

## COMMENT

Seen through Dr Kissinger's spectacles, Zimbabwe was neither white nor black but chrome yellow. It is clear that the United States has even less interest than Britain in supporting the squalid group of white racists who at present terrorise that country; their concern is to ensure that when the country achieves a real government it will be one that accepts western satellite status. The reason for this is not some vague commitment to balancing communist influence in Mozambique and Angola, it is the simple fact that most of the chrome in the world that does not come from Russia is to be found in Zimbabwe. Chromium is an extremely important element in modern industry, so important to the economy and security of the United States that the Americans, it will be remembered, explicitly exempted it from sanctions regulations forbidding the import of Rhodesian goods. (How pleasant, by the way, that we shall shortly no longer have to refer to an area of good earth inhabited by a lot of decent people by commemorating a ruthless crook like Cecil Rhodes.)

The American and in general the capitalist world's interest lies in promoting a 'stable' regime in Zimbabwe (and, like Dr Vorster but a bit sooner, Kissinger came to see that this meant ditching Smith) which is orientated towards the west (if that be etymologically possible.) Of course the new state will have to be called 'socialist', an epithet now as necessary, as honorific and about as meaningful as 'democratic'; the question will be whether it is to be the real socialism of Tanzania or that of, say, Kenya or Zaire.

Before this question can be answered or even realistically put, it is necessary to get rid of Smith. The proposal that the racists should be bought off by a kind of danegeld contributed to by Britain, while a manifest injustice to the British taxpayer (particularly as so many of these herrenvolk skipped to Africa precisely to avoid paying British taxes) is nevertheless a sacrifice worth making if it will shorten the present period of bloodshed. To see all this as merely a preliminary step is in no way to minimise its importance or to underrate the magnificent stand taken by, for example, Bishop Lamont. It is only necessary to read the Report of the Rhodesian Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace<sup>1</sup> to recognise that any succeeding regime, whether an American client or an African socialist state or even a Russian satellite, would find it hard to be anything but an improvement on the brutal tyranny that now prevails. It is good to see that the Bishop of Umtali is by

<sup>1</sup>Civil War in Rhodesia. *Catholic Institute for International Relations* (1, Cambridge Terrace, London N.W.1.) £1.

no means an isolated figure in his Church; at least in this struggle the Catholic Church (quite apart from containing Robert Mugabe) has come down unequivocally on the side of liberation while, of course, for the Methodists, Bishop Muzorewa splendidly witnesses to the beneficent influence of the World Council of Churches. It is such courageous men and women who have stood up to Smith's thugs, risking and suffering imprisonment, torture and death for justice's sake, who have made possible the choice that will shortly lie before the country. During this preliminary phase the unity between the African parties now being shown so hearteningly at Geneva is exactly what is needed. The danger lies in thinking that once the racist irrelevancies have been swept into the appropriate historical dustbin good men can relax and allow the policies of Kissinger to be implemented by the new American administration.

It seems that the Americans had originally selected Joshua Nkomo to be their man in Zimbabwe, assigning to Mugabe the role (and perhaps the fate) of Patrice Lumumba. If Nkomo is prepared to play, then we must hope for a split in the Patriotic Front before any government is established. The western powers will naturally pursue the classical policy of establishing an authoritarian regime representing local businessmen friendly to capitalism so that opposition to it can be described as communist-inspired subversion of a good moderate democratic regime. If this scenario were to be realised there is, of course, no reason to doubt that there really would be Russian support for such subversion and Zimbabwe would join the dreary list of areas where Russia and America play out their antagonisms with other people's lives. The ground is already being prepared: Robert Mugabe is already being represented as some kind of unreasonable extremist because he has no intention of dismantling the guerilla war during the Geneva talks—there is less to be heard of proposals for disarming the Rhodesian army and police. Sister Weinrich's article on the guerillas in this issue is not made out of date because Smith is trying to buy time at Geneva.

Fortunately it does not look as though the capitalist world will have it all its own way. It is quite possible that there may be real majority rule in Zimbabwe before the two years needed by the right wing to consolidate itself with American money and arms. It is possible that a genuinely African socialist state will come into existence; it is even possible that the Americans may realise that this does not necessarily mean they will be starved of their chrome—though it may mean paying a bit more for it. Certainly if Robert Mugabe has anything to do with it, it will seek to be as neutralist as Tanzania and it looks like the only real alternative to inflicting on Africa and on the world another Vietnam or another Middle East.

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