

The Hostage

THE RHODESIAN FRONT'S THREATS that economic destruction of Rhodesia by Commonwealth sanctions would also mean the total economic destruction of Zambia have been hurled back at them by President Kaunda. He has told the Zambian people: "It is the duty of every Zambian to stand up against such forces and fight."

His role is that of the hostage who has to choose between making a desperate attack on his captor and being shot in the back.

Coal, power and transport make landlocked Zambia Rhodesia's prisoner, a position which Zambia has long tried to change with the help of her friends.

Two-thirds of these ties could have been cut if the World Bank had not stalled last year on finding the £50 millions needed to link Zambia with Tanzania by rail. This would have enabled Zambia's 600,000 tons of copper annually to have found an outlet other than through colonial Rhodesia and Mozambique. It would also have made possible the development of Tanzania's large coal deposits in the Galula and Ruhuhu areas on the eastern shores of Lake Malawi, helping to replace the 1.1 million tons of Wankie coal Zambia takes annually from Rhodesia.

Even before the Rhodesia Front's election-time threats the need for a Tanzanian rail link was pressing. Rhodesia was already asking Zambia to renegotiate the Rhodesian Railways Agreement of 1964, we learn from Salisbury. At that time the request seemed less like a bargaining counter than evidence of Rhodesia's purpose to free herself of the restriction on new lines and on the requirement to carry Zambia's copper to Beira. Mr. Smith's post-election talk of speeding up negotiations for independence has been less belligerent than before, but his election triumph has increased the likelihood that he will threaten his Zambian hostage.

IT HAS GENERALLY BEEN FELT that the World Bank's report last year was completely inadequate for the purpose of raising finance for the rail link, and the governments of Zambia and Tanzania have very recently set up an intergovernmental committee charged with the task of commissioning a further combined economic and engineering study. The crucial question is, of course, who is to pay the £50 millions.

During his recent visit to Peking, President Nyerere perhaps as a result of pressure at home, asked the Chinese if they were interested in building the railway. When they surprisingly replied that they were, Zambian reaction was decidedly negative. Foreign Minister Simon Kapwepwe flew to Dar es Salaam to say that Zambia was most opposed to this.

Yet such help must be found, the cost being too great a burden for Tanzania and Zambia if the finance is to be found in commercial circles.

Zambia and Tanzania would obviously want an international consortium to come forward with a suitable offer of aid and soft loans. If the nations who could support such a project do not do so, and such a consortium does not appear, how will the rail link be built?

Even without UDI Rhodesia may continue to press for renegotiation of the Rail Agreement though to cancel it would be to act illegally since such an issue would affect Rhodesia's foreign policy which is still, technically speaking, controlled by Britain.

With UDI the link will become as vital to Zambia as the air lift was to West Berlin. Failure to provide it might destroy Zambia as effectively as it would destroy the remains of her Western friends' credit among the unaligned nations of the world. But perhaps Zambia might yet be saved if the rail link is financed from elsewhere.

At worst Zambian reaction to what President Kuanda has already called Rhodesia's threat of "wanton aggression" could bring a step nearer the race war for which much of Western policy seems to be preparing central and southern Africa.

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