

I don't feel optimistic, says Mugabe

By James Fox

MEMBERS of Rhodesia's most militant black nationalist group Zanu, were still arguing tactics yesterday as they readied themselves for the talks in Geneva on Rhodesia's interim government.

Their uncertainty followed the decision only late last week of Robert Mugabe, Zanu's leader and political spokesman for the guerrilla army, Zipa, to lead a delegation to the talks. Mugabe formed an uneasy, "patriotic front" with Joshua Nkomo, the moderate leader of the other nationalistic - faction Zapu, recently.

Zanu's tactics will also be affected by the release from detention in Zambia of several key militants including Josiah Tongogara, 36-year-old former leader of Zanu's army. The stance of Mugabe and to a certain extent Nkomo was aptly described by one diplomatic observer as "each looking over their left shoulder—Mugabe especially cannot afford to lose his revolutionary credentials at Geneva."

As both the Smith delegation and Zanu reaffirmed their apparently intransigent positions over the talks, Mugabe told The Sunday Times by telephone from Lusaka — before leaving for Geneva: "I don't feel optimistic at all about the talks. I never have felt optimistic. Smith's statements from Geneva still show a reluctance to hand over power. We require the complete transference of power during the interim period."

On the patriotic front, he said that it was an alliance for the purposes of the conference only. "We will be two delegations, Zanu and Zapu, but we are agreeing on all the proposals we are making." He would not say whether the patriotic front would make a joint opening speech. Mugabe reiterated that Zipa would demand control of the forces of law and order. If control of the government was to be taken over by a political party, that party would be Zanu.

A Zanu spokesman in London yesterday suggested that one reason for forming the patriotic front was that "Nkomo is much more likely to settle on any terms, and he has to be kept in check." He said it was obvious to everyone in Zanu that there could be no military alliance between the two parties.

Meanwhile Nkomo himself, still at the Savoy Hotel in London en route to Geneva, was deeply critical yesterday of the British reluctance to put a minister in the chair at Geneva or to play a vigorous role, a view shared by all the African nationalists, the "front-line presidents" and the US. "We want political decisions to be made," he told The Sunday Times, "and these can only be made by ministers and not diplo-



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Rhodesia

mats" (referring to Mr Ivor Richard, Britain's UN ambassador, the present chairman of the talks).

"I'm puzzled why they don't take more power. Callaghan is a man who all the time criticised the Tories for failing to be forthright on the Rhodesia question, and we can see now that he is even worse than the Tories."

Britain squares Geneva circle

By Nicholas Carroll, Geneva

THE preliminaries to the Geneva Conference on Rhodesia have got off to a quiet start, but some procedural matters have already been decided—subject to acceptance by those delegates who have not yet arrived.

For instance, the table will, after all, not be round. Instead, there will be a number of small square tables arranged in a hollow rectangle.

The leading delegates will be labelled by their names, not by

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