have come to negotiate with the British not the principle, but the modalities, of the transfer of power." A calm but forceful and highly impressive personality, Robert Mugabe had also been released from jail in Zambia to attend the conference. In his Geneva hotel room where he received a small group of correspondents shortly after his arrival, he replied with superb scorn to an American journalist from one of the leading newsweeklies who asked "what price" the Patriotic Front was willing to pay for independence. "You have the effrontery to ask that we should pay something to be free after eighty-six years of semi-slavery?" he said. The journalist shrunk into his seat and mumbled: "I meant in terms of facilitating the departure of those who want to leave." "Why should we want to retain people who won't accept African rule?" said Mugabe. "Some will stay—many will leave. It's a question of whether they accept whatever legal government emerges."

The great bombshell of the conference was the formation—announced only a few weeks before the delegations were due to meet in Geneva—of the Patriotic Front. Smith had great hopes of exploiting the old divisions based on personal political rivalries. But he came up against a solid wall of unity between the two most important leaders of the two most important movements. Of the four official Zimbabwean nationalist delegations at the conference, that headed by Reverend Ndabaningi Sithole counted least. Although he pretended to represent ZANU, that organization in fact

had explicitly rejected his leadership. Sithole was clearly looking for outside support. I found myself in the same waiting room for an interview with Sithole with a West German correspondent from Johannesburg (who confided to me that Sithole was "the only real statesman" among the nationalists), a young American from a CIA-funded labor organization, and the Zaire ambassador to Switzerland. During my own interview there was an embarrassing moment when Reverend Sithole handed me a copy of his book, *African Nationalism*. Opening it, I found an eulogistic dedication to President Mobutu of Zaire. It was quickly retrieved and replaced by a "clean" copy! Mobutu had just "happened" to be in Switzerland during the early stages of the conference, looking for a role to play in the wings and perhaps for a client willing to serve his interests.

Apart from the ZIPA team and the ZANU-ZIPA reinforcements who came at a later stage, Robert Mugabe and Joshua Nkomo dominated the stage as far as the nationalists were concerned. They represented real power, while Bishop Muzorewa and Reverend Sithole represented positions. Nkomo, a huge man with grizzly, crewcut hair, strikes one as very shrewd, experienced and with a strong personality. He made mincemeat of some journalists who should have known better than to try to put their words into his mouth by means of barbed questions. At our first meeting, he said:

The Patriotic Front has been set up not just to present a single ZAPU-ZANU position at this conference. We set it up, above all, to intensify the armed struggle. It is because of the battlefield successes that the British government and its allies have sensed a threat to their interests in Zimbabwe and southern Africa and have thus been compelled to bring about this conference. We have come here as a result of the sweat, blood, and toil of our people. Our delegation is here to discover whether the message of armed struggle has sunk in sufficiently to ensure the immediate and unfettered independence of the people of Zimbabwe. We consider this conference as strictly between Zimbabweans of whatever color and race on the one hand, and the colonizers, the British government, on the other. . . . We insist on the fact that Britain never ceased being the colonizer of Rhodesia and therefore must now take steps to march out of Zimbabwe through the normal decolonialization process by the end of the transitional period. The final aim is independence from Britain.

Referring to fears expressed in some sections of the Western press that blacks might seek revenge against white settlers once they had state power in their hands, Nkomo said:

First, our liberation struggle aims at ending all forms of racism and discrimination because of color, as well as ending economic exploitation and all forms of social privilege. Second, in the new nation of Zimbabwe color, race, or tribe cease to be the measure of value in society and, in this connection, any settler who chooses to be a Zimbabwean shall be as much of a citizen as any other. It is not our intention to substitute one form of evil for another.

An embittered Ian Smith left the conference five days after it started, saying he had "more important things to do at home." He had not been able to play the game of using one leader against the other and, moreover, Kissinger could not come out into the open and say: "Yes, Ian Smith's negotiating position is the one we agreed on." During the dreary weeks following the start of the conference, the attempts to split the delegations proceeded apace. To split the "moderates" Muzorewa and Sithole from the "militant" Mugabe and Nkomo, and to split the "moderate-militant" Nkomo from the "revolutionary-militant" Mugabe. At one point the ZANU element of the Patriotic Front was kicked out of the Intercontinental Hotel, where it had been installed together with the ZAPU element and Sithole. The pretext was that the bills—which the British government was supposed to take care of—were not being paid. The British found them cheaper lodgings at the Hotel Royal. ZAPU stayed on at the Intercontinental.³

On November 29, the Patriotic Front issued a communiqué protesting "divisive tactics" employed by Chairman Ivor Richard:

There have been undisguised attempts to "divide and rule." On at least two occasions, favored delegations were shown conference documents which were expressly denied to the Patriotic Front. . . . More serious perhaps is the way the conference is being conducted. Minutes of bilateral talks have not been recorded as conference documents. As a result delegations do not know what has been discussed in bilateral meetings that do not involve them. We call upon the chairman to hold more discussions in the open forum than in secret. . . .

The Patriotic Front leaders, especially those who had only recently been freed from jail, were chafing at the inaction. They

wanted to end the farce and get back to the battlefield. They were uncertain as to how their fruitless diplomatic activities were viewed by their comrades in the field. It took the arrival of Mozambique Foreign Minister Joaquim Chissano in Geneva to persuade them not to stage a unilateral walkout. Chissano offered to send a planeload of leading ZANU and ZIPA militants to prove that they had the backing of the front-line combatants. On the night of December 3 there arrived three members of the ZANU Central Committee (including Josiah Tongogara, who had returned to the battlefield after the first week in Geneva) and six ZIPA commanders, including Rex Nhongo, acting commander-in-chief during Tongogara's imprisonment, and Dzinashe Machingura. It was an extremely high-level delegation, with the top military and political leaders of the ZANU-ZIPA element of the Patriotic Front. They were almost all wiped out within a few hours of their arrival. A ZANU communiqué issued on December 4 describes what happened:

At 4:15 this morning, Comrade Rex Nhongo woke up and saw smoke and flames advancing from the door toward the center of his room. He bravely groped his way to the door and rushed out, leaving all his belongings behind. The incident was immediately reported to the hotel authorities. The fire brigade arrived after about half an hour and put out the fire which had spread all over the building. One other comrade incurred bruises as the comrades rushed out of their rooms. . . . We have no doubt that it was arson and that the act was calculated to take the lives of members of our delegation, if not to destroy the entire delegation. It was an attempt by the enemy to intimidate us so that we would soften our stand on the question of irreversible transfer of power. . . .

Virtually the whole floor of the Hotel Royal was completely gutted. Had Rex Nhongo awakened a few seconds later, it is highly possible that the entire group would have been wiped out. It was difficult for them to grasp that comfortable hotel rooms in sophisticated, neutral Switzerland could be infinitely more dangerous than battlefield bombs and shells. The Swiss police pooh-poohed the idea of arson, but came up with no convincing explanation for the fire. Ten days later the Geneva Conference was officially "adjourned" until January 17, although few had any illusions that it would be reconvened. It gave me no satisfaction at all to lead my last dispatch from Geneva:

The Geneva Conference on Rhodesia has broken down and the liberation struggle must now go back to the battlefield and be intensified. This paraphrases the point of view of leaders of the Zimbabwe Patriotic Front and the ZIPA in exclusive interviews with this correspondent, as they prepared to return to Africa. . . .⁴

It was Kumbirai Kangai, mentioned earlier as a member of the ZANU Central Committee, who summed up the results of the Geneva Conference for the Patriotic Front delegates. "The British say the conference is adjourned," he said, "but we think this is a diplomatic way of saying the conference has failed. A failure for the British and for Ian Smith, but not for us. In fact it was a victory for us." He went on to explain why:

We consider that at this moment there are two fronts. The battlefield inside Zimbabwe and the diplomatic front at Geneva. Here we claim a decisive victory. A couple of months ago, apparently prodded by Kissinger, who correctly foresaw the danger that Zimbabwe could become a new Mozambique or a new Angola, Smith stated that he accepted "majority rule." That was the basis of setting up the Geneva Conference, which Kissinger had not foreseen. He thought that by sleight of hand, Smith could manipulate some tribal chiefs and others known as "moderate" nationalists and claim that he had the elements of "majority rule." Once the Geneva Conference was scheduled we decided to come to see what the enemy had in mind, but also ready for serious negotiations in case of any possibility of peaceful transfer of power. In fact, it was quickly clear that Smith had come to play for time because he was hurting from our battlefield successes. Kissinger thought he only had to wave a magic wand and we—and the front-line heads of state—would be dazzled by his brilliance. In fact, Smith—and thereby Kissinger—was smoked out into the open. Before he arrived at Geneva, Smith said repeatedly he now favored "majority rule." It was quite clear to us that he was lying. He repudiated "one man, one vote" as a criterion and talked about "responsible majority rule." We managed to isolate him with regard to world public opinion.

Some people criticized us for agreeing to talks. As revolutionaries, they said, we should never have come to Geneva. But other good revolutionaries have talked and fought at the same time. Our Vietnamese comrades talked in Paris while they intensified their armed struggle. That under our constant prodding the British agreed that Zimbabwe had to have its independence, and even set a date for that independence, was a victory for us. World public opinion has accepted this and also that our interpretation of "majority rule" as

"one man, one vote" is a reasonable one. In fact, we no longer talk about "majority rule" because this implies a minority to be repressed. We are for the independence of all Zimbabweans and equal rights for all regardless of color.

We had to participate at Geneva to avoid deals being made behind our backs. We came to prevent the British and Smith from maneuvering to set up a puppet regime, for this was the essence of the Kissinger "plan." British annoyance that the plan failed is implicit in the statement made by British foreign secretary Anthony Crossland after the conference broke down. He said that somehow or other it had got "off course" and that plans for a "moderate regime" had been thwarted.

In the closing days of the Geneva Conference, there was a revolt within Bishop Muzorewa's ranks. It had been simmering for some time with a number of the Bishop's closest aides wanting to join the Patriotic Front at the beginning of the conference. But they were urged by Mugabe and Nkomo to stay where they were and influence the Bishop in the cause of unity. The revolt had been sparked off by a position paper submitted by Muzorewa on the opening day of the conference in which he accepted elections under the Smith regime on the basis of "one man, one vote" to elect a new prime minister. Ministries would be allocated on the basis of the proportions of votes received by the contesting parties and the prime minister alone would distribute the portfolios. As the Bishop was the only one of the nationalist leaders who had legal status, while the others were in jail or in exile, it was felt that he was intent on carving out the top position for himself and using the name of the ANC—and even the freedom fighters—to promote his personal cause. Just one week before the Geneva Conference was "adjourned," one of Bishop Muzorewa's top aides, the Reverend Canaan Banana, held a press conference in Salisbury to announce the resignation of eleven members of the national executive of the Muzorewa wing of the ANC, sometimes called the "internal ANC", and finally "UANC" (United African National Council). Four of them, including Reverend Banana, announced they were leaving for Geneva to reinforce the delegation of the Patriotic Front.

It was against this background that, at the last meeting with journalists before they returned to the battlefield via Mozambique, Kumbirai Kangai was asked to clarify the relations between the Patriotic Front and the African National Council. (In mid-

1975, Muzorewa had "expelled" Joshua Nkomo from the ANC leadership because Nkomo was pushing for a congress according to ANC statutes and Muzorewa opposed this.)

Historically speaking, the ANC was formed by ZANU-ZAPU. When Nkomo was expelled he took most of the ZAPU leadership with him. But because the ZANU element remained and Robert Mugabe could only operate in the semi-liberated zones of Zimbabwe, ZANU could continue to function partially under the ANC umbrella. Then it was discovered that Muzorewa took advantage of this to spread the rumor that he, as head of the ANC, was leader of the armed forces. In fact, he had nothing to do with the armed forces, but as he is the only one who has access and facilities to operate in Rhodesia, he could persuade many members and sympathizers that it was he who was directing the armed struggle. The ANC has no policy, no ideology, no program. Muzorewa's agreement to hold elections, even under Smith's regime, was treachery. He hoped to take advantage of Smith's ban on other leaders to have a monopoly on electioneering. In fact, ANC is practically dead now. Muzorewa will be isolated. The prestige of the Patriotic Front grows every day.

Thus, although the Geneva Conference achieved none of its stated aims, the by-products were of fundamental importance. It provided a forum for consolidation among the real national liberation militants; it brought about the exposure of those who believed it was possible to talk their way into independence and the top power positions. It projected the Patriotic Front into the unrivaled first place and provided a tribune for it to make its aims known to the outside world. Kumbirai Kangai's assessment of Bishop Muzorewa's ambitions was perfectly correct, as was demonstrated some two months later in a dispatch to the *New York Times* from Salisbury by correspondent John F. Burns. Referring to the Patriotic Front's rejection of the Kissinger-Smith proposals, Burns reported:

Mr. Smith now plans to implement the proposals in a fresh round of talks with moderate black groups, including Bishop Abel Muzorewa's United African National Council. The Prime Minister also plans a referendum among the country's 6.3 million blacks, confident that it will prove Bishop Muzorewa's group to have majority support. But U.S. officials have insisted that the plan will not

work, because the Patriotic Front, which claims control of the guerillas fighting the Smith government, will continue fighting.

The whole thrust of the dispatch proves Kumbirai Kangai's other point about the expanding prestige of the Patriotic Front. It was based on Foreign Minister Pieter Van der Byl's reaction to Carter administration skepticism about any settlement in Rhodesia which did not have the approval of the Patriotic Front, a view supported by Secretary of State Cyrus Vance and UN representative Andrew Young, a black who is knowledgeable about the southern African situation. Among Van der Byl's dire predictions:

Once Rhodesia's gone, you'll have a belt of Marxist states running across southern Africa—Angola, Rhodesia, Mozambique. From there they'll move north—Zambia first, then Zaire, then one by one, further north, until they have the bulk of sub-Saharan Africa.⁵

Oddly enough, he did not mention South Africa!

Little progress toward a negotiated settlement was made during the year that followed the collapse of the Geneva Conference. Anglo-American diplomacy was directed essentially at giving Smith gentlemanly prods to ensure that the "moderates" could inherit power before the battlefield "radicals" grabbed it. In a patent step to have his own tame "moderates," Smith—and according to press reports elements of the British Conservative Party—sponsored the formation of a new grouping, ZUPO (Zimbabwean United People's Organization). Heading ZUPO is Jeremiah Chirau, and together with deputy head, Kayisa Ndiwena, they are two of the five black senators who had both served in Ian Smith's Cabinet. At an inaugural press conference on December 29, 1976, they claimed the allegiance of "254 tribal chiefs and 450 headmen" and had "ample financial support from many quarters." ZUPO was formed a few days after the Geneva Conference broke down. It was with Muzorewa, Sithole and Chirau that Smith conducted negotiations based on the oft-revised Anglo-American plan during the latter half of 1977. Chirau claimed to represent the Mashona, and Ndiwena the Matabele tribal groups. One of their first common declarations was for the guerillas to lay down their arms! As distinct from Muzorewa and Sithole, they rejected elections or a referendum on the basis that their tribal authority

was sufficient evidence of popular support. By such charades Smith tried to cling to power, always under the illusion that time was on his side. All he could do was to intensify repression in those areas where his regime still exercised control.

At a meeting of British Commonwealth prime ministers in London, on June 10, 1977, Joshua Nkomo urged the British government at least to intervene to stop the hanging of black nationalist leaders in Rhodesia and other atrocities of the Smith government. The *Financial Times* (London) quotes him as saying:

“The British want to destroy the Freedom movement, to install a Government which will protect their interests”. The Nationalist leader, who is in London for the Conference, said in a letter to Mr. Shridath Ramphal, the Commonwealth Secretary-General, that the Rhodesian Government was hanging many Africans every Monday on flimsy and framed-up charges, and he named fifteen men whom he said were under sentence of death in Salisbury jail . . . He said that Rhodesian troops had interrupted a traditional African ceremony at a village in the Fort Victoria area of South-east Rhodesia and had indiscriminately killed forty-five men, women and children, claiming the meeting had been organized by “terrorists”.⁶

It took nine months after the Geneva breakdown for Smith to accept the principle of “one man, one vote,” but with so many qualifications that the results would still conserve white majority rule, because there would be no equal value in black and white votes. The white votes would have sufficient value to ensure that over one-third of Assembly seats—and thus veto power over legislation—went to the whites. In a BBC interview on the night of September 26, 1977, after the “one man, one vote” concession had been announced, Smith was asked whether a peaceful settlement, including incorporating the guerillas in the Rhodesian army, would work. He replied:

I don't think it would. You see there isn't really such a thing as guerilla armies. If we look at them, they're a bunch of people who have had very little training, who don't acknowledge commands, they operate in individual units, there are dozens of them all over the place . . .⁷

His solution for the guerillas was that they only had to lay down their arms, return to civilian life where they could vote in

elections and even enlist as individuals in the national Rhodesian army. This was only another illustration of the dream world in which Smith lived even at the moment when the dream was about to turn into a nightmare—from his viewpoint. That the British government also lived in a dream world was clear when they appointed a Field Marshal—in this case Lord Carver—as the Resident Commissioner designate in Rhodesia to supervise the transfer of powers and negotiate the modalities for that transfer. The Field Marshal almost certainly shared Ian Smith's contempt for guerillas and it would not be surprising if he felt closer to his old Sandhurst-trained comrades-in-arms within Smith's armed forces than to black guerilla leaders. Yet it was with them and their political counterparts that any final solution would have to be negotiated—if there was still time for a negotiated solution. This point was made in a despatch from Salisbury by James MacManus in the *Guardian* (Manchester) of November 10, 1977:

The Patriotic Front alliance challenged the powers vested in Lord Carver's potential role of Resident Commissioner, the Smith regime rejected the emphasis on a ceasefire before the formulation of a constitution, and the Zambian Government apparently dismissed the idea that elections should precede independence.

American officials reportedly feel that the decision to place Lord Carver in charge of talks had been a disastrous error. Even British sources concede that he lacks the necessary political grasp and negotiating skills. He is said to be abrupt and abrasive in private discussions, a reflection of a direct military manner rather than any deliberate attempt at rudeness. There is also disquiet that the Field Marshal appears less than happy with the concept of a new Zimbabwe army “based on” the guerilla liberation forces.⁸

A blunt soldier, he must have reminded the Nationalists of the types who came to colonize their country at the end of the 19th century! By the time the Field Marshal was appointed the British seemed to have forgotten what their role at that stage was supposed to be. Simply expressed, it was to take back the independence which the rebel predecessors of the Smith regime had illegally appropriated to themselves and grant that independence to the representatives of the African majority. But having been invited to play that role, the British were starting to behave as if they were to reinstall their old colonial regime in Salisbury. The Patriotic

Front leaders considered themselves as the legitimate representatives of the Nationalist forces, having acquired that position by armed struggle. Their legitimacy had been recognized by the Liberation Committee of OAU. But while the abstract talks went on about what type of elections, what type of constitution, whether elections came first or a constitution, ceasefire or constitution first, and so on, the real intentions of the Smith regime were expressed in the slaughter of hundreds of African Zimbabweans in the refugee camps, continued hangings of patriots in Salisbury and the arrest of hundreds of Patriotic Front supporters all over the country.

In a letter published in *The Times* (London) on November 12, 1977, Canon L. John Collins, president of the International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa, having noted the lack of progress towards a Rhodesian settlement during the Lord Carver visit, wrote as follows:

Since April 1975, the regime has executed at least 99 people on political charges . . . The Smith regime has embarked on a countryside purge of supporters of the African National Council of Zimbabwe. Hundreds of officers at all levels from Branches to the National Assembly have been systematically arrested and detained to cripple political activity of any kind. There are 77 such members in the Marandellas Prison alone . . . [Canon Collins was referring to the umbrella organization ANC under which ZAPU-ZANU members had some legal status.] Over half a million people are estimated to have been removed from their homes into fenced camps or "protected villages" . . . In this climate of continuing political repression, it is not surprising that the liberation movements should regard with deepest suspicion proposals to retain substantial sections of the Rhodesian Army, the police, judiciary and civil service to maintain "law and order" during the transition to independence. . . .

Not only were the Patriotic Front leaders also deeply suspicious of this, but they were equally suspicious of renewed intensive efforts toward the end of 1977 at splitting the Patriotic Front; at driving a wedge between Nkomo and Mugabe, even to the extent of suggesting a separate ceasefire with the ZAPU forces. At a press conference in the Zambian capital of Lusaka, on November 11, 1977, Joshua Nkomo accused the British government of behind-the-scenes maneuvers aimed at splitting the Patriotic Front, and he produced documents which were being circulated in Brit-

ain to the effect that he was plotting to oust Mugabe from the Front.

Behind Nkomo's anger—and Mugabe's natural suspicions—was the fact that at the end of September, Zambia's president Kenneth Kaunda played host in Lusaka to a secret meeting with Ian Smith. It was their first meeting for over two years—the previous one a well-publicized affair at Victoria Falls. "It appears," reported *The Times* (London) on October 3, "that the meeting was arranged through the mediation of the head of the Lonrho organization, Mr. 'Tiny' Rowland. Lonrho has extensive interests in both Zambia and Rhodesia and has been indirectly involved in previous settlement attempts. In 1975, it provided transport and other facilities for Mr. Nkomo . . . Observers here in Lusaka today speculated whether one of Mr. Smith's motives in coming to Lusaka was to try and lure Mr. Nkomo away from the Patriotic Front . . ."

The *Sunday Times* (London) was more specific in a feature article a few days later. Depicting the unhappiness of Bishop Muzorewa, "languishing unloved in a London hotel" while the big event unfolded in Lusaka, the article continues:

Muzorewa believes that he is the victim of an international conspiracy organized by Rowland and supported by Rowland's ally, President Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia, to install Joshua Nkomo . . . as the heir to Ian Smith . . .

Muzorewa's misery springs from a secret meeting arranged by Rowland between Smith and Kaunda in the Zambian capital Lusaka two weeks ago. Both Rowland and Kaunda have for many years been prominent supporters of Nkomo, and in Salisbury, Smith, seeking to safeguard white interests under a black government, is known to regard Nkomo as the most astute black politician in the field . . .

Tiny Rowland has a great deal at stake in Rhodesia. The Lonrho company there, on which the international conglomerate was founded, owns a million acres of ranches and forests and is one of the largest landowners in the country. Lonrho's gold and copper mines, under the control of local directors since Smith's declaration of independence in 1965, have helped to boost Rhodesia's sanction-breaking mineral exports of 220 million pounds a year and to keep the Rhodesian exchequer in funds . . .

The nationalist leader whom Rowland has consistently supported has been Nkomo, whom he has known for twenty years. . . .⁹

Nothing could be more calculated to arouse the suspicions of the ZANU leadership and this was probably the main aim of what

developed into one of those “divide and rule” attempts in which the British of all colonial powers are the most experienced. A whole spate of articles and commentaries on the theme of detaching Nkomo from Mugabe developed in the British press. Fuel was added to the fire when *The Times* (London) carried a report from Lusaka on November 12 quoting Mr. Nkomo as announcing that the Patriotic Front was “ready to meet Lord Carver and General Prem Chand, the United Nations representative in Salisbury, in Malta on November 15.” The main purpose “would be to discuss the mechanism and implementation of a ceasefire. . . .” On the same day, from Salisbury, the *Guardian* (Manchester) carried a report from James MacManus, stating that the British had offered to arrange ceasefire talks between the Patriotic Front and Smith’s military leaders somewhere “outside Africa.” The implication that Nkomo was acting in the name of the Patriotic Front, but in fact only for the ZAPU faction, was spelled out in the following passage:

The attraction to the Rhodesian generals was that such a move would almost certainly have formalized the split in the Patriotic Front since Mr. Mugabe’s wing of the organization would have refused to attend. This would have cleared the way for the military to explore a deal with the other Front leader, Mr. Joshua Nkomo, whose guerilla forces are poised to make damaging incursions into western Rhodesia during the approaching rainy season . . .

In early October a Rhodesian team flew to Zambia to meet Government officials there and members of Mr. Nkomo’s Zimbabwe People’s Union ZAPU.

The group is said to have met its counterparts at Mfuwe in eastern Zambia where agreement was reached in principle between Mr. Nkomo’s army and Rhodesian forces.¹⁰

Whether Joshua Nkomo was playing an agreed role within the Patriotic Front, sounding out the adversary’s intentions, or instance, or not, was not clear. But there were clarifications at a summit meeting with Robert Mugabe in Maputo starting December 6. The following day President Samora Machel joined in the discussions and the day after that Joshua Nkomo announced he would not be going to London for talks with the British Foreign Secretary, Dr. Owen. At the same time President Kuanda announced he was disassociating himself from the latest Anglo-American initiative. In a change of attitude, he announced that in

Zambia’s view, “the focus must be on independence first—that is the transfer of power to the majority under the leadership of the Patriotic Front”

As 1977 moved into 1978, it became clearer than ever that whatever diplomatic shadow-boxing went on in London, Salisbury, Lusaka or anywhere else, the final solution was being worked out on the battlefield.