

ZIMBABWE ZANU TURNS SOUR

The Daily Telegraph (4 March) suggests that current events cast doubt on the wisdom of the Lancaster House Settlement. Big Flame readers may also—from a different perspective—be wondering just what is going on in Zimbabwe and whether we were wrong to support the Patriotic Front during the independence war.

TWO EVENTS DOMINATE the news: Nkomo's flight to London via Botswana, and the wave of repression and murder sweeping through Matabeleland—the area of Western Zimbabwe which forms the home of the Ndebele people and the base for ZAPU, the party Nkomo heads. But behind this spectacle stand the main facts about the Mugabe Government: constricted by the Lancaster House Settlement and under tightening economic and military pressure from South Africa, the ZANU regime has made a massive compromise with international capital and has been unable to satisfy any sector of Zimbabwe's dispossessed. In these circumstances, a witch-hunt of ZAPU 'dissidents' and a war in Matabeleland are a very convenient diversion for the government; the Daily Telegraph, revelling in its own witch-hunts and wars, has something in common with the official mouthpiece in Zimbabwe. By all accounts, the situation in Matabeleland is grim. In January—after months of kidnapping and murder—the 5,000-strong Fifth Brigade was sent in after other army units had failed to restore 'law and order'. These had contained ex-guerrillas from ZIPRA, the armed wing of ZAPU. When they reached Matabeleland, many had deserted. The Fifth Brigade consists entirely of ZANU supporters, trained by North Korean instructors.

Their efforts have been concentrated not on a direct military confrontation with ZIPRA dissidents—who may be very well armed and trained—but on terrorising their possible supporters. Teachers have been beaten or shot, a businessman murdered by soldiers posing as dissidents. At mass rallies, government spokesmen are telling the people 'ZAPU must be liquidated'. Previously, their rhetoric was aimed at 'bandits'; but outlaws can be political as well. The government has used buses to round up youths for conscription into the army, and to take cattle from Matabeleland to Mashonaland. The buses are then hijacked: is this banditry or resistance?

One party

Accompanying the army operation is the national move toward a one-party state. Before the election, the Patriotic Front split back into its components, and then ZANU swept the poll. But until last year a compromise was maintained, with ZAPU officials in cabinet posts. Last February, Nkomo and other ministers were sacked after arms caches were found on ZAPU-owned land. In March, two ZIPRA guerrilla leaders (Dabengwa and Masuku) were arrested; a year later they are on trial charged with plotting to overthrow the ZANU Government and install Nkomo. Mugabe has declared his support for one-party rule and encouraged defections from ZAPU. His chief spokesman—Edison Zvobgo—has hinted at constitutional changes to this end. But Building the Party has not gone far enough to hold a Party Congress—the first one is due in 1984 or after.

This emphasis on Party and Army diverts attention from more basic issues in Zimbabwe: land and the peasantry, women's oppression, workplace organisation and the minimum wage, multinational companies, the strings attached to IMF loans, South African interference... In BF 109 (October 1982) we reported on women, on the slow pace of land resettlement (by the end of 1981 only 15,000 families had been resettled; the projected figure was 50,000 per year) and on the government preference for individual land-holdings rather than co-operatives. Half the best land is still owned by white farmers and agribusiness. Squatting, by landless Shona as well as Ndebele, continues but this year's bad harvest has led people to leave the farms for the towns.

The industrial working class has fared no better. After the initial wave of strikes was put down by the army (see Revolutionary Socialism 6, 1981), the government has concentrated on forming Workplace Committees and countering ZAPU's influence in the trade unions. When a representative of the official Zimbabwean Congress of Trade Unions visited Britain recently, he expressed opposition to the right to strike and accountability of trade union leaders. Ian Smith's Industrial Concilia-



Judah Passow (Network)

tion Act is still in force, and the minimum wage is still frozen at under £40 per month.

What then is the government's attitude to the companies which employ these workers? Interviewed by 'Africa Report' last September, Mugabe stated: '... (But) the multinational companies in existence—Union Carbide, Anglo American Corp., Rio Tinto, and Lonrho, which operates our pipeline—are companies with large assets in the country. We haven't expropriated those assets and we don't intend to expropriate them. If under any circumstances the state would want to acquire the properties, we would go about it in a very calculated way by consultation. In any case, we believe it is better to participate in these multinationals than to nationalise them outright. Nationalisation is therefore not on our cards. If we have these multinationals that have contributed to the development of the country, surely new multinationals that seek to invest in the country must accept the same circumstances in which their counterparts are operating—the guiding rules that operate. The law that protects them is one of the most rigid laws in the world—the Constitution of Zimbabwe—which can only be amended by a 100% vote in Parliament...

'We want to offer protection to all of them, the existing ones and the new ones. It is in these circumstances that we would want new investment to come. We want investment here and we hope that investment will be forthcoming from the US private sector.'

Whether or not ZANU chooses to fight imperialism again—and the signs are against it—it is undoubtedly constrained by imperialism. Four key examples are Lancaster House, the continuing role of the British Army, the conditions of IMF (and other) loans, and the combined military sabotage/economic grip of South Africa.

Constraints

The Settlement was imposed on the Patriotic Front by Lord Carrington's diplomacy and the Western-funded South Africa/Rhodesian war effort. It guaranteed the protection of private property, white-owned farms or mines, for example. This is the pressure to which Mugabe is bowing in his interview,



Scots, Rhodesian Light Infantry, SAS and the Central Intelligence Organisation (secret service)—which is operating in Matabeleland.

The recent loans from the IMF, World Bank, and others, have been accompanied by changes in economic policy. Heinz, the food giant, took a 51% stake in a local vegetable-oil firm—reversing the policy of majority domestic holdings. The currency has been devalued by 20% and food subsidies cut; these IMF demands raise the cost of living. Industry's access to foreign currency (to buy

—operated by Lonrho—and the sabotage inflicted a massive petrol shortage.

South African agents blew up air force planes last year; their spies have been arrested, and black S. African troops killed in a military encounter near the border last summer. The threat from the south is real.

Our role

During the war of independence, there were two main reasons why (some) socialists in Britain gave active support to the Patriotic Front. We knew that a victory for the PF would awaken great hopes among black people in Zimbabwe, South Africa, Namibia, and here in Britain too. The Smith regime, described by a Telegraph leader as 'peaceful and prosperous', meant only war, famine, and execution for the black majority. Secondly, the PF were by necessity fighting against imperialism: South African, British, and American interests had placed their bets on Muzorewa, or alternatively on a separate deal with Joshua Nkomo.

But within that solidarity movement, some of us also knew that the victory was unlikely to bring an immediate struggle for socialism—without which the new hopes would remain unfulfilled. We also knew that a black neo-colonial government was a possible outcome.

Unlike the RCP—who came to heckle solidarity meetings and to denounce ZANU speakers—we aimed to raise the debate on socialism and feminism while participating in solidarity with a struggle for a more limited—but still worthwhile—aim: independence. Our willingness to raise the debate brought us into conflict with the unquestioning solidarity of Anti-Apartheid and the RCG.

Socialists in Britain can't change the course of events inside Zimbabwe. Nor do we expect Nkomo or the rest of the ZAPU leadership—politically similar to their ZANU counterparts—to push for socialism. That task faces the landless workers, angry women, low-paid workers, and the guerrillas who fought the war only to surrender power to the educated elite returning from exile. It requires a political debate inside the country, not a witch-hunt against ZPAU. Last November, Moto (a Zimbabwean catholic newspaper) published a marxist critique of the government, emphasising the potential for self-organisation among the peasants. But the debate has hardly begun.

Greg Dropkin

The Socialist Forum for Southern African Solidarity (SOFAS) will be discussing developments inside Zimbabwe at their next meeting on Sat. 9th April in London. For details contact 01-607-5206

above, and in the slow pace of land reforms.

The British Army, after supervising the election period, stayed on as BMATT (British Military Assistance and Training Team) to train army cadets and officers, air force pilots too. The team recently expanded—and the government's request—to counter the rise of factional tension in the army. They have also trained a Task Force—including ex-Selous

imports) was also cut in line with the IMF.

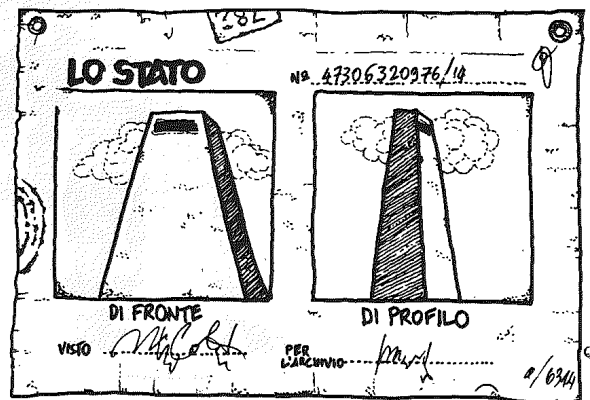
South Africa, which takes the largest portion of Zimbabwe's exports and supplies 27% of imports, recently acquired a 3-year contract for petrol and diesel fuel. How? Their anti-government guerrilla movement in Mozambique (the MNR) had blown up the fuel storage tanks in Beira in December. Zimbabwe depended on the Beira pipeline

AFTER MARX, JAIL

IN ITALY NEARLY 3,000 people are being held without trial. Some have been held for more than three years. They have been charged with various serious but unproven charges, all of which have been changed over time. Some have a politics which has developed from a tradition of which Big Flame has also been a part. Some have little or no politics except that they are opposed to the government.

Here we reprint an extract from a letter by the accused, at a time when for some of them their long awaited trials have begun with a blaze of publicity. In the next issue we hope to carry a longer article about the trials and their significance for us all.

This 'trial of trials' began 3 years ago with a massive fanfare and a witch hunt in the press built on outrageous and unsubstantiated accusations. A handful of the defendants were offered up as a sacrifice to a wave of irrationality that swept Italy in the wake of the kidnapping and killing of Aldo Moro, then president of the Christian Democratic Party. Plots, scandals, suspicions, and allegations of terrorism were all acted out in the press. It was in this context that those arrested on 7th April were



made out to be founders of the Red Brigades, the brains behind terrorism in Italy, and as those who had made the telephone calls on behalf of the kidnapers of Aldo Moro.

These accusations were absurd. They were also false. Never proven, in the end they were dropped. The April 7th defendants are still in prison, now facing new charges of conspiracy to armed insurrection against the state, the first time such a charge has been used. The defendants have uncovered the repressive

policies behind the use of preventive detention in Italy. The 'anti-terrorism' frame up has collapsed, and now the defendants are demanding to be free. It is the only demand that makes sense. The International Campaign against Repression in Italy are contactable at: John Merrington, Middlesex Polytechnic, White Hart Lane, London N17 (tel: 801 3434). Cheques payable to 'After Marx-April'.

David Stones (S/London BF).