

ZIMBABWE:

Joshua Nkomo Out After Plot Accusations

[AN] In the most significant crisis since Zimbabwe's independence Prime Minister Robert Mugabe dismissed Patriotic Front leader Joshua Nkomo from the Cabinet February 17, charging him with plotting to overthrow the government. The move strengthens the position of the ruling ZANU party but stops short of slamming the door on PF involvement in the coalition government, which has suffered other strains since independence in April 1980.

The severe measures taken against Nkomo were prompted by the unearthing of large caches of military hardware on property belonging to Nkomo and the PF.

A number of caches were found earlier this month in the southwestern part of the country near Bulawayo. Nkomo's primary support comes from the Ndebele-speaking people who live there and who make up some 20% of the country's population.

Government sources said the quantity of weaponry located was large enough to supply a 5,000-person brigade. Included in the stockpiles were medical supplies, sophisticated electronic equipment used for jamming communications frequencies, thousands of automatic weapons, surface-to-air missiles and a number of army vehicles.

Observers believe security forces learned of the weapons locations while interrogating people suspected of armed robbery in the town of Bulawayo. The weapons are thought to be part of the arsenal Nkomo had in his bases in neighboring Zambia during the independence war.

Reports suggest the existence of the arms caches was known to the government for some time, but the size of the finds and the implications of stockpiling came as a jolt to the ZANU leadership, which charged it had caught Nkomo "red-handed" in a plot.

In his harshest words against Nkomo since their original split in 1963, Mugabe was quoted as saying, "They joined us to string along while planning for an eventual overthrow of the government."

The prime minister went on to charge Nkomo with failure as a leader of his people and accused him of seeking help from white Rhodesian General Peter Walls in gaining support from white-ruled South Africa for a war against his government.

The state-controlled news media has also lashed out at Nkomo and called for him to be brought up on charges of treason. So far, however, there have been no arrests of PF leaders.

The ZANU-dominated government began taking action against the PF last week when eleven PF-owned companies were confiscated under the coun-

try's emergency regulations. The businesses will soon be liquidated and it is likely that controls will be placed on their assets to insure they are used for party projects and not for commercial ventures.

Calling the arms discoveries "bizarre," Nkomo denied any previous knowledge of their existence and said there was no plot to overthrow the government.

Instead, Nkomo charged Mugabe with using the incident to discredit him and his party and to give ZANU the opportunity to remove Nkomo from his Cabinet post as home affairs minister.

With 57 seats in parliament ZANU leaders believe they can govern without the inclusion of Nkomo's party, which controls twenty seats. Minister of Local Government Eddison Zvogbo described the PF involvement in the government as "an act of magnanimity and generosity on the part of the prime minister," and went on to say, "Reconciliation was never intended to cover-up dishonesty."

While Mugabe's shaky alliance with Nkomo appears to have come to a bitter end, the prime minister has offered to keep four PF members in the government, and he has been careful not to alienate all of Nkomo's followers. Mugabe's attacks have been addressed very specifically to a small number of PF

military forces and arms leaders.

For his part, Nkomo has called for his party's total withdrawal from the government. Reaction in the PF is apparently mixed, however, and at least one party member has declared he will remain in the Cabinet, saying, "My country comes first."

Whatever may be the outcome of the current crisis, it can be no surprise that the tension between coalition partners Mugabe and Nkomo finally came to a head.

The nationalist movements ZAPU and ZANU had maintained separate guerrilla armies during the long war for independence from white minority rule, and even the alliance known as the Patriotic Front that was sustained from 1977 was beset with mutual suspicion. In February of 1980, the two parties contested the elections separately, ZAPU under the name "Patriotic Front," and ZANU as ZANU-PF.

Mugabe's ZANU-PF won a landslide victory, but while many members of his party would have preferred to rule alone, Mugabe opted for a coalition strategy. In November and again in February fighting erupted between guerrillas of the two groups, as yet incompletely integrated into a national army. And many in both camps suspected the other of holding back



Cherokee Art Of Basket Weaving

A native Cherokee woman demonstrates the ancient Cherokee art of basket weaving at Oconaluftee Indian Village, a recreated Indian community of 250 years ago. The Village will be open daily from May 1 through October 31 this year.

in preparation of a future confrontation.

Somehow each time, the two drew back from the brink of escalated conflict, knowing that such an outcome could only please the advocates of white minority rule and disappoint the hopes of the average Zimbabwean for a time of peace.

In recent months, Prime Minister Mugabe has repeatedly broached the subject of forming a one-party state, based on an eventual merger of ZANU-PF and the Patriotic Front. Supporters of this view have argued that ZANU-PF was clearly the overwhelming winner in the elections, and that persistence of an opposition with support concentrated in the minority Ndebele-speaking section of the population would perpetuate regional conflict.

At least a portion of the Patriotic Front leadership has been responsive to such arguments, and in January, in fact, Mugabe announced that merger talks between the two groups would begin soon. He was, however, angrily rebuffed by Nkomo, who said he knew nothing about it, and that the prime minister "has been misguided."

The atmosphere has also been tense due to strained relations with South Africa and with supporters of former Rhodesian leader Ian Smith. The presence in South Africa of large numbers of former soldiers of the white Rhodesian army and of former Prime Minister Abel Muzorewa has led to repeated charges that South Africa is planning destabilization of the

Zimbabwean government. And on December 18, a bomb exploded in the ZANU-PF headquarters, killing six and injuring as many as 150, at a time when normally the prime minister and several of his colleagues would have been there.

Some thirteen whites, including Member of Parliament Wally Stuttaford, have been in detention on suspicion of organizing a plot late last year. And in late January, Parliament renewed the state of emergency, which had been continued after independence, for another six months.

In such a context, it would be easily possible for any conflict to get out of hand, thus lending credence to white predictions of the "chaos" that would follow majority rule.

Letters to the Editor: Cold Comfort In U.S. Position

Secretary of State Haig brought a message from President Reagan to the Chicago rally held in support of the Polish union Solidarity a few weeks ago. "We will not do business with the Soviet Union or Poland," he said, "as long as there is repression in Poland." No matter what your feelings about the Polish situation, those of us concerned with the plight of twenty million blacks in South Africa found cold comfort in the statement.

Poland has been a communist-ruled country for decades. By Western definition communism means repressive. In the world of realpolitik, no other reaction should have been expected of the Polish regime when confronted with Solidarity.

In South Africa, however, we have a government that claims to be a republic where people vote for their political leaders. In reality, the 84% of the population that is non-white has no political voice at all. Yet, that government prides itself on being a member of the free world; and our government not only recognizes that membership but, under the Reagan/Haig/Crocker policy of constructive engagement, seeks closer ties between us and them.

Conveniently overlooked — or explained away — is the long history of repression, oppression and racism practiced by the government of South Africa. Racism is written into its constitution and repression and oppression the aim of its intricate web of apartheid laws.

Like Lech Walesa, Nelson Mandela demanded for his people the right to vote. Nelson Mandela has been in jail on Robben Island for almost twenty years. Like Lech Walesa, Steve Biko attempted to build solidarity among his people. Steve Biko was killed while in police custody in 1977. Like Lech Walesa, Thozamile Gqweta seeks to organize the workers of his country. Thozamile Gqweta is now in jail.

Why is our President so distraught at repression in a Communist state and so accepting of it in a so-called free world nation? I've come to the sad, disturbing conclusion that racism is so entrenched in the American system that repression of black people just isn't terribly repugnant to us. And so we are outraged by Poland but do business as usual with South Africa.

Franklin H. Williams
President
Phelps Stokes Fund

Positive Feedback

I want to thank you for the excellent coverage which you gave to our Private Industry Council visit to the Lyon Park School CETA training programs on Tuesday, February 2. We have received nothing but positive feedback from your article, and on behalf of the members of the Private Industry Council I am happy to convey our sincere appreciation to you for your involvement.

Thomas J. White, Director
Private Sector Initiative Program
Durham Chamber of Commerce

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Plain Talk

(Continued From Page 10) these conditions, you should be receiving equal pay. Women in the Work Force is a project of the American Friends Service Committee in High Point. This information was taken from a booklet which is available from them. If you feel your rights of equal pay are being denied, they may be able to assist you.

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