

October 1979

**ZRGBS Report: Zimbabwe-Rhodesia (Z-R) Political
Development**

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Summary:

Overview of political developments in Zimbabwe-Rodesia reporting hopeful optimism that a settlement can be reached in London. The structure of newly created governing bodies is announced. Additionally it states that the chances of Nkomo winning an election are slim, and that if Mugabe comes to power a clash between ZPRA and ZANLA forces is a strong possibility. If a settlement is not reached, Zimbabwe-Rhodesia will become even more heavily dependent on South Africa.

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ZRGS REPORT: ZIMBABWE-RHODESIA (Z-R) POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT, October 1979.

1.1 After the constitutional conference in London had initially struggled to get off the ground, the Prime Minister of Z-R in the third week of the discussions accepted the British constitutional proposals and the Patriotic Front (PF) indicated that they would approve a 20 per cent reserve of Whites in the intended new parliament. According to the latest indications a spirit of cautious optimism prevails in official Z-R circles that the conference will serve a constructive purpose and that it will lead either to a settlement or that the position of the PF-should the latter prove to be the fly in the ointment-would be dealt a serious blow. The lifting of sanctions within the next few months, as far as it concerns Britain, appears to be accepted as a strong possibility...

1.2 It has, for instance, been heard reliably that on 21 September in Brussels NKOMO informed MOBUTU that a settlement was imminent and that MUGABE had been neutralized. MUGABE's position is also affected in that he cannot rely on the loyalty of the ZANLA leader, TONGOGARA...

3. POLITICAL POSITION REGARDING THE PF

3.1 Due to the ethnic constitution and various other latent differences, various attempts to unify ZANLA and ZPRA have failed. Under the increasing pressure of the USSR and the 'front line' states success has apparently been achieved in the unification of the two organizations in a loose alliance. After various failed attempts, in July 1979 after the Maputo and Dar-es-Salaam Conference, it was announced that the two wings had created a basis for co-operation-consisting of the following bodies:

3.1.1. A Co-ordinating Council consisting of six members of each to serve as the executive body.

3.1.2. A Defence Council consisting of eight members to serve as a 'war council'.

3.1.3. A Joint Operational Command, consisting of six military commanding officers from every organization to be jointly responsible for the planning of the war strategy.

3.2. As far as is known a draft constitution has already been accepted by both organizations. Despite the seeming readiness for co-operation it appears to be a smoke screen to increase the PF's bargaining position in the negotiations.

4. PRESENT PROSPECTS FOR THE RSA

According to information the Z-R government as well as Britain agree that, as soon as a settlement treaty has been signed, an election must be held as soon as possible to give the PF as little time as possible to organize domestically. It is in this regard that a period of weeks are at present mentioned. This, combined with the result of the previous election as well as the possibility that the PF will not be able to retain a united front, contributes to the supposition that MUZOREWA will win such an election. This accompanies the further assumption that the Defence Forces would be allowed and would have the capability of maintaining law and order.

[There is, however] further information which indicates that MUZOREWA's chances of winning an election under present circumstances have weakened.

4.1 In the event, however, where MUZOREWA does win the election, it would lead to at least partial international recognition and it could be expected that Z-R would

campaign for affiliation with bodies such as the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) and the United Nations (UN). It might lead to the present close relations with the RSA 'cooling' to a degree. It is, however, doubtful whether, at least in the short to medium term, it would crystallize into an openly hostile attitude towards the RSA. For a considerable time Z-R will be caught up in the attempts to overcome the disruption which has been caused by the war and would probably want to avoid coming into confrontation with the RSA.

4.2 Moreover it can be foreseen that within the Z-R many 'difficulties' [obstructions] would still exist which could be exploited by the RSA should relations appear to be unsatisfactory.

4.3 Given the ethnic reality it is unlikely that NKOMO will come into power after an election. Should MUGABE win the election, a bloody clash between ZPRA and ZANLA forces is a strong possibility-once again a situation which could be exploited by the RSA.

4.4 If, due to MUZOREWA's actions, a settlement is not reached and recognition fails to materialize, it must be foreseen that Z-R would have to rely even more heavily on the RSA to keep it going. In this case a protracted struggle must be foreseen during which the RSA's accountability will increase progressively, and where an increasing involvement by outside forces might occur. In such a case the consequences appear to be potentially more detrimental to the RSA than the calculated risk which an internationally accepted moderate government in Z-R might hold for the RSA and the Southern African strategy... In spite of all the means that the PF can/will apply to ensure a military victory, the Z-R security forces could continue maintaining the military status quo in the short term through a sustained effective centralised command and the effective utilisation of available means if the Security Forces/White morale do not collapse.