

THE AGONY OF AFRIKANERDOM

South African eyes on developments in Zimbabwe

By BREMER HOFMEYR*

ZIMBABWE has become an important new factor in the Southern African equation.

White South Africa fears black government just as black Africa hates white government in Africa.

It is true that of the two-party governments handed to African States by their European colonisers, hardly one remains. There are the disasters of Ethiopia, Uganda, the Central African Republic and others. There are military governments and one-party States. Now in Zimbabwe, on our borders, after 10 years of war, there arises a multi-party interracial Government. What does this mean for South Africa?

South Africa tended to regard the Lancaster House conference and the election outcome as a disaster. They had backed Bishop Muzorewa as the Soviet Union had backed Mr Nkomo and China had backed Mr Mugabe. It proved counter-productive and Mr Mugabe was swept into power.

But Mr Mugabe's trump card was

the threat that if he were not elected, the war would go on. For many it was rather a vote for peace than a vote for Mr Mugabe.

Hundreds have died in tribal fighting since independence and there is a stream of Zimbabweans flowing into South Africa with a view of Zimbabwe that does not add to our confidence.

Yet there are changes taking place that sober, if not sceptical, men such as Lord Carrington and Lord Soames can only describe as miracles.

One of Mr Ian Smith's ministers met his Patriotic Front counterparts before Lancaster House in the framework of a world Moral Re-Armament assembly in Switzerland. His earlier stance had been, "If the blacks come to power we will blow up the dams. We will burn down our farms. We will retreat across the Limpopo River into South Africa and we will show them what white terrorism is".

In an extraordinary way he found a meeting of minds with Mr Byron Hove, who is one of Mr Mugabe's top men. With others they went to London to work behind the scenes at

Lancaster House to bring conflicting groups together.

When eventually Mr Mugabe came to power and the whites were saying, "We will wait and see", he wrote an open letter to *The Rhodesia Herald* saying this was the time for the whites to jump in boots and all to make the thing go. People do change.

On the eve of independence before the election results were announced, Mr Smith and Mr Mugabe met privately for the first time. They spoke from their hearts.

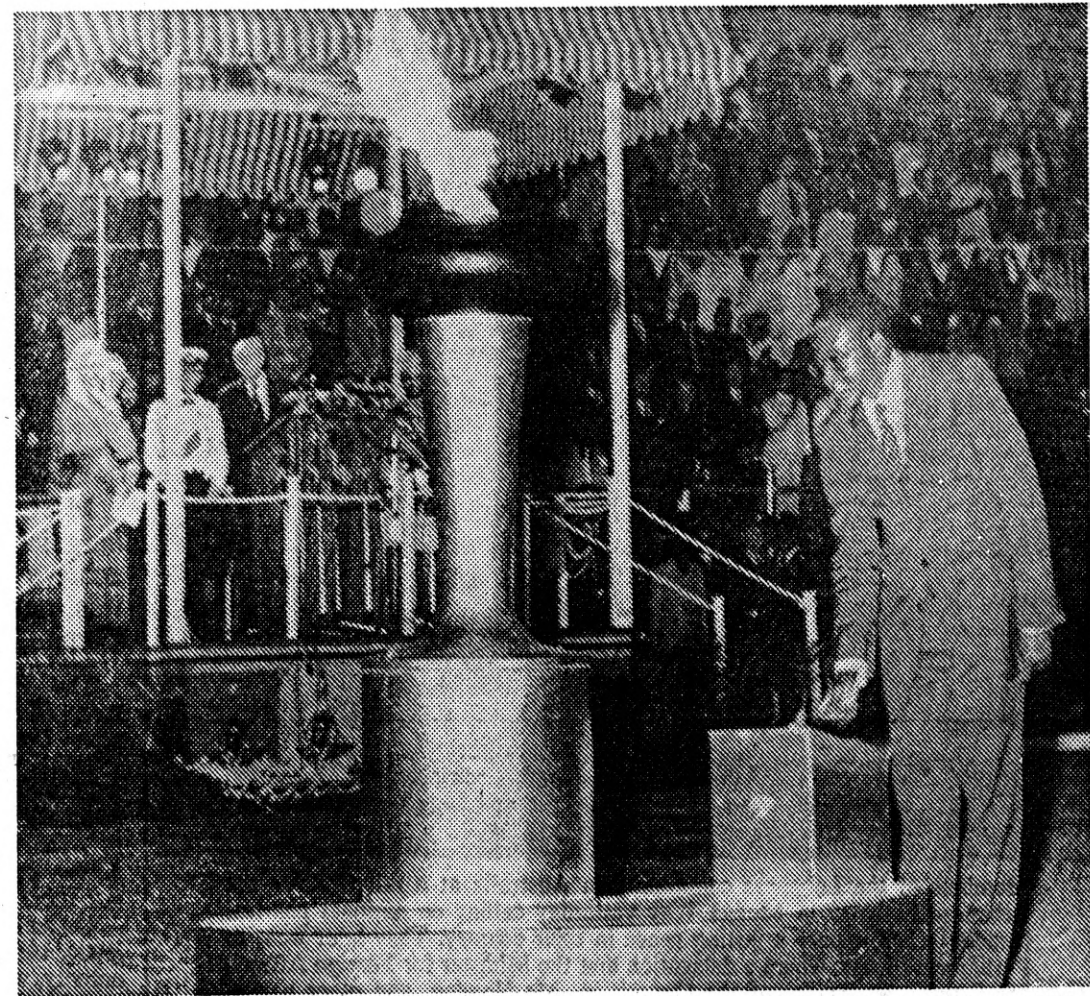
Mr Smith agreed to try to persuade the whites to stay and help build Zimbabwe. Mr Mugabe decided to put two whites in his Cabinet. Now we hear that the person Mr Mugabe consults most on political matters is Ian Smith.

Mr Smith in a public speech said that the greatest disaster that could befall Zimbabwe would be if something happened to Mr Mugabe.

All this is not lost on South Africa. If Zimbabwe goes ahead with a reasonable degree of freedom, security and progress, it cannot but be a new factor in Southern Africa.

Sports boycotts deserve an evaluation. Certainly they have made an impact and hastened the day of desegregated sport. National and provincial teams are selected on merit. But to be effective the sports boycott needs to be used with discretion and with a readiness to give credit where changes occur.

If South African sporting bodies feel that no matter what they do the sports boycott will go on, it will no longer be a lever. The other question is whether integrated sport is in fact important. In terms of the quality of life of the blacks it is fairly cosmetic. But in terms of the education of the whites it is important.



The Prime Minister of Zimbabwe, Mr Mugabe, sets alight the independence flame at Highfields, Zimbabwe, on April 18 last year. The flame is to burn eternally as a monument to black-majority rule won through seven years of guerilla warfare and political effort.

When on television we see a black South African scoring a try for the Springboks, and see a black wearing the coveted Springbok blazer it begins to dawn on us that a new day is breaking and things will not go on as they were.

We are seeing things — desegregation of hotels, parks, theatres, industry, sport, that 10 years ago would have been unthinkable. Many blacks dismiss these changes as "cosmetic" since they do not alter the power structure. None the less, if today we accept what 10 years ago was unthinkable, perhaps sooner than we expect we may find ourselves ready to accept changes in the structure that today we think are impossible.

To be acceptable to the blacks, these changes cannot, repeat not, be worked out by the white man and handed to the black. They must be born and built out of a common heart and mind. Some time the

wielders of white power must sit down with the wielders of black power with open hearts and minds.

If we whites have the grace to admit that we have put our own interests first and that we have to find the new way together; if we say, "We understand *your* sufferings. This is *our* dilemma and we do not know what to do. Can you help us?", then I believe we might find a generosity of response that could unlock the seemingly impossible situation.

With an honesty and courage much lacking in some other countries, several Australian politicians have come to our country in an effort to enter into the pain of the whites as well as the pain of the blacks. We value it.

For those white Australians who do not have this opportunity but want to involve their hearts in the situation, and understand the traumas of both black and white,

perhaps one could suggest the following.

Envisage an Australia not with a small black minority, but with a black-white ratio some five-to-one in favour of the blacks. What would the white Australian feel was the right thing to do? Would it be one-man-one-vote across the board? What would a political leader feel was the right thing to do? What would his electorate allow him to do? These are the things that go daily through the minds of South Africa's white leaders.

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