

- Phuza Ishumba

"The British government appears to be prepared to go it alone with new Rhodesian elections based on a fresh constitution for Zimbabwe-Rhodesia, if next month's scheduled conference in London is deadlocked by the leaders of the Patriotic Front guerrilla movement... But in that case it is probable that the British government, in its role as the responsible authority, will go ahead with a new constitution for Zimbabwe-Rhodesia, to be swiftly followed by a test of acceptability in Rhodesia and a new multi-racial election".

'The Guardian' newspaper,
London, August 12th.

After Margaret Thatcher's apparent bombshell of a statement in Canberra, Australia, that the British government would move to lift sanctions against Rhodesia and recognise the Smith-Muzorewa regime, the 'iron-lady' appeared to change her tune. Apparently back-tracking at the Commonwealth Prime Minister's Conference in Lusaka at the beginning of August, the British government has convened a fresh all-party conference which is now taking place in London.

The Lusaka Commonwealth conference "recognised that the internal settlement was defective, that it was the constitutional responsibility of the British government to grant legal independence to Zimbabwe on the basis of majority rule; and welcomed the British government's intention to call a constitutional conference to which all the parties would be invited". The leaders of the 39 delegations present at Lusaka consequently accepted "that it must be a major objective to bring about a cessation of hostilities and an end to sanctions as part of the process of implementation of a lasting settlement".

As much as the Bishop Smithorewa puppet gang might have initially fumed over Thatcher's apparent climb-down (for after all had the Tory high-priestess not applauded the farcical April elections as 'free and fair'?) we do not feel that the Lusaka package represents any major change from the previous Anglo-American proposal. Whereas the Organisation of African Unity meeting in Monrovia in July recognised the Patriotic Front as the authentic representative of the Zimbabwean people the Commonwealth statement refers simply to 'all parties to the conflict', placing the puppets on the same level as the Patriotic Front.

Further, from the final communique, it is clear that the danger of sanctions being lifted is as present as ever. The 'Guardian' report which we have quoted above is a clear pointer to the British government's tactics at the London talks. At once it shows why the leaders of the Patriotic Front must be present at such talks, and why they will seek to expose Britain's twists and turns every step of the way. It is clear that the armed struggle continues whilst the talks take place. Indeed it is the armed struggle that has brought the situation in Zimbabwe to this new state; a stage in which the ruling class cannot rule in the old way and has to find black collaborators to do the job for them; a stage where independent Africa and world opinion threatens to isolate Britain.

The talks in London are likely to be bitter and protracted. The British ruling class as wily and cunning a crowd of brigands as ever trod this earth. The Patriotic Front have already shown Lord Carrington, Thatcher's devious Foreign Minister, that they will not bow down to his snooty Chairmanship and simply talk about a pie-in-the-sky constitution. They want to get down to brass tacks and that means discussion on the all-important question of the transition to power. What must be resolved before any constitutional settlement and fresh elections can be agreed upon are such crucial questions as: Who will control the White dominated state machine, the administration, police, army and judiciary?

How will a ceasefire and elections be supervised?

Who will hold power while elections are held?

We cannot say how far the London talks can take the Zimbabwean struggle. What is clear is that unless such talks as these clearly indicate the procedure for the hand over of power to the authentic representatives of the struggling people, there can be no peace nor liberation.

In the complex and tricky stage the Zimbabwean struggle is reaching our comrades-in-arms will expect to receive the full and principled support of the Front Line States, (which have borne a heavy brunt of the racist backlash), the fighting liberation movements, Africa and the progressive world forces. We of the African National Congress and Umkhonto we Sizwe are four-square behind our Zimbabwean brothers and sisters. We have shed our blood on the sacred battle-fields of Zimbabwe; at Wankie and on the Eastern Front (1967-68). We are committed as ever in the common cause against the common enemy. We must expect a protracted struggle in Zimbabwe; for it is part of the entire process to liberate Southern Africa.

In Zimbabwe, South Africa and Namibia the struggle is continuing, taking place under more and more intensive conditions. Immense sacrifices, dedication and determination are required of all freedom fighters. As our President, comrade Tambo, has state: 'There is no force that can stop us. All the manoeuvrings of the imperialists can only delay the result, they cannot alter it'.

DOWN WITH IMPERIALIST MANOEUVRES!

FORWARD WITH THE ARMED STRUGGLE!

FORWARD TO FREEDOM IN ZIMBABWE, SOUTH AFRICA AND NAMIBIA!