

Going over TL5 13-14/11/87

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KEN FLOWER

Serving Secretly: An Intelligence chief on record, Rhodesia into Zimbabwe, 1964-1981
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In April 1980 independent Zimbabwe emerged from the rotting womb of what was first Southern Rhodesia, then UDI Rhodesia, Zimbabwe-Rhodesia and finally, during the culminating four months of British sovereignty, Rhodesia again. As the wits remarked at the conclusion of the Lancaster House Conference, this was the first time that a black Prime Minister had stepped down in favour of a colonial Governor in the name of progress. But Bishop Muzorewa was not amused, nor was the author of this book, Ken Flower, head of Rhodesia's Secret Service since 1963.

Prime Minister Robert Mugabe and his wife recently attended the funeral in England of Rhodesia's last British Governor, Lord Soames. Mrs Mugabe wept. To those of us who covered the desperate election campaign of January-March 1980, such a display of affection would have seemed inconceivable. Emerging from the bush and exile, Mugabe's Zanu-PF was convinced that the British in Government House were plotting to engineer a coalition headed by Nkomo and Muzorewa. As unidentified Rhodesian units staged successive attempts on Mugabe's life, the black Jacobin's denunciations of Soames's "collusion" became increasingly bitter. And yet, only hours after Zanu-PF's overwhelming triumph on March 3, Mugabe and Soames were joined in a jovial embrace which was never to unlock. Soames had resisted intense Rhodesian pressure to ban his party and Mugabe discovered, in the euphoria of victory, a friend.

What Mugabe feared was a Rhodesian military coup - the force of that fear became clear later in the year when he fired General Walls as commander of Zimbabwe's amalgamated security forces. Scarcely less remarkable than Mugabe's acceptance of Ian Smith's top soldier had been his retention of Smith's top secret policeman and counter-insurgency expert, Ken Flower, Director-General of the Central Intelligence Organization. Indeed the CIO passed from Smith's office to Muzorewa's to Mugabe's with few dismissals or resignations at senior level. Flower's new political controller,

Emmerson Mnangagwa, had himself been maltreated by the Special Branch (Flower does not mention this) after blowing up a railway locomotive in the 1960s.

Flower, who died recently, was a Cornishman of sufficiently genteel stock to qualify for the British South Africa Police, with whom he enlisted in 1937 as a mounted trooper. By 1961 he was Deputy Commissioner of the BSAP: two years later Prime Minister Winston Field (who alone all others commanded Flower's affection) invited him to head Rhodesia's new secret service. Within months Field had been ousted by the Rhodesia Front hard-liners, whose leader was Ian Smith.

Flower's detailed account of the internal and diplomatic manoeuvring before and after Smith's Unilateral Declaration of Independence in November 1965 is of considerable historical interest, not least because he was privy to virtually every move in both Rhodesia and Britain, and later reinforced his memory by a freewheeling privatization of the CIO's files. But no government will move to injunct this book, or confiscate the royalties, because Flower served an illegal régime which no longer exists - his Top Secret documents thus enjoy no more legal currency than Monopoly money.

Involved in successive political compromises from the time of the Kissinger negotiations in 1976, Ian Smith no longer retains his heroic role in the myth and legend of white Rhodesia, and Flower makes no attempt to rehabilitate him, depicting him as a stubborn, unimaginative leader who led his country to a predictable disaster. Yet Smith's stubbornness was also visionary, given the almost unanimous passion of white Rhodesians for sustaining racial supremacy whatever the price. Flower, while striving to distance himself from the régime he served, fails to demonstrate that his own, supposedly more sophisticated, perception of black nationalism could have deferred the reckoning.

In reality, he fought black nationalism as ruthlessly as his South African colleague, Hendrik van den Bergh, head of BOSS, whose Afrikaner fanaticism Flower belittles in a manner typical of Rhodesians parading their British culture. As he vividly recounts, Flower was up to his neck in the putrid colonialism of Portuguese Mozambique and was personally responsible for launching the MNR movement, which today wreaks havoc in that desperate country and along Zimbabwe's eastern

border. (In 1980 Flower quickly handed the MNR over to its present, South African, god-fathers - he professes to be shocked by the result.)

Flower often claims to feel dismay at the results of his own initiatives. The Selous Scouts and the "dirty tricks" operations by the pseudo-terrorist gangs either got out of hand or into the wrong hands; he blames the Selous Scouts' commander, Colonel Ron Reid-Daly, whose own book naturally blames everyone but himself. Flower took the desperate Ndabangi Sithole to King Hassan of Morocco to collect a million pounds, yet was appalled by the deprivations inflicted by Sithole's auxiliaries in the tribal trust lands. He also recounts how a leading African clergyman was enlisted in the bogus recruitment for the nationalist cause of young blacks who were then despatched to the guerrilla camps in poisoned uniforms. They died a slow death in the bush: "It became so diabolically successful that exposure seemed inevitable and so the principal perpetrators had to be eliminated - rather as a hunter will finish off a wounded animal to stop further suffering." This parenthetical clause is the essence of Flower: the clergyman was murdered, and the world assumed he was the victim of nationalist factionalism; Flower cannot resist a chuckle.

He constantly speaks with two incompatible voices; his book chokes on its own contradictions and hypocrisies. *Serving Secretly* is nevertheless an informative account of sanctions-busting and the under-cover war. Flower travelled the world in princely style, visiting the Shah of Iran, Paris, London, Geneva, Cairo, Lisbon, Oman, Khartoum. No one closed the door and no one poisoned his uniform. Despite his vital service to rebel Rhodesia he was able to visit Britain at will and was regularly briefed (and entertained) by British Intelligence.

Finally, Mrs Thatcher let Rhodesia down. Flower rages about her capitulation to Commonwealth pressure at the Lusaka Conference in 1979, describing it as "the greatest betrayal in the history of Anglo-Rhodesian relations". What he wanted was the Bishop - white power, black mask. Insistent that Zanu-PF won the ensuing election through intimidation and should have been banned, Flower yet concludes with a glowing portrait of the arch-enemy - his new master, Robert Mugabe. If this is a case of *cuius regio, eius religio*, the conversion was incomplete.