

the Scope
Interview
JOSHUA NKOMO
THE BUTCHER OF KARIBU

THE MAN WHO RHODESLAND

Joshua Nkomo fully believes that he will be the next leader of Rhodesia. The whites, he says, will be given a fair deal. In the wake of the Viscount airliner atrocity, there can be few whites inclined to believe him

THREE years ago, Joshua Nkomo was the man most likely to become Rhodesia's first black prime minister. He had a large following among the country's blacks and, as a moderate, he was acceptable to many whites.

Today, he is Public Enemy Number One, a wanted man — dead (preferably) or alive. If he were to return to Rhodesia today he would probably be strung up in Cecil Square and flayed alive.

Three years ago the "Great Elephant" of African politics came out of the wilderness after being restricted without trial for more than a decade in a remote corner of south-east Rhodesia.

Yet his enforced exile, during which his hair turned grey and his middle-age came and went, had not embittered him. Instead, Nkomo seemed to have mellow-

ed; the lonely years had given him an air of gentleness, dignity and peace of mind.

It was a tranquillity which enabled him to smile gently when asked if he was bitter about the long years in detention and to reply: "No, I feel no bitterness at all. It was a phase in my life and I accept it as that. You see, the people who put me there were themselves victims of circumstances they don't yet fully understand."

IN those days, Nkomo was a man of peace. Today, he is a man of war, leader of a terrorist army dedicated to the destruction of the Rhodesian Government.

Power, Nkomo has decided, does not come from round-table negotiations but out of the barrel of a gun.

Today, Nkomo sniggers wit

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SHOT DOWN THE AIRLINER

by a Special Correspondent





forces, as well as those of Mr Robert Mugabe, have been responsible for scores of atrocities in Zimbabwe. Why don't you use your authority to stop the killing of innocent people — white and black — in the field?

We have committed no atrocities on our side. How can we kill our own people; people we have come to liberate from oppression?

Are you saying that your men have not taken a single innocent life in Rhodesia?

Not one. The European leader of the Elim missionaries killed recently said at a Press conference:

'We have lived with the freedom fighters. We have worked together. I cannot believe that they did this.' Those are not the words of a man whose brothers were killed by revolutionary units.

With respect, sir, you appear to be taking his words out of context. As I recall, his attitude was one of stunned disbelief that the men they had sheltered could have turned upon them as they did. You can believe what you like.

I happen to know the truth. The rest is Smith propaganda. Can you imagine my freedom fighters killing two German priests exactly two days before I had an official meeting with the German Chancellor? But that is what happened — only my men didn't do it. Smith's soldiers are cunningly trying to destroy our reputation as human beings fighting for the lives of their people, not their deaths.

Mr Nkomo, about twelve thousand people have died in the past five years — more than three thousand this year alone — in Zimbabwe.

Why are you not prepared to negotiate with the interim government for a cease-fire?

No! No! No! That is an insult to me. I have given my life to the struggle. I will not be a party to a settlement in which my party was not consulted from the beginning. Muzorewa, Sithole and Chirau are all puppets, dancing to strings pulled by Smith and his gang. The interim government is a farce. There will be no peace

in Zimbabwe until I say so, and Smith knows it.

But according to reports, when you met in Lusaka on August 14, Mr Smith offered you chairmanship of the Executive Council until the end of the year if you abandoned your war effort. Why carry on fighting now that Smith has agreed to climb down?

We demand nothing short of unconditional surrender. Only then will the fighting stop.

If the Patriotic Front takes power in Zimbabwe, will there be reprisals against government or military personnel?

You must understand that we are not a vengeful people. I was imprisoned for more than a decade, together with many of my friends. We were very badly treated. But when we came out we put aside our bitterness and tried to talk to Smith. He wouldn't listen, so we took up arms. When we take power, why should we show the same disregard for human rights as the white racists?

Would the Patriotic Front encourage whites to stay in Zimbabwe?

I am really astonished at the way the Western Press handles race in our country. They keep asking: 'What is going to happen to the whites?' What is this animal called 'whites'? It doesn't exist in my mind. They are fellow citizens who happen to have white skins. They are no different from anybody else. I don't look at race. I look at people.

Nevertheless, many whites fear chaos and bloodshed similar to what happened in Angola, Zaire and Mocambique, for example. How would your government cope economically if the whites fled?

What is this thing called economics? The people are all that matter. The country will still be there even if the whites destroy everything as they leave, as many have threatened to do. Japan and Germany are the richest nations on earth today, but they were both economically and socially destroyed only



'THERE WILL BE NO CIVIL WAR'

thirty years ago. What one man has destroyed another can rebuild.

But both those nations had a base of highly skilled and intelligent workers. What specialists will Zimbabwe have if the whites leave?

The fact that our people are unskilled after 80 years of occupation under a succession of racist regimes shows that the whites have deliberately kept them in ignorance to safeguard their positions of privilege. If the whites go we will have to train the technicians we need in the shortest possible time. It will not be easy. I would like to see the whites remain, but I would not like to see them stay only for the economy. I would like to see them stay because they have faith in their country.

Mr Nkomo, will the Patriotic Front install a Marxist-type government in Zimbabwe?

I am a capitalist. I studied at Adams College in South Africa and the Hofmeyr School of Social Science in Johannesburg. I wrote my BA in Social Science at the University of South Africa. I have been an auctioneer, an insurance salesman and an estate agent . . . I like making money! If I am a Communist, then so is President Carter. But the West refused to help us gain our freedom, so we went shopping in Russia instead. They gave us arms and supplies with no strings attached.

Mr Nkomo, you say your followers are fighting to liberate Zimbabwe, yet the vast majority of troops ranged against them have always been black. In fact, without the support of these men the Smith government would collapse. How do you explain this paradox?

There are traitors in any country. The black troops have been brainwashed by the Smith regime. Many of them have been conscripted into the army against their will.

Do you anticipate a civil war

similar to the UNITA-MPLA conflict in Angola, between your followers and those of Robert Mugabe if the Patriotic Front takes power?

No. There will be no civil war. We are joint leaders of the Patriotic Front. The people will decide who leads a free Zimbabwe.

But how will you and Robert Mugabe reconcile your ideological differences? He is an avowed Marxist; you say you are a Capitalist. I think you will agree that you make strange bedfellows. What happens if Mugabe calls in the Cubans to help him seize power?

These are matters which only the future will decide. At the moment, only the struggle to free Zimbabwe from oppression counts. Robert Mugabe is part and parcel of the Patriotic Front. The people of Zimbabwe will decide the role for him — and me.

Mr Nkomo, what guarantees can you give to whites that their farms, homes and businesses will not be nationalised when the Patriotic Front assumes power?

What do you mean? There is no such thing as ownership. Land belongs to the people. You may call it nationalisation — I call it normalisation. Land, like everything else in Zimbabwe, will be shared among the people.

The soundtrack of your BBC interview in Lusaka, recorded after the Viscount killings, was relayed by Rhodesia Television. While denying that ZIPRA forces had massacred the survivors, you were heard to snigger and chuck. Your attitude enraged many whites to such an extent that they swore to kill you if ever you set foot in Zimbabwe. Do you not fear for your life?

I am not afraid of any white racist. For twenty five years I have struggled to lead my people to freedom. I am an old man. If I die . . . well, I die. But I hope that before my time comes my job will have been done and Zimbabwe will be free.