

Countdown in Rhodesia

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During the summer of 1978, as support for the internal settlement in Rhodesia grew in both Washington and London, the Soviet-Cuban backed Patriotic Front guerrilla forces stepped up their efforts to gain power in Salisbury by bullets rather than by ballots.

The economic sanctions which the U.S. and British governments imposed on Rhodesia to force Ian Smith to his knees were in force, but opposition to them began to swell in Congress and in the British Parliament. In late July, the U.S. Senate gave President Carter the power to lift sanctions after free elections were held if he believed that a Rhodesian government had committed itself to negotiate with the guerrillas in good faith. A stronger amendment, to lift sanctions now for a trial period, failed by only a few votes. Subsequently, the House of Representatives voted to lift the sanctions if free elections are held in Rhodesia by the end of this year. If the Conservative Party should force a fall election in Britain, the anticipated government might also have lifted sanctions and recognized the black government chosen by the planned elections.

These possibilities, however, were rudely shattered by a September shooting down of a Rhodesian airliner by Patriotic Front guerrillas firing a heat-seeking missile. In the aftermath of this gruesome incident the internal situation in Rhodesia began to disintegrate.

This article will trace the Carter Administration's role in abetting what appears to be a bloody tragedy in Rhodesia. By way of example, Carter Administration officials stated that congressional votes to lift sanctions would propel Rhodesia along a course which would increase the conflict rather than improve the chances for a peaceful settlement.

Secretary Vance asserted that "If we were to choose one side or the other, the chance for a peaceful solution would be greatly diminished." The architect of U.S. policy toward Rhodesia is Ambassador Andrew Young whose bias toward the Patriotic Front forces is notorious. In his celebrated interview in the Parisian paper *Le Matin*, Young asserted that

the "planned operation of attacking Missions . . . could only have come from Smith's (Rhodesian Prime Minister Ian Smith) camp." The Reverend Ndabaningi Sithole, a black member of the ruling Executive Council of Rhodesia's transitional government, contends that Young "is all Patriotic Front. . . . He only wants power to be handed over to the Patriotic Front." It would seem that the U.S. claim to be an honest broker among the contending parties is specious.¹

The strong response by President Carter to the Soviet-Cuban incursion into Zaire makes inexplicable Washington's calculated coolness toward the peaceful transfer of political power from whites to blacks in Rhodesia arranged between Ian Smith and internal black leaders. One would think that an evolving black majority rule solution to the long impasse over Zimbabwe's future would have been welcomed and endorsed by the Carter Administration. President Carter and Ambassador Young could even take credit from the fact that the British-American initiative had finally propelled Smith to make the concessions required for him to reach agreement with black leaders in Rhodesia. On his March visit to Lagos, however, President Carter and Nigerian leader Obasanjo agreed that the Salisbury internal solution was illegal since it did not "guarantee a genuine transfer of power to the majority."

Ambassador Young, who was with President Carter in Lagos, appears piqued that this commitment to install Soviet-backed guerrilla leaders into Salisbury might have been toppled by the democratic compromise reached between Smith and black leaders. Ambassador Young talked about a continuing civil war between blacks and blacks. As he put it, the Salisbury Agreement "does not address the issues that have some 40,000 people fighting." They seemed in keeping with the views expressed in Zambia by Joshua Nkomo, a leader of the black guerrilla forces based in Zambia who condemned the settlement as "the greatest sell-out in the history of Africa" and promised intensified war to thwart it.

1. Some recent literature on the controversial events in Rhodesia includes: James E. Dornan, Jr., (editor) *Rhodesia Alone* (Washington, D.C.: Council on American Affairs, 1977); Chester A. Crocker, "The United States and the Endgame in Rhodesia," *Strategic Review*, Summer 1978; Julian Amery, M.P., "The Crisis in Southern Africa," *Policy Review*, Fall 1977; and Samuel T. Francis, "Rhodesia in Transition," *Background* (Washington, D.C.: The Heritage Foundation, August 1978).

His comments echoed those of Robert Mugabe, the other co-chairman of the Patriotic Front based in Mozambique, who said, "The only way for the restoration of the dignity of the Africans is armed struggle."

Why we turned from the emerging democratic process in Rhodesia and continued to back guerrilla forces armed by the Soviet Union needs some explanation. The three black leaders who negotiated the Salisbury Agreement with Ian Smith commanded the allegiance of more than half of the six million blacks living in Rhodesia. They are Bishop Muzorewa, the Reverend Sithole and Chief Jeremiah Chirau. Last fall Reverend Sithole, the American-educated founder of ZANU, unsuccessfully sought to present his moderate views to President Carter, the Vice President and Mr. Brzezinski. In February, Bishop Muzorewa was unable to speak to the U.N., although the two guerrilla leaders were given *carte blanche* to speak there.

The Transitional Government

Yet, once the Salisbury Agreement was reached, David Owen, the British Foreign Secretary, described it as "a significant step toward majority rule." Dr. Owen's comment, made in response to questions in the House of Commons, was a sign of a divergence in the U.S. and British approaches toward the establishment of majority rule in Rhodesia. He conceded that the "settlement" negotiated between Prime Minister Ian D. Smith and three black leaders might prove acceptable to a majority of the black population in Rhodesia. "If so," he said, "it would be acceptable to the British Government as well."

But the Carter Administration did not even glance sidewise at the transitional government in Salisbury. The situation in Rhodesia for the Salisbury Agreement can only be understood within the context of the volatile politics that have emerged in southern Africa over the past several years.

The political climate in southern Africa changed quickly and drastically after the Soviets and their Cuban legionnaires imposed a Marxist regime upon Angola. At the beginning of 1976, before the Soviet-Cuban victory seemed certain, Zambia's President Kaunda warned about Soviet imperialism; after the Soviet-Cuban gambit succeeded, his controlled press acclaimed the triumph and urged the new "liberators" to stay in Africa until the job was done — meaning the destruction of white rule

in both Rhodesia and South Africa. In mid-May of this year, President Kaunda paid a visit to Washington and, after meeting with President Carter, told an audience at the National Press Club that it was the moral duty of the Africans to launch a liberation war in Rhodesia and to use all the help the Soviets and Cubans could give to end the transitional government in Salisbury.

In early June, Joshua Nkomo acknowledged for the first time that Cubans were training his 6,000-man guerrilla force in Zambia. Describing the Western powers as "hyenas," Mr. Nkomo charged that they were propping up the "oppressive" government in Salisbury, the Rhodesian capital, and that 11,000 to 15,000 mercenaries were fighting alongside Rhodesian security forces against the guerrillas.²

Prior to this admission, President Kaunda had given a press conference in Zambia's capital, Lusaka, after his return from Washington. He expressed how he was "impressed indeed by Jimmy Carter and the team he has got around him." But, he continued, the President has problems in dealing with the "enemies of African freedom."

While backing the freedom of African leaders to receive support and training from either Western or Soviet sources, Kaunda's controlled television permitted Nkomo to state that he would return "as a fighter" to remove what he called the fascist regime of Mr. Smith and his black collaborators, Bishop Abel Muzorewa, the Reverend Ndabaningi Sithole and Senator Jeremiah Chirau.

It would seem that Kaunda's moderation is affected by his estimate of how the wind is blowing. As long as it blows stronger from the East, he will permit Nkomo to use Zambia as a base for Cuban-Soviet operations against Rhodesia. In the unlikely event that the United States should decide to oppose Nkomo's Soviet-Cuban-backed incursion against the Salisbury Agreement, as it has done in Zaire, Kaunda might again shift his position.

Until recently there was hope that the key to a peaceful Rhodesian settlement was to pry Nkomo loose from Mugabe. Smith has struck at Mugabe's guerrillas in Mozambique, but rarely against Nkomo's men in Zambia. Over 3,000 of Mugabe's men, who have done most of the fighting, have been killed. So

2. *The New York Times*, June 7, 1978, p. 1.

far Nkomo has kept the bulk of his forces out of conflict while searching for a political settlement he could accept.

What if a place of honor and position in the new Zimbabwe regime should be offered to Nkomo by Messrs. Smith, Muzorewa, Sithole and Chirau and endorsed by the United States? The inducement for Nkomo to participate in a settlement which he has called a sell-out will not be easy. He has accused the United States of double-dealing — yet he has not ruled out future contacts with the Americans. After his whirlwind April visit to Dar es Salaam, Pretoria and Salisbury, Secretary of State Cyrus Vance appeared convinced that Joshua Nkomo was more moderate than Robert Mugabe.

In late August, Ian Smith met secretly with Nkomo in neighboring Zambia to see if he could be induced to join the interim government. Nkomo's open acknowledgement that his guerrillas had brought down a Rhodesian airliner near the Zambian border on September 3 provides a convincing proof that he rejected Smith's overture. Noteworthy, however, was Smith's willingness to meet with his principal enemy even at the risk of alienating his three leading domestic black supporters. Smith's action was in marked contrast with the inflexible diplomacy that Carter-Young have demonstrated toward the increasingly bloody Rhodesian issue. Their disdain for the interim settlement irrevocably committed them and the United States to some sort of Patriotic Front victory. Nkomo, sensing a potential victory, largely made possible by the morally indefensible U.S. policy, saw no reason to respond to Smith's initiative.

Problems for the Multi-Racial Government

Admittedly, even with more positive U.S. diplomacy, there are problems in translating the Salisbury Agreement into an acceptable transfer of power within an agreed time framework. It has not all been clear sailing since the transitional government, established by the Salisbury Agreement, began to function. A major storm developed when Byron R. Hove, a black lawyer appointed by Bishop Muzorewa to share the justice portfolio with a white man, was abruptly dismissed and returned to his law practice in London. Mr. Hove had publicly demanded that the personnel policies of the police and judiciary be changed rapidly to bring in many more blacks. Hove's dismissal created a crisis with Muzorewa's party, the United

African National Council. Many of the party's younger and more militant leaders wanted the party to pull out of the ruling Executive Council. The other black members of the Executive Council, the Reverend Sithole and Chief Chirau, who backed the Hove ouster, were accused by Muzorewa of wanting to humiliate and destroy him. Muzorewa's party was angry and disgusted with the Hove Affair but chose to stick with the transitional government. The longer the Salisbury Agreement held together the more likely a peaceful transition to black rule would take place. Otherwise, the specter of an intensified civil war in which the Patriotic Front guerrillas, backed by Cuban forces and Soviet arms, seems most likely.

The time to demonstrate the legitimacy of the transitional process toward black rule is rapidly running out. A *New York Times* report asserts the guerrilla leaders have about 10,000 men in the field. According to Sithole, there are peace factions among the guerrilla forces. Many of the guerrillas might want to come home once a black government is installed in Rhodesia. They have been offered amnesty. Needless to say, the amnesty would have been more attractive had the United States endorsed the Salisbury transitional government.

Had the United States shifted its position, the front line states would have found it difficult to oppose the transitional process toward black rule. They have adopted their current position because Mr. Smith refused to accept the principle of one-man, one-vote, but that rationale for their hostility is gone. Moreover, all of Rhodesia's neighbors are in economic need of improved relations. This fact should have provided further incentive for the front line states to accept a popularly elected black government. Zimbabwe, in turn, would be prepared to cooperate with them to improve the economic well-being of southern Africa. All of these African governments know that the Soviet-Cuban combination is an excellent source of weapons and military training, but not for the economic development they so desperately need. By offering an imaginative development program to the region, the United States and its European partners could have gained acceptance for the transitional government.

The real stumbling block to a peaceful solution in Rhodesia has been the U.S. Mission to the United Nations. Ambassador Young asserts that he sees little chance that

an internal settlement would be recognized by the United States or others and that no resulting government would get financial help from the United States or the rest of the world, let alone military help against Patriotic Front guerrillas. The reason the settlement would "create" a new war, he said, is that there is "evidence that there would be a massive commitment of Soviet weapons" to help the guerrillas overthrow a black-majority government. He could certainly be right, in creating a self-fulfilling prophecy. There is little time to prevent the bankruptcy of our mischievous policy.

The situation in Rhodesia is reaching the point of no return. The pace of fighting has stepped up in the last few weeks — for a very good reason: foreign support for the internal settlement is growing. No longer does the Patriotic Front have the luxury of facing an entirely white Smith government. The black/white fight could be allowed to simmer until the whites were worn down. Now the Patriotic Front faces a predominantly black government in Salisbury and we are entering a period of "civil war."

The shooting down of the Rhodesian airliner has radically altered assessments made just a month ago. The complete lack of any official U.S. comment on the shooting down of a Rhodesian airliner and the subsequent massacre of its few survivors by Nkomo's guerrillas provided further evidence of the moral and political opaqueness of the Carter Administration's handling of the Rhodesian issue. The Rhodesian government conceded that the shooting down of the airliner "was caused by the plane being hit by a heat-seeking missile."³ This missile could only have been supplied by the Soviet Union. Nkomo's guerrillas have been trained to use this and other Soviet military equipment in Angola by Cuban troops. The Soviet-Cuban aim in Rhodesia is obvious: to install another Marxist-Leninist regime in Africa — this time in the one country that might have created a multi-racial democratic regime, a rarity in a continent in which most countries are ruled by military dictatorships.

The U.S. response to the latest guerrilla atrocity in Rhodesia was to dispatch Assistant Secretary of State (for African Affairs) Richard Moose and Policy Planning Director, Anthony Lake, to discuss with British Foreign Secretary David Owen how to breathe life into the British-American dream of

3. Philadelphia *Inquirer*, September 8, 1978, p. 3A.

convening an all-party conference aimed at ending the Rhodesian guerrilla war. It would seem that Washington and London plan to walk down this dead end street until they reach its dismal end. The only possible input that might change this tragic scenario would be a falling out between Nkomo and Mugabe over the spoils before the victims have stopped breathing. Symptoms of such a split in the Patriotic Front are already occurring.

Yet, a Patriotic Front split is more likely to bring on intensified civil war than aid the internal settlement. Although generally regarded as the strongest of the potential leaders, Nkomo comes from a minority tribe among Rhodesian blacks. If he rejects the Smith offer he may turn to Cubans and perhaps march into Salisbury on the strength of their arms. In this instance Cuban rifles will bring to Rhodesia the same kind of stability as they did in Angola and which Ambassador Young found so praiseworthy.

Before this macabre scenario takes place Smith may escalate the bombing of Nkomo's bases in both Zambia and Angola. In any event Ambassador Young's self-fulfilling prophecy of a large-scale Cuban-Soviet interaction is likely to occur.

Since President Carter hews to Ambassador Young's all or nothing formula, the United States will sink deeper into a quagmire in southern Africa from which it will be difficult to extricate itself. Meanwhile the people in Zimbabwe will continue to face unnecessary slaughter rather than a peaceful solution. Present American policy toward Rhodesia is based on self-inflicted blindness. A State Department publication⁴ states U.S. policy as follows: "U.S. policy on Rhodesia is to persevere with the U.K. in efforts to find a fair solution and to maintain our position as an honest broker among the contending parties." The following premises underlie this policy.

- The conflict will continue unless a solution can be found offering a realistic possibility for fair participation in the transition government and the electoral process by the main parties — the Salisbury group and the Patriotic Front.

- Soviet and Cuban intervention is a strong possibility if the conflict continues and U.S. interests would suffer.

- The United States does not favor one side against the

4. "Rhodesia: U.S. Policy," in *GIST*, Department of State, June 1978.

other. Endorsing either side's negotiating position would prejudice the political opportunities of the other and could further inflame the conflict.

But, in fact, we did favor one side against the other and thus inflamed the conflict. In reality, the Anglo-American alternative to the Salisbury Agreement nurtured political change via violence, abandonment of democracy and the eventual acceptance of an imposed government that might line up with the Soviet Union. Advancing the prospects for peace in Rhodesia needed little from us except our moral and diplomatic support for the Salisbury Agreement. By denying that support, we only gave aid and comfort to the enemies of democracy and development.

Why Not Recognize A Democratic Government?

There never has been an answer to a question addressed to the British and American governments by Bishop Muzorewa, "Why on Earth would they not recognize a government that has been set up by honest people who have tried to do it on a democratic basis?"

Ambassador Young's desire to demonstrate his support for the Marxist-Leninist elites of Black Africa, including Mugabe, whom Young has called "my brother," has placed him for the most part on the side of potential oppressors. Since President Carter could not free his Rhodesian policies from Young's obsessions, Carter has wittingly or unwittingly condemned millions of blacks in Zimbabwe to the tyranny of yet another totalitarian African regime, regardless of its ideological coloration.

At the time of this writing, American policy continues to maintain its public posture of paralysis in Africa. Unwilling to support an internal settlement which has been unfairly castigated as racist, the Carter Administration has conducted its maneuvers behind closed doors. The Administration, knowing too that the Congress is deeply split on Rhodesian policy, is assiduously avoiding the *appearance* of American involvement, in order to avoid providing the Soviet Union or Cuba with a pretext for intervention. Such a course, naturally, does not rule out a unilateral projection of power by communist forces, as occurred in the Horn of Africa at a time of American abstention from involvement.

Carter and Young, nevertheless, are engaged in extensive

jockeying for position in a transitional Rhodesia. Not only are their bets placed on Joshua Nkomo as head of state, but they have chosen their proxy to accomplish Nkomo's appointment: Nigeria. Nigeria was rumored to have a center place in the original Anglo-American plan, as providing the peacekeeping forces during a transition. As that plan has died in the evolution towards violence, the Americans have been encouraging Zambia's President Kaunda to include Nigeria as a guarantor of Nkomo's success in the eventual civil war. This could, perhaps, exclude the Cubans from a central role. The Nigerians, sensibly enough, are reluctant to become involved in a situation of civil strife, made more likely by the recurrent animosity between the two branches of the Patriotic Front. Small signs can be detected regarding the seriousness of the split, such as the fact that Lonrho's Tiny Rowland, bankroller of Nkomo's movement and arranger of the unproductive meetings between Smith and Nkomo, has just had his assets nationalized in Tanzania, backer of Mugabe. Nigeria, it is clear, will not undertake a military role unless guarantees are given of Mugabe being neutralized or eliminated.

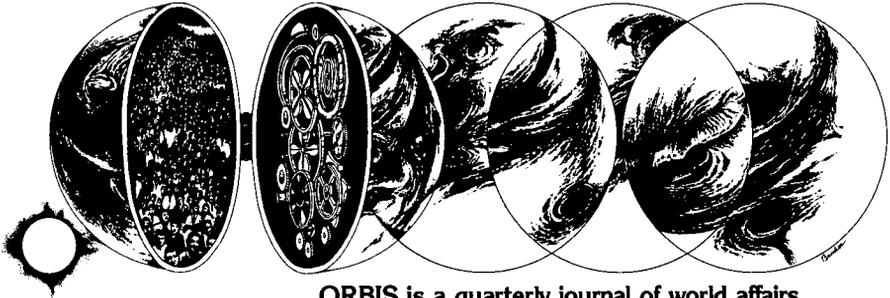
Likewise, Nigeria will not become involved in a situation of violent conflict if the remaining whites in Rhodesia decide to fight to the finish. If they cannot be neutralized by negotiation, hitherto unsuccessful, Young and his Nigerian proxies at least hope to buy them out. The problem is finding the money to buy out the Rhodesian farmers (whose land, incidentally, would cement native support for a new government by distribution to the landless). The cost of this largess has been recently estimated as between one and two billion dollars. Young knows the U.S. Congress will not appropriate the money in its present mood, and it would not be desirable anyway, since an American appropriation would make the settlement appear American-engineered (thus providing the Soviet Union with an excuse for overt or covert intervention). This likely explanation for Bishop Muzorewa's recent mystery trip to Teheran indicates how similarly all parties are thinking: even the Rhodesian whites, so scorned publicly, will have to be accommodated as part of the settlement, and the black party that comes up with credible money may walk away with control of the transition. The Rhodesian issue, it appears, may yet be settled with black gold.

That the tragedy of Rhodesia should come to such a sordid

end was predicted by Young many months ago — and his policy ensured that it would occur. Peaceful solutions to the poly-ethnic Rhodesian crisis — possible some months ago — can now be achieved only if backed by decisive force, and the only decisive policies in Africa today are those made by the Soviets and Cubans. The abdication of American principles and interests in southern Africa by the Carter Administration means that the least disastrous solution will be a settlement greased by cash, and even that depends upon a coalition of undependable regional actors. The politics of ideological racism, as applied by those making American foreign policy, will leave their mark on southern Africa for years to come.* Secretary of State Vance announced his courageous decision to grant visas to allow Mr. Smith and Mr. Sithole to come to Washington to present their case in person to the Congress and the American people. This may augur a decisive turn for the better in our foreign policy toward that strategic part of the world. Let us hope so.

***As this article went to press**

Reviewing the Dimensions of Our World



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ERNEST W. LEFEVER

Two singular but opposing developments have conspired to symbolize the dilemma of America's security involvement in the Northern Pacific. One was the discovery, announced on March 19, 1975, by the U.N. Command that North Korea had dug a second infiltration tunnel 150 feet beneath the DMZ, large enough to allow 30,000 armed troops an hour to pass through. Its planned exit was in South Korea, 500 yards south of the DMZ.

The second development was President Carter's announcement on March 9, 1977, that his "commitment to withdraw American troops from Korea has not changed." He revealed this "commitment" on January 16, 1975, a month after he became a declared candidate, to an editorial page meeting of *The Washington Post*. This was eleven weeks before the fall of Saigon.*

If North Korea's dozen or more tunnels, dug at a great human cost, demonstrate Kim Il Sung's determination to unify Korea by subversion or military force, what does President Carter's "commitment to withdraw American troops" (later limited to ground forces) signify? To everyone I talked with in Korea, Japan, and Taiwan, Mr. Carter's specific "commitment" means a diminution of the overall American commitment embraced in the 1954 Mutual Defense Treaty between Washington and Seoul. Repeated oral assurances by the Carter Administration to the contrary have not dispelled this interpretation.

Thus, the invisible tunnel built by South Korea's implacable foe and the highly visible troop withdrawal by South Korea's only ally dramatize the irony, if not tragedy, of the delicate balance of forces in an arena where the two communist giants confront Japan, the chief ally of the free world in Northeast Asia.

The stability of the Pacific basin and the security of the states on its borders are deeply intertwined with the changing character of the confrontation between the United States

* See Ernest W. Lefever, "Withdrawal from Korea: A Perplexing Decision," *Strategic Review*, Winter 1978, pp. 28-35.