

Guerrillas swear to destroy Rhodesia army

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By James Fox

ON THE EVE of the opening of the Geneva conference on Rhodesia, The Sunday Times has obtained an exclusive tape recording which reveals the real strategy of the most militant of the African nationalist leaders, Robert Mugabe.

Mugabe, secretary general of Zanu, the Zimbabwe African National Union, has told a group of his members that his guerrillas will recognise no interim government set up by the Geneva negotiators—even an all-black government—until Ian Smith's white forces have been totally destroyed.

Mugabe's blueprint for an armed takeover of Zimbabwe, which runs counter to the Anglo-American plans for an agreed Rhodesia settlement, was set out—and taped—at a secret meeting in Lusaka three days after Smith's television announcement of his acceptance of the principle of majority rule. These are some of the key passages:

“The question is, not to go to a conference and argue which powers each will have. What we want is more time to fight and then the Smith government will acknowledge that the time has come to give in on these proposals. These arguments about going to the conference—that's Nkomo's business. [Nkomo leads Zapu, the other main nationalist faction.] If the British want, they can have constitutional talks with him. . . .

Even if the proposals gave 100 per cent black membership of parliament, we would not accept it unless there was total destruction to Smith's army and immediate replacement by Zanu forces. . . . When Smith's army is tired, he will come and say “Gentlemen, let's talk about the transfer of power.” The only time for negotiations is that time. . . .

Talks delayed

The Geneva conference aimed at setting up an interim government for Rhodesia and due to open formally on October 25, has been postponed for three days. Joshua Nkomo, one of the African nationalist leaders set to take part, said in Lusaka yesterday that the delay would not affect the start of preliminary informal talks in Geneva on Thursday of this week. African leaders have been asking for more time to hammer out their approach.

The presidents of five countries surrounding Rhodesia—Mozambique, Angola, Zambia, Tanzania, Botswana—are meeting in Lusaka today to discuss African policy positions for the conference which will be chaired by Ivor Richard, British ambassador to the United Nations.

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These [Kissinger] proposals, according to Smith, state that the army and police remain in the hands of the whites, but we were not told that a new white army and white police force will be created. But you were also told that terrorism would stop. Thousands of the cadres are supposed to throw down their arms into the hands of the new white army—probably to be arrested. Only fools would accept this. . . .

We can be confident in our support from our friends and from the socialist countries. And we shouldn't worry about the Kissinger-British proposals. They can put in any puppet government they want, but a puppet government cannot contain us. . . .

Mugabe's importance is enhanced by the fact that he is not only the leader of Zanu but also regarded as political spokes-

man of Zipa, the 10,000-strong black guerrilla force. Originally this was the military arm of both Zanu and Zapu, but since the middle of last year Nkomo's Zapu troops have been pushed out.

Mugabe also claimed in his speech that President Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, who originally created the joint Zanu-Zapu force, had now promised to throw his support exclusively behind Mugabe's Zanu.

The speech thus set out to show that Mugabe, Nyerere and President Samora Machel of Mozambique have formed a powerful triumvirate. It aims at sustaining a protracted war to establish eventually a socialist régime which, as Mugabe said publicly last Wednesday, will “assault capitalist and bourgeois tendencies.”

Other nationalist leaders, such as Bishop Abel Muzorewa of the African National Council, and Nkomo, who have agreed to go to the Geneva talks, have taken more ambiguous positions on the Smith proposals. Mugabe has reserved his position on whether he will go to Geneva.

Why then did Mugabe establish a “Patriotic Front” last week with Nkomo?

It is evident that Nkomo wanted to reinforce his political position by getting closer to the Zipa guerrillas. As for Mugabe, he stands to enjoy the benefit of the Russian support which has been going to the Nkomo faction.

The support for Mugabe and Zipa has come mainly from the Chinese. When Nkomo paid a visit to Moscow recently, he was told that further support depended on his getting more influence over the guerrilla army which Mugabe claims to control. This coincided with Mugabe's need for weapons that the Chinese could not provide but Russia could.

But in his speech—delivered

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