

strategy throughout has been to hurry the talks along and telescope the timetable to independence as much as possible, presumably for fear that doubts would be compounded and difficulties increased if the momentum slackened. They have been able to maintain the momentum in a way that the Labour Government team never did during the 1976-77 talks in Geneva. For they were prepared to move at better than convoy speed, unlike Anthony Crosland the Foreign Secretary in 1976, leaving the PF behind if necessary (and if that was a bluff, it was an effective one). They were also prepared to move boldly into an exposed position, as when Lord Soames was despatched to Salisbury as Governor before a full ceasefire agreement.

Measured Pace

The Patriotic Front's strategy, on the other hand, was to negotiate at a measured pace and to plan for a longer transition period. Was that to give its armed forces time to move further into strategic parts of the country, or to claim a reasonable time for organizing and campaigning in the most important election Zimbabweans have ever faced? Or for both reasons? In any case, the PF leaders in the end dropped these important demands:

—they wanted a six-month transition period, but accepted the British plan for a period of only two months from ceasefire to polling.

—they wanted a United Nations force, to help maintain order during this period. Field Marshal Lord Carver, the Governor-designate in 1977-78, worked out such a scheme then. Mrs. Thatcher was strongly against a UN force: nor did Britain invite troops from six Commonwealth countries suggested by the PF (Ghana, Guyana, India, Jamaica, Nigeria and Sierra Leone). Instead it asked Australia, Fiji, Kenya and New Zealand to provide 500 troops alongside a 700-strong British contingent. Their job: to keep an eye on the separated armies after disengagement.

—as for the maintenance of law and order, the PF accepted that the British South Africa Police would remain in charge, although now under Governor Soames' ultimate command.

—and when negotiating on "assembly points" where PF forces would gather and remain during the election campaign, they asked for a number equal to that occupied by the Salisbury forces and also for the grounding of the Rhodesian Air Force. They ended with 16 assembly points, less than half the other side's number, and only one on the strategic spine of the country, the high veld between Salisbury and Bulawayo.

Set out like this, the Patriotic Front leaders can be seen during the 14 weeks to have abandoned so many of their original positions that one must wonder why they have done so. Were they simply outgunned by the British team? It was a formidable team, but the PF had a line of men, sharpened by years of detention (Mugabe

and others took law degrees in prison), who were a match for Carrington, Gilmour and Duff. Were they Bishop Muzorewa alleged in a spiteful statement in London after signing the cease-fire agreement, utterly deceitful and "making promises not worth the paper they're written on"? I don't believe so, and I know the world quite well. Were they greatly concerned to appear reasonable rather than rigid, and to rid themselves of a terrorist image, and therefore prepared to sacrifice some points to this end? Perhaps. Are they so confident of winning an election that they believe they have a margin to bargain away? Or did they become worried that Bishop Muzorewa was by November already pioneering with some effect and the British might move ahead with election plans, leaving them out in the cold? Have they concluded that, after a seven-year stalemated war that has left 30,000 dead and life in rural areas utterly dislocated, the people are desperate for peace. Perhaps, to all of these.

Let's now look briefly into the future.

Writing before Christmas 1979 it is risky to the point of folly to predict what may happen by the end of February 1980 and after the elections. Having said that, I offer a set of predictions, as a means of highlighting some of the problems immediately ahead.

As many as six major political parties may contest the elections. With 20 seats reserved for whites elected on a separate roll, one African party has to win 51 of the 80 remaining seats to gain a majority. It is more than possible that a bloc of right-wing whites led by Ian Smith will end up holding the balance of power. This is certainly to the tactical advantage of Smith's Rhodesians to encourage divisions among sub-groups of the Shona people (Robert Chikerema's Zezuru group of Mambasa split from the Bishop in 1979 in protest against his favouring the Manyika group) and between the Shona and Ndebele peoples.

It will be a mixed blessing, having a constitutionally elected president and executive prime minister. An older politician may be given the presidential job (Nkomo or Bishop?) while Mugabe or conceivably Dr Siala Mawema or dawarara becomes prime minister; and this may help to forge a two-party alliance to secure majority government. It can equally be, in the phrase of constitutional expert Dr. Claire Palley, "a recipe for discord", since the president can dismiss the prime minister. Remember Robert Kasavubu and Lumumba in the Congo?

The formation of a Zimbabwe national army will be a major problem. Lord Carver had plans for a 10,000-strong force, balancing Salisbury and PF forces with new recruitment and starting the integration process before independence. Carrington ducked the problem, leaving it to the incoming government on a winner-take-all basis. To judge by General Walls' remarks on the day the cease-fire agreement was signed (Nkomo and Mugabe "are agents of Soviet imperialism" and their election victory would bring "bloody civil war") he will be more hindrance than help in