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Dark Clouds over Southern Africa

The Rhodesia-Zimbabwe Conference of Geneva appears to have been no more than another attempt only to reach a fragile station on the thorny way to peaceful change in Southern Africa. Whether all those efforts made by Henry Kissinger through his shuffle diplomacy should have been in vain because of an uncompromising spirit of the participants as to the transitional period before majority rule can be fully realized, is still uncertain. Perhaps historians will tell the true story of peaceful change and why it could not come into being. They may give an answer to the question if there had been misunderstandings about the basis of the settlement envisaged by the American Secretary of State. What did Kissinger suggest to the Rhodesian Prime Minister, and what could Smith honestly take for granted as far as the accord of Kissinger and the Front Line Presidents Nyerere and Kaunda was concerned? Smith — so he claims — accepted the accord as reported to him as a precondition to giving his government's pledge to majority rule, to be realized fully within two years.

Whether one likes Ian Smith or not: it is a fact that he gave his consent to majority rule and thus made a contribution to peaceful change. It is more than doubtful that men like Mugabe and Nkomo are likewise interested in the peaceful way. Nkomo was interested, but he seems to be under pressure. According to their exulting appearance in Geneva Mugabe and Nkomo seem to be keen on frustrating the efforts for a settlement. Their demand for a continuous fighting would indi-

cate their aspiration for becoming the liberators of Zimbabwe, the victorious leaders of an army which would mean power for them personally. They are undoubting that their allies will not let them down. Machel of Mozambique and Neto of Angola are the sponsors of war. But in the background there is the real power of the Soviets!

The Russians gave clear evidence that they disagree with the US in the matter of peaceful change. They were fully aware of the fact that Washington regards Rhodesia as the question to be solved primarily in the interest of peaceful change for the whole of Southern Africa. So they did their utmost to destroy the Rhodesian settlement. They were active behind the scenes and they employed their propaganda machinery to expound the American diplomacy as being the last (and the lost) endeavour of concealing the true imperialist concept of preserving and hardening the mastery of the racists and their system of exploitation and suppression of the Africans. Words and arguments used by Machel to induce the other Front Line Presidents to agree with the fight are much the same as those the Russians use when they are dealing ideologically with the matter of Southern Africa, of course not telling the world how interested they are in the raw materials of that region.

Is there still a hope for peaceful change? The USA should go on with its efforts, more than lavishly assisted by the Western European powers, especially by the EC. There should be a real common policy in regard of Southern Africa. The Africans should know that there are in-

terests in South Africa the Western countries will not give away. But at the same time the South Africans should know that peaceful change begins at home in their own country by abandoning the policy of separate development as it has been practised by the nationalist government. Many white South Africans including a very great section of Afrikaans speaking men and women are convinced that they have to act now. It is true that responsible people who run the economy of South Africa are deeply concerned about the future of their country and of the white man's position. How deeply they are concerned came to light at the last Congress of the Association of Chambers of Commerce in Port Elizabeth. There was an unanimous vote for the abolition of racial barriers.

Majority rule may not work in South Africa. But integration of the coloured population as well as Federation or Con-Federation of South African States — black and white and multiracial states — would offer a solution to the burning questions: how to keep peace, how to keep the economy growing, how to open up chances to all ethnic groups, how to practise real independence in a continent where the "winds of change" are blowing, and last but not least: how to ban the forces of destruction — including the self-destruction of the white community — and to banish the dark clouds of a major conflict. INTERECONOMICS raised the question of peaceful change in 1974. Since then chances were omitted, confrontation has been enforced. Nevertheless: it is not too late for another attempt to save the peace. *Günter Jantzen*