

DIPLOMACY IN BLACK AND WHITE: AMERICA AND THE SEARCH FOR
ZIMBABWEAN INDEPENDENCE, 1965-1980

By

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Introduction

From Rhodesia to Zimbabwe: A Transnational Account¹

On the morning of February 8, 1977, Police Superintendent John Potter and his men carefully loaded seven white plastic bags into a police van. Inside the bags were the bullet-riddled corpses of seven missionaries who had been stationed at St. Paul's, a Roman Catholic mission in northern Rhodesia (present-day Zimbabwe). The dead included two Jesuit priests, a lay brother, and four nuns of the Dominican order. The victims ranged in age from 34 to 73. All were white. According to the sole survivor of the attack, the missionaries had been watching a popular British television program when a group of 12 black guerrillas entered the mission, herded the missionaries out of the television room, and gunned them down at point-blank range. When he learned of the slayings, Archbishop Patrick Chapaika (a Zimbabwean) was beside himself. He described the missionaries as "fine servants of the African people" and denounced those who had killed them. Nor was the Archbishop the only member of the Catholic Church to condemn the incident; Pope Paul VI publicly decried it as an act "without reason."²

The St. Paul's massacre appalled many Rhodesians. For although the colony had been in a state of civil war since 1966 (the year after its white-supremacist leaders had broken with the British crown in an effort to preserve their privileged position), the guerrillas had previously limited their attacks to farmers in remote parts of the country. Assailing those who monopolized

¹ Terminology can become confusing when writing about Zimbabwean history. Present-day Zimbabwe has only existed since April 1980, when the country achieved independence under majority rule. Prior to that, the territory was known by its colonial name of Rhodesia. Therefore, when writing about Zimbabwe prior to 1980, I will refer to it as Rhodesia. When writing about events since 1980, I will use the name Zimbabwe. I will refer to members of the white minority as Rhodesians and members of the country's black majority as Zimbabweans.

² Account based on The Times (of London), "Rhodesians Stunned by Massacre of Seven White Missionaries," February 8, 1977 and New York Times, "Catholic Missions of Rhodesia: A Major Role Since Colonial Era," February 8, 1977, "7 White Missionaries Slain in Raid by Black Guerrillas," February 8, 1977, and "Pope Calls Killing of Missionaries in Rhodesia an Act 'Without Reason,'" February 14, 1977.

the colony's most arable farmland was one thing, but slaughtering missionaries (a group respected by many Zimbabweans for providing education and health care) was quite another.³ As Rhodesian calls for retribution escalated, southern Africa seemed to be headed for an all-out race war. International commentators had been speculating about the possibility of such a conflagration since the early-1970s.⁴ By mid-decade, diplomats and journalists alike feared that the Rhodesian bush war (known in Africa as the *Chimurenga*) would drag the entire region into a vicious race war, pitting the guerrillas and their allies in the neighboring black states against the Rhodesian security forces and their South African allies. One of the most concerned African statesmen was Zambian President Kenneth Kaunda, who believed that the *Chimurenga* would lead to "a racial...holocaust" unless Rhodesia's leaders could be brought to accept the principle of majority rule in the near future.⁵ On the other side of Africa's black-white divide, South African Prime Minister John Vorster agreed that the bush war had the potential to spill over into neighboring countries such as Zambia, Mozambique, and South Africa. While Kaunda and Vorster could rarely be found on the same side of any issue, they agreed that an all-out race war would have consequences which were simply "too ghastly to contemplate."⁶

Officials in Washington grew increasingly concerned about the Rhodesian crisis as it wore on.⁷ By the mid-1970s, many had come to share Kaunda's concern that the *Chimurenga*

³ There had been a similar outcry when reports of Congolese soldiers raping and killing Belgian nuns had leaked out in the early 1960s. See, for instance, New York Times, "Terror in Congo Related by Nuns," March 14, 1961.

⁴ For US press commentary, see, for instance, Time, "State of Siege," July 2, 1973, "The Thin White Line," June 3, 1974, and "Angola's Three Troubled Neighbors," February 16, 1976.

⁵ Letter, Kenneth Kaunda to Lyndon Johnson, January 16, 1968, FA/1/105, National Archives of Zambia (hereafter, NAZ). In fact, Kaunda had long been concerned about the "appalling consequences" that a major racial conflict in southern Africa would have. See, for instance, Record of a Meeting held at State House on 10 January 1972 between his Excellency the President and Ambassador Bush, FA/1/387, NAZ.

⁶ Quoted in Time, "Make Peace or Face War," March 8, 1976.

⁷ See, for instance, Untitled Memorandum, Robert Komer to Lyndon Johnson, December 6, 1965, Rhodesia folder, National Security File (NSF), Files of Edward K. Hamilton, Box 3, Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library (hereafter, LBJL) and Jeremy Shearar to Secretary for Foreign Affairs, "US State Department's Views on Africa and African Problems," November 8, 1978, BTS 1/33/8/3, vol. 1, South African Department of International Relations and Cooperation Archives (hereafter, SAA).

would lead to “a bloodbath” unless it was swiftly resolved. In addition to their humanitarian concerns, US officials feared that a race war in southern Africa would not only enable the Soviet Union to gain a foothold in the region but would also exacerbate racial tensions at home. “If there is a race war in [Southern Africa], there will be a race conflict in the United States,” predicted one senior US official. “[R]acial tensions in this country are always just below the surface.”⁸ Desperate to forestall these possibilities, some of America’s most senior statesmen (including George Ball, Henry Kissinger, Andrew Young, and Jimmy Carter) expended considerable time and energy trying to facilitate Rhodesia’s transition from white minority rule to black majority rule during the 1960s and 1970s.⁹

In addition to their concerns about a race war, some Americans saw in the Rhodesian crisis an opportunity to strike a blow against white rule in southern Africa. Indeed, many foreign policy experts believed that the advent of black majority rule in Rhodesia would resonate throughout white-ruled Africa – in effect, triggering a racial “domino effect.” According to former President Jimmy Carter, “At the time, it was clear to everyone that the end of apartheid [sic] in Rhodesia would set an example for future action in South Africa.”¹⁰ While not everyone shared Carter’s belief that the transition to majority rule in Rhodesia would hasten the end of minority rule elsewhere in southern Africa, many did. And in the end, these optimists were correct. For although it did not provide an exact blueprint of how to dismantle apartheid, the introduction of majority rule in Rhodesia demonstrated that southern Africa’s white minority regimes could no longer expect international acceptance or assistance. For this reason, it can

⁸ In a 1978 interview, another high-ranking US official speculated about what might happen “if televised reports of white bloodshed were to enter American living rooms.” Quoted in Gerald Horne, From the Barrel of a Gun: The United States and the War Against Zimbabwe, 1965-1980, (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2001): 17 and New York Times, “Young Says Africa[n] Race War Would Start One in US,” June 6, 1977.

⁹ Carter has estimated that he spent as much time trying to bring peace to southern Africa during his presidency as he did trying to achieve peace in the Middle East. Jimmy Carter, The White House Diary, (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 2010): 20.

¹⁰ Carter, White House Diary, 20.

hardly be considered a coincidence that shortly after Zimbabwe achieved independence under majority rule, Namibia and South Africa (the region's last remaining white redoubts) came under increasing pressure to grant majority rule as well. In this sense, Zimbabwe's birth represented a pivotal moment in southern Africa's history – namely, the beginning of the end of white rule. Although the results of this process have been far from perfect (as will be demonstrated in the epilogue), many expected the transition to black rule to be far more violent than it ultimately was.

Based on the premise that the resolution of the Rhodesian crisis helped to bring white rule in southern Africa to a (relatively) peaceful end, this dissertation seeks to answer the question: how did Zimbabwe achieve independence under majority rule in April 1980? For while it may now seem clear that white minority rule was on its last legs in the 1960s and 1970s, the “inevitable” seemed far less certain at the time. Whereas previous scholars have examined the role that British diplomats and Zimbabwean guerrillas played in facilitating the transition from Rhodesia to Zimbabwe, this dissertation explores the role that successive US administrations played in the search for Zimbabwean independence.¹¹ In contrast to historian Frederick Cooper, who asserted (only partially tongue-in-cheek) that America's most significant contribution to the decolonization process occurred during World War II, this dissertation maintains that the United States played an important role in brokering the agreement which

¹¹ See, for instance, Martin Meredith, The Past is Another Country: Rhodesia UDI to Zimbabwe, (London: Pan Books, 1981); M. Tamarkin, The Making of Zimbabwe: Decolonization in Regional and International Politics, (London: Frank Cass, 1990); Robin Renwick, Unconventional Diplomacy in Southern Africa, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997). On the guerrilla war, see, David Martin and Phyllis Johnson, The Struggle for Independence: The Chimurenga War, (London: Faber and Faber, 1981); Terence Ranger, Peasant Consciousness and Guerilla War in Zimbabwe, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985); and Norma Kriger, Zimbabwe's Guerilla War: Peasant Voices, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992). Historian Sue Onslow has written extensively about South Africa's role in the Rhodesian crisis. Her most important works include: “South Africa and the Owen/Vance Plan of 1977,” South African Historical Journal, vol. 51 no. 1 (2004): 130-158; “A Question of Timing: South Africa and Rhodesia's Unilateral Declaration of Independence, 1964-65,” Cold War History, vol. 5, no. 2 (2005): 129-159; “‘We Must Gain Time’: South Africa, Rhodesia and the Kissinger Initiative of 1976,” South African Historical Journal, vol. 56, no. 1 (2006): 123-153; and “‘Noises Off’: South Africa and the Lancaster House Settlement 1979-1980,” Journal of Southern African Studies, vol. 35, no. 2 (2009): 489-506.

brought the Rhodesian crisis to an end.¹² However, it also asserts that America's Rhodesian policy during the 1960s and 1970s was neither consistent nor preordained. To the contrary, it is illustrative of what historian Wilson Miscamble has described as "the complexity, the uncertainty, and the sheer messiness of [foreign] policymaking."¹³

Much of the "messiness" in this case stems from the fact that the Rhodesian crisis had become a global dilemma by the 1970s – one involving the United Kingdom (the colonial power responsible for Rhodesia's fate according to international law), the United States, the Soviet Union, Cuba, and Rhodesia's neighbors in southern Africa. While this dissertation focuses primarily on the role that the United States played in facilitating the transition from Rhodesia to Zimbabwe, it seeks to contextualize America's role in this process. Because US officials lacked the wherewithal to convince Rhodesia's white-supremacist leaders to hand over the reins of power, they were forced to rely on regional diplomacy to achieve their objective. As such, their room for maneuver was circumscribed by the aspirations and actions of African statesmen, guerrillas, and citizens. By studying the Rhodesian crisis in a transnational context, this dissertation sheds new light on the settlement which brought the *Chimurenga* to an end and enabled Robert Mugabe to emerge as Zimbabwe's first black prime minister.

US-African Relations since 1945: A Brief Historiographical Overview

This dissertation posits that scholars can learn a great deal about the nature of American foreign policy by studying US-African relations. Until recently, however, few scholars of American foreign relations paid much attention to sub-Saharan Africa. From the 1950s until the

¹² Frederick Cooper, *The Past of the Present: Africa Since 1940*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002): 134.

¹³ Wilson Miscamble, *From Roosevelt to Truman: Potsdam, Hiroshima, and the Cold War*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007): xiii.

1970s, heavyweights in the field were engaged in a heated debate about the origins of the Cold War and the nature of Soviet foreign policy.¹⁴ Crises and foreign interventions influenced a later generation of historians' choice of subject matter. Many focused on US policy toward Southeast Asia in an effort to understand how the United States had become embroiled in a hot war in Vietnam, while others examined American diplomacy toward Western Europe, Latin America, and the Middle East.¹⁵ Sub-Saharan Africa remained little more than an afterthought in this literature. In part, this silence may reflect the fact that the United States exercised little direct influence over African affairs in the early postwar years, relying instead on its European allies to

¹⁴ While the literature on the origins of the Cold War is vast, it can broadly be divided into three "schools." The first is the orthodox school, which alleges that the Soviet Union was responsible for the coming of the Cold War. Adherents to the orthodox school claim that Stalin's refusal to abide by the Yalta agreement and Soviet expansionism after World War II left American policymakers with no choice but to assume a hostile stance and implement a policy of "containment." Two of the more important works of this school are: Herbert Feis, From Trust to Terror, The Origins of the Cold War, 1945-1950, (New York: Norton, 1970) and Thomas Bailey, America Faces Russia: Russian-American Relations from the Early Times to Our Day, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1950). A second wave of scholars, many of whom reached prominence in the mid-to-late 1960s, questioned the necessity of America's containment policy. These "revisionists" were more critical of America's postwar diplomacy (particularly its quest for markets) and blamed the United States for the onset of the Cold War. Among the most well-known revisionists works are: William Appleman Williams, The Tragedy of American Diplomacy, (New York: Dell, 1972); Walter LaFeber, America, Russia, and the Cold War, 1945-1966, (New York: Wiley, 1967); Gar Alperovitz, Atomic Diplomacy: Hiroshima and Potsdam; The Use of the Atomic Bomb and the American Confrontation with Soviet Power, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1965); Gabriel and Joyce Kolko, The Limits of Power: The World and United States Foreign Policy, 1945-1954, (New York: Harper and Row, 1972); and Thomas Paterson, Soviet-American Confrontation: Postwar Reconstruction and the Origins of the Cold War, (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1973). By the mid-1970s, a "post-revisionist" school was beginning to emerge. Post-revisionists argued that both the United States and the Soviet Union bore some of the blame for the Cold War – although they tended to see the Soviets as more culpable than the Americans. See, for instance, John Lewis Gaddis, The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941-1947, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972) and Melvyn Leffler, A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992).

¹⁵ The literature on Vietnam is also extremely vast. For a sampling, see George Herring, America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975, (New York: Wiley, 1979); Larry Berman, Planning a Tragedy: The Americanization of the War in Vietnam, (New York: Norton, 1982); Thomas McCormick, America's Half-Century: United States Foreign Policy in the Cold War and After, (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1995); Frederick Logevall, Choosing War: The Lost Chance for Peace and the Escalation of War in Vietnam, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); Michael Lind, Vietnam, the Necessary War: A Reinterpretation of America's Most Disastrous Military Conflict, (New York: Free Press, 1999); and Robert McNamara, James Blight, and Robert Brigham, Argument Without End: In Search of Answers to the Vietnam Tragedy, (New York: Public Affairs, 1999).

do so. Yet it probably also reflects the fact that an earlier generation of historians tended to regard sub-Saharan Africa as little more than a backwater.¹⁶

In recent years, however, the pendulum has begun to swing. The trauma of the Vietnam War, the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the emergence of the developing world have prompted some historians to question whether the US-Soviet confrontation was really the most significant development of the post-World War II era.¹⁷ In their search for a new grand narrative, some scholars have zeroed in on the end of European colonialism. In 2001, for instance, historian Thomas Borstelmann suggested that, “In retrospect, the conflict between the great powers of the Northern Hemisphere after 1945 distracted attention from the period’s perhaps more significant long-term development: the emergence of the world’s non-white majority from white colonial rule into national independence.”¹⁸ It was a bold statement at the time, but if the recent spate of books and articles about the decolonization process is any

¹⁶ So, too, did many US officials and politicians. See, for instance, William Thom, African Wars: A Defense Intelligence Perspective, (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2010): 27-44.

¹⁷ For instance, in 2010, historian Odd Arne Westad urged scholars “to place the Cold War in the larger context of chronological time and geographical space, within the web that ties the never-ending threads of history together. First and foremost,” Westad maintained, this meant situating the Cold War “within the wider history of the twentieth century in a global perspective.” Such a call contrasts sharply with a 1998 historiographical work which began by confidently asserting that, “The Cold War was the defining event of the second half of the twentieth century.” Other scholars have been even more adamant. In a 2012 review, historian Akira Iriye questioned whether the Cold War still deserves “to be studied seriously.” In noting that a younger generation of scholars has increasingly turned its attention to topics such as globalization, decolonization, human rights, and the environment, Iriye asserted, “It is becoming less and less fashionable to focus on the Cold War as the main drama in the history of the world after World War II.” Westad, “The Cold War and the International History of the 20th Century,” in eds. Melvyn Leffler and Westad, The Cambridge History of the Cold War, vol. 1 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010): 2; Michael Kort, The Columbia Guide to the Cold War, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998): 3; and Iriye, “Review of Tsuyoshi Hasegawa, ed., The Cold War in East Asia, 1945-1991,” in “The American Historical Review,” vol. 117, no. 1 (Feb. 2012): 175-76.

¹⁸ Thomas Borstelmann, The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard university Press, 2001): 6. Historian Philip Muehlenbeck has recently echoed the Borstelmann line. Muehlenbeck, Betting on the Africans: John F. Kennedy’s Courting of African Nationalist Leaders, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012): xv-xvi.

indication, Borstelmann is not alone in his belief that the end of European colonial rule was indeed the defining geopolitical event of the second half of the 20th century.¹⁹

While historians of American foreign relations have examined the decolonization process in Latin America, the Middle East, and Asia, the history of African decolonization has proven to be of particular interest – in no small part because it has allowed scholars to examine some of the ways in which changing conceptions of “race” have affected the American foreign policymaking process.²⁰ Within the subfield of US-African relations, the search for Zimbabwean independence has attracted relatively little attention. Only two historians have devoted monographs to America’s role in this process, and neither of these is entirely satisfactory. Using race as his primary means of analysis, Gerald Horne has written about the ways in which white Americans attempted to thwart Zimbabwe’s transition to majority rule.²¹ While Horne demonstrates that some white Southerners did regard the Rhodesians’ struggle against black majority rule as analogous to their own struggle against the Civil Rights Movement, he overlooks the fact that US

¹⁹ See, for instance, Odd Arne Westad, The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Artemy Kalinovsky and Sergey Radchenko, eds., The End of the Cold War and the Third World: New Perspectives on Regional Conflict, (New York: Routledge, 2011); Sue Onslow, ed., Cold War in Southern Africa: White Power, Black Liberation, (New York: Routledge 2009); Prosser Gifford and William Roger Louis, eds., The Transfer of Power in Africa: Decolonization, 1940-1960, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1982); Gifford and Louis, eds., Decolonization and African Independence: The Transfers of Power, 1960-1980 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988); R.F. Holland, European Decolonization 1918-1981: An Introductory Survey, (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1985); and Frederick Cooper, The Past of the Present.

²⁰ See, for instance, Thomas Noer, Cold War and Black Liberation: The United States and White Rule in Africa, 1948-1968, (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1985); Borstelmann, The Cold War and the Color Line; Muehlenbeck, Betting on the Africans; and Piero Gleijeses, Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington, and Africa, 1959-1976, (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2002). Some of the most prominent works on how “race” has influenced US-African relations include: Brenda Gayle Plummer, Rising Wind: Black Americans and US Foreign Affairs, 1935-1960, (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Penny von Eschen, Race against Empire: Black Americans and Anti-Colonialism, 1937-1957, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996); Carol Anderson, Eyes Off the Prize: The United Nations and the African American Struggle for Human Rights, 1944-1955, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Kevin Gaines, American Africans in Ghana: Black Expatriates and the Civil Rights Era, (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2006); and Gerald Horne, Black and Red: W.E.B. DuBois and the Afro-American Response to the Cold War, 1944-1963, (Albany NY: State University of New York Press, 1986). Some new and promising work examines the role that African Americans played in the anti-apartheid struggle. See, for instance, Ryan Irwin, “The Gordian Knot: Apartheid & the Unmaking of the Liberal World Order, 1960-1970,” PhD Dissertation, Ohio State University (2010) and Eric Morgan, “Into the Struggle: Confronting Apartheid in the United States and South Africa,” PhD Dissertation, University of Colorado (2009).

²¹ Horne, From the Barrel of a Gun.

officials consistently supported the Zimbabweans' demand for majority rule – even if this support was often more rhetorical than material. Andrew DeRoche comes closer to the mark, but by focusing too narrowly on US diplomacy, he overstates America's ability to affect change in southern Africa.²² By contrast, this dissertation employs a more transnational approach to show that American efforts to mediate the Rhodesian crisis were important but by no means decisive. Drawing on recently-declassified archival materials from southern Africa, the United States, and the United Kingdom, this dissertation maintains that the process by which Zimbabwe achieved its independence was messy and inexact. If the outcome was something that few had expected, this was because the final settlement reflected a compromise between African and Western interests, both of which were constantly evolving in response to shifting circumstances.

Project Overview

This dissertation has five chapters. Chapter One examines Zambian President Kenneth Kaunda's response to the Rhodesian crisis. It argues that between 1965 and 1974, Kaunda tried – and ultimately failed – to convince friendly nations such as the United Kingdom and the United States to support the Zimbabweans in their quest for majority rule. This chapter is among the first works to use African archival materials to chronicle an African nation's response to the unfolding Rhodesian crisis. It attempts to show that although their initiatives did not always bear fruit, black Africans were hardly passive spectators in the Rhodesian crisis. Fuelled by a combination of geostrategic concerns and pan-African solidarity, Kaunda elected to support the Zimbabwean people rather than merely allowing events to take their course.

²² Andrew DeRoche, Black, White, and Chrome: The United States and Zimbabwe, 1953-1998, (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press Inc., 2001).

Chapter Two examines the efforts of US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger to mediate the Rhodesian crisis in 1976. It argues that in the aftermath of his disastrous foray into the Angolan civil war, Kissinger (who hoped to snuff out any further opportunities for Soviet and Cuban involvement in southern Africa) made considerable progress in his efforts to defuse the Rhodesian crisis. In this respect, Chapter Two demonstrates an instance in which Cold War considerations prompted US officials to champion black majority rule. Previous studies have asserted that Kissinger's overt sympathy for southern Africa's white populations ultimately undermined his efforts to play peacemaker. This chapter does not dispute the claim that Kissinger had little faith in black Africans' capacity for self-governance. Nevertheless, it maintains that the so-called "Kissinger initiative" failed primarily because neither the Rhodesian leaders nor the Zimbabwean guerrillas were willing to accept a compromise settlement at the time. Henry Kissinger certainly had his shortcomings, but it seems unlikely that the Rhodesian protagonists would have accepted a negotiated settlement in 1976 regardless of who had brokered it.

Chapter Three examines US President Jimmy Carter and British Prime Minister James Callaghan's joint effort to mediate the Rhodesian crisis in 1977. It argues that Carter's policies toward sub-Saharan Africa reflected his desire to move beyond the "Cold War orthodoxy" and conduct a foreign policy based on a concern for human rights. While many scholars have applauded Carter for attempting to move beyond the containment policy that had driven American diplomacy since the late-1940s, this chapter demonstrates the limitations of Carter's more moralistic approach to foreign policy. It may have earned him the respect of some influential African leaders, but it failed to bring the Rhodesian crisis any closer to resolution. This chapter also seeks to shed light on the so-called "special relationship" between the United

Kingdom and the United States. Examining the Carter-Callaghan initiative through this lens, Chapter Three concludes that the Anglo-American partnership was more “functional” than it was “special.”

Chapter Four shows how African actors circumscribed the possibilities open to Western officials in 1978 and 1979. After the collapse of the Anglo-American Proposals, the Rhodesian leaders entered into an ostensibly multiracial alliance with a handful of "moderate" Zimbabwean nationalists in an effort to preserve as much white privilege as possible. This chapter focuses on the countervailing pressures that Jimmy Carter faced as he tried to decide whether or not to recognize the "internal settlement." It focuses primarily on the lobbying efforts of African and African American leaders, concluding that these pressures – along with Carter's fears that recognizing the "internal settlement" would encourage the Soviets and Cubans to become more directly involved in supporting the Zimbabwean guerrillas – fueled his decision not to recognize the hybrid regime in Salisbury. While many accounts treat Carter's decision as a foregone conclusion, this chapter seeks to restore a sense of historical contingency.

Chapter Five returns to the issue of African agency, focusing on the ways in which African and Commonwealth pressure forced British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher to abandon her initial plans to recognize the "internal settlement" and to instead try for a settlement that included the co-leaders of the guerrilla forces: Robert Mugabe and Joshua Nkomo. Chapter Five also examines the Lancaster House negotiations, which paved the way for Zimbabwe to achieve independence under majority rule. Much of the previous scholarship on the Lancaster House negotiations has focused on the diplomacy of British Foreign Secretary Peter Carrington. While this chapter maintains that Carrington played his hand skillfully, it also argues that his importance should not be overstated. Carrington was able to set up the framework for a

successful conference, but African leaders such as Samora Machel of Mozambique, Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, and Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia played a crucial role in convincing Mugabe and Nkomo to negotiate in good faith.

The epilogue deals briefly with Zimbabwe's history after independence. It argues against reading history backwards. For, although the country is in dire straits at the moment, many Zimbabweans saw their standard of living improve dramatically in the years after independence. Moreover, although Mugabe is now demonized in the West for his human rights violations and disastrous economic policies, he was initially praised for ensuring that white-owned farms remained intact and opting not to nationalize key sectors of the economy. It was only in the late-1990s and 2000s (when the country turned in a more autocratic direction) that relations between Zimbabwe and the West began to sour.

Chapter One

The Limits of African Influence: Kenneth Kaunda and the Rhodesian Crisis, 1964-1974

1964 was a year of exhilaration for the citizens of Northern Rhodesia. After months of negotiations, the British colony was set to join the international community as the sovereign state of Zambia. Unlike many African countries which emerged in the 1960s, international observers were bullish about Zambia's prospects. With its rich copper deposits and modest population, there was reason to believe that it would succeed where so many other African nations had failed.²³ But perhaps the greatest cause for optimism was Zambia's leader, President Kenneth Kaunda. A devout Christian who had rubbed shoulders with the likes of Mohandas Gandhi and Martin Luther King Junior, Kaunda desperately wanted to improve the quality of life for all Zambians, black and white alike. He electrified crowds with his vision of a peaceful and prosperous nation in which "people of all tribes, races, beliefs and opinions...will be able to live happily and in harmony."²⁴ Indeed, it was this desire to build a multiracial society that made Kaunda a media darling throughout the Western world. With the price of copper booming and with Kaunda at the helm, Zambia's future seemed so bright in the heady days preceding independence that some pundits dubbed the soon-to-be-nation "Africa's second chance."²⁵

²³See, for instance, Chicago Defender, "Zambia To Be 'Free' Saturday," October 24, 1964; New York Times, "The Future Zambia," May 20, 1964; and New York Times, "Copper is King in Newest African Republic," October 24, 1964.

²⁴Quoted in Time Magazine, "Zambia: Tomorrow the Moon," October 30, 1964. For more on Kaunda's desire for greater US involvement in southern Africa, see Andrew DeRoche, "Non-Alignment on the Racial Frontier: Zambia and the USA, 1964-1968," Cold War History, vol. 7, no. 2 (May 2007): 227-250 and "Dreams and Disappointments: Kenneth Kaunda and the United States, 1960-64," Safundi: The Journal of South African and American Studies, vol. 9, no. 4 (October 2008): 369-394. For the US government's views on Kaunda, see, for instance, Memorandum, Dean Rusk to Lyndon Johnson, "Your Meeting with President Kaunda of the Republic of Zambia," November 28, 1964, Zambia: Kaunda Visit: 11/30-12/2/64 folder, NSF Country File, Box 102, Lyndon Johnson Presidential Library (hereafter LBJL).

²⁵Quoted in Richard Hall, The High Price of Principles: Kaunda and the White South, (New York: Africana Publishing Company, 1970): 67.

On October 24, 1964, 73 years of British colonial rule in Northern Rhodesia came to an end. According to contemporary reports, nearly 40,000 spectators representing more than 60 nations packed into Independence Stadium, where traditional dancers clad in lion skins performed to the rhythm of pounding drums and blaring horns. At midnight, a hush fell over the crowd. The lights were dimmed, and the Union Jack was lowered for the final time. When the lights came back on, the Zambian flag fluttered in its place. Fireworks exploded, and a wave of jubilation swept across the nation. Cries of “kwacha” (meaning “freedom”) reverberated throughout the stadium and throughout the country. Even Zambia’s white population seemed to accept the moment with tranquility, displaying “an equanimity and readiness to accept black rule not found in any other British territory in Africa.” All things considered, it was an auspicious start for Africa’s 36th sovereign nation.²⁶

Approximately 250 miles south of the Zambian capital of Lusaka, the mood was far less exuberant. The 250,000 white settlers in Southern Rhodesia (known simply as Rhodesia after Zambian independence) abhorred the idea of majority rule. To them, it meant ethnic violence, rampant corruption, and economic mismanagement. They were therefore determined to prevent their colony from following in Zambia’s footsteps. Since the election of the white-supremacist Rhodesian Front in December 1962, there had been whispers that the Rhodesians were prepared to seize independence from Great Britain if the British continued to insist that the colony’s four million black inhabitants be given greater political and economic rights. These whispers grew louder when the Rhodesian Front jettisoned Prime Minister Winston Field in favor of Finance

²⁶ New York Times, “Northern Rhodesia Reborn as Zambia; Britain Ends Rule,” October 24, 1964; Chicago Defender, “Zambia To Be ‘Free’ Saturday;” Time Magazine, “Tomorrow the Moon;” and Hall, The Price of Principles, 65-67, 84.

Minister Ian Smith.²⁷ A hardliner who drew inspiration from such right-wing organizations as the John Birch Society in the United States, Smith's ascension to the prime ministership in April 1964 raised concerns that a unilateral declaration of independence (UDI) was imminent.²⁸ Some observers even predicted that Smith was planning to break with the British on the very day Zambia was slated to receive its independence. Although such forecasts proved inaccurate, Smith and his ministers did nothing to allay suspicions that a unilateral declaration of independence was in the offing. Most international observers believed it was only a matter of time before the Rhodesians took the plunge, and, indeed, on November 11, 1965, the Rhodesian Front unilaterally broke with the British crown.

This was the background against which Kenneth Kaunda and his United National Independence Party (UNIP) assumed power. The joy of achieving nationhood was tempered by the foreboding developments south of the Zambezi River. As Kaunda and his ministers set to work attempting to forge Zambia's 72 ethnic groups into one nation, they also had to consider how they would respond if the Rhodesians broke with Britain in an effort to preserve white privilege. Could they afford to take a principled stand on behalf of Rhodesia's black majority? Or would their nation's vulnerability to Rhodesian reprisals compel Zambia's leaders to stand by as the settlers attempted to stem "the wind of change?"

Viewing the Rhodesian crisis through the eyes of policymakers in Lusaka, this chapter will argue that Kaunda and his cabinet colleagues opted for a policy of principled pragmatism, endeavoring to bring about a swift resolution of the Rhodesian crisis while simultaneously trying

²⁷ Circular Telegram, "S[outhern] R[hodesian] Politics," April 15, 1964, Rhodesia Cables, Vol. 1: 12/63 – 1/66, NSF Country File, Box 97, LBJL.

²⁸ For more on the connection between the Rhodesian Front's ideology and right-wing organizations in the US, see Michael Evans, "The Role of Ideology in Rhodesian Front Rule," D. Phil dissertation, University of Western Australia, 1993. For a more sympathetic view of Smith, see J.R.T Wood, So Far and No Further! Rhodesia's Bid for Independence during the Retreat from Empire, 1959-1965, (Victoria, British Columbia: Trafford, 2005).

to avoid being sucked into a military or economic confrontation with Ian Smith's regime. Zambia's leaders clearly understood that they lacked the clout to force Smith and his followers to grant majority rule. They therefore called upon the United Kingdom (the colonial power responsible for Rhodesia's fate according to international law) to defuse the crisis. When the British proved unequal to the task, the Zambians sought to enlist the United States in the search for Zimbabwean independence. Unfortunately, neither the Johnson Administration nor the Nixon Administration was willing to fulfill this role. It was only after southern Africa became a Cold War arena in the mid-1970s that US officials began to reconsider their nation's role in the region. Thus, while this chapter will argue that the Zambians displayed a degree of agency in seeking to convince sympathetic foreign powers to defuse the Rhodesian crisis before it spiraled out of control, it will also seek to demonstrate the limitations of that agency. Zambian officials could plead and cajole all they wanted, but until Soviet and Cuban troops began arriving in southern Africa, they were unable to convince their counterparts in London and Washington to take decisive action against the Rhodesian rebels.

The Zambian Response to UDI

Although the Rhodesian Front's unilateral declaration of independence was condemned throughout black Africa, no country was more alarmed by this development than Zambia. For whereas many Africans regarded UDI as an existential threat, Kenneth Kaunda and his cabinet colleagues saw it as a threat to their nation's very existence. Their concern is evidenced by the fact that Zambian representatives abroad reported on little else in their dispatches to Lusaka in the months leading up to November 11, 1965. Whether stationed in Washington or Moscow, London or Dar es Salaam, Zambian diplomats dedicated the overwhelming majority of their

correspondences to predicting how the nation to which they had been accredited was likely to react if Ian Smith and his followers broke with the British.²⁹

The Zambians' most immediate concern was that Smith's regime would seek to smother their economy if the international community tried to snuff out Rhodesia's "independence."³⁰ Such fears were well-founded since Zambia's location and colonial inheritance left the fledgling nation in an extremely vulnerable position. At independence, Kaunda and his UNIP colleagues had inherited an economy dependent on copper exports. Unfortunately for Kaunda and his countrymen, Zambia was a landlocked nation, and the only rail route to the sea passed through the Rhodesian capital of Salisbury. This arrangement had worked well enough during the colonial era, but as tensions between the Zambian and Rhodesian governments escalated, policymakers in Lusaka quickly realized that a hostile regime in Salisbury could easily isolate their nation from the outside world. Zambia's allies arrived at similar conclusions. As one American official noted, Smith's regime could "quickly bring the modern economy of Zambia to a halt" by refusing to allow Zambian imports and exports to pass through Rhodesia.³¹ Doing so would have entailed a fairly substantial loss of revenue for the Rhodesians, but few observers doubted that Smith would resort to such a ploy if the international community attempted to drive his regime from power.

²⁹ See, for instance, S.C. Katilungu to S.M. Kapwepwe, Fortnightly Report, 30th April – 11th May, 1965, FA/1/56 folder; Katilungu to Kapwepwe, Report No. Lon. 4 for the period 11th November – 24th November, 1965, FA/1/56 folder; Unknown to R.B. Banda, Untitled, March 14, 1966, FA/1/193 folder; V.J. Mwaanga to Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, December 31, 1965, FA/1/98 folder, National Archives of Zambia (hereafter NAZ).

³⁰ Memorandum of Conversation, "Effect on Zambia of a Rhodesian Unilateral Declaration of independence," November 20, 1964, in Foreign Relations of the United States (hereafter FRUS), 1964-1968, vol. 24.

³¹ Quoted in undated Intelligence Memorandum RR IM 67-1, "Rhodesia and Zambia: From Voluntary to Mandatory Sanctions," FRUS, 1964-1968, vol. 24. According to US estimates, 98% of Zambia's exports were carried by Rhodesian railways. Special National Intelligence Estimate Number 72-65, "Repercussions of a Unilateral Declaration of Independence by Southern Rhodesia," October 13, 1965, 70 Rhodesia folder, NSF National Intelligence Estimates, Box 8, LBJL.

Equally foreboding was the fact that Zambia was almost completely dependent on Rhodesia for its energy needs. Its coal came from the Wankie colliery in Rhodesia, while its oil passed through a pipeline that ran through Rhodesia. Further adding to the Zambians' plight was the fact that the colonial regime had built the Kariba hydroelectric power station, which supplied electricity to much of southern and central Zambia (including Lusaka and the Copperbelt region), on the southern banks of the Zambezi River. Zambia's energy dependence meant that Smith's regime could effectively paralyze its northern neighbor by terminating the northward flow of coal, oil, and electricity.³² Depriving Zambia of power for even 72 hours would have caused the nation's copper mines to flood, ruining its economic prospects and depriving the West of a vital source of the strategically-important mineral.³³ While the Rhodesian Front had refrained from using this leverage at the time of UDI, there was nothing to guarantee that Smith would not turn the screws at some point in the future. To the contrary, he had given every indication that he would retaliate against Zambia if the international community threatened his regime.³⁴

Additional threats emerged as the Zambian government and its allies began their contingency planning. Chief among their concerns was the possibility of a Rhodesian invasion.³⁵ Not only was the Rhodesian military better-equipped and better-trained than its Zambian counterpart, but

³² The US estimated that Zambia received 93% of its electricity from Rhodesia. Special National Intelligence Estimate Number 72-65, "Repercussions of a Unilateral Declaration of Independence by Southern Rhodesia," October 13, 1965, 70 Rhodesia folder, NSF National Intelligence Estimates, Box 8, LBJL.

³³ 72 hours cited in Memorandum for Zbigniew Brzezinski, "Evening Report," June 8, 1977, NLC-10-3-2-11-3, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library (hereafter, JECL). For more on the uses of copper, see Andrew DeRoche, Black, White, and Chrome: The United States and Zimbabwe, 1953 to 1998, (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2001): 18, 117.

³⁴ "The one thing that stands out," Kaunda observed in a May 1965 speech, "is that Smith intends to make Zambia pay for any actions taken by Britain and the rest of the world. Douglas Anglin, Zambian Crisis Behaviour: Confronting Rhodesia's Unilateral Declaration of Independence, 1965-1966, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994): 47. This speech was made in response to the thinly-veiled threats against Zambia contained in a Rhodesian White Paper entitled "Economic Aspects of a Declaration of Independence." Untitled Telegram, Jack Johnston to Commonwealth Relations Office, April 26, 1965. PREM 13/536, British National Archives (hereafter, TNA).

³⁵ Robert C. Good, UDI: The International Politics of the Rhodesian Rebellion, (London: Faber and Faber, 1973): 94. Smith reiterated this point in private conversations with Canadian officials. Record of a Meeting between the Prime Minister and the Prime Minister of Canada at 10 Downing Street on January 30, 1965, PREM 13/698, TNA.

the fact that the Zambian military was led by white officers raised doubts about its loyalty in the event of a Rhodesian attack.³⁶ Policymakers in Lusaka also feared that the Rhodesians' unilateral declaration of independence would unleash a wave of racial unrest in Zambia.³⁷ Not only were such tensions likely to thwart Kaunda's goal of establishing a multiracial society, but they also threatened to undermine the Zambian civil service and economy, both of which, like the army, were reliant on a small cadre of whites whose loyalties remained uncertain. With their nation's physical security, economic prosperity, and racial harmony potentially in jeopardy, it is no wonder that Zambian officials became increasingly alarmed by the storm clouds gathering over southern Africa in 1964 and 1965.

Despite his nation's precarious position, Kaunda assumed a fairly hardline stance against the Rhodesian Front – a decision which, at first glance, may seem puzzling. The President was more cognizant of his nation's vulnerability to Rhodesian reprisals than anyone, so why would he risk provoking the rebel regime? The question remains unresolved, although scholars have proffered several compelling hypotheses. Previous works have stressed Kaunda's dedication to his own brand of "humanism," a philosophy which emphasized non-racialism and equality.³⁸ His admirers contend that Kaunda felt a near-messianic calling to eradicate racial oppression in southern Africa, and, for this reason, have posited that Kaunda's abhorrence of racial discrimination shaped his response to the Rhodesian crisis.³⁹ Other scholars have noted that the

³⁶ As late as 1978, one US official described the Zambian army as "disorganized, badly trained, and poorly led." Memorandum, Frank Wisner to Zbigniew Brzezinski, "Country Paper on Zambia," March 15, 1978, Zambia, 1/77-12/78 folder, National Security Affairs (24), Staff Material, North/South, Box 118, JECL.

³⁷ Telegram, Robert Good to Dean Rusk, "Mac Donald's Visit," November 27, 1965, NLJ-001R-102-4-4-0, LBJL.

³⁸ For more on Kenneth Kaunda's humanist philosophy, see Kaunda, Letter to My Children, (Veritas Trust: Lusaka, 1977): esp. 22-37, and Kaunda, A Humanist in Africa, (London: Longman's, 1966): passim.

³⁹ For Kaunda's views on the ways in which racial discrimination undercut his humanist vision, see Kaunda, Letter to My Children, 52-67. See also, Good, UDI, 87; Anglin, Zambian Crisis Behaviour, 37-40; and Hall, The Price of Principles, 36-51. See also, Record of the discussion held between His Excellency the President on the part of Zambia, and the Honourable Vice President of the United States of America, Mr. Hubert Humphrey, on the 5th January, 1968, FA/1/105 folder, NAZ, in which Kaunda explained to Vice President Hubert Humphrey, "The racial

Zambian President was under pressure from elements within his own party and from abroad to take an uncompromising stand against the white-supremacist regime in Salisbury.⁴⁰ Less charitably, at least one scholar has suggested that the President hoped to use the Rhodesian crisis as an excuse to consolidate his power and clamp down on internal dissidents.⁴¹ While it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to determine Kenneth Kaunda's exact motivations, it seems likely that all of these factors contributed to his decision to stand firm against the Rhodesian Front in spite of the obvious risks involved.

Having decided to oppose the rebels, Kaunda and his advisers sought to determine the most effective way of defusing the Rhodesian crisis. Whereas the British favored imposing economic sanctions against Rhodesia, Zambian officials doubted that such measures would succeed in bringing down the Rhodesian Front. They assumed that Portugal (the colonial power in Mozambique and Angola) and apartheid South Africa would refuse to comply, thereby rendering sanctions hopelessly ineffective.⁴² Instead of relying on economic coercion, Kaunda and his ministers insisted that the British use military force to crush the Rhodesian uprising. In this respect, Zambia's position mirrored that of many other African nations, several of which had

regimes professed to stand for the defence of Western civilisation, Christian values and law and order...but their policies were intended for exactly the opposite – dehumanisation of African people.”

⁴⁰ For more on Kaunda's Cabinet quarrels, see Hall, *The Price of Principles*, 128-129, 137, 150-151. For more on the international pressures facing Zambia, see, Memorandum, Thomas Mann to Lyndon Jonson, “Memorandum for the President on the Rhodesian Crisis,” December 22, 1965, FRUS, 1964-1968, vol. 24; Untitled Telegram, Chief Mapanza, to Permanent Secretary (Ministry of Foreign Affairs), February 9, 1967, FA/1/151 folder, NAZ; and Good, *UDI*, 101-106.

⁴¹ Giacomo Macola, “Harry Mwaanga Nkambula, UNIP, and the Roots of Authoritarianism in Nationalist Zambia,” in eds. Jan-Bart Gewald, Marja Hinfelaar, and Giacomo Macola, *One Zambia, Many Histories: Towards a Post-colonial Zambia*, (Boston: Brill, 2009): 17-18, 24-25. British officials were also aware that Kaunda's position was in jeopardy. See, for instance, Sir Leslie Monson to CRO, “Rhodesia,” October 24, 1965, PREM 13/540, TNA.

⁴² S.C. Katilungu to S.M. Kapwepwe, Report No. Lon. 4 for the period 11th November – 24th November, 1965, FA/1/56, NAZ. The US government agreed. See, for instance, Special National Intelligence Estimate, No. 72-65, “Repercussions of a Unilateral Declaration of Independence by Southern Rhodesia,” October 13, 1965, Rhodesia folder, NSF National Intelligence Estimates, Box 8, LBJL. For that matter, neither did many British officials. See, for instance, Telegram, Philip Kaiser to Dean Rusk, “UK-Rhodesian Relations,” November 16, 1965, United Kingdom Cables [1 of 2], Vol. 7: 10/65-1/66 folder, NSF Country Files, Box 209 [1 of 2], LBJL.

been clamoring for the British to “fulfill their colonial responsibilities” in Rhodesia for some time.⁴³

Kaunda and his advisers were realists, however, and they refused to countenance any course of action that seemed likely to unleash a major racial conflagration. The Zambians were particularly concerned about how the South African government (the dominant military and economic power in the region) would respond to any attempt to unseat the white regime on its northern border. Thus, while the Zambian government believed that only a military intervention could defuse the Rhodesian crisis in a timely fashion, Kaunda and his ministers were adamant that only the British (the colonial power responsible for Rhodesia’s fate) could undertake such an endeavor without provoking the South Africans. As the Zambian High Commissioner to London, S.C. Katilungu, reported shortly after UDI, “[O]ur tactics and pressures should now be directed at committing the British Government to the use of military force.” Katilungu noted that he had “singled out Britain and not any other power or groups of allies” because the deployment of British troops to Rhodesia would be less likely to provoke the South Africans than if the United Nations (UN) or the newly-established Organization of African Unity (OAU) spearheaded the invasion.⁴⁴ The Zambian Undersecretary of State argued along similar lines when he opined that sending UN or OAU forces into Rhodesia was all but certain to ignite a wider war – “whereas if Britain sends troops, the situation would be very different.”⁴⁵ For this reason, Zambian emissaries refused to join Egypt, Ghana, and Ethiopia in calling for Africans to take matters into their own hands. Instead, they looked the British for leadership.⁴⁶ Viewed in

⁴³ Good, UDI, 101-106.

⁴⁴ S.C. Katilungu to Simon Kapwepwe, Report No. Lon. 4 for the period 11th November – 24th November, 1965, FA/1/56 folder, NAZ

⁴⁵ C.C. Chipamata to Permanent Secretary (Ministry of Foreign Affairs), Fortnightly Report, 30th April – 11th May, 1965, November 26, 1965, FA/1/56 folder, NAZ.

⁴⁶ Telegram, Vernon Mwaanga to Permanent Secretary (Ministry of Foreign Affairs), December 10, 1965, FA/1/98 folder and Telegram, Chief Mapanza, to Permanent Secretary, February 9, 1967, FA/1/151 folder, NAZ.

this light, the Zambian response to UDI was hardly the knee-jerk reaction that some foreign policy experts deemed it to be. The Rhodesian rebellion posed a grave threat to Zambia's national security, and Kenneth Kaunda and his ministers recognized that they could not reverse UDI by themselves. They concluded that a British military intervention offered the best hope of defusing the Rhodesian crisis before it spiraled out of control.

“Satisfying No One:” Britain’s Response to UDI

However reasonable this policy may have seemed to officials in Lusaka, it soon became apparent that the British government had no intention of using military force in Rhodesia. Prime Minister Harold Wilson was dead set against the idea and said so publicly. “If there are those in this country who are thinking in terms of a thunderbolt, hurtling through the sky and destroying their enemy, a thunderbolt in the shape of the Royal Air Force, let me say that this thunderbolt will not be coming,” Wilson announced on October 30, 1965.⁴⁷ The Prime Minister was even more direct in an interview he gave the following evening, declaring that Her Majesty’s Government “do not believe this problem can be solved by force.”⁴⁸ While many throughout the Commonwealth (including some members of his own party) regarded Wilson’s statement as a shameful abrogation of British responsibility, it merely reflected what his government had been saying in private for some time.⁴⁹ Indeed, while recently-declassified documents at the British National Archives fail to reveal the exact date when military intervention in Rhodesia was ruled

⁴⁷ Cited in Ben Pimlott, Harold Wilson, (London: Harper Collins, 1992): 371.

⁴⁸ Times of London, “Terrible Disaster Can Be Averted,” November 1, 1965.

⁴⁹ The non-use of military force seems to have been agreed upon no later than February 1965, when British Commonwealth Secretary Arthur Bottomley and Lord Chancellor Gerald Gardiner informed one leading Zimbabwean nationalist leader that Britain was unwilling to impose majority rule at gunpoint. The British envoys reiterated this point during a February 1965 discussion with the Rhodesian Cabinet. Nor should Wilson’s statement have caught African leaders like Kaunda off guard. The Prime Minister had dismissed the use of military force in Rhodesia as “unthinkable” during the June 1965 Commonwealth meeting. Bottomley publicly reaffirmed Britain’s unwillingness to dispatch troops to Rhodesia during an August 1965 tour of Western Africa. Wood, So Far and No Further, 270-343.

out, they tend to substantiate one former member of the Commonwealth Relations Office's assertion that, "From the beginning, there was really no likelihood that Harold Wilson was going to use force in Rhodesia."⁵⁰

There were many reasons for the British government's reluctance to embark on a military adventure in Rhodesia. These included: the logistical difficulties involved in transporting up to two divisions of troops to southern Africa, concerns about the domestic ramifications of British soldiers fighting against their "kith and kin" in Rhodesia, and fears that a war in southern Africa would adversely affect the British economy. Historians have spent the past 45 years trying to determine which of these factors weighed most heavily on ministers' minds when they decided to rule out the use of force in Rhodesia, but for the purposes of this dissertation, it is unnecessary to delve into this ongoing debate.⁵¹ It is sufficient to note that while British officials opposed the use of force in Rhodesia, they understood that they would have to undertake some action in order to minimize the damage that UDI was bound to have on Britain's relations with the newly-independent nations of sub-Saharan Africa. Their response was to ask the United Nations Security Council to impose mandatory sanctions against Rhodesia. The Security Council agreed that the Rhodesian crisis constituted a threat to international peace and instructed member nations to embargo the colony's major export crops: tobacco, sugar, and chromium. Member states were also instructed to stop supplying the colony with oil and military equipment. In a

⁵⁰ George Cunningham in "Rhodesian UDI" seminar held September 6, 2000 (Institute of Contemporary British History), <http://www.ccbh.ac.uk/downloads/rhodesia.pdf>, p. 31.

⁵¹ Carl Watts has asserted that domestic politics and economics were the most important factors. Watt, "Killing Kith and Kin: The Viability of British Military Intervention in Rhodesia, 1964-5," *Twentieth Century British History*, vol. 16, no. 4 (2005): 382-415. Ben Pimlott and Phillip Zeigler have argued that Wilson believed that sanctions would succeed in toppling the Rhodesian Front. Pimlott, *Wilson*, 381 and Zeigler, *Wilson: The Authorised Life of Lord Wilson of Rievaulx*, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1993): 236.

phrase that would come back to haunt him, Wilson predicted that these measures would bring down Smith's regime "in a matter of weeks rather than months."⁵²

Historians have roundly condemned Wilson for his handling of the Rhodesian crisis. Some have castigated the Prime Minister for implementing sanctions despite the fact that few economists believed they would bring Smith's regime to its knees – much less in a matter of "weeks rather than months."⁵³ Others have seen Wilson's sanctions policy as a cynical ploy designed to appease African nations and prevent the Commonwealth from unraveling.⁵⁴ In reality, Wilson's sanctions policy represented an effort to steer a middle course between the Scylla of military intervention and the Charybdis of passive quiescence. Viewed in this light, the policy is hardly worthy of some of the more savage criticism it has received. It succeeded in holding the Commonwealth together (no mean feat given the vitriolic rhetoric coming out of Africa in the weeks following UDI) and left the door open for Smith to negotiate a "return to legality."⁵⁵ Given Wilson's belief in the Commonwealth ideal, his pacifistic nature, his party's slim majority in the House of Commons, and Britain's diminished global position in the wake of the Suez debacle, it is unrealistic to have expected the Prime Minister to undertake a bolder initiative.

Wilson's sanctions policy may have averted an open Commonwealth revolt, but his refusal to send troops to Rhodesia soured London's relations with countries throughout the developing world. Tanzanian Prime Minister Julius Nyerere and Ghanaian President Kwame Nkrumah were among the most vocal critics of Britain's flaccid response to the Rhodesian crisis.

⁵² Quoted in Good, UDI, 121.

⁵³ For example, see, Pimlott, Wilson, 381 and Ziegler, Wilson, 236.

⁵⁴ Good, UDI, 203-211 and Elaine Windrich, Britain and the Politics of Rhodesian Independence, (New York: Africana, 1978), 70.

⁵⁵ Untitled Telegram, Averell Harriman to Lyndon Johnson and Dean Rusk, May 5, 1966, United Kingdom Cables, Vol. 8: 1/66-7/66 folder. NSF Country Files, Box 209 [2 of 2], LBJL.

Both leaders severed ties with the United Kingdom in the aftermath of UDI.⁵⁶ Meanwhile, London's relations with many other African nations (most notably Nigeria and Sierra Leone) declined precipitously when it became clear that the British were unwilling to impose majority rule at gunpoint.⁵⁷ Nations outside of Africa were also unhappy with Harold Wilson's handling of the Rhodesian crisis, as evidenced by their critical remarks in the United Nation General Assembly and at the 1965 and 1966 Commonwealth Heads of Government meetings.⁵⁸

But no government was more dismayed by Wilson's response to the Rhodesian crisis than was Zambia's. As previously noted, Zambian leaders believed that South African and Portuguese non-compliance would render sanctions ineffective and maintained that only the use of force would bring the Rhodesians to heel. More than one Zambian official accused Harold Wilson of operating in bad faith, alleging that he and his cabinet colleagues were more interested in placating members of the Commonwealth and the OAU than they were in defending the rights of Rhodesia's black majority.⁵⁹ The Zambians only reluctantly agreed to curtail their trade with Rhodesia – and this was done less out of any conviction that sanctions would succeed than in the hope that the British would be compelled to dispatch troops to Rhodesia once sanctions had failed to topple Ian Smith's regime.⁶⁰

Relations between the United Kingdom and Zambia further deteriorated as the Rhodesian crisis wore on. "It is nearly two years since UDI was proclaimed," Zambian official G.B. Silwizya noted in a dispatch to Lusaka. "Up to date, it still survives. The reason is that Britain

⁵⁶ See, Harold Wilson, The Labour Government, 1964-70: A Personal Record, (London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971): 151-152.

⁵⁷ Commonwealth Relations Office to Jack Johnston, "Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting," June 22, 1965, PREM 13/537, TNA.

⁵⁸ Telegram, CRO to High Commission Salisbury, "Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting," June 22, 1965 and Untitled Telegram, CRO to High Commission Salisbury, June 25, 1966, PREM 13/537, TNA.

⁵⁹ P.J.F Lusaka to Simon Kapwepwe, Report No. 5 for the period 24th November – 15th December, 1966, FA/1/156 folder, NAZ.

⁶⁰ S.C. Katilungu to S.M. Kapwepwe, "Report on the Second Part of My Trip to Europe," March 24, 1966, FA/1/158, NAZ.

has shamefully and disappointingly failed to assert her authority over Rhodesia.”⁶¹ Because Zambian officials erroneously believed that the majority of Labourites favored military intervention in Rhodesia, they focused their ire on Harold Wilson.⁶² Such misperceptions were fuelled by reports that the Zimbabwean cause enjoyed widespread support throughout the United Kingdom. In one such report, Silwizya described the pro-African statements made by many of the speakers at the 1966 Labour Party Annual Conference. “The way in which [the] speeches were delivered from the floor would lead one to think that [the] speakers were Africans from Zimbabwe and not Britons. The impression [one] got was that the ordinary British Labour Party supporter is committed to crushing the rebellion but it is his Government which lacks the will and power to do so.”⁶³ Pro-Zimbabwe bumper stickers and press reports reinforced this impression.⁶⁴ Thus, as Zambian officials saw it, Harold Wilson was the chief impediment to a swift and just resolution of the Rhodesian crisis. Even worse, many in the Zambian government suspected that Wilson’s aversion to the use force was racially motivated. After all, Britain had dispatched troops to help put down mutinies in the predominantly-black countries of Tanzania, Uganda, and Kenya only two years earlier. Why, then, would Wilson refuse to send troops to Rhodesia – except for his concern about how stories of British troops slaughtering their own “kith and kin” would be received by the British public?⁶⁵

⁶¹ G.B. Silwizya (Second Secretary at the Zambian High Commission in London), Report on the British Conservative Party Annual Conference 1967, November 6, 1967, FA/1/188 folder, NAZ.

⁶² This was a case of misperception. In a recent oral history project, all of those interviewed agreed with the participant who asserted that “it was very apparent in the Parliamentary Labour Party that there was no instinct for the use of force at all.” Dr. David Kerr in “Rhodesian UDI” seminar held September 6, 2000 (Institute of Contemporary British History), <http://www.ccbh.ac.uk/downloads/rhodesia.pdf>, p. 38. Chancellor of the Exchequer James Callaghan was the only high-ranking Cabinet official who supported the use of force in Rhodesia. James Morgan, *Callaghan: A Life*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997): 227-228; and James Callaghan, *Time and Chance*, (London: Collins, 1987): 145.

⁶³ G.B. Silwizya, Report on the Labour Party Annual Conference, October 4, 1966, FA/1/188, NAZ.

⁶⁴ G.B. Silwizya, Report on the Labour Party Annual Conference, October 4, 1966, FA/1/188, NAZ.

⁶⁵ C.C. Chipamata to Permanent Secretary (Ministry of Foreign Affairs), Fortnightly Report, 30th April – 11th May, 1965, November 26, 1965, FA/1/56 folder, NAZ.

Despite Wilson's obstinacy, Kaunda persisted in his efforts to prod his British counterpart into action. The Zambian President threatened to sever his country's ties with the United Kingdom unless Britain drove the Rhodesian Front from power.⁶⁶ Kaunda also threatened to withdraw Zambia's sterling reserves from British banks, a measure which would have placed tremendous pressure on sterling at a moment when the British economy was particularly vulnerable.⁶⁷ When these ploys failed to produce the desired result, Kaunda spearheaded a movement to toss the United Kingdom out of the Commonwealth unless the British fulfilled their "colonial responsibilities" in Rhodesia.⁶⁸ By this time, however, it was more apparent than ever that military intervention was not in the cards. In 1967, Wilson's government was forced to devalue the pound. Continued economic woes forced the Prime Minister to withdraw from Britain's position "East of Suez" the following year. Both of these actions represented political and personal setbacks for Wilson, who had come to office determined to preserve what remained of Britain's position as a world power.⁶⁹ During this period of retrenchment, there was little chance of Britain embarking on a military adventure against a well-armed foe in southern Africa.

⁶⁶ Untitled Telegram, Robert Good to Dean Rusk, August 18, 1966, Zambia Cables, Vol. 1: 8/64-9/68 folder, NSF Country File, Box 102, LBJL.

⁶⁷ State Department Intelligence Note, "Threat by Zambia to Withdraw Sterling Balances: The Ultimate Weapon," July 22, 1966, Zambia: Memos & Misc., Vol. 1: 8/64 - 9/68 folder, National Security Files, Country File, Box 102, LBJL.

⁶⁸ Hall, *The Price of Principles*, 151.

⁶⁹ For more on British "declinism," see Michael Shanks, *The Stagnant Society: A Warning*, (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1961); Andrew Shonfield, *British Economic Policy since the War*, (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1958); Susan Strange, *Sterling and British Policy: A Political Study of an International Currency in Decline*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971); and Stuart Wood, ed., *British Culture and the End of Empire*, (New York: Manchester University Press, 2001). For a critique of the "declinist" literature, see Jim Tomlinson, "Thrice Denied: 'Declinism' as a Recurrent Theme in British History in the Long Twentieth Century," in *Twentieth Century British History*, vol. 20, no. 2 (2009): 227-251.

Britain's failure to come to the aid of Rhodesia's black majority caused Kenneth Kaunda to lose faith in "perfidious Albion."⁷⁰ Having concluded that Harold Wilson was either unwilling or unable to douse the Rhodesian flames, the Zambian President cast about for alternatives. Seeking to capitalize on the ongoing struggle between the United States and Soviet Union, he sent out feelers to Washington and Moscow in the hopes that one of the superpowers would be able to succeed where Britain had failed. Zambian officials were split on this decision. The Zambian Ambassador to Moscow urged Kaunda to use caution in dealing with the Americans and the Soviets. "He who sups with the devil needs a long spoon," the Ambassador warned, noting that the adage was "pertinent to our relations with both power blocs."⁷¹ Conversely, the Acting Zambian High Commissioner to London applauded his President's decision to appeal to the superpowers. "This is no longer the time to be playing to the gallery," he opined "since we have now come face to face with the stark-naked realities of the situation."⁷² Kaunda decided to press ahead, and from 1968 onward, Zambian officials concentrated on trying to persuade the Americans and the Soviets to use their influence to force Ian Smith and his followers to relinquish power.

The Johnson Administration and Rhodesia: "Keeping as far away as we could"

On December 15, 1965, Zambian officials announced their government's intention to dispatch high-ranking emissaries to Washington and Moscow.⁷³ While envoys were sent to both capitals, this was done primarily to maintain the appearance of Zambian non-alignment. In

⁷⁰ Record of a Meeting between Hon. Mudena, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Ambassador George Bush, United States Permanent Representative to the United Nations, 10 February 1972, FA/1/387 folder, NAZ.

⁷¹ H.J. Soko to R.C. Kamanga, Report No. 1/68 for the period ended 19th January, 1968, FA/1/279 folder, NAZ.

⁷² P.J.F Lusaka to S.M. Kapwepwe, Report No. 5 for the period 24th November – 15th December, 1965, FA/1/56 folder, NAZ.

⁷³ For more on the decision to send delegations to Washington and Moscow, see Anglin, Zambian Crisis Behavior, 147-151.

reality, Kaunda coveted US assistance. The Soviets' decision to join some of the OAU's more militant members in calling for an African force to liberate Zimbabwe raised hackles in Lusaka as early as December 1965.⁷⁴ Since the Zambians believed an OAU-led invasion would ignite a race war in southern Africa, they concluded that the Soviets either did not understand southern African realities or – more likely – were exploiting the Rhodesian crisis in order to improve their standing with some of Africa's more “radical” leaders. Zambian officials also resented Soviet efforts to pressure them into quitting the Commonwealth and cutting ties with the United Kingdom when it became clear that Harold Wilson did not intend to use force to quell the Rhodesian rebellion. To policymakers in Lusaka, these actions represented affronts to Zambian independence and reinforced their fears that the Kremlin was seeking to turn Zambia into a Soviet satellite.⁷⁵ These developments, combined with Moscow's refusal to offer any concrete assistance in the immediate aftermath of UDI, bolstered Kaunda's preference to work with the Americans.

In many respects, these tensions mirrored the Soviet Union's inability to gain a foothold in sub-Saharan Africa during the 1960s. This failure can be partially attributed to the Soviets' staggering ignorance about African affairs during the 1940s and 1950s. According to historians Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin, it was not until 1960 that the KGB established a department dedicated to African issues. Prior to this, Soviet policymakers had seen little more than “a blank sheet of paper” when they gazed at maps of Africa.⁷⁶ As relative latecomers to the African scene, the Soviets had not been in a position to offer substantial assistance to the first

⁷⁴ V.J. Mwaanga to Permanent Secretary (Ministry of Foreign Affairs) December 10, 1965, FA/1/98 folder, NAZ.

⁷⁵ See, for instance, H.J. Soko to S.M. Kapwepwe, “Special Report: Zambia-Tanzania Relations,” July 15, 1966, FA/1/98 folder; and Soko to Kapwepwe, Report No. MO 6 for the period 1st to 15th September, 1966, FA/1/98 folder, NAZ.

⁷⁶ Cited in, Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin, The World Was Going Our Way: The KGB and the Battle for the Third World, (New York: Basic Books, 2005): 425.

wave of liberation movements during the 1940s and 1950s. What limited support they did provide earned little gratitude from nationalistic leaders like Kenneth Kaunda, who claimed that “the communist[s’] offer of help in the freedom struggle was so belated that it was like throwing a lifebelt to a swimmer in difficulty just as he drags himself to shore.”⁷⁷ Most African leaders who had achieved independence without Soviet assistance remained wary of Marxism, which they regarded as “a subtle and debilitating form of colonial domination which can carve up Africa as effectively as anything achieved by the Great Powers in the late nineteenth century.”⁷⁸ Even the few African leaders who received substantial aid from Moscow sought to keep the Soviets and their ideology at arm’s length.⁷⁹

This coolness was one reason why the Kremlin’s interest in sub-Saharan Africa waned in the 1960s. Another factor was the change in leadership that occurred in Moscow in 1964, when Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev was deposed in favor of Leonid Brezhnev. Whereas Khrushchev had believed that the Cold War would be won in the developing world, Brezhnev had little interest in the global periphery. Chastened by their lack of success in sub-Saharan Africa, many high-ranking officials in the Soviet Foreign Service had come to share this sentiment. As Moscow’s longtime Ambassador to Washington, Anatoli Dobrynin, later recalled of Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko, “The Third World was not his prime domain. He believed that events there could not decisively influence our fundamental relations with the United States.”⁸⁰ Given the attitudes of these leading Soviet statesmen, it should come as little surprise that Moscow’s interest in sub-Saharan Africa dissipated as the 1960s wore on. This sense of

⁷⁷ Kaunda, *A Humanist in Africa*, 118.

⁷⁸ Kaunda, *A Humanist in Africa*, 117-121.

⁷⁹ Transcript, Walt W. Rostow Oral History Interview I, March 21, 1969, conducted by Paige E. Mulhollan, LBJ Library Online: <http://www.lbjlib.utexas.edu/johnson/archives.hom/oralhistory.hom/rostow/rostow1.pdf>, (accessed October 9, 2010).

⁸⁰ Quoted in Andrew and Mitrokhin, *The World Was Going Our Way*, 10.

disenchantment was reinforced by the ouster of two of the few African leaders who had forged close ties with the Soviet Union: Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah and Mali's Modibo Keita. With the change in leadership in Moscow and their inability to make inroads in southern Africa, the Soviets grew apathetic about African developments, judging the continent as not yet ripe for revolution.⁸¹

Kenneth Kaunda's preference for American assistance was based on more than the poor state of Soviet-Zambian relations, however. At one level, the Zambian leader's desire to cooperate with the Americans reflected his preference for Western liberalism and individualism – as opposed to “the tough discipline that goes hand in glove with socialist civilization.”⁸² Indeed, the type of oppressive, one-party police states the Soviets had helped to construct in Ghana and Mali hardly fit with Kaunda's “humanist” vision. And for all of America's shortcomings, Kaunda believed that African Americans were making progress in their quest for racial equality.⁸³ But perhaps most importantly, Kaunda saw the United States as the only nation capable of affecting change in southern Africa.⁸⁴ For these reasons, the Zambian President pinned his hopes on the Americans once it became clear that the United Kingdom was in no position to break the Rhodesian impasse. “I have said time and again that the situation in Southern Africa is slowly but surely leading us to a...racial and ideological holocaust,” Kaunda wrote in a desperate appeal to his American counterpart, Lyndon Johnson. “[U]nless your

⁸¹ Jimmy Carter's National Security Adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski, referred to this period as one of “premature Soviet globalism.” Brzezinski to Carter, NSC Weekly Report #57, May 5, 1978, Zbigniew Brzezinski Donated Material, Subject File, Box 41, JECL. See also, Andrew and Mitrokhin, The World Was Going Our Way, 9.

⁸² N.M. Mubiaelelwa to Permanent Secretary (Ministry of Foreign Affairs), untitled, June 20, 1968, FA/1/279 folder, NAZ.

⁸³ The Zambians carefully monitored the progress of the Civil Rights Movement in the mid-1960s. See, for instance, S.C. Mbilishi to S.M. Kapwepwe, Report No. WA 20: For the Period 1st to 15th October, 1966, FA/1/193 folder, NAZ. For the reaction of African nations more generally, see, Memorandum, Carl Rowan to Lyndon Johnson, “African Reaction to Recent Civil Rights Developments,” July 21, 1964, Africa General Memos & Misc. [1 of 3], Vol. 2: 7/64-6/65 folder, NSF Country File, Box 76 [1 of 2], LBJL.

⁸⁴ Brief for the Zambian Delegation to the United States led by His Excellency Dr. K.D. Kaunda, April 18th to 21st 1975, UNIP 7/23/51 folder, United National Independence Party Archives (hereafter, UNIPA).

country, which is the leading country in the West, acts now to stop the rebellion in Rhodesia, a very serious catastrophe is going to befall Southern Africa. Enough has already been said. What is required now is action. We cannot expect it from Mr. Wilson as he appears to be helpless. It is our hope that your country, which believes in the equality of men and Human Rights, will take a lead in helping to bring about justice and peace to [sic] Southern Africa.”⁸⁵

Unfortunately for the people of southern Africa, Kaunda’s plea for assistance fell on deaf ears in Washington. As previous accounts of the search for Zimbabwean independence have emphasized, the Johnson Administration had no desire to become too deeply entangled in the Rhodesian imbroglio.⁸⁶ “In general we felt this was a British problem,” Secretary of State Dean Rusk later recounted. “[W]e tried to stay one or two steps behind Britain in it because we did not want to buy the Rhodesian problem as our own.”⁸⁷ Much to the chagrin of Zambian officials, numerous high-ranking Americans – including G. Mennen Williams, the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs whose pro-black sympathies had prompted one Rhodesian man to punch him in the face – seemed to share this attitude.⁸⁸ Indeed, the Zambian Ambassador to Washington complained that the Americans were doing everything in their power “to mislead the

⁸⁵ Letter, Kenneth Kaunda to Lyndon Johnson, January 16, 1968, FA/1/105 folder, NAZ.

⁸⁶ See, for instance, Tony Lake, The ‘Tar Baby’ Option: American Policy toward Southern Rhodesia, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976): 60; Thomas Noer, Cold War and Black Liberation: The United States and White Rule in Africa, 1948-1968, (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1985): 185-250; Terrence Lyons, “Keeping Africa off the Agenda,” in eds. Warren Cohen and Nancy Tucker, Lyndon Johnson Confronts the World: American Foreign Policy, 1963-1968, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994): 245-278; DeRoche, Black, White, and Chrome, 97-130; Thomas Borstelmann, The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001): 195-199; and James Hubbard, The United States and the End of British Colonial Rule in Africa, 1941-1968, (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2010): 350, 355-60.

⁸⁷ Transcript, Dean Rusk Oral History Interview IV, March 8, 1970, conducted by Paige E. Mulhollan, LBJ Library Online, <http://www.lbjlib.utexas.edu/johnson/archives.hom/oralhistory.hom/rusk/rusk04.pdf>, (accessed August 24, 2010).

⁸⁸ “Memorandum by Mennen Williams,” undated, Rhodesia Memos & Misc. [1 of 2], Vol. 1, NSF Country File, Box 97, LBJL. For more on Williams, see Thomas Noer, Soapy: A Biography of G. Mennen Williams, (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2005). For LBJ’s views, see, Recording of Telephone Conversation between Lyndon Johnson and Dwight Eisenhower, January 21, 1966, 1:15PM, Citation #9526, Recordings and Transcripts of Conversations and Meetings, LBJ Library, in which Johnson explained to the former President how the US “tried to keep away from it [the Rhodesian situation] as far as we could without completely sacrificing other interests.”

world in[to] believing that the Rhodesian crisis is a British problem and requires [only] a British solution.”⁸⁹ The perception that the Americans were looking to “duck” the Rhodesian issue was reinforced by the cool reception that Foreign Minister Simon Kapwepwe received when he met with US officials in December 1965.⁹⁰

There were many reasons for the Johnson Administration’s reluctance to become embroiled in the Rhodesian crisis in 1965. For one, that year saw the “Americanization” of the war in Vietnam. Given the importance that the war took on as American combat troops assumed responsibility for the defense of Saigon, developments in Southeast Asia soon came to consume the bulk of Lyndon Johnson’s attention. Moreover, scholars of American foreign relations are increasingly coming to appreciate that the President had more on his plate than just the war in Vietnam. Historian Thomas Schwartz has recently documented LBJ’s extensive dealings with Europe. From fending off French President Charles de Gaulle’s challenge to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, to promoting liberal international economic policies, to attempting to build bridges to Warsaw Pact members, Schwartz’s study is an important reminder that US diplomacy continued apace even as the Vietnam War heated up.⁹¹ As if all this were not enough, Johnson and his chief foreign policy advisers were also forced to grapple with crises in locations as disparate as the Middle East, the Dominican Republic, and the Congo.

In addition to these diplomatic preoccupations, LBJ also hoped to implement an expansive domestic agenda, constructing what he would come to call “the Great Society.” Johnson never seems to have doubted that an active federal government could (and should) solve all of America’s ills. “Some men want power simply to strut around the world and hear the tune

⁸⁹ S.C. Mbilishi to Minister of Foreign Affairs S.M. Kapwepwe, Report No. WA 19: For the Period 16th to 30th September, 1966, FA/1/193 folder, NAZ.

⁹⁰ DeRoche, “Non-Alignment on the Racial Frontier,” 233-234.

⁹¹ Thomas Schwartz, Lyndon Johnson and Europe: In the Shadow of Vietnam, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).

of ‘Hail to the Chief,’” the President once remarked. “Others want it simply to build prestige, to collect antiques, and to buy pretty things. Well, I wanted it to give things to people, all sorts of things to all sorts of people.”⁹² Put more succinctly, Johnson hoped to use the power of the federal government to ensure “abundance and liberty for all.”⁹³ From advancing civil rights for African Americans, to eradicating poverty, providing affordable health care, and liberalizing immigration laws, Johnson’s agenda was nothing if not ambitious.⁹⁴ Given these myriad foreign and domestic preoccupations, it is easy to see why Johnson and Rusk hoped to play second fiddle to America’s European allies when it came to African affairs.⁹⁵ LBJ agreed to go along with the UN-sponsored sanctions against Rhodesia, but that was the extent of his involvement in the search for Zimbabwean independence.

The Nixon Administration and Africa: “Accomplishing Nothing In Particular”

If Kenneth Kaunda grew frustrated by Lyndon Johnson’s unwillingness to assume a leading role in the search for Zimbabwean independence, he quickly became exasperated with Johnson’s successor, who was determined to play as passive a role in African affairs as possible. In a memorandum written to Richard Nixon, Marshall Wright (one of the National Security Council’s African experts) advised the President to assume an “essentially defensive” position when it came to dealing with African questions. According to Wright, the continent and its problems were not “central in any way to US foreign policy operations or interests. We deal with them because they are there, not because we hope to get great things from our participation.

⁹² Quoted in Bruce Schulman, Lyndon B. Johnson and American Liberalism: A Brief Biography with Documents, (Boston: St. Martin’s, 2007): 2.

⁹³ Lyndon B. Johnson, “Remarks at the University of Michigan,” May 22, 1964, in Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Lyndon Johnson: 1963-1964, vol. 1, 704-707.

⁹⁴ For an overview of Johnson’s “Great Society,” see Schulman, LBJ and American Liberalism, 87-132.

⁹⁵ For a more detailed account of the Johnson Administration’s limited response to UDI, see, DeRoche, Black, White, and Chrome, 97-130.

We aim at minimizing the attention and resources which must be addressed to them...Our policy is therefore directed at damage limiting, rather than at accomplishing anything in particular.”

“That being true,” Wright opined, “there is (or at least, I can find) no broad and positive conceptual base which can credibly be put forward to explain why we do what we do in Africa...The task then is to put the best possible face upon essentially negative roles, and to try to make them sound more positive and more integrated than they actually are.”⁹⁶ Coming from one of the National Security Council’s African specialists, this memorandum did not bode well for US-African relations in the years ahead.

For his part, the new President seemed inclined to heed such advice. Shortly after receiving Wright’s memorandum, Nixon informed a trio of his top aides that he did not want any papers relating to sub-Saharan Africa to cross his desk “unless they require [a] Presidential decision and can only be handled at the Presidential level.” Nor was his chief foreign policy mandarin, Henry Kissinger, to waste his time dealing with Africa. “[H]e should farm that subject out to a member of his staff but he, himself, should not bother with it,” Nixon stipulated. “I want him to concentrate just as hard as I will be concentrating on the...major countries and major problem areas.”⁹⁷ Thus, despite the change in the administrations, African affairs seemed destined to remain a distant afterthought in the American foreign policymaking process as the disco decade dawned.

African diplomats quickly picked up on the Administration’s lack of interest in their continent and its problems. When the President had failed to spell out a coherent African policy after several months in office, a group of senior African ambassadors took it upon themselves to

⁹⁶ Quoted in Memorandum, Marshall Wright to Henry Kissinger, “Revised Drafts of African and UN Papers for Annual Report,” January 10, 1970, FRUS, 1969-1972, vol. 1.

⁹⁷ Quoted in Memorandum, Richard Nixon to Bob Haldeman, John Ehrlichman, and Henry Kissinger, March 2, 1970, FRUS, 1969-1976, vol. E-5, Part 1.

gain a clearer idea of what they could expect from the new Administration. “In an effort to pin down or rather to entice President Nixon, out of sheer embarrassment perhaps, to make some pronouncement on Africa,” they invited the President to be the guest of honor at a celebration of Africa Day. According to the Zambian Chargé d’Affaires, the diplomats’ hearts sank when “Tricky Dick” offered nothing but vague, high-sounding platitudes. Nixon’s vapid remarks, combined with the fact that he did not know the name of even the longest-tenured member of the African diplomatic corps, left his hosts with the unmistakable impression that the new President “really did not care to know more about African diplomats” or the nations they represented.⁹⁸

This negative impression did not improve over time. To the contrary, the more Zambian officials learned about the Nixon Administration’s African policy, the less they liked it. After studying the Administration’s first annual foreign policy report (a 119-page document entitled “United States Foreign Policy in the 1970s”) the Zambian Ambassador to Washington glumly concluded that the report, which focused primarily on Europe and Southeast Asia, represented little more than “an on the fence policy in Africa.” Based on its contents, he predicted that the United States would seek to play “a largely insignificant role” in Africa’s political and economic development in the coming years.⁹⁹ Thus, less than one year after taking the oath of office, Richard Nixon had made it abundantly clear that his Administration had no intention of playing a leading role in the search for Zimbabwean independence – or, indeed, in any African problem.

Adding insult to indifference, Richard Nixon went out of his way to avoid meeting with African leaders. One of the more notorious instances of this behavior occurred in October 1970, when he ducked out of a meeting with Kenneth Kaunda. The Zambian president, who was slated to address the UN General Assembly in New York, hoped to meet with his American counterpart

⁹⁸ Telegram, Zambian Chargé d’Affaires in Washington to E.H.K. Mudenda, May 28, 1969, FA/1/193 folder, NAZ.

⁹⁹ Telegram, Zambian Embassy Washington to Zambian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, February 20, 1970, FA/1/350 folder, NAZ.

while he was in the United States. Given that Kaunda was also serving as the Chairman of the Organization for African Unity and the head of the Non-Aligned Movement at the time, Zambian officials expected that the two statesmen would have much to discuss. However, due to “scheduling conflicts,” the summit never occurred. Kaunda and his aides were incensed by the fact that Nixon and his staff had seemingly “made mountains out of molehills” in order to avoid meeting with them.¹⁰⁰ This slight was seen as yet another indication of Nixon’s “apparent apathy” toward southern Africa and did considerable harm to the US-Zambian relationship.¹⁰¹ Given all this, it is not difficult to see why Zambian officials would later describe Richard Nixon’s tenure in the Oval Office as an “era of arrogance.”¹⁰²

Critics often attribute the Nixon Administration’s disregard for sub-Saharan Africa to the less-than-enlightened racial views of the President and some of his chief advisers. Historian Thomas Borstelmann has claimed that Richard Nixon, who was born in 1913, demonstrated “the casual racism common among white Americans of his generation.”¹⁰³ In the words of historian Dean Kotlowski, Nixon “could sound as bigoted as any southern segregationist.”¹⁰⁴ Historian Phil Muehlenbeck has gone even further, describing America’s 37th President as “clearly racist at heart.”¹⁰⁵ Others, including former New York Times journalist Seymour Hersh and former National Security Council staff member Roger Morris, have leveled similar accusations.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁰ Further Brief for Visit of Mr. David Newsom, Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, visiting Livingstone on his way to Malawi, 21 November 1970, FA/1/350 folder, NAZ.

¹⁰¹ Record of a Meeting held at State House on 10 January 1972 between his Excellency the President and Ambassador Bush, FA/1/387 folder, NAZ.

¹⁰² Brief for the Zambian Delegation to the United States led by His Excellency Dr. K.D. Kaunda, April 18th to 21st 1975, UNIP 7/23/51 folder, UNIPA.

¹⁰³ Borstelmann, The Cold War and the Color Line, 226.

¹⁰⁴ Dean Kotlowski, Nixon’s Civil Rights: Politics, Principle, and Policy, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001): 2.

¹⁰⁵ Phil Muehlenbeck, “Betting on the Dark Horses: John F. Kennedy’s Courting of African Nationalist Leaders,” PhD Dissertation, George Washington University, 2007: 30.

¹⁰⁶ Seymour Hersh, The Price of Power: Kissinger in the Nixon White House, (New York: Summit Books, 1983): 110-111 and Roger Morris, Uncertain Greatness: Henry Kissinger and American Foreign Policy, (New York: Harper and Row, 1977): 107-132.

While the degree to which Richard Nixon's racial prejudice affected his diplomacy can be debated, the existence of such a bias cannot. Indeed, it is not difficult to unearth examples of the low esteem in which Nixon held Africans and African Americans. For instance, during the course of a telephone conversation with UN Representative Daniel Patrick Moynihan, the President confided that black Africans were not cut out for self-governance. "The Latins [Latin Americans] do it in a miserable way, but they do it," Nixon opined. "But the Africans just can't run things."¹⁰⁷ As this conversation suggests, Nixon's view of sub-Saharan Africa had not changed much since his days as Vice President, when, due to his belief that some Africans had "been out of the trees for only about fifty years," the Vice President had cautioned the National Security Council that "it would be naïve of the US to hope that Africa will be democratic" as it emerged from colonial rule.¹⁰⁸ Nor did Nixon hold African Americans in particularly high regard – although he did suggest to Moynihan that "they can beat the hell out of us" in fields like music, poetry, dance, and athletics. In a reference to the reigning World Series champions, Nixon queried, "[W]hat would [the] Pittsburgh [Pirates] be without...heh, heh...[a] hell of a lot of blacks!"¹⁰⁹ Such remarks, in addition to his frequent quips about "niggers," "jigaboos," and "jungle bunnies," seem to substantiate the charges of racial prejudice leveled by critics like Borstelmann, Muehlenbeck, Hersh, and Morris.¹¹⁰

Such contemptuous attitudes were not confined to the Oval Office. National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger was a German-Jewish émigré whose family had fled the Nazi regime in

¹⁰⁷ Conversation between the President and Daniel Patrick Moynihan, October 7, 1971, Conversation No. 10-116, cassette nos. 1049 and 1050, White House Telephone.

¹⁰⁸ Muehlenbeck, "Betting on the Dark Horses," 23, 25.

¹⁰⁹ Conversation between the President and Daniel Patrick Moynihan, October 7, 1971, Conversation No. 10-116, cassette nos. 1049 and 1050, White House Telephone.

¹¹⁰ Hersh, The Price of Power, 110.

the 1930s, but this experience did not prevent him from indulging in racially-offensive humor.¹¹¹ “I wonder what the dining room is going to smell like,” the National Security Adviser once quipped on his way to a White House dinner for African Ambassadors.¹¹² Given the “locker-room mentality” that Nixon and Kissinger allowed to develop, it is hardly shocking that Deputy National Security Adviser Alexander Haig drummed his fists on the table as if playing a tom-tom whenever African issues were discussed or that some members of the National Security Council routinely made derogatory racial comments at staff meetings. According to its detractors, the Nixon Administration’s attitude toward sub-Saharan Africa is epitomized by the gaffe of White House Press Secretary Ronald Zeigler, who began one briefing by informing the media that the President had asked him to read a statement concerning the “Niggerian [sic]” civil war.¹¹³

While racial prejudice was not uncommon in the Nixon White House, the question remains: how much did these attitudes influence the direction of American diplomacy? The answer, it seems, is relatively little. Nixon and Kissinger came to office determined to introduce “conceptual coherence” to the American foreign policymaking process. No longer would the United States “pay any price,” “bear any burden,” or “oppose any foe.”¹¹⁴ Under Nixon and Kissinger, the country would return to the type of containment envisioned by George Kennan. The United States would defend those interests considered truly vital to its national security, while peripheral interests would receive far less attention. This policy shift was exemplified by the Nixon Doctrine (which stipulated that the US would honor its existing treaty obligations by providing allies with money and material rather than troops) and the “Vietnamization” of the war

¹¹¹ For more on the influence of Kissinger’s German-Jewish origins, see Jeremi Suri, Henry Kissinger and the American Century, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007).

¹¹² Hersh, Price of Power, 110.

¹¹³ Quoted in Hersh, The Price of Power, 110. For other recent works critical of Kissinger’s racial attitudes, see Hanes Walton Jr., Robert Louis Stevenson, and James Bernard Rosser Sr., eds., The African Foreign Policy of Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, (New York: Lexington Books, 2007) and Morris, Uncertain Greatness, 107-132

¹¹⁴ Quoted in John F. Kennedy, “Inaugural Address,” January 20, 1961, in Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: John F. Kennedy: 1961, 1-2.

in Southeast Asia.¹¹⁵ Given Nixon and Kissinger's appreciation of the limits of American power – especially at a time when many Americans, from anti-war protesters to members of the Washington establishment, were clamoring for a period of retrenchment – assuming greater responsibilities in southern Africa, where American interests were seen as “important but not vital,” would have been inconsonant with the Administration's larger foreign policy aims.¹¹⁶ Viewed in this light, Nixon and Kissinger's disinclination to become embroiled in southern Africa seems to have been fuelled less by racial prejudice than by a desire to ease America's imperial overstretch.

Further fuelling their disinterest in black Africa was the fact that Nixon and Kissinger viewed the continent as one of the few regions where communism was not on the march. Despite their desire to scale back America's global commitments, the President and his National Security Adviser proved just as incapable of resisting the urge to squelch communist movements in the developing world as their predecessors.¹¹⁷ Thus, Nixon may not have held black Africans in high regard, but Cold War considerations had caused him to take notice of the continent during the late 1950s. “Africa is the most rapidly changing area in the world today,” the then-Vice President had warned Dwight Eisenhower upon returning from an eight-nation tour of the continent in 1957. “The course of its development, as its people continue to emerge from a colonial status and assume [the] responsibilities of independence and self-government, could well prove to be the decisive factor in the conflict between [the] forces of freedom and [those of] international Communism.” In order to prevent the communists from gaining the upper hand,

¹¹⁵ John Lewis Gaddis, Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of Postwar American National Security Policy, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982): 272-306.

¹¹⁶ Quoted in Mohamed El-Khawas and Barry Cohen eds., The Kissinger Study of Southern Africa: National Security Study Memorandum 39, (Westport, CT: Lawrence Hill & Company, 1976): 81.

¹¹⁷ Nixon and Kissinger's policies toward Vietnam, Chile, and Angola are illustrative of their intolerance of third world communist movements.

Nixon advocated improving US-African relations.¹¹⁸ Henry Kissinger's attitudes closely mirrored those of his boss in this regard. Thus, if anything could have forced Nixon and Kissinger to take an interest in sub-Saharan Africa, it would have been the possibility of the region falling into Moscow (or Peking's) orbit. However, policymakers in Washington felt confident that neither the Soviets nor the Chinese were making significant headway in Africa; nor were they were likely to do so in the near future.¹¹⁹ Operating under the premise that most of Africa was safely in the Western camp, Nixon and Kissinger felt free to ignore the continent's problems and focus their energy on such tasks as ending the war in Vietnam, promoting détente with the Soviet Union, and improving Sino-American relations.

An additional reason for the Nixon Administration's disregard for sub-Saharan Africa may have been that it felt little domestic pressure to adopt a more progressive African policy. Many African Americans had felt tremendous pride and excitement as the "wind of change" swept across the African continent in the late 1950s and early 1960s. So had the black press, which lauded the appearance of black statesmen such as Kwame Nkrumah on the world stage.¹²⁰ In many cases, however, this euphoria had been undermined by the corruption, ineptitude, and authoritarianism which seemed to plague Africa's post-independence regimes.¹²¹ In any event,

¹¹⁸ Cited in Muehlenbeck, "Betting on the Dark Horses," 28.

¹¹⁹ See, for instance, CIA Memorandum, "The Soviets and Black Africa: New Approaches and the African Response," March 13, 1969; CIA Special Report, "Communist China's Presence in Africa," June 20, 1969; and Memorandum of Conversation, "US/UK Talks on Africa: Soviet Activities and Influence in Africa," March 6-7, 1972, FRUS, 1969-1976, vol. E-5, Part 1.

¹²⁰ The black press wrote extensively about the coming of African independence during these days. See, for instance, the following articles in the Chicago Defender: "Britain, France on Decline as Empires," March 17, 1956; "Balance of Power May Rest with New African Nations," July 23, 1956; "Dawn of Independence," August 11, 1956; "Ghana Independence, Africa's Biggest Event," February 16, 1957; "Brotherhood and Independence," January 4, 1958; "Meet Sudan's Able Prime Minister," March 8, 1958; "West Africa Wants Freedom," March 17, 1958; "Unity, Glory Are The Vital Goals," June 7, 1958; "They Call Him Black Nasser," September 23, 1958; "Africa and a New Leadership," October 6, 1958; "Our Opinions: The African Unification Movement," December 13, 1958; "Emphasis Nigeria: Spotlight on Africa's New Nations in the Sun," September 26, 1960.

¹²¹ Martin Staniland, American Intellectuals and African Nationals, 1950-1970, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1991):178-213 and James Meriwether, Proudly We Can Be Africans: Black Americans and Africa, 1935-1961, (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2002): 208-245.

the attitudes of African Americans meant relatively little to Richard Nixon, whose “southern strategy” of courting aggrieved white voters ensured that he did not feel beholden to African Americans for his narrow 1968 electoral victory. “If I am president, I am not going to owe anything to the black community,” Nixon told an aide during the campaign.¹²² Once in office, most historians agree that Nixon did his best to honor this vow.¹²³

The Nixon Administration’s African policy may have been shaped more by apathy than animus, but it nevertheless worked to the detriment of those seeking to achieve majority rule in Rhodesia. Disinterest devolved into neglect, and in the absence of any high-level leadership, a small but determined group of Congressmen managed to overturn the ban on Rhodesian chrome adopted by the Johnson Administration.¹²⁴ The 1971 Byrd Amendment (so named because Virginia Senator Harry Byrd Junior had been its strongest advocate) represented a notable victory for the Rhodesian Front. Prior to UDI, the United States had been the foremost consumer of Rhodesian chrome, purchasing nearly half of the colony’s annual output. While leaders in Salisbury were eager to resume this lucrative trade, they secretly acknowledged that the amendment’s symbolic value was of even greater importance than its economic impact.¹²⁵ Indeed, Ian Smith’s propagandists had long sought to portray Rhodesia as an anti-communist bulwark in Africa. The Byrd Amendment enabled many Rhodesians were to delude themselves into thinking that policymakers in Washington had finally come to appreciate their contribution

¹²² Quoted in Borstelmann, Cold War and the Color Line, 230.

¹²³ See, for instance, Kotlowski, Nixon’s Civil Rights, 1, footnote 3.

¹²⁴ Chrome is a metallic ore used in the production of jet engines, nuclear reactors, and stainless steel. Along with tobacco and sugar, it was one of the staples of the Rhodesian economy prior to UDI. For more on its uses, see DeRoche, Black, White, and Chrome, 144-145.

¹²⁵ Memorandum, Harold Hawkins to Brand Fourie, “Chrome,” April 26, 1976, BTS 1/156/1/2, vol. 9, South African Department of International Relations and Cooperation Archives (hereafter, SAA). This outcome should not have caught US officials off guard. As early as 1969, one NSC staffer had predicted that Smith and his followers would play such a decision “for all it’s worth.” Memorandum, Roger Morris to Henry Kissinger, “Chrome Imports and Rhodesian Sanctions,” May 5, 1969, FRUS, 1969-1976, vol. 28, Southern Africa.

to the Cold War. And if the Americans now recognized Rhodesia's strategic significance, this logic ran, surely they would not allow the colony to fall into the hands of communist-inspired agitators like Joshua Nkomo and Robert Mugabe.¹²⁶ Thus, by indirectly providing Ian Smith's regime with additional funds to use in its counterinsurgency efforts and by giving Smith and his followers hope that the United States would not allow the Rhodesian Front to be driven from power, the Byrd Amendment prolonged the transition to majority rule in Rhodesia. For this reason, those who sympathized with the Zimbabwean cause decried the act. "The action of the USA to resume chrome imports from Rhodesia under the present circumstances only goes to show that she cares more for metals than for justice and peace in southern Africa," lamented one leading Zimbabwean nationalist.¹²⁷ Zambian officials were forced to agree with this assessment, seeing in the Nixon Administration's unwillingness to stand firm for principles yet another indication of America's "impotence on moral issues."¹²⁸

In spite of the Nixon Administration's obvious lack of interest in sub-Saharan Africa (as well as the less-than-enlightened racial views of some of its leading figures), Kenneth Kaunda continued trying to reach out to the President. He even wrote his beleaguered counterpart in the middle of the Watergate scandal, expressing his hope that Nixon's political fortunes would quickly rebound.¹²⁹ While it may seem strange that Kaunda would send such a message to a man who had done his best to ignore Africa and its problems, the Zambian leader was probably seeking to curry favor with his American counterpart in the hope that a grateful Richard Nixon would devote more time and energy to resolving southern Africa's problems once the furor over

¹²⁶ For more on the importance of anti-communism in Rhodesia, see Donal Lowry, "The Impact of Anti-Communism on White Rhodesian Political Culture, ca. 1920-1980," *Cold War History*, vol. 7, no. 2 (May 2007): 169-194.

¹²⁷ Quoted in DeRoche, *Black, White, and Chrome*, 177.

¹²⁸ Unknown to Unknown, "United States Policy on Zambia," undated, FA/1/105 folder, NAZ.

¹²⁹ Letter, Kenneth Kaunda to Richard Nixon, September 20, 1973, UNIP 7/23/40 folder, UNIPA.

Watergate had subsided. For, in spite of America's persistent failure to assume a leading role in the search for Zimbabwean independence, Kaunda remained convinced that the United States was uniquely positioned and qualified to do so. Having lost faith in Britain's ability to facilitate Rhodesia's transition to majority rule, and doubtful of the Soviets' ability to achieve this aim, Kaunda had few options but to continue trying to prod American officials into action. The collapse of the Zambian economy and the election of a Conservative government in the United Kingdom that was far less sympathetic to the Zimbabwean cause than its Labour predecessor had been made American assistance more vital than ever by the early 1970s.

Conclusion

Despite the Zambians' best efforts, the international community marked the 10th anniversary of UDI in November 1975. As this chapter has sought to demonstrate, Kenneth Kaunda and his Cabinet colleagues tried to resist the policies of the Rhodesian Front, but in the end, they were only partially successful. The Zambians did manage to stave off financial collapse and avert a military invasion. Indeed, by 1975, Zambia had reduced its economic dependence on Rhodesia by developing its own coalfields, constructing an oil pipeline that ran from Lusaka to the Tanzanian capital of Dar es Salaam, and completing the TANZARA railroad, which provided Zambia with an alternate rail route to the sea. Less concretely but perhaps no less significantly, the Zambians helped to keep the Rhodesian crisis on the international agenda at a time when the Western powers would have preferred for it to fade into the background. These actions represent important successes, and their significance should not be discounted when evaluating the Zambian response to UDI.

Nevertheless, the Zambians failed to bring the Rhodesian crisis to an end. Indeed, their aim of liberating Rhodesia's black majority seemed no closer to being realized in 1975 than it

had been a decade earlier. To the contrary, the Rhodesian Front had intensified its segregationist laws during this period, leaving the colony's indigenous black population worse off than it had been before UDI. Nor could Zambians claim to be significantly more secure from Rhodesian reprisals in 1975 than they had been in 1965. Their country was no longer completely dependent on Rhodesia for its trade and energy needs, but it was hardly on sound economic footing.¹³⁰ Zambia remained a "one-commodity economy" and a drastic decrease in world copper prices left the fledgling nation in dire financial straits by the mid-1970s.¹³¹ Thus, although Zambia was theoretically participating in the UN-sponsored sanctions campaign against Rhodesia, the rebellious colony remained one of Zambia's most important trading partners well into the 1970s.¹³² The outlook was similarly bleak on the military front, where the Rhodesian security forces remained capable of invading their northern neighbor with ease.

Developments on the international front were no more promising. As this chapter has attempted to demonstrate, Kenneth Kaunda's efforts to solicit international assistance in the search for Zimbabwean independence failed to bear fruit during the first decade of the Rhodesian crisis. Kaunda's faith in the British Labour Party seems particularly misplaced. Due to the weakened state of the British economy, the "kith and kin" ties between many Britons and Rhodesians, and the United Kingdom's desire to shed existing commitments, it is difficult to imagine any circumstances under which Harold Wilson would have considering using military force in Rhodesia. Nor were Kaunda's attempts to convince the United States to assume a leadership role in the search for Zimbabwean independence any more successful. Some US

¹³⁰ CIA Special Intelligence Memorandum, "Troubles Ahead for Zambia," June 18, 1968, Zambia Memos & Misc., Vol. 1: 8/64-9/68 folder, NSF Country Files, Box 102, LBJL.

¹³¹ Quoted in "Zambia: Economic and Military Needs and US Assistance," Zambia, 1/77-12/78 folder, National Security Affairs (24) Staff Material – North/South, Box 105, JECL.

¹³² "[T]here has always been a considerable amount of traffic across the Rhodesia-Zambia border," noted one US official in 1978. "Everybody pretends that it doesn't exist." Memorandum, Frank Wisner to Zbigniew Brzezinski, "Fertilizer Flights to Zambia," July 27, 1978, Zambia, 1/77-12/78 folder, National Security Affairs (24), Staff Material, North/South, Box 118, JECL.

officials empathized with the Zambians' plight, but none were willing to do anything more than follow Britain's lead. Preoccupied with domestic affairs and the war in Vietnam, policymakers in Washington had little desire to become embroiled in what they regarded as a British affair.

Despite their lack of success, the Zambians' diplomatic maneuverings should not be dismissed as quixotic or naïve. Their country was in a weak position, and there was little else that Zambian officials could have done to resolve the Rhodesian crisis. Zambia was in no position to dictate terms to the well-armed settlers south of the Zambezi River –especially since they seemed to have the solid backing of the South African military. Nor, for all its bluster, was the OAU. Overall, then, Zambia's response to the Rhodesian crisis should be seen as a reminder of the relative weakness of many nations in the developing world during the Cold War era.

Despite Kaunda's desire to facilitate Rhodesia's transition to majority rule, he was unable to affect any real change in the colony. Nor was he able to persuade the Western powers to support the Zimbabwean cause until a massive Soviet and Cuban intervention in southern Africa transformed the region into a Cold War arena and convinced policymakers in Washington and London that it was in their interest to support the Zimbabweans' struggle for independence before the Soviets and Cubans solidified their position in southern Africa.

Chapter Two

The Limits of Realism: Henry Kissinger and the Rhodesian Crisis, 1976

On April 27, 1976, Zambian President Kenneth Kaunda struggled to control his emotions as an American envoy addressed a gathering of notable Zambians. “Of all the challenges before us, of all the purposes we have in common, racial justice is one of the most basic,” the speaker declared in a gravelly voice. “We know from our own experience that the goal of racial justice is both compelling and achievable. Our support for this principle in southern Africa is not simply a matter of foreign policy, but an imperative of our own moral heritage.” The speaker went on to align the United States with the cause of majority rule in southern Africa – although he focused primarily on the situation in Rhodesia. He outlined a ten-point program for implementing majority rule in the colony and pledged that under no circumstances would the United States assist Rhodesia’s white-supremacist government in the *Chimurenga* (the African name for the bush war that had been simmering in Rhodesia since 1972). “The Salisbury regime must understand that it cannot expect [American] support...at any stage of its conflict with African states or African liberation movements. On the contrary, it will face our unrelenting opposition until a negotiated settlement is achieved.” The speaker concluded by warning that unless the South African government began to dismantle apartheid, it would soon face similar opprobrium.¹³³

Kaunda, who had long urged the United States to play a more active role in promoting majority rule in southern Africa, wept openly during the address and, in what must have come as something of a shock to those present, embraced the speaker at the conclusion of his remarks.

¹³³ Henry Kissinger, “United States Policy in Southern Africa,” April 27, 1976, Department of State Bulletin, vol. LXXIV, issue, 1919, 672-679.

While there is no report of anyone else in the audience reacting in such a visible manner, Kaunda was probably not the only Zambian to be taken aback by Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's message. Indeed, there was nothing in the Secretary's past handling of US-African relations to suggest that he would emerge as a champion of black majority rule in 1976. To the contrary, critics had long decried Kissinger's approach to US-African relations. At best, it could be described as one of "benign neglect." At worst, it represented what historian Andrew DeRoche has termed "jackassery."¹³⁴

This chapter will seek to explain how it was that the "Doctor of Diplomacy" came to spend his final year in office shuttling across sub-Saharan Africa in an effort to mediate the Rhodesian crisis.¹³⁵ It will argue that Cold War considerations drew Kissinger's attention to the region in 1975, when (in the aftermath of America's withdrawal from Vietnam) southern Africa became the central sparring ground for the United States, the Soviet Union, and their allies. Fearful that the Soviets and Cubans would exploit the Rhodesian bush war to increase their influence in southern Africa, Kissinger saw promoting a quick transition to majority rule in Rhodesia as the best way to ensure that the communist powers remained minor players in Africa's mineral-rich southern tip. This chapter will also take issue with those scholars who have given Henry Kissinger's African diplomacy short shrift.¹³⁶ For although he failed to broker a deal between the Rhodesians and the Zimbabwean nationalists, Kissinger's diplomacy helped

¹³⁴ I would like to thank Professor DeRoche for allowing me to borrow this term. For critiques of Kissinger's handling of US-African relations, see Anthony Lake, The 'tar baby option: American Policy toward Southern Rhodesia, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976); Roger Morris, Uncertain Greatness: Henry Kissinger and American Foreign Policy, (New York: Harper and Row, 1977); Gerald Horne, From the Barrel of a Gun: The United States and the War against Zimbabwe, 1965-1980, (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Seymour Hersh, The Price of Power: Kissinger in the Nixon White House, (New York: Summit Books, 1983), and Donald Easum oral history, http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?mfdip:2:/temp/~ammem_QuFo

¹³⁵ Robert Schulzinger, Henry Kissinger: Doctor of Diplomacy, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989).

¹³⁶ Few scholars of Kissinger's career even mention his African diplomacy. This includes Robert Schulzinger's classic study as well as newer works by Jussi Hanhimaki and Jeremi Suri. Schulzinger, Doctor of Diplomacy; Hanhimaki, The Flawed Architect: Henry Kissinger and American Foreign Policy, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004); and Suri, Henry Kissinger and the American Century, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007).

to reassure African leaders such as Kenneth Kaunda that majority rule in Rhodesia could still be achieved by the ballot rather than by the bullet. By doing so, Kissinger helped to forestall a major racial war and left the door open for the future statesmen to obtain a Rhodesian settlement.

Explaining Kaunda's Tears

Kenneth Kaunda's emotional reaction to Kissinger's Lusaka Address almost certainly reflected his relief that the United States had finally decided to assume a leadership role in the search for Zimbabwean independence. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, Zambian officials had been trying – without success – to convince the Americans to bring their influence to bear in southern Africa since the mid-1960s. From Kaunda's perspective, a negotiated settlement was more vital than ever in 1976. His decision to apply sanctions against Rhodesia (formerly his country's most important trading partner) had seriously damaged the Zambian economy. Without access to the Rhodesian railway, Zambia was having difficulty getting its copper exports to market, thereby depriving the country of its major source of foreign currency.¹³⁷ Many Zambians who had been employed in the mining industry found themselves without jobs, and a major increase in urban crime had accompanied this rise in unemployment. As agricultural production and manufacturing output were also lagging, foodstuffs and other basic commodities were in short supply throughout the country. Not surprisingly, this situation was doing little to endear Kaunda to his fellow Zambians.¹³⁸

¹³⁷ Although the TANZARA railroad linking Lusaka to the Tanzanian port of Dar es Salaam partially offset these losses, Dar was fairly inefficient. An estimated 70,000 tons of Zambian copper sat in Tanzanian warehouses waiting to be shipped out in February 1976. The Tanzanians charged \$210,000 a day to store this ore. This inefficiency was a source of lingering friction between the countries throughout the 1970s. Telegram, Henry Kissinger to US Embassy Lusaka, "Zambian Economic Officials Meet with Asst. Sec. Schaufele," February 13, 1976, <http://aad.archives.gov/aad/createpdf?rid=333245&dt=2082&dl=1345>

¹³⁸ Telegram, Jean Wilkowski to Henry Kissinger, "Embassy Comments on Declaration of State of Emergency in Zambia," January 29, 1976, <http://aad.archives.gov/aad/createpdf?rid=59666&dt=2082&dl=1345> and Telegram,

In addition to his domestic difficulties, Kaunda feared that the *Chimurenga* was about to ignite a region-wide race war. The Rhodesian security forces had contained the insurgency with relative ease during its early years, but the tide was beginning to turn by 1976.¹³⁹ While it may seem strange, Kaunda viewed the guerillas' success with a deepening sense of foreboding. This apparent incongruity can be explained by that fact that Kaunda, like many international commentators, believed that if the guerrillas gained the upper hand in the *Chimurenga*, South Africa's apartheid government would intervene on the Rhodesians' behalf. In this scenario, many pundits predicted that the South Africans would not only seek to crush the guerrillas but would also punish the so-called "Frontline States" (Zambia, Tanzania, Mozambique, and Botswana) for aiding and abetting them.¹⁴⁰ From Kaunda's perspective, therefore, Henry Kissinger's Lusaka Address had come not a moment too soon.

Kaunda's tears probably also revealed a sense of surprise that it was Henry Kissinger who had answered his calls for assistance.¹⁴¹ As noted in the previous chapter, Kissinger had

Wilkowski to Kissinger, "1976 Budget Presentation," February 4, 1976, <http://aad.archives.gov/aad/createpdf?rid=14178&dt=2082&dl=1345>

¹³⁹ One reason for the guerrillas' reversal of fortunes was the improved training they were receiving in the "Frontline States" of Tanzania, Zambia, and Mozambique. Another factor was the increasingly-sophisticated weaponry that the Soviet Union and China were providing. The guerrillas also benefitted from the advent of a friendly regime in Mozambique, which enabled them to infiltrate into Rhodesia much more easily than had previously been possible. According to military historian Barbara Cole, having to cross through the Zambezi Valley was the greatest obstacle the guerrillas faced in the early years of the *Chimurenga*. The region was extremely hot, filled with disease, and possessed little drinkable water. Moreover, it was sparsely populated, which meant that the guerrillas had no one to provide them with food, shelter, or intelligence. And in order to infiltrate into Rhodesia, the guerrillas had to cross the Zambezi River or Lake Kariba. All told, it took approximately 30 days to make the journey. Cole, *The Elite: The Story of the Rhodesian Special Air Service*, (Amanzimtoti, South Africa: Three Knights, 1984): 36-37. For more on the assistance offered by the Frontline States and the Soviet Union, see Martin Meredith, *The Past is Another Country: Rhodesia UDI to Zimbabwe*, (London: Pan Books, 1980): 286 and Vladimir Shubin, *The Hot "Cold War": The USSR in Southern Africa*, (London: Pluto Press, 2008): 151-175.

¹⁴⁰ *New York Times*, "Zambian Leader Foresees a Bloodbath in the Rhodesia," February 16, 1976; *Time*, "Make Peace or Face War," March 8, 1976; and *Time*, "The Countdown for Rhodesia" March 15, 1976.

¹⁴¹ Or perhaps not. Although a briefing for Kaunda's April 1975 state visit to Washington asserted that the Americans' African policy remained "unclear," it acknowledged that a rapprochement had occurred since Richard Nixon's resignation, culminating in "an unprecedented degree of warmth" between the two governments. Moreover, Zambian officials were impressed by Kissinger's diplomatic achievements. "The United States has played remarkable roles in endeavoring to defuse crises and conflicts in the Middle East and other parts of the world. The atrocious war in Vietnam, albeit of their own marking initially, was brought to an end through the

displayed little interest in southern Africa during Richard Nixon's presidency.¹⁴² To the extent that he had formulated an African policy at all during the Nixon years, he had advocated forging closer ties with the region's white minority regimes on the assumption that "[t]he whites are here to stay and that constructive change can only come through them."¹⁴³ Some critics have chalked this attitude up to racism, asserting that Kissinger – like many American policymakers – regarded black Africans as inferior to their white counterparts.¹⁴⁴ There is probably a grain of truth to these accusations as Kissinger freely admitted that he felt a "basic sympathy" toward the white regimes of southern Africa.¹⁴⁵ He was impressed by the modern skyscrapers, bustling highways, and conspicuous consumer culture of cities like Johannesburg and Salisbury and made little secret of his belief that both races would see their standard of living deteriorate under majority rule.¹⁴⁶

Nevertheless, claims of Kissinger's racialism should not be overstated. His attitude toward sub-Saharan Africa was one of apathy rather than overt racism. He was pessimistic about

efforts and initiatives of none other than the United States; the precarious and very dangerous situation in the Middle-East has been made to abate, thanks again to the instrumental role played in this conflict by the United States." According to the US Ambassador to Lusaka, Kaunda and his colleagues were hopeful that the Secretary would be able to work "his special magic" in southern Africa. Brief for the Zambian Delegation to the United States led by His Excellency Dr. K.D. Kaunda, April 18th to 21st 1975, UNIP 7/23/51, United National Independence Party Archives (hereafter UNIPA) and Telegram, Jean Wilkowski to Henry Kissinger, "Zambian Mood on Eve of Visit," April 25, 1976, <http://aad.archives.gov/aad/createpdf?rid=65973&dt=2082&dl=1345>

¹⁴² By his own admission, Kissinger had regarded the region as little more than an afterthought throughout most of his time in office. Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1999): 903-904.

¹⁴³ This was the underlying premise of Option 2 of National Security Study Memorandum (NSSM) 39. In a decision that has been widely criticized, Nixon and Kissinger chose to pursue this option and develop closer ties with the region's minority regimes. See, Mohamed El-Khawas and Barry Cohen eds., *The Kissinger Study of Southern Africa: National Security Study Memorandum 39*, (Westport, CT: Lawrence Hill & Company, 1976): 105.

¹⁴⁴ Hersh, *The Price of Power*, 110-111 and Morris, *Uncertain Greatness*, 107-132.

¹⁴⁵ Quoted in Minutes of a National Security Council Meeting, May 11, 1976, NSC Meeting May 11 1976 folder, Box 2, National Security Adviser NSC Meeting Files, Gerald Ford Presidential Library (hereafter, GRFL). See also, Memorandum of Conversation, "Southern Africa," January 19, 1977 in *Foreign Relations of the United States* (hereafter, *FRUS*), 1969-1976, vol. 28.

¹⁴⁶ Memorandum of a Conversation between an American and a Rhodesian delegation, September 19, 1976, Digital National Security Archive (hereafter, DNSA). For examples of how many white Americans viewed apartheid South Africa during this era, see Larry Grubbs, "'Workshop of a Continent': American Representations of Whiteness and Modernity in 1960s South Africa," *Diplomatic History*, vol. 32, no. 3 (June 2008): 405-440.

Africa in many respects, but he does not seem to have shared the low opinion of black Africans held by an earlier generation of American statesmen such as former Secretary of State Dean Acheson, who publicly railed against decolonization, asserting that majority rule was doomed because “[m]any blacks are still in a state of primitive [N]eolithic culture.”¹⁴⁷ Like Richard Nixon, Kissinger’s focus was on the “major countries and major problem areas.” African countries, which tended to be poor and militarily weak, did not count for much in the Secretary’s balance of power calculations. As one State Department official later recounted, “Kissinger had very little interest in the third world and what interest he had was keyed to the [C]old [W]ar implications of Third World activities. He never looked at the Third World in terms of the inherent problems, but thought that the[se] problems flowed from the East-West rivalry.”¹⁴⁸

Given his tendency to view events through the lens of the Cold War, it took a massive and unexpected intervention in southern Africa by America’s chief Cold War rivals to jolt Kissinger from his torpor. This shock occurred in Angola, where three ethnically-based guerrilla armies had waging a low-level insurgency against the Portuguese for more than a decade. When the Portuguese announced that they would withdraw from Angola in November 1975, each faction dreamed of seizing power once the Portuguese had abdicated. Against this background of mutual suspicion, a transitional government of national unity proved unworkable. By March of 1975, the factions had turned on each other, dragging Angola into civil war.¹⁴⁹

Before long, rumors that the Soviets and Cubans were backing the Marxist faction, the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), began to swirl. Exactly when Moscow and Havana became involved in the Angolan civil war remains difficult to determine,

¹⁴⁷ Dean Acheson, The Sunday Star, Washington DC, December 22, 1968; reprinted in “Dean Acheson on the Rhodesian Question,” (Washington DC: Rhodesian Information Office, 1969).

¹⁴⁸ Talcott Seeyle oral history, http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?mfdip:3:./temp/~ammem_8pnO

¹⁴⁹ For more on the collapse of the Portuguese empire, see Norrie Macqueen, The Decolonization of Portuguese Africa: Metropolitan Revolution and the Dissolution of Empire, (New York: Longman, 1997).

but by mid-1975, a number of international observers believed that outside assistance was providing the MPLA with a decisive advantage over its rivals.¹⁵⁰ This development alarmed Henry Kissinger, who was outraged by what he perceived as the interference of America's chief Cold War rivals thousands of miles outside of their traditional spheres of influence. Although he repeatedly stated that he was not opposed to the MPLA *per se*, Kissinger refused to countenance any regime that came to power as the result of Soviet and Cuban "meddling."¹⁵¹ Indeed, during a May 1975 staff meeting, Kissinger tellingly grumbled that he "couldn't care less what happens in Angola," as long as the Soviets and Cubans did not end up with a foothold in southern Africa.¹⁵² The Secretary reiterated this message to America's allies over the course of the next several months — albeit in somewhat less abrasive terms. "We are open-minded about the MPLA," Kissinger insisted in a conversation with one African Foreign Minister. "What we are not open-minded about is the Soviet Union."¹⁵³

Given its presumed dependence upon Soviet largesse, Kissinger concluded that an MPLA-governed Angola was likely to become a Soviet satellite. As he noted in a memorandum to President Gerald Ford, "The Soviet Union has backed the MPLA since it was founded. While we do not know the exact quantity of military assistance the Soviets are providing for the MPLA, this assistance is of major significance, and the Soviets could be expected to play a major role in

¹⁵⁰ The question of which side is responsible for escalating the Angolan crisis has taken on something of a "chicken or egg" quality. In reality, both superpowers had been supplying their favored Angolan group with low levels of assistance since the 1960s. Despite this earlier assistance, many scholars tend to view the US decision to give an additional \$200,000 to the FNLA in January 1975 as the beginning of a new cycle of escalation.

¹⁵¹ Telegram, Henry Kissinger to US Embassy London, "Policy Coordination on Angola," December 26, 1975, United Kingdom-State Department Telegrams: from SECSTATE-NODIS (4) folder, Country Files for Europe and Canada, Box 15, GRFL.

¹⁵² Secretary's Staff Meeting, May 16, 1975, DNSA.

¹⁵³ Memorandum of Conversation between Kissinger and Algerian Foreign Minister Abdelaziz Bouteflika, December 17, 1975, DNSA. In a conversation with a Danish delegation, Kissinger reiterated this message. "To us the problem isn't the MPLA. The problem is that in March the Soviet Union began pouring in military equipment amounting to \$175 million. This is more than all of the military aid from all sources to all the rest of Africa put together... If this is accepted, it will have massive consequences." Memorandum of Conversation between Kissinger and Danish Prime Minister Anker Jorgensen, January 20, 1976, DNSA.

an MPLA-dominated Angola.”¹⁵⁴ This was more than Kissinger could stomach, and in June he began pressing for a clandestine operation to “prevent an easy victory by the communist-backed forces in Angola.”¹⁵⁵ Brushing aside the doubts of the “choir boys” and “missionaries” in the State Department’s African Bureau, who argued that Soviet aims and involvement in Angola were likely to remain limited, the Secretary exhorted Ford to funnel \$14 million the MPLA’s rivals: the National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA) and the National Union for the Total Liberation of Angola (UNITA).¹⁵⁶ The President acquiesced in mid-July, and, shortly thereafter, American economic and military aid began flowing into Angola.¹⁵⁷

If Ford and Kissinger believed that this modest amount of aid would allow UNITA and the FNLA to turn the tables in Angola, they had badly miscalculated. The Soviets and Cubans soon learned of Washington’s involvement and redoubled their support for the MPLA.

According to historian Piero Gleijeses, this was especially true of Soviet General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev, who had been far more interested in finalizing a new strategic arms limitation treaty (SALT II) and participating in another US-Soviet summit than in supporting the MPLA.¹⁵⁸

But whereas Brezhnev had initially been content to supply the MPLA with a limited number of

¹⁵⁴ Briefing for a Meeting of the National Security Council, June 27, 1975, DNSA.

¹⁵⁵ Quoted in John Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies: A CIA Story*, (New York: Norton, 1978): 46.

¹⁵⁶ National Security Council Interdepartmental Group for Africa, “Response to NSSM 224: United States Policy Toward Angola,” June 13, 1975, DNSA. Although intended as an options paper, this document clearly tilts toward Option B (“promote a peaceful solution through diplomatic/political measures”) and away from Option C (“actively support the FNLA and/or UNITA”).

¹⁵⁷ Memorandum of Conversation, “Middle East; Angola; Soviet Grain; SALT; President’s Trip,” July 18, 1975, *FRUS* 1969-1976, vol. 28.

¹⁵⁸ Piero Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington, and Africa, 1959-1976*, (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2002): 260, 366-67. This claim has been largely substantiated by the partial opening of the former Soviet Union’s archives. Historian Christopher Andrew, who has examined hundreds of documents from the KGB’s archives, has concluded that most Soviet politicians and diplomats, including Brezhnev, had grown skeptical about interventions in the developing world by the 1970s. This is in line with the findings of Russian historian Vladimir Zubok, who has described Brezhnev as a cautious leader, interested first and foremost in improving US-Soviet relations and avoiding a superpower confrontation. Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin, *The World Was Going Our Way: The KGB and the Battle for the Third World*, (New York: Basic Books, 2005): 4-13 and Vladimir Zubok, *A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev*, (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2007): 201-226.

small arms, the Soviet leader quickly realized that Washington's support for the FNLA and UNITA (possibly in conjunction with South Africa's apartheid government) had upped the ante, placing his credibility as an anti-colonial leader at stake.¹⁵⁹ Under pressure from members of the Politburo and KGB, Brezhnev agreed to airlift approximately 12,000 Cuban combat troops to Angola between November 1975 and January 1976 while drastically increasing Soviet arms shipments to the MPLA.¹⁶⁰ The additional troops and arms had an immediate impact, and the tide quickly began to turn in the MPLA's favor.

Things went from bad to worse for Kissinger when Congress, in no mood for foreign adventures in the wake of Vietnam, Watergate, and the ongoing hearings into the CIA's past misdeeds, passed the Tunney and Clark Amendments in December 1975 and January 1976, respectively. These acts prohibited any further funds from being spent on Angolan operations, thereby short-circuiting Kissinger's plans to funnel another \$28 million to the MPLA's rivals. In so doing, they effectively prevented the Secretary from responding to the Soviet-Cuban airlift and sent him scrambling to reassure America's allies that he and the President (and not the "McGovernite" 94th Congress) remained in charge of the American foreign policy-making

¹⁵⁹ Report by Michael Duncan, "Post-Mortem on Angola," May 3, 1976, FCO 51/425, British National Archives, (hereafter, TNA). The question of whether or not the US cooperated with South Africa remains unresolved. Many historians, journalists, and South African officials have argued that this was the case. Kissinger and most of his top aides, conversely, have denied that there was any such cooperation in Angola. The best available evidence this author has seen does not resolve this dispute. Nevertheless, it does reveal that once the South Africans had gotten involved in Angola, the Ford Administration did not want them to pull out. See, Memorandum for the Record, "40 Committee Meeting, 14 November 1975;" Memorandum for the Record, "40 Committee Meeting, 21 November 1975;" and Memorandum for the Record, "40 Committee Meeting, 11 December 1975," *FRUS*, 1969-1976, vol. 28.

¹⁶⁰ Andrew has argued for the importance of the KGB in pushing Brezhnev to support the MPLA, while Zubok and longtime Soviet Ambassador to Washington Anatoly Dobrynin have claimed that Brezhnev was propelled into Angola by ideologues in the Politburo. Andrew and Mitrokin, *The World Was Going Our War*, 423-470; Zubok, *Failed Empire*, 204-205; Anatoly Dobrynin, *In Confidence: Moscow's Ambassador to America's Six Cold War Presidents*, (New York: Random House, 1995): 362. Statistics from Hanhimaki, *The Flawed Architect*, 406; and Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of our Times*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005): 236.

process.¹⁶¹ Without US support, the FNLA rapidly disintegrated. UNITA forces fared little better in spite of the not-so-covert assistance they were receiving from the South African Government.¹⁶² As a result of America's failed efforts to install a pro-Western regime in Angola, many international commentators saw the January 1976 decision by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) to recognize the MPLA as the legitimate government of Angola as a serious setback for America's efforts to contain communism in the developing world.¹⁶³

Kissinger's "African Safari"

In the wake of the Angolan debacle, Henry Kissinger became increasingly concerned about the possibility of the communist powers increasing their influence elsewhere in southern Africa. A spate of recently-declassified documents reveals that the Secretary was particularly worried that the Soviets and Cubans would attempt to repeat their Angolan success elsewhere in the region.¹⁶⁴ And nowhere did the situation seem more ripe for intervention than in Rhodesia, where a fractious national liberation movement and a burgeoning guerrilla war seemed to offer

¹⁶¹ In a heated phone conversation with one Congressional leader, Kissinger hit the roof, calling the Tunney Amendment "a national disgrace" and "the worst foreign policy disaster I can remember." Telephone Conversation between Kissinger and Congressman George Mahon, January 14, 1976, DNSA. For examples of Kissinger's comments to foreign leaders, see Memorandum of Conversation between Kissinger and Italian Foreign Minister Mariano Rumor, December 11, 1975, and Secretary's Luncheon for Minister Genscher following NATO Ministerial Meeting, December 12, 1975, DNSA.

¹⁶² It may seem strange that South Africa's apartheid regime would align itself with any of the Angolan factions. However, South African officials realized that majority rule in Angola was inevitable and preferred the pliant and moderately pro-Western UNITA to the Marxist MPLA and the corrupt FNLA.

¹⁶³ This included many Soviet leaders. As one later recalled, "After its humiliation in Vietnam in 1975, America was increasingly portrayed by Party militants as a diminished rival in the Third World. Although some experts took a more cautious line, the Soviet leaders judged that, in addition to the 'Vietnam syndrome,' the United States now had an 'Angola syndrome.'" Andrew and Mitrokhin, *The World Was Going Our Way*, 453.

¹⁶⁴ Memorandum of Conversation, February 26, 1976, February 26, 1976 folder; Memorandum of Conversation, March 4, 1976, March 4, 1976 folder; and Memorandum of Conversation, March 15, 1976, March 15, 1976 folder, National Security Adviser Memoranda of Conversations, 1973-1977, Box 18, GRFL. See also, Telegram, Peter Ramsbotham to FCO, "Call on Kissinger: Southern Africa," March 4, 1976, FCO 36/1823, TNA. As if Kissinger's paranoia needed to be fuelled, one high-ranking Zambian official reported his concern that the Soviets were determined to create a belt of client states in southern Africa in an effort to offset the "losses" they had recently suffered in the Middle East and Portugal. Telegram, Jean Wilkowski to Henry Kissinger, "Zambian Official's View on Soviet Grand Strategy for Africa," January 17, 1976, <http://aad.archives.gov/aad/createpdf?rid=114669&dt=2082&dl=1345>

the communist powers ample opportunity to meddle. Relations between Joshua Nkomo's Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) and Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) were every bit as strained as those between the Angolan factions had been in 1975. In fact, ZANU had been established when Ndabaningi Sithole, Robert Mugabe, and a handful of their colleagues broke away from ZAPU to form their own nationalist movement in 1963.¹⁶⁵ The potential for internecine conflict was immediately apparent to African observers.¹⁶⁶ As predicted, it did not take long for trouble to begin. As early as 1967, Zambian officials were lamenting the fact that ZANU and ZAPU were spending much of their time "fighting against each other, forgetting the common enemy in Rhodesia."¹⁶⁷ The ZANU-ZAPU rivalry only intensified over time. Kissinger quickly spotted the parallels between the two situations and worried that Rhodesia might become "another Angola" – with the Soviets and Cubans gaining another ally in southern Africa. Given Kissinger's anti-communist leanings, it can hardly be deemed a coincidence that in early 1976, as the Angola crisis was reaching its denouement, Sir Peter Ramsbotham (the British Ambassador to Washington) informed the Foreign Office that Kissinger was becoming "increasingly worried about the prospects for Rhodesia."¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁵ While the ZANU-ZAPU divide was largely based on ethnic differences (Sithole and Mugabe were members of the majority Shona group while Nkomo belonged to the minority Ndebele group), the Zambian High Commissioner to Dar es Salaam felt the split may have been justified. In his estimation, Nkomo and his colleagues "are not doing anything to convince the entire continent that their party stands to bring independence to the [Zimbabwean] people." To the contrary, they seemed to regard "comfort, leisure, and globe-trotting as the best way of fighting for freedom." Telegram, A.M. Simbule to Permanent Secretary (Ministry of Foreign Affairs), "Liberation Movements Based in Tanzania," March 22, 1967, FA/1/235, National Archives of Zambia (hereafter, NAZ). For Nkomo's account of the ZANU-ZAPU split, see *Nkomo: The Story of My Life*, (London: Methuen, 1984): 109-119.

¹⁶⁶ Untitled telegram, P.K. Banda to Permanent Secretary (Ministry of Foreign Affairs), December 20, 1966, FA/1/191, NAZ.

¹⁶⁷ Telegram, A.M. Simbule to Permanent Secretary (Ministry of Foreign Affairs), "Liberation Movements Based in Tanzania," March 22, 1967, FA/1/235, NAZ. Nkomo recounted that ZANU and ZAPU supporters inside Rhodesia soon resorted to a campaign of firebombing. Nkomo, *The Story of My Life*, 117.

¹⁶⁸ Telegram 728, Peter Ramsbotham to FCO, February 27, 1976, FCO 36/1823, TNA. For more on Ramsbotham, see Raj Roy, "Peter Ramsbotham, 1974-77" in eds. Michael Hopkins, Saul Kelly, and John Young, *The Washington Embassy: British Ambassadors to the United States, 1939-77*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009): 209-228.

Despite his concern, Kissinger did not have any firm ideas as to how the United States could prevent the Soviets and Cubans from increasing their influence in the region. His initial inclination was to punish the Cubans for their involvement in the Angolan civil war. However, the Secretary's desire to "give the Cubans a bloody nose" completely ignored domestic realities.¹⁶⁹ For as the British Embassy in Washington recognized, the American public was bound to oppose the type of undertaking Kissinger was advocating so soon after the traumatic conclusion of the war in Vietnam. Instead, the British sought to persuade the Secretary to channel his energies in a more fruitful direction. "Our aim should be to persuade Kissinger that African diplomacy of the kind we are attempting is more likely to prevent the Russians from getting what they want than the measures which he has in mind, and for which on present evidence he has no chance of obtaining Congressional support," Ramsbotham advised the Foreign Office.¹⁷⁰

Based upon this recommendation, Undersecretary of State for African and Middle Eastern Affairs Tony Duff was dispatched to Washington for a series of consultations with two of Kissinger's top aides, Helmut Sonnenfeldt and Joseph Sisco.¹⁷¹ Since many in the State Department were already coming to favor the type of approach the British were advocating, it is difficult to determine the extent to which Duff succeeded in convincing US officials that diplomatic finesse – rather than military aggression – offered the best chance of containing the communist threat in southern Africa. It seems likely that the British merely reaffirmed what many US officials were already thinking. Nonetheless, the British got what they wanted: the

¹⁶⁹ Memorandum of Conversation, March 4, 1976, March 4, 1976 folder, National Security Adviser Memoranda of Conversation, 1973-1977, Box 18, GRFL. It is unclear what Kissinger had in mind, and it seems possible that he did not have any specific actions in mind. See, for example, Telegram, Kenneth Rush to Henry Kissinger, "Discussions on Africa with the French," April 2, 1976, <http://aad.archives.gov/aad/createpdf?rid=81875&dt=2082&dl=1345>

¹⁷⁰ Telegram, Peter Ramsbotham to FCO, "US Policy Toward Angola," February 4, 1976, FCO 45/1881, TNA.

¹⁷¹ Telegram, Tony Duff to FCO, February 14, 1976, "Southern Africa," FCO 45/1881, TNA.

Americans' new African policy emphasized facilitating Rhodesia's transition to majority rule before the colony became "another Angola."

By this time, events in southern Africa were moving quickly. On March 3, Mozambican President Samora Machel closed his country's border with Rhodesia.¹⁷² Because an estimated 30% of the colony's imports and exports passed through Mozambique, the move constituted a potentially devastating blow to the Rhodesian economy.¹⁷³ Nevertheless, Ian Smith remained obdurate in his defense of minority rule. On March 19, he allowed the talks he had been conducting with Joshua Nkomo to break down over the issue of how soon majority rule would be implemented.¹⁷⁴ The collapse of the talks surprised no one; however British and American officials worried that the announcement that the Smith-Nkomo talks had failed would unleash a wave of guerrilla violence. Such fears were exacerbated by the flood of radical statements emanating from southern Africa when Smith's decision to break off the negotiations became known. Typical of the African press's reaction was the Zambia Daily Mail, which declared,

Africa has no option now but to declare total war on the Rhodesian white population...It is a total war to the finish. A few days back, Africa had hoped for a solution that would have given the whites in Rhodesia a chance to salvage whatever they had built up...That chance has gone forever. We had hoped for peaceful change. But there is now no alternative but violent change. And when that violent change comes, it is the victor grabs all, and all fair play to the winds.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷² Machel was the leader of FRELIMO, the Marxist liberation group that had come to power after the collapse of the Portuguese Empire in 1974. A true revolutionary, he was eager to assist the Zimbabwean guerrillas in their quest to overthrow Ian Smith's regime and establish a "people's state." For more, see Iain Christie, Samora Machel: A Biography, (London: Panaf, 1989).

¹⁷³ Rhodesia Department Monthly Summary, Number 3 (March 1976), FCO 36/1814, TNA. As Rhodesia's Accredited Diplomatic Representative to Pretoria informed the South African government, officials in Salisbury had been worried about a possible border closure "for some time." Memorandum, Harold Hawkins to Brand Fourie, "Closure of Mozambique Ports," March 3, 1976, BTS 1/156/1/2, vol. 9, South African Department of International Relations and Cooperation Archives (hereafter, SAA).

¹⁷⁴ Telegram, William Spiers to Henry Kissinger, "Conversation with Nkomo," February 3, 1976, <http://aad.archives.gov/aad/createpdf?rid=7387&dt=2082&dl=1345>

¹⁷⁵ Editorial, Zambia Daily Mail, March 20, 1976, in ed. Goswin Baumhogger, The Struggle for Independence, Documents on the Recent Development of Zimbabwe (1975-1980), (Hamburg: The Institute for African Studies, 1984): vol. 2, 75.

Such vitriolic rhetoric did not augur well for anyone who continued to hope that a moderate black regime would peacefully assume power in Rhodesia.

In an effort to stem this rising tide of violence, British Foreign Secretary James Callaghan went before Parliament and laid out a new plan for bringing majority rule to Rhodesia. Little has been written about why Callaghan opted to undertake a new Rhodesian initiative in 1976. In some respects, the decision can be seen as a courageous one. For the United Kingdom was so beset by economic, political, and social turmoil that some commentators wondered aloud whether it “was drifting toward a condition of ungovernability.”¹⁷⁶ Moreover, the Rhodesian issue was particularly divisive in Britain. Many Conservatives saw the colony as a bastion of western civilization in a region wracked by violence, corruption, and economic mismanagement. Members of the so-called “Rhodesia lobby” had no desire to see their “kith and kin” thrown to the wolves.¹⁷⁷ For its part, the Labour Party was divided over the issue. While some on the left clamored for the government to use military force to crush the rebellion, few Labourites had any confidence that they could compel Smith to accept majority rule. The British had attempted to negotiate Rhodesia’s “return to legality” on three separate occasions between 1966 and 1972 –

¹⁷⁶ Quoted in Robert Hathaway, Great Britain and the United States: Special Relations since World War II, (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1990): 108. Economically, the country was mired in a deep recession. Unemployment was higher than it had been since the 1930s, inflation hovered around 20%, and industrial strife was rampant as union leaders fought to keep wages ahead of prices. Politically, the Labour Party was engaged in yet another period of internecine warfare as left wingers sought to wrest control of the party away from the moderates. And socially, there seemed to be “anarchy in the UK,” as the raffish optimism of the early-1960s gave way to polarization and social unrest. As if these domestic problems were not vexing enough for a government which lacked a reliable majority in the House of Commons, paramilitary violence raged on in Northern Ireland and the Cold War continued to loom ominously in the background. For a good sense of the overall climate of Great Britain in the 1970s, see Philip Whitehead, The Writing on the Wall: Britain in the Seventies, (London: Michael Joseph Limited, 1985).

¹⁷⁷ “We hear about the need for African majority rule, but how many General [Idi] Amins are waiting in the wings to grab Rhodesia and to take away the prosperity that all Rhodesians have had in recent years?” queried one member of the “Rhodesia lobby” during an acrimonious parliamentary debate. Representing the sentiments of many Conservatives, the speaker added that, “Rhodesia has had in its time a splendid colonial record, and compared with other parts of Africa its citizens are freer and have comparatively greater economic liberty.” British Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons (hereafter, Hansard), October 20 1975, series 5, vol. 898, columns 2010-2011.

only to see their efforts founder.¹⁷⁸ As a result, a palpable sense of impotence seemed to hover over Whitehall like a thick London fog when it came to dealing with Rhodesian affairs.¹⁷⁹ American officials did not expect the British to provide much leadership in defusing the Rhodesian crisis. “The political circumstances in London... do not favor a bold and vigorous involvement in a faraway place that is the legacy of an earlier era,” remarked one high-ranking member of the US Embassy in London. “The risks would be too great for a government whose hold on power is already too weak.”¹⁸⁰

Despite this myriad of seemingly-intractable problems, British officials felt compelled to make one final attempt to resolve the Rhodesian crisis. Although the British were eager to prevent a racial war from erupting in southern Africa, they were not motivated solely by humanitarian concerns. As noted in the previous chapter, Britain’s inability to bring the Rhodesian crisis to an end had long plagued the country’s relations with its Commonwealth partners. By 1976, there was concern in some Foreign Office circles that unless Britain found a way to “fulfill its colonial responsibility” in Rhodesia, Commonwealth members such as Nigeria, Zambia, and Tanzania might sever their ties to the United Kingdom.¹⁸¹ Such a development would have been both diplomatically humiliating and economically damaging to the former metropole. For not only was the Labour Party politically and ideologically committed to the establishment of a close partnership between Britons and the citizens of all Commonwealth countries, but southern Africa represented one of the few regions where Britain maintained a

¹⁷⁸ Labour Prime Minister Harold Wilson met twice with Ian Smith for constitutional talks, once in 1966 and again in 1968. Wilson’s Conservative successor, Ted Heath, also tried to negotiate with the Rhodesians in the early 1970s.

¹⁷⁹ Telegram, William Spiers to Henry Kissinger, “Britain and Rhodesia,” March 2, 1976, <http://aad.archives.gov/aad/createpdf?rid=44400&dt=2082&dl=1345>.

¹⁸⁰ Telegram, William Spiers to Henry Kissinger, “Rhodesia: The British Role,” November 10, 1976, United Kingdom-State Department Telegrams: to SECSTATE – NODIS (5) folder, Country Files for Europe and Canada, Box 16, GRFL.

¹⁸¹ Letter, Harold Wilson to John Vorster, February 5, 1976, PREM 16/1090, TNA.

favorable balance of trade. Losing access to these markets would have further exacerbated Britain's economic plight.

Adding to the Foreign Office's anxiety was the specter of Soviet and Cuban adventurism in Rhodesia. While Europe and Southeast Asia had theretofore served as the primary Cold War arenas, the continued intransigence of southern Africa's minority regimes was beginning to create new opportunities for communist involvement in the region as Africans frustrated by the glacial pace of progress toward majority rule began looking to the Soviets, Cubans, and Chinese for assistance.¹⁸² Such fears were seemingly substantiated by the unprecedented assistance the Soviets and Cubans had provided to the MPLA.¹⁸³ This support seemed to indicate that, in the wake of America's humiliating defeat in Vietnam, the communist powers were prepared to act more aggressively in southern Africa. "I entirely share your concern at the seriousness of what has happened in Angola," James Callaghan wrote in a message to Henry Kissinger. "[W]e both agree that in the short term the communists have scored a major success and that we must do everything we can to prevent the same thing [from] occurring again...[T]he Angolan episode will have encouraged the Russians and Cubans to look for other opportunities to exploit, one way or another, to their own advantage and to the discomfiture of the West."¹⁸⁴ Fearful that the communist powers would target Rhodesia next, Callaghan and his Foreign Office colleagues were eager to defuse the Rhodesian crisis before the Soviets and Cubans attempted to capitalize on their Angolan success.

¹⁸² Thus, while acknowledging that many of the region's leaders were leery of superpower involvement in African affairs, at least one British official cautioned that, "If armed conflict increases in Rhodesia, the Africans may, despite themselves welcome [Soviet and] Cuban intervention." Memorandum, R.H. Smith to B.W. Newton, "Cuban Involvement in Africa," March 25, 1976, FCO 51/425, TNA.

¹⁸³ Rhodesia Department Monthly Summary No. 2 (Feb 1976), FCO 36/1814, TNA.

¹⁸⁴ Letter, James Callaghan to Henry Kissinger, March 15, 1976, FCO 82/662, TNA.

It was with these considerations in mind that the Foreign Secretary unveiled his blueprint for Rhodesian independence. He envisioned the transition to majority rule as a three-step process. First, the Rhodesians and the guerrillas would agree to end the *Chimurenga* and accept a package of preconditions.¹⁸⁵ Once this had been accomplished, negotiations on an independence constitution would commence. As soon as the new constitution (which would guarantee majority rule as well as minority rights) was finalized, Britain would grant Rhodesia its independence. Playing to an international audience that was generally sympathetic toward the Zimbabweans' struggle for independence, Callaghan heaped scorn on Ian Smith, who did not seem to realize that he was "leading his country on the path of death and destruction." The Foreign Secretary went on to blame the failure of the Smith-Nkomo talks on the "prevarications" of the Rhodesian leader, whose "purpose has not been to negotiate a constitutional settlement but to buy time in order to remove the pressures on him." Ominously, he warned, Smith did "not seem to realise that he no longer has much time to buy."¹⁸⁶

Yet Callaghan was reminded that lofty rhetoric counted for little in Salisbury when Smith publicly rejected his proposals the next day.¹⁸⁷ Despite this rebuff, all was not lost. To the contrary, Callaghan's message had been intended less for the obstinate Rhodesian Prime Minister (whom he had expected to reject the new proposals) than it had been for his good friend Henry Kissinger. The Secretary, who had probably seen a copy of the British proposals in advance, publicly endorsed them on March 23, describing them as "most constructive."¹⁸⁸ Thus, while Callaghan's proposals had fallen on deaf ears in Salisbury, they were embraced by the

¹⁸⁵ The preconditions included: 1. Acceptance of the principle of majority rule by Ian Smith; 2. Elections leading to majority rule within 18-24 months; 3. No independence before majority rule; 4. No drawn out negotiations.

¹⁸⁶ Hansard, "Callaghan Statement on Rhodesia," March 22, 1976, Series 5, Vol. 908, cols. 29-45.

¹⁸⁷ Reports on I. Smith's Reply to Callaghan's Statement, March 23, 1976, in Baumhogger, The Struggle for Independence, vol. 2, 79.

¹⁸⁸ Kissinger Speech, March 23 1976, Ron Nessen Papers, 1974-77, Rhodesia, Box 124, GRFL.

Ford Administration as a way to break the Rhodesian impasse. Backed by the power and influence of the United States, they would become the basis of a joint Anglo-American initiative.

Such a coordinated approach suited both men. Callaghan (who would become Prime Minister on April 5) knew that Britain could not achieve a negotiated settlement on its own. A leading acolyte of the Anglo-American “special relationship,” he hoped that American power and influence might help to break the Rhodesian impasse. He also hoped that procuring American involvement would go a long way toward persuading the British public and reluctant government ministers that the time was ripe for a new Rhodesian initiative. Kissinger agreed that the British lacked the wherewithal to force the Rhodesians and the Zimbabwean nationalists to reach an agreement. In his mind, only American power and influence could bring about the desired result.¹⁸⁹ He therefore sought to maneuver the United States into the forefront of the search for Zimbabwean independence, and he believed that working alongside America’s “most natural ally” would allow him to sell the initiative to an American public that knew (and cared) relatively little about African affairs. Kissinger also appreciated that Britain’s historic ties to many African states could well prove valuable in the search for a Rhodesian settlement. Thus, after failing to deter the Soviets and Cubans in Angola through the use of force, Kissinger hoped to use diplomacy to prevent the communist powers from increasing their influence in southern Africa. Ironically, then, it was Kissinger’s preoccupation with the East-West struggle that caused him to emerge as one of the most unlikely champions of black majority rule in 1976.

¹⁸⁹ As Kissinger later recalled, “[D]iplomatic proposals could not by themselves change the balance of incentives which had enabled Smith to stonewall for ten years. Britain did not have the power to subdue him and...[a]nnouncing one futile plan after another ran the risk of frustrating the African parties and providing a pretext for Soviet and Cuban intervention. As the only power capable of affecting the calculations of the parties, the United States needed to take charge of developing a strategy for Southern Africa.” Kissinger, Years of Renewal, 915.

To Lusaka and Beyond

In an attempt to emphasize America's newfound commitment to majority rule, Kissinger decided to visit sub-Saharan Africa in April 1976. However, the Secretary's decision to embark on a seven-nation tour of the region generated more suspicion than optimism. Many conservatives (including those who would support Ronald Reagan rather than Gerald Ford in the 1976 Republican primaries) opposed the Secretary's efforts to forge closer ties with black Africa, while Kissinger's well-known sympathy for the white minority regimes in southern Africa and his disastrous foray into the Angolan civil war had done little to avail him to blacks at home or abroad. "The perception of your general indifference to Africa and relative inaccessibility to the African diplomatic community in Washington, except when there is a public relations advantage to be gained, has created skepticism about the timing and the substance of your visit," several members of the Congressional Black Caucus observed in a letter to the Secretary of State.¹⁹⁰ Many African leaders were equally skeptical of Kissinger's intentions. The governments of Mozambique, Nigeria, and Ghana refused to grant him an entry visa, while Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere faced strong pressure from his Vice-Presidents to follow suit. Although Nyerere overruled his Vice-Presidents, he harbored no illusions that Henry Kissinger had undergone a Pauline conversion. As he told the British High Commissioner in Dar es Salaam, he was looking forward to "doing battle" with the Secretary and planned to "make it plain to him that the Indian Ocean and southern Africa were not American spheres of influence."¹⁹¹

¹⁹⁰ Letter from Congresswoman Yvonne Burke and Congressman Charles Diggs to Secretary of State Kissinger, April 14, 1976, in *FRUS*, 1969-1976, vol. E-6.

¹⁹¹ Telegram, Mervyn Brown to FCO, "Rhodesia," April 10, 1976, FCO 36/1823, TNA.

Thus, Kissinger had his work cut out for him on April 23, as he embarked on what Time Magazine sardonically labeled his “African Safari.”¹⁹² But before arriving in Africa, Kissinger stopped over in the United Kingdom to discuss matters with the British – as was his custom. In part, he was anxious to gain some insight about a part of the world which he had largely ignored throughout his years in office. Indeed, during a rare moment of humility, the Secretary confessed to his British counterparts, “I have no feel for Africa. I read the cables. But you have more experience.”¹⁹³ The scant faith Kissinger had in the State Department’s African Bureau (which he suspected of being filled with “pacifists” and “missionaries”) only served to enhance the Secretary’s desire to consult with the British prior to setting foot in southern Africa.

In addition to discussing African affairs, Kissinger hoped to establish a strong working relationship with the new British Foreign Secretary, Tony Crosland. For, as Kissinger had remarked during a 1976 press conference, “The close and confidential relationship between the [American] Secretary of State and the British Foreign Secretary is one of the most important factors in international life.”¹⁹⁴ Although these words were uttered during a public press conference, they should not be dismissed as mere diplomatic niceties. To the contrary, as scholars of the Anglo-American relationship are increasingly coming to appreciate, Kissinger held the Foreign Office in the highest esteem, comparing it favorably to the State Department on numerous occasions.¹⁹⁵ As a result of this deep respect, Kissinger became so accustomed to

¹⁹² Time Magazine, “Doctor K’s African Safari,” May 10, 1976. Kissinger seems to very much have had his Middle Eastern diplomacy in mind as he set out for southern Africa. Indeed, there were a number of parallels. In both cases, Kissinger’s overarching goal was to reduce (and where possible, eliminate) Soviet influence. Moreover, both regions featured two groups with longstanding animosity, and just as Kissinger had never set foot in southern Africa prior to 1976, he had not been to an Arab nation before his first round of shuttle diplomacy in November 1973.

¹⁹³ Memorandum of a Conversation between an American and a British delegation, April 24, 1976, DNSA.

¹⁹⁴ Meeting between Secretary Kissinger and Foreign Secretary Anthony Crosland at RAF Waddington, April 24, 1976, FCO 82/664, TNA.

¹⁹⁵ Perhaps the most striking example of the esteem in which Kissinger held the Foreign Office occurred in 1973, when he enlisted a Foreign Office official to draft a US-Soviet nuclear non-aggression pact, prompting the British Ambassador to marvel at the “astonishing anomaly of the most powerful nation in the world invoking the aid of a

consulting with the British on major foreign policy issues that acting without first attaining their feedback seemed “to violate club rules.”¹⁹⁶ On top of this institutionalized pattern of consultation, Kissinger developed a particularly warm relationship with Foreign Secretary Callaghan when the Labour Party was returned to office in 1974. Due to Callaghan’s avuncular personality, discretion, and “abundant common sense,” both contemporaries and historians have noted that the two statesmen quickly developed a good working relationship.¹⁹⁷ Consequently, the notoriously-secretive Kissinger felt comfortable exchanging thoughts, comparing opinions, and sounding out ideas with Callaghan in a way that he did not with most other statesmen.

Tony Crosland had his own reasons for wanting to forge a strong rapport with his American counterpart. For while Kissinger may have found it reassuring to consult with the British, the United States did not require British support to enact most of its policies. The British, by contrast, depended on American support to achieve many of their economic, military, and foreign policy goals. Consequently, every British Prime Minister since Winston Churchill had sought to maintain the “special” relationship that had been forged in the flames of World War II. During the 1970s, as economic decrepitude further eroded London’s ability to act independently on the international stage, British officials saw it as absolutely imperative to preserve the special transatlantic bond between Washington and London. “[W]e remain America’s most natural and closest ally,” Peter Ramsbotham reported in his 1975 review of US-UK relations. “From this fact alone,” he added, “we derive much of our influence in world affairs...[W]e do well to make every effort to keep the relationship in good repair.”¹⁹⁸

foreign government” to draft such an important agreement “while totally excluding its own Ministry of Foreign Affairs.” Stephen Twigge, “Operation Hullabaloo: Henry Kissinger, British Diplomacy, and the Agreement on the Prevention of Nuclear War,” *Diplomatic History*, vol. 33, no. 4 (September 2009): 689-701, 694.

¹⁹⁶ Henry Kissinger, *The White House Years*, (Boston: Little and Brown, 1979): 90.

¹⁹⁷ Kenneth Morgan, *Callaghan: A Life*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997): 439-440; Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 609; and Telegram, Peter Ramsbotham to FCO, November 24, 1975, FCO 82/581, TNA.

¹⁹⁸ Annual Review for 1975, December 31, 1975, FCO 82/652, TNA.

Keeping the Anglo-American relationship in good repair required a good deal of effort on the part of the Callaghan Government. The British Embassy in Washington, aided by British consulates throughout the United States and the British Information Service, worked to portray a positive image of the mother country in the United States, cultivating influential politicians, journalists, and businesspeople.¹⁹⁹ In the realm of foreign policy, maintaining harmonious relations involved cultivating key members of the State Department – including the Secretary of State. And while British Foreign Secretaries since Ernest Bevin had generally worked well with their American counterparts, the personal dimension took on a special significance during Henry Kissinger’s tenure at Foggy Bottom. As a result of his penchant for secrecy and his contempt for the State Department’s “detestable bureaucracy,” Kissinger frequently conducted his diplomacy personally, bypassing the State Department whenever possible.²⁰⁰ This state of affairs angered many lower-level British officials who found themselves deprived of meaningful contacts with their American counterparts.²⁰¹ It also placed that much more emphasis on the relationship between the countries’ chief diplomats. If the relationship was one of mutual trust and respect (as it had been during Callaghan’s tenure as Foreign Secretary), the Foreign Office was likely to be kept more up-to-date on Kissinger’s thinking and potential initiatives than many State Department officials. A strained relationship, conversely, would rob London of its ability to

¹⁹⁹ For more on Ramsbotham’s efforts, see Memorandum, Ramsbotham to James Callaghan, “Annual Review for 1975,” December 31, 1975, FCO 82/652, TNA. More generally, see eds. Hopkins, Kelly, and Young, The Washington Embassy, 1-13, 232-33.

²⁰⁰ “Detestable bureaucracy” cited in Twigge, “Operation Hullabaloo,” 691. According to Henry Brandon, The Sunday Times’ longtime Washington correspondent, Kissinger conducted his diplomacy in a “very personal, very conspiratorial” manner. Brandon, Special Relationships: A Foreign Correspondent’s Memoirs from Roosevelt to Reagan, (New York: Atheneum, 1988): 262.

²⁰¹ See, for instance, Derek Thomas, November 1975, FCO 82/615, TNA.

influence the US foreign policymaking process – thereby depriving the British of much of their influence in world affairs.²⁰²

The first meeting between Kissinger and Crosland was a success, marking the beginning of an excellent – albeit somewhat abbreviated – working relationship.²⁰³ Flanked by several of his top aides, the Foreign Secretary was on hand to greet his American counterpart when his Boeing 747 touched down at Waddington Royal Air Force base early on the morning of April 24. Over the course of a working breakfast, the British delegation engaged Kissinger in a *tour d’horizon* of world affairs. Predictably, the discussion centered on the Secretary’s upcoming African mission. The British tried to convince Kissinger to play down his preoccupation with Cold War concerns during his trip since, to most black Africans, the struggle against communism paled in comparison to the struggle for majority rule. They also encouraged the Secretary to rework his Lusaka Address, persuading the Secretary to focus on the moral imperative of ending minority rule in southern Africa and to make it clear to the Rhodesian hardliners that there would be no American bailout in the event of a Cuban or Soviet intervention in the bush war.²⁰⁴ Often impervious to advice, Kissinger so thoroughly incorporated these recommendations into his Lusaka speech that one commentator felt it “reflected almost word for word” what the British had recommended during their April 24 meeting.²⁰⁵

²⁰² For insight into how Kissinger’s personalized diplomacy affected his policymaking, see Barbara Keys, “Henry Kissinger: The Emotional Statesmen,” *Diplomatic History*, vol. 35, no. 4 (September 2011): 602-609.

²⁰³ Susan Crosland, *Tony Crosland*, (London: Cape, 1982): 338. Jimmy Carter’s election ended Kissinger’s reign as America’s chief diplomat in January 1977, and Crosland died of a heart attack less than a month later.

²⁰⁴ The Ford Administration’s intervention in Angola may have reinforced Smith’s belief that the US would come to the Rhodesians’ aid if the Cubans or Soviets intervened in the Rhodesian bush war.

²⁰⁵ Record of a Meeting between the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the US Secretary of State at RAF Waddington Lincolnshire on Saturday 24 April, FCO 82/664, TNA. “Word for word” cited in Crosland, *Tony Crosland*, 326. Of course, not all of the credit should go to the British. Kissinger was receiving similar advice from American ambassadors across Africa. See for instance, Jean Wilkowski to Henry Kissinger, “Secretary’s Visit to Lusaka,” April 19, 1976, <http://aad.archives.gov/aad/createpdf?rid=85170&dt=2082&dl=1345>

Kissinger also solicited advice about how to handle his upcoming meetings with two of the region's most important leaders: Presidents Julius Nyerere of Tanzania and Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia. As previously noted, Tanzania and Zambia (along with Mozambique and Botswana) comprised the "Frontline States" in southern Africa's struggle for majority rule. The "Frontline Presidents" (particularly Nyerere and Kaunda) had long helped to legitimize ZANU and ZAPU's struggle against the Rhodesian Front. The presidents also provided vital assistance to the guerrilla armies, hosting them and ensuring that they received support from the OAU's Liberation Committee. Because of this leverage, American and British policymakers hoped that the presidents would be able to convince Nkomo and Mugabe to put aside their differences and entreat with the Rhodesians if Smith could be dragged back to the negotiating table.

As the unofficial "chairman" of the Frontline Presidents, Nyerere was widely acknowledged as the most influential leader in southern Africa. Thus, any Anglo-American initiative would require his seal of approval.²⁰⁶ However, obtaining Nyerere's support promised to be a delicate task since the Tanzanian leader was torn between his desire to see the *Chimurenga* resolved as quickly as possible and his desire to see the Zimbabwean guerrillas establish a socialist state. Kissinger was also slated to meet with Kenneth Kaunda, whom the Secretary regarded as a "closet moderate."²⁰⁷ A longtime US ally, a champion of multiracial democracy, and the leader of Rhodesia's northern neighbor, Kaunda desperately wanted a settlement in Rhodesia before a full-scale race war erupted. The Secretary hoped to reassure the Zambian leader that a moderate, non-racial Zimbabwe remained within reach. Moreover, Joshua

²⁰⁶ As Assistant Secretary Schaufele later recalled, "The key visit, as we knew it would be from the beginning, was Tanzania, with President Julius Nyerere...Nyerere kind of controlled things in that corner of Africa." William Schaufele Oral History, http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?mfdip:1:/temp/~ammem_0fdF:: Kissinger seconded this logic, reporting to the National Security Council that the primary objective of his African tour had been to get Nyerere "tied down to a moderate position." Minutes of a National Security Council Meeting, May 11 1976, NSC Meeting May 11 1976 folder, Box 2, National Security Adviser NSC Meeting Files, GRFL.

²⁰⁷ Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 937.

Nkomo, the man whom the British and Americans hoped would emerge as Zimbabwe's first prime minister, was Kaunda's protégé.²⁰⁸ Maintaining good relations with Kaunda was therefore seen as a way to ensure that neither he nor Nkomo fell under the sway of some of their more radical colleagues – most notably, Robert Mugabe.

Despite concerns that it would not be well-received by black Africans, Kissinger's "safari" made quite a favorable impression. The British High Commissioner to Dar es Salaam described it as "a far greater success than anyone on either side had expected."²⁰⁹ The US Ambassador to Lusaka echoed this sentiment.²¹⁰ The Secretary won acclaim for publicly endorsing the notion that "African problems should be solved by African solutions."²¹¹ He also demonstrated sensitivity for Africa's past by visiting the Senegalese island of Gorée, which had served as a key point in the transatlantic slave trade. "It makes you ashamed to be a human being," he subsequently told reporters.²¹² Kissinger also seemed to strike the right chords in his private meetings with African leaders. He explained that, whatever its past actions, the Ford Administration was now fully committed to majority rule. He pledged that the United States would not support any Zimbabwean faction over the other (as it had done in Angola) and conceded that he did not have all the answers to southern Africa's problems. "I don't know the

²⁰⁸ Both the State Department and the Foreign Office viewed Nkomo as the only leader whose support cut across ethnic lines. Because "[t]he ability of moderate black leadership to take control of an independent Rhodesia is central to the country's longer term ability to resist Soviet influence," the US and UK saw Nkomo as their man. Telegram, Kissinger to US Embassy Tehran, "Joshua Nkomo Visit to Saudi Arabia and Iran," August 1, 1976, Iran-State Department Telegrams: from SECSTATE-NODIS (5), Country Files for the Middle East and South Asia, 1974-77, Box 14, GRFL. The Zambians reinforced the view that Nkomo was the most moderate of the Zimbabwean nationalist leaders. See, for instance, Telegram, Joseph Sisco to US Embassy Lusaka, "Chona Meeting with Secretary," February 7, 1976, <http://aad.archives.gov/aad/createpdf?rid=333172&dt=2082&dl=1345>

²⁰⁹ Telegram, Mervyn Brown to Norman Aspin, "Dr. Kissinger's Visit to Dar es Salaam, 25-26 April, 1976," April 28, 1976, FCO 36/1824, TNA.

²¹⁰ Jean Wilkowski, *Abroad for Her Country: Tales of a Pioneer Woman Ambassador in the US Foreign Service*, (South Bend, IN: Notre Dame Press, 2008): 287-290.

²¹¹ *New York Times*, "Kissinger Meets 2 African Leaders," April 26, 1976. This statement seemed to harken back to Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs G. Mennen Williams's (in)famous phrase, "Africa for the Africans!" which had landed him in hot water in the early 1960s. For more on Williams, see Thomas Noer, *Soapy: A Biography of G. Mennen Williams*, (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2005).

²¹² Walter Isaacson, *Kissinger: A Biography*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992): 688.

nuances,” the Secretary confessed in a private meeting with Nyerere. “But I have come here to learn.”²¹³ For their part, neither Nyerere nor Kaunda seem to have protested when Kissinger lectured them on the importance of keeping the Soviets and Cubans at bay. “I know that your Government fears Russian and Cuban interference in Rhodesia, but I also know of no African leader who has spoken of this possibility,” the Zambian leader reassured him. “We do not want to see outside interference at all.”²¹⁴ Nyerere agreed that southern Africa could not afford to become the next Cold War hot spot. For as the Tanzanian leader was fond of saying, “Whether the elephants are fighting or making love, the grass gets trampled.”²¹⁵

Publicly, the highlight of the trip was Kissinger’s Lusaka Address, which was hailed as a masterstroke by those who had been waiting for the United States to emerge as the champion of majority rule in southern Africa.²¹⁶ Kenneth Kaunda was particularly delighted by Kissinger’s speech, which he regarded as a turning point in US-African relations. The Zambian leader informed the American Ambassador to Lusaka that Kissinger’s mission had been “fantastic and beyond all expectations.”²¹⁷ Even Julius Nyerere came away impressed by the Secretary’s seriousness of purpose. “American international power [i]s a fact of life which we all recognise,” he admitted to the British High Commissioner to Dar es Salaam. “If it could be placed behind an agreement for the introduction of majority rule...then perhaps there may yet be a chance for the war in Rhodesia to be brought to an end more quickly than had earlier seemed possible.”²¹⁸ Botswana’s Seretse Khama echoed these sentiments when he paid a state visit to

²¹³ Memoranda of Conversations between Julius Nyerere and Henry Kissinger, April 25 and 26, 1976, DNSA.

²¹⁴ Memorandum of Conversation between US and Zambian delegations, April 27, 1976, DNSA.

²¹⁵ James Spain, *In Those Days: A Diplomat Remembers*, (Kent OH: Kent State University Press, 1998): 165.

²¹⁶ For instance, see, Donald Easum oral history; Wilkowski, *Abroad for Her Country*, 291-92; and *New York Times*, “A Forward Policy,” April 28, 1976.

²¹⁷ Telegram, John McQuiggan to FCO, “Kissinger’s Visit,” April 28, 1976, FCO 45/1876, TNA.

²¹⁸ Telegram, Mervyn Brown to FCO, “MIPT: Rhodesia – Joint Planning,” September 12, 1976, FCO 36/1832, TNA.

Washington in early June.²¹⁹ Thus, Kissinger's shuttle diplomacy and Lusaka Address seem to have succeeded in persuading three of the four Frontline Presidents that an Anglo-American initiative might yet obviate the need for armed struggle in Rhodesia.

Playing the South African Card

By the time he returned to Washington, Kissinger felt confident that the Frontline Presidents would support an Anglo-American initiative on Rhodesia. Because of the vital assistance the Presidents were providing to the guerrillas, Kissinger believed they would be able to ensure that Mugabe and Nkomo entered into negotiations with the Rhodesian Front when the time came. The question he now faced was how to disabuse Smith and his followers of their belief that minority rule remained a viable option. His discussions with the Frontline Presidents and the British had convinced him that the Rhodesian Front and its supporters were living in "cloud cuckoo land" and would never accept majority rule if left to their own devices.²²⁰ The key to forcing the Rhodesians to accept reality, Kissinger was told time and again, was to persuade Rhodesia's stalwart ally, the South African government, to pressure the Rhodesian Front into granting majority rule.²²¹ As long as the South Africans continued to back him, Smith seemed unlikely to budge. But if the South Africans could be persuaded to withdraw their support, the Rhodesians would be left with no choice but to enter into negotiations with the nationalists. Thus, Kissinger decided to sound out South African Prime Minister John Vorster to determine whether he could be persuaded to sever his nation's ties to the Rhodesian Front.

²¹⁹ Meeting with Sir Seretse Khama of Botswana, June 9, 1976, Botswana Folder, Country Files for Africa, 1974-1977, Box 2, GRFL

²²⁰ Quoted in *New York Times*, "The end of Cloud-Cuckoo-Land," March 28, 1976.

²²¹ Historian Sue Onslow has recently documented Ian Smith's unwillingness to break with the British until he received assurances that South African economic and military assistance would be forthcoming. After a decade of international isolation, economic sanctions, and counter-insurgency, this South African support had become more crucial than ever. Sue Onslow, "A Question of Timing: South Africa and Rhodesia's Unilateral Declaration of Independence, 1964-65," *Cold War History*; vol. 5, no. 2 (May 2005): 129-159, 130.

Although the New York Times described Vorster as “the most extreme, most ruthless, and most totalitarian” acolyte of apartheid, Kissinger’s task was not as daunting as it might have seemed.²²² For while South Africa and Rhodesia shared an ideology rooted in white supremacy, there was a great deal of tension behind the façade of white solidarity. As scholars such as Leonard Thompson, Robert Massie, and Sue Onslow have noted, many Afrikaner elites carried a deep-seated hatred of Britain that dated back to the Boer War.²²³ Thus, the mere fact that most white Rhodesians were of British descent was a lingering source of friction. Their respective racial policies also drove a wedge between the two peoples. Seeking to juxtapose their policies against those of their southern neighbor, Rhodesian propagandists tried to justify UDI as a defense of meritocracy rather than a defense of white supremacy. The Rhodesian Front’s supporters insisted that they were merely trying to maintain “standards” and were not opposed to “responsible” Africans having a say in Rhodesia’s governance. In fact, black Africans were not legally prohibited from voting (although the property and education qualifications enshrined in the 1969 Rhodesian constitution ensured that the overwhelming majority of black Rhodesians remained disenfranchised), and eight of the 58 seats in the Rhodesian House of Assembly were reserved for black delegates. Such “enlightened” policies, in conjunction with the limited degree of racial intermingling that occurred in professional athletics and at some of Rhodesia’s top universities allowed many Rhodesians to delude themselves into thinking that their country’s racial policies were more progressive than South African apartheid.²²⁴ Most Afrikaners, by

²²² Cited in Robert Kinloch Massie, Loosing the Bonds: The United States and South Africa in the Apartheid Years, (New York: Doubleday, 1997): 212.

²²³ The Great Trek of 1838 also rankled Afrikaner sensibilities. See, Massie, Loosing the Bonds, 20-21, 392; Sue Onslow, “The Cold War in Southern Africa: White Power, Black Nationalism, and External Intervention,” in ed. Onslow, Cold War in Southern Africa: White Power, Black Liberation, (New York: Routledge, 2009): 12-13; and Leonard Thompson, A History of South Africa, third ed., (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000): 87-96.

²²⁴ Rhodesian scholars Peter Godwin and Ian Hancock have claimed that most Rhodesians possessed an “almost infinite capacity for self-deception.” Godwin and Hancock, “Rhodesians Never Die:” The Impact of War and Political Change on White Rhodesia, c. 1970-1980, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993): 11.

contrast, believed their policy of “separate development” was more humane than the (albeit limited) racial intermingling which occurred across the Limpopo River. While these differences may seem inconsequential in hindsight, this was not how many in Salisbury and Pretoria perceived them. To the contrary, they helped prevent southern Africa’s remaining white redoubts from forging a stronger alliance against the myriad challenges posed by African nationalism in the 1960s and 1970s.²²⁵

Personal factors also played a role in eroding the bonds of white solidarity. At the highest level, John Vorster had long since soured on his Rhodesian counterpart.²²⁶ He had opposed Smith’s Unilateral Declaration of Independence in 1965, and the relationship between the two leaders languished thereafter. Smith’s decision to close Rhodesia’s border with Zambia in January 1973 (in an effort to punish the Zambians for assisting the Zimbabwean guerrillas) had infuriated Vorster. Not only had Smith failed to consult him with beforehand, but the border closure had thrust southern Africa’s racial problems back into the international limelight. As a result, South Africa had found itself on the receiving end of a renewed barrage of criticism from the Afro-Asian bloc at the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity – both of which assumed that Vorster’s regime had sanctioned Smith’s decision.²²⁷ Despite all this, Smith was hardly the most reviled member of the Rhodesian Front. That distinction was held by Defense Minister P.K. van der Byl, whom Vorster so despised that he was prohibited from accompanying

²²⁵ Onslow, “White Power, Black Nationalism,” 11-13. For more on the Rhodesian Front’s beliefs, see Michael Evans, “The Role of Ideology in Rhodesian Front Rule, 1962-1980,” (Unpublished DPhil dissertation: University of Western Australia, 1994).

²²⁶ Memorandum of Conversation between Henry Kissinger, Brent Scowcroft, and Pik Botha, April 15, 1976, April 15, 1976 folder, National Security Adviser Memoranda of Conversations, 1973-1977, Box 19, GRFL.

²²⁷ Memorandum of a Discussion with Mr. Howman, Rhodesian Minister of Foreign Affairs, on 13th January 1973 and Untitled telegram, South African Embassy Cologne to Secretary for Foreign Affairs, January 19, 1973, BTS 1/156/6, vol. 2, SAA. See also, James Barber and John Barratt, South Africa’s Foreign Policy: The Search for Status and Security, 1945-1988, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990): 138 and Evans, “The Role of Ideology,” 154.

any Rhodesian delegation slated to meet with the South African Prime Minister.²²⁸ Several influential South African officials shared their leader's contempt for Smith and his ministers, thereby ensuring that Rhodesian-South African relations remained far less harmonious than many outsiders appreciated.

But perhaps the most important reason Vorster came to regard the Rhodesian Front as expendable was that its continued refusal to reach a settlement with the Zimbabwean nationalists threatened to destabilize the entire region. Whereas the South African Government had viewed Rhodesia as a useful buffer against the black states north of the Zambezi River at the time of UDI, the collapse of the Portuguese Empire in 1974 forced Vorster to reassess this view. Once Mozambique and Angola had attained independence, Vorster realized, a white-ruled Rhodesia could no longer serve as an effective *cordon sanitaire* between his country and black Africa. To the contrary, he began to see in the Rhodesian crisis the seeds of another Angola, with a protracted guerrilla war leading to political, economic, and military chaos. Vorster also appreciated that the longer the bush war dragged on, the more likely Robert Mugabe and his "wild boys" were to seize control of Rhodesia and transform the colony into a springboard for guerrilla attacks against South Africa.²²⁹ Therefore, he quietly let it be known that he was willing to sacrifice the Rhodesian Front at the altar of African nationalism – provided that a "moderate" black regime succeeded the Rhodesian Front.²³⁰ Vorster may also have hoped that

²²⁸ Horne, From the Barrel of a Gun, 92.

²²⁹ Nor was the Prime Minister alone in seeing Rhodesia as a liability rather than an ally. See, for instance, P. Snyman to Secretary for Foreign Affairs, "Speech by Mr. Grobbelaar, General Secretary of the Trades Union Council of South Africa, September 5, 1974, BTS 1/156/3, vol. 12, SAA.

²³⁰ As one Zambian official noted in 1975, "[T]he crumbling of Portuguese rule has brought majority rule so close that even the South African government has recognized its inevitability. So, South Africa is trying to pave the way for moderate forces to gain political power, to provide a buffer zone protecting her from the rest of independent Africa and to derive large benefits from continued economic cooperation." Brief for the Zambian Delegation to the United States led by His Excellency Dr. K.D. Kaunda, April 18th to 21st 1975, UNIP 7/23/51, UNIPA. In fact, Vorster and Kaunda had brought Smith and the Zimbabwean nationalists together to try to reconcile their differences in 1975. Although the ensuing talks got nowhere, the process demonstrated that the South African Prime

facilitating Rhodesia's transition to majority rule would gain his regime more time in which to pursue its strategy of relocating black Africans into politically independent but impoverished "homelands."²³¹

Although Vorster had expressed a willingness to pressure the Rhodesian Front into granting majority rule, Kissinger could not assume that the South African Prime Minister would automatically support an Anglo-American initiative. For one, Vorster had imbibed a particularly virulent strain of Afrikaner nationalism and felt a searing hatred of all things British.²³² Whether he could bring himself to cooperate with the Callaghan Government, therefore, remained uncertain. Vorster also had his doubts about the Americans after the Ford Administration had left South Africa "in the lurch" in Angola the previous year.²³³ The fact that a number of influential South African ministers shared this opinion sparked a heated debate as to whether such an "indecisive and unreliable" nation could be trusted.²³⁴ Finally, even if Vorster was able to overcome his distrust of the British and the Americans, there was no guarantee that he would be able to garner sufficient support for such a drastic change of policy among his countrymen and cabinet colleagues. Although the Prime Minister had come to regard the Rhodesian Front as "the Achilles heel of Southern Africa," many white South Africans saw "good old Smithy" as an ally fighting for a common cause. The fact that a substantial number of Rhodesians were of

Minister was serious about promoting a settlement. See, Meredith, The Past is Another Country, 134-144. I plan to devote a chapter to this initiative when the dissertation becomes a monograph.

²³¹ For more on the "homelands" policy, see Thompson, South Africa, 190-204.

²³² Massie, Loosing the Bonds, 86-87.

²³³ While it remains unclear how closely the CIA and the South Africans collaborated in Angola, the feeling that the South Africans were "left in the lurch" has been well documented. See, for instance, Barber and Barratt, South African Foreign Policy, 238; Meredith, The Past is Another Country, 220; and Odd Arne Westad, The Global Cold War, 237.

²³⁴ Telegram, Ambassador William Bowdler to State Department, "Conversation with PM Vorster," February 19, 1976, South Africa (4) folder, National Security Adviser's Presidential Country Files for Africa, 1974-1977, Box 5, GRFL.

South African stock only served to make the issue that much more emotionally charged.²³⁵

Despite these obstacles, Kissinger saw South African pressure as the key to unlocking the Rhodesian crisis and was determined to see whether Vorster was willing to play his “indispensable part” in the search for Zimbabwean independence.

However, the Kissinger-Vorster summit was nearly derailed by the international furor caused by the South African Government’s draconian handling of a student protest in Soweto (an impoverished township on the outskirts of Johannesburg). On June 16, only a week before Vorster was scheduled to meet with Kissinger, violence erupted in the poverty-stricken community when white police officers shot and killed Hector Petersen, a black thirteen-year-old. Petersen had been one of nearly 10,000 schoolchildren protesting a recent government mandate that classes not taught in an indigenous African language would henceforth be taught in Afrikaans rather than in English. With most of its 700,000 residents living below the poverty line, unable to find employment, and crammed into primitive dwellings that had neither electricity nor running water, Soweto was nothing short of a powder keg. The government’s decision to force students to learn Afrikaans, long despised as the “language of the conqueror,” provided the necessary spark. The student protesters responded to Petersen’s murder by setting schools, government buildings, and vehicles ablaze. The police retaliated by firing on the crowd, which only served to further provoke the protestors. Despite official claims that the situation

²³⁵ As former South African Prime Minister Hendrik Verwoerd commented shortly after UDI, “We have blood relations over the border. However others may feel or act towards their kith and kin, South Africans on the whole cannot cold-shoulder theirs.” Cited in Barber and Barrett, *South African Foreign Policy*, 137. Even many of black Africa’s statesmen recognized that abandoning the Rhodesians in their hour of need would pose major problems for Vorster. Memorandum of Conversation between Sir Seretse Khama, Gerald Ford, and Brent Scowcroft, June 9 1976, June 9 1976 folder, National Security Adviser Memoranda of Conversation, 1973-1977, Box 19, GRFL.

was “completely under control” by early evening, the violence raged on throughout the night and most of the next day, leaving nearly 600 dead and many more wounded.²³⁶

The international community rushed to condemn the South African government for the incident. In the days following the uprising, stories portraying the plight of Soweto’s residents were splashed across front pages throughout Africa and the West. Most accounts (including those presented in such South African dailies as The Rand Daily Mail and Die Vaderland) blamed the incident, the bloodiest to occur on South African soil in 16 years, on the Afrikaners’ apartheid policies.²³⁷ So did the United Nations Security Council, which unanimously passed a resolution condemning the South African government for its heavy-handed actions and calling for an end to all forms of racial discrimination in the Republic.²³⁸ In light of the Soweto uprising, some clamored for Kissinger to call off his upcoming summit with the South Africans. These calls seem to have gone unheeded; for the record contains no indication that the Ford Administration considered cancelling the Kissinger-Vorster talks. To the contrary, they may have hoped that Vorster would be more amenable to the idea of pulling the plug on Ian Smith’s regime in the wake of the worst domestic crisis of his prime ministership.

At his June 23 meeting with the South Africans, Kissinger quickly cut to the chase. The Secretary offered Vorster two choices: he could either work to promote majority rule in Rhodesia or he could continue playing for time while the situation around him crumbled. Kissinger pledged to provide South Africa with substantial economic aid if Vorster agreed to play a constructive role in the search for Zimbabwean independence. If he refused, Kissinger warned,

²³⁶ Massie, Loosing the Bonds, 393-98; Thompson, History of South Africa, 212-13; New York Times, “Six Die in South African Riot after Black Student Protest,” June 17, 1976, and ABC Evening News, June 16, 1976, Vanderbilt Television News Archives (hereafter, VTVA).

²³⁷ New York Times, “Roots of Violence for South Africa,” June 18, 1976 and The Times of London, “The Lessons of Soweto,” June 19, 1976.

²³⁸ M. Tamarkin, The Making of Zimbabwe: Decolonization in Regional and International Politics, (London: Frank Cass, 1990): 135.

the Ford Administration would be forced to turn its back on Pretoria. It was, Kissinger acknowledged, “as fundamental a decision as any South African Prime Minister had ever faced.”²³⁹ Whether because of the downturn in South African-Rhodesian relations, Vorster’s pessimism about the Rhodesian Front’s ability to defeat the guerrillas, or because of a sense of crisis generated by the Soweto uprising, Vorster agreed to apply the necessary pressure on the Rhodesian Front as long as the Americans and British could produce a “reasonable deal” that he could “sell” to his electorate. He predicted that a package which included: financial inducements designed to prevent an exodus of white artisans, farmers, and civil servants; the enshrinement of minority rights in Zimbabwe’s independence constitution; a “moderate” black leader; a British presence during the transition period; and an end to the bush war would allow him the latitude he needed to pressure Smith into another round of negotiations with the nationalists.²⁴⁰ The deal was reaffirmed during the course of a follow-up meeting the next day, and Kissinger left the summit confident that he was on the verge of bringing the Rhodesian saga to an end.²⁴¹

The Anglo-American-South African Initiative

After his summit with the South Africans, Kissinger returned to London to debrief the British. The Secretary relayed Vorster’s willingness to pressure Ian Smith to negotiate with the nationalists so long as his preconditions were satisfied. The transatlantic allies agreed that there would need to be some political and economic incentives to encourage whites in key fields to remain in the country after majority rule was implemented. For unless a sufficient number of white farmers, artisans, and civil servants could be persuaded to stay on until their African

²³⁹ Note of a Meeting between the Prime Minister and Dr. Kissinger at 10 Downing Street on Friday 25 June 1976 at Noon, FCO 36/1826, TNA.

²⁴⁰ Memorandum of a Conversation between Henry Kissinger and Johannes Vorster, June 23 1976, June 23 1976 folder, National Security Adviser’s Memoranda of Conversations, 1973-1977, Box 20, GRFL.

²⁴¹ Memorandum of a conversation between an American and South African delegation, June 24, 1976, DNSA.

replacements had been trained, Zimbabwe's economy was likely to run aground. The allies also discussed the idea of Britain assuming control of Rhodesia during a brief transition period in order to ease tensions and ensure that free and fair elections were held as soon as was practicable. Kissinger explained that his discussions with Vorster had reaffirmed his belief that the United Kingdom would need to govern Rhodesia during the transitional period if a workable agreement was to be reached. Callaghan was not sanguine about the possibility of re-imposing colonial control and concluded that he would have to "think very carefully" about it.²⁴²

While the British pondered how active a role they were willing to assume in Rhodesia, Kissinger dispatched Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs William Schaufele to southern Africa to determine whether the general framework he had discussed with the South Africans and the British was acceptable to Julius Nyerere and Kenneth Kaunda. Specifically, he wanted to know whether the Presidents would support a package deal that called for an 18- to 24-month transition to majority rule, economic and political guarantees for the Rhodesian whites, and British oversight of the transition period. During the course of a July 9 meeting in Lusaka, Schaufele outlined this plan to Kenneth Kaunda. Although Kaunda was hesitant to commit himself, Schaufele came away from the meeting confident that, when push came to shove, the Zambian leader would support the deal.²⁴³ Schaufele was further encouraged by the results of a July 12 meeting in Dar es Salaam. Nyerere cautioned that the divisions among the Zimbabwean nationalists could pose problems down the road, but he encouraged the Americans to "push on"

²⁴² Note on a Meeting between the Prime Minister and Dr. Kissinger, June 25, 1976, FCO 36/1826, TNA.

²⁴³ "Kaunda is taken with the vigor, the sense of commitment, and the obvious determination of the United States," Schaufele informed the State Department. "[H]e is...reluctant to go all the way at the present and his final attitude may depend upon consultation with the other Presidents. Nevertheless, I think it was a constructive start to my mission." Telegram, William Schaufele to Henry Kissinger, "Conversation with Kaunda on Southern Africa," July 8, 1976, Zambia-State Department Telegrams to SECSTATE- NODIS (3) folder, National Security Adviser's Presidential Country Files for Africa, 1974-1977, Box 8, GRFL.

with their initiative.²⁴⁴ Schaufele also discussed the scheme with Joseph Mobutu of Zaire, Felix Houphouet-Boigny of the Ivory Coast, Leopold Senghor of Senegal, and Joshua Nkomo. When none of these leaders objected to the details of the package he presented, Schaufele informed Kissinger that he had received a “general mandate” to continue working toward a negotiated settlement along the lines envisioned in Washington, London, and Pretoria.²⁴⁵

When the British learned of the positive reception Schaufele had received in Africa, they decided that the time was ripe to make a final push for Zimbabwean independence. “Unless we take the opportunity thus presented, we shall probably lose our last chance of bringing about a peaceful settlement on the basis of the principles set out by the Prime Minister in his statement of 22 March,” one high-ranking official remarked during a meeting of the Ministerial Group on Southern Africa.²⁴⁶ Seizing upon this opportunity, however, was easier said than done. In order to proceed with the initiative, Callaghan needed to secure the approval of his Cabinet, and the presence of left-wing ministers such as Tony Benn and Michael Foot ensured that this would be no easy feat. Like many Labourites, Benn and Foot loathed South Africa and were reluctant to jeopardize Britain’s relations with black Africa by entering into negotiations with John Vorster, the high priest of apartheid. Callaghan was temporarily able to skirt the issue by confining discussion of Rhodesian affairs to the Ministerial Group on Southern Africa, a body over which he could exercise a more direct influence than he could his Cabinet. On July 22, Callaghan and Tony Crosland persuaded the Ministerial Group to allow Kissinger to press ahead with the initiative as long as the Frontline Presidents remained on board.²⁴⁷ Shortly thereafter, Crosland

²⁴⁴ Telegram, William Schaufele to Henry Kissinger, “Conversation with Nyerere,” July 11, 1976, Tanzania-State Department Telegrams to SECSTATE- NODIS (1) folder, National Security Adviser’s Presidential Country Files for Africa, 1974-1977, Box 6, GRFL

²⁴⁵ Telegram, Peter Ramsbotham to FCO, July 14, 1976, “Southern Africa: Schaufele’s Tour,” FCO 36/1826, TNA.

²⁴⁶ Speaking Note, “Rhodesia: Meeting of Gen. 12 on 22 July,” July 20, 1976, FCO 36/1827, TNA.

²⁴⁷ Summary of a Gen 12 Meeting, FCO 36/1827, TNA.

informed the British Ambassador to Washington that Kissinger was free to present the Anglo-American package to the South Africans as soon as it was finalized.²⁴⁸

While the transatlantic allies continued to hammer out the details of the package, the British insisted upon further consultations with the Frontline Presidents. Ostensibly designed to keep the Presidents up-to-date, these consultations also arose out of British concerns about Henry Kissinger's *modus operandi*. The British had harbored suspicions about the Secretary's African policy from the beginning (especially the haste with which the Secretary was determined to work and his ignorance of African affairs), and these concerns escalated as several tactical disagreements began to boil to the surface.²⁴⁹ British officials also worried that Kissinger not keeping them adequately informed about his summit with Vorster and Schauffele's subsequent African mission. "There is a danger of Kissinger running away with us," noted one member of the Rhodesia Department. "What I fear is that in his eagerness to get on, he is consciously or unconsciously concealing some of the difficulties, over-simplifying some of the issues, and possibly representing to us that Vorster on the one hand and the Africans on the other are more wholeheartedly in agreement with his plan than is actually the case."²⁵⁰ While the British did not "detect or suspect any devious US attempt to deceive us," they felt it wise "to keep our eyes open just in case."²⁵¹ A joint demarche to the Frontline Presidents offered a perfect pretext for

²⁴⁸ Telegram, Tony Crosland to Peter Ramsbotham, "Rhodesia: Joint Planning," July 29, 1976, FCO 36/1828, TNA.

²⁴⁹ The most salient of these differences concerned Ian Smith's fate. The British, who had been attempting to deal with the Rhodesian leader for more than a decade, regarded Smith's ouster as a precondition for proceeding. "We must start from the proposition that there is no hope of a peaceful, negotiated settlement while Smith is still around. How are we going to get rid of him?" Ted Rowlands queried in a minute to Tony Crosland. Minute, Rowlands to Crosland, "Meeting with Dr. Kissinger," June 24, 1976, FCO 36/1826, TNA. Kissinger, by contrast, believed that the Rhodesian Prime Minister should remain in office until the last possible moment. He worried that the nationalists would interpret Smith's departure as a sign that the whites were prepared to throw in the towel and would either lose interest in negotiations or increase their demands if Smith stepped down too soon. In short, Kissinger wanted to use Smith's departure as a bargaining chip. Memorandum of Conversation between Gerald Ford, Henry Kissinger, and Brent Scowcroft, July 13 1976, July 13 1976 folder, National Security Adviser Memoranda of Conversations, 1973-1977, Box 20, GRFL.

²⁵⁰ Draft Speaking Note for a Gen. 12 Meeting on July 22, 1976, FCO 36/1827, TNA.

²⁵¹ Tony Duff to Mr. Snodgrass, "Rhodesia Joint Planning," August 19, 1976, FCO 36/1829.

checking up on the Americans. Because Gerald Ford was unwilling to act without Britain's support, Kissinger had little choice but to acquiesce to the British request.

Kissinger and Crosland intended to send a joint delegation to southern Africa, but this plan was abandoned at the last minute because the statesmen wanted to get separate readings of the Frontline Presidents' attitudes "and compare notes afterwards."²⁵² The new plan called for an American delegation (headed by Schaufele and Undersecretary of State for Economic Affairs William Rogers) to consult with Nyerere, Kaunda, and Mozambican President Samora Machel. A British team (headed by Minister of State for African Affairs Ted Rowlands and Tony Duff) would follow on the Americans' heels. Both delegations would work from a joint brief prepared in advance, and, in a further display of collaboration, Kissinger arranged for the American ambassadors to Dar es Salaam, Lusaka, and Maputo to brief their British counterparts about what had transpired during Schaufele and Rogers's meeting with the host President.²⁵³ Through these consultations, the British and Americans would keep each other fully briefed about their findings and opinions. If everything seemed promising, Kissinger would meet with Vorster to discuss the specifics of the package which the Americans and British were assembling and to confirm that the Prime Minister was still willing to tighten the screws on the Rhodesian Front.

The Americans found Kaunda and Nyerere in a much more pessimistic mood than they had been a month earlier. While they quibbled with various aspects of the Anglo-American package, it soon became apparent that they were primarily concerned about the disunity among the nationalist factions. Nyerere, in particular, felt that ZANU and ZAPU were prepared to deal

²⁵² Telegram, Tony Crosland to Embassy Washington, "Rhodesia Joint Planning," August 6, 1976, FCO 36/1828, TNA.

²⁵³ Telegram, Tony Crosland to High Commission Lusaka, "Mr. Rowlands' Visit," August 24, 1976, FCO 36/1830, TNA.

with the Rhodesian Front but not with each other.²⁵⁴ As Schaufele surmised, there was “one basic reason” for the Tanzanian leader’s reluctance to support the Anglo-American-South African initiative: the “disarray” within the ranks of the Zimbabwean nationalists.²⁵⁵ Kenneth Kaunda echoed these concerns.²⁵⁶ So did Samora Machel, who glumly predicted that unless the rift between ZANU and ZAPU was healed, “an Angola-type civil war” was likely to erupt if and when Ian Smith agreed to cede power.²⁵⁷

Despite these concerns, Henry Kissinger was determined to plow ahead with his Rhodesian diplomacy. This push may have come at the behest of Gerald Ford, who had refrained from openly advocating majority rule throughout the 1976 Republican primary campaign.²⁵⁸ Once he had clinched his party’s nomination for the presidency, however, Ford

²⁵⁴ Telegram, William Schaufele to Henry Kissinger, “Conversation with Nyerere,” July 11, 1976, Tanzania-State Department Telegrams: to SECSTATE- NODIS (1) folder, National Security Adviser’s Presidential Country Files for Africa, 1974-1977, Box 6, GRFL.

²⁵⁵ Telegram, William Schaufele and William Rogers to Henry Kissinger, “Conversation with President Nyerere,” August 28, 1976, Tanzania-State Department Telegrams to SECSTATE- NODIS (2) folder, National Security Adviser’s Presidential Country Files for Africa, 1974-1977, Box 6, GRFL.

²⁵⁶ Telegram, William Schaufele and William Rogers to Henry Kissinger, “Meeting with Kaunda in Lusaka,” August 25, 1976, Zambia-State Department Telegrams to SECSTATE – NODIS (4) folder, National Security Adviser’s Presidential Country Files for Africa, 1974-1977, Box 8, GRFL.

²⁵⁷ Telegram, William Schaufele to Henry Kissinger and William Rogers, “Conversation with President Machel,” August 30, 1976, Mozambique – State Department Telegrams to SECSTATE- NODIS folder, National Security Adviser’s Presidential Country Files for Africa, 1974-1977, Box 4, GRFL.

²⁵⁸ The Rhodesian issue played a small but important role in the 1976 Republican primaries. Many Americans conservatives – from politicians such as Senators James Eastland and Thomas Dodd to intellectuals like Milton Friedman and William F. Buckley Junior – regarded the colony as a bulwark of Western civilization and an important anti-communist bastion. So did many Republican voters. Some doubted that black Rhodesians would be better off under majority rule, while others were concerned that Robert Mugabe and Joshua Nkomo “would drag the white people into the streets and slaughter them.” Ronald Reagan capitalized on these fears, assailing the Ford Administration’s Rhodesian policy as an “impulsive reaction” that was likely to lead to “a massacre” of the Rhodesian whites. Some of Ford’s advisors felt that Kissinger’s Lusaka April 27 speech had played a role in Reagan’s surprising victory in the Texas primary, which was held on May 1. Thus, although the President maintained that the United States needed to “be on the rights side” of the Rhodesian issue, he played down his interest in promoting a settlement until he had locked up the nomination. White reactions cited in Letter, Dean A. Watkins to Gerald Ford, March 22, 1976, CO 1-1 Africa 1/1/76-1/20/77 (Executive) folder, White House Central File, Subject File, Box 4, GRFL; Gerald Horne, *From the Barrel of the Gun*, 82; *New York Times*, “Reagan Attacks Kissinger for His Stand on Rhodesia,” May 1, 1976; Letter, Ronald Elliott to Harold Stern, May 18, 1976, CO 1-1 Africa 1/1/76-1/20/77 (General) folder, White House Central File, Subject File, Box 4, GRFL. Ford staff beliefs in Untitled Memorandum, Dorrance Smith to Doug Blaser, July 26, 1976, Press Office Improvement Sessions, 8/6-7/76 - Press Advance (2) folder, Ron Nessen Papers, Box 24, GRFL. In his memoirs, Ford admitted that Kissinger’s Lusaka speech probably contributed to Reagan’s surprise victory in Texas. Gerald Ford, *A Time to Heal: The Autobiography of Gerald R. Ford*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1979): 380-381.

was eager to see progress in Rhodesia – perhaps in the hope that facilitating the colony’s transition to majority rule would appeal to independent voters. “Now that we’ve gotten rid of that son-of-a-bitch Reagan, we can just do what’s right,” the President told his chief foreign policy advisers before an August 30 Cabinet meeting.²⁵⁹ James Callaghan shared this desire for haste. He realized that Joshua Nkomo was rapidly losing ground to the “boys with the guns” and questioned whether Jimmy Carter, whom the British Embassy in Washington expected to capture the American presidency in November, would share Ford and Kissinger’s determination to resolve the Rhodesian crisis.²⁶⁰ Thus, although Nyerere, Kaunda, and Machel were pessimistic about their ability to unify the Zimbabwean nationalists, the transatlantic allies decided to proceed with their initiative.²⁶¹

On September 4, Kissinger met with the South African Prime Minister in Zurich. Vorster seemed prepared to pull the rug out from under Smith, and the conversation shifted to tactics. The Secretary advised Vorster to try to compel Smith to publicly declare his intention to move toward majority rule within two years and to invite the Zimbabwean nationalists to negotiate with him. Such an offer, Kissinger predicted, would be difficult for the nationalists to refuse. As the meeting was winding down, Vorster requested that Kissinger meet with Smith. The Secretary demurred. “I haven’t got much heart for doing it,” he confessed. However, Vorster was insistent. “You think it’s a painful thing,” he stated, “we think it’s the logical thing to do.” The South African Foreign Minister reinforced this argument, pointing out that Rhodesia’s 1961 constitution contained the seeds of majority rule. With more than a trace of disdain, he claimed that a rapid transfer to majority rule was “the logical result of what they’ve been advocating for

²⁵⁹ Memorandum of Conversation between Gerald Ford, Henry Kissinger, and Brent Scowcroft, August 30 1976, August 13 1976 folder, National Security Adviser Memoranda of Conversation, 1973-1977, Box 20, GRFL.

²⁶⁰ Summary of a Gen 12 (Ministerial Group on Southern Africa) Meeting, July 22, 1976, FCO 36/1827, TNA.

²⁶¹ As Callaghan’s Private Secretary remarked, “In the Prime Minister’s view, it is worth going on.” Minute, Patrick Wright to Richard Dales, September 1, 1976, FCO 36/1831, TNA.

years.”²⁶² Kissinger was unenthusiastic about the prospect of meeting the Rhodesian leader, but he agreed to do so if such a tête-à-tête would drive home to Smith the fact that his regime was completely isolated.²⁶³ Thus, by September 1976, all the pieces for a successful resolution of the Rhodesian crisis seemed to be falling into place.

On September 14, shortly after departing Zurich, Vorster summoned Ian Smith to Pretoria to let him know that the game was up. In no uncertain terms, Vorster threatened to withdraw his country’s military and economic support unless Smith accepted the Anglo-American-South African deal. Smith vehemently protested this ultimatum, warning that the Rhodesians were a proud people and that there were limits to what they would accept. If outside powers tried to push him too far in the direction of “abject surrender,” Smith vowed, he was prepared to “face the consequences” of going it alone.²⁶⁴ However, the Rhodesian leader must have known that these words would ring hollow; he knew better than anyone that his regime was doomed if the South African lifeline was severed. With his back against the wall, Smith agreed to meet with the American Secretary of State and hear him out.

On September 19, the Rhodesian leader returned to South Africa – this time to meet with Henry Kissinger. It was a difficult meeting for both sides. Before the negotiations commenced, Kissinger and Smith spoke privately for twenty minutes. The Secretary acknowledged that the proposal he was about to put forward was far from perfect, but he insisted that it represented the best deal the Rhodesians were likely to get.²⁶⁵ When they returned, Kissinger assured the Rhodesians that he derived no joy from his task. To the contrary, he considered it “a tragedy”

²⁶² This comment echoed a speech the Foreign minister had given in Durban on August 13, in which he had told the Rhodesians, “Majority rule is inherent in your constitution – implement it.” Unknown to Secretary of Foreign Affairs, “Minister Hilgard Muller’s Durban Speech,” August 19, 1976, BTS 1/156/3 vol. 14, SAA.

²⁶³ Memorandum of a Conversation between an American and South African delegation, September 4, 1976, DNSA.

²⁶⁴ Ian Smith, The Great Betrayal: The Memoirs of Ian Douglas Smith, (London: Blake Publishing, 1997), 199-200.

²⁶⁵ Smith, The Great Betrayal, 202.

because both races would be worse off under majority rule.²⁶⁶ Nevertheless, he emphasized that a rapid transition to majority rule was the only way to forestall an all-out race war and a likely communist takeover. Demonstrating a detailed knowledge of the bush war that impressed even the head of Rhodesia's Central Intelligence Organization, Kissinger reminded the Rhodesians that their position was becoming untenable. Unless they received substantial military and economic assistance, their country was likely to collapse within a matter of months.²⁶⁷ Such aid, Kissinger declared, could not be expected from the United States. "There is no domestic support for it in America," he asserted. "There are many conservatives in America who are heroic in speeches until they have to vote for military spending." The Secretary then proceeded to lay out the terms of the Anglo-American-South African plan. It required the Rhodesians to implement majority rule within two years. In exchange, the British would lift sanctions and the Frontline Presidents would use their leverage to persuade the guerrillas to tamp down the bush war. To sweeten the pot, Kissinger pledged that Rhodesia would receive \$2 billion in financial aid once a black government was in place.²⁶⁸ Confronted by Kissinger and Vorster, Smith saw no option but to acquiesce.²⁶⁹ He accepted Kissinger's terms but maintained that he would have to persuade his Cabinet colleagues to agree to them as well. Smith pledged he would do his best to convince them but refused to make any promises.²⁷⁰

²⁶⁶ This does not seem to have been a negotiating ploy. "I have one great worry in the whole of this exercise," he told the British Ambassador to Pretoria. "I know that what we are doing is right in state terms, but I am much less certain about it in purely human terms." Teleletter, David Scott to Anthony Duff, September 19, 1976, FCO 36/1837, TNA.

²⁶⁷ Flower, *Serving Secretly*, 170.

²⁶⁸ Memorandum of a Conversation between an American and a Rhodesian delegation, September 19, 1976, DNSA.

²⁶⁹ As an embittered Smith later recalled, "Having a gun pointed at one's head leaves little room for equivocation." Smith, *The Great Betrayal*, 208. While Smith has made much of the external pressure on him to settle, domestic considerations also pointed toward the need for a settlement. Most significantly, sanctions were finally beginning to "bite" and the bush war was becoming increasingly costly. As the economy stagnated and the draft age kept increasing, white morale plummeted. By mid-1976, more whites were emigrating out of the colony than were immigrating. Rhodesia Department Monthly Summaries Nos. 5 and 7, (May and July 1976), FCO 36/1814, TNA.

²⁷⁰ Memorandum of a Conversation between an American, Rhodesian, and South African delegation, September 19, 1976, DNSA.

On September 24, Smith took to the airwaves to announce his party's decision. The announcement was much anticipated throughout Africa and the West. In his usual monotone, Smith announced that he had accepted Kissinger's terms. The Prime Minister made it clear that he did not regard the proposals put forth in Pretoria as the best solution to Rhodesia's problems, stating that he had been forced to accept against his better judgment. "The American and British governments, together with the major Western powers, have made up their minds as to the kind of solution they wish to see in Rhodesia and they are determined to bring it about," he stated. "The alternative to acceptance of the proposals was explained to us in the clearest of terms, which left no room for misunderstandings." In an effort to reassure his audience, Smith listed the benefits of the Anglo-American-South African package: it would end the bush war, result in the lifting of sanctions, and bring a much-needed financial stimulus. Despite his reservations, Smith encouraged his followers to rally behind the plan. "What I have said this evening will be the cause of deep concern to you all, and understandably so," he acknowledged. "But we live in a world of rapid change, and if we are to survive, we must be prepared to adapt ourselves to change."²⁷¹

Reactions to Smith's speech varied. Many Rhodesians could only listen in disbelief as the man who, only six months earlier, had declared that there would be no majority rule in Rhodesia for another thousand years, publicly agreed to hand over power in a mere 24 months. Conversely, the Western media portrayed Kissinger as a miracle worker. Time hailed Smith's September 24 announcement as "the spectacular climax of a carefully and astutely planned push for peace."²⁷² The Washington Post praised Kissinger for displaying an unexpected degree of courage and imagination. "He has added luster to his own reputation, and he has provided a

²⁷¹ "I Smith's Address to the Nation on the Kissinger Plan," September 24 1976, reprinted in Baumhogger, The Struggle for Independence, vol. 2, 155-156.

²⁷² Quoted in Isaacson, Kissinger, 691.

heartening example of the wise use of American power,” one editorial gushed.²⁷³ Thus, although Kissinger remained stoic while listening to the BBC feed of Smith’s speech as his Boeing 707 sped back to Andrews Air Force Base, he had ample reason to be pleased with the results of his African diplomacy. He had seemingly prevented a race war from erupting in southern Africa and deprived the communists of an opportunity to meddle in the region. Moreover, if a negotiated settlement could be reached before the upcoming presidential election, it was possible that the agreement might help Gerald Ford win re-election.²⁷⁴

The Geneva Conference and its Aftermath

Despite the media hoopla, Kissinger’s Rhodesian diplomacy did not lead to a settlement. The obvious question is: why not? Some of the blame rests with the British – a theory Kissinger has espoused in his memoirs.²⁷⁵ Sour grapes aside, there is a good deal of substance to these charges. As previously noted, the British were anxious to avoid becoming too deeply embroiled in Rhodesian affairs. The Labour Party had historically been pessimistic about Britain’s ability to affect change in Rhodesia, and the country’s 1976 appeal to the International Monetary Fund for a bailout only served to increase this sense of impotence. “In our Cabinet, there is a marked reluctance to get involved [in Rhodesian affairs] because we have been caught before,” James Callaghan remarked during a September 1976 meeting with Kissinger. “You can imagine, in our present economic situation and [with] lots of other problems, there is no great rush in the Cabinet

²⁷³ Washington Post, “An African Success,” September 26, 1976. See also, NBC Nightly News, September 24, 1976, VTVA.

²⁷⁴ The African media was far more restrained in its response to Smith’s address. See, for instance, Editorial, Ghanaian Times, September 28, 1976 and Editorial, Daily News (Dar es Salaam), September 27, in ed. Baumhogger, The Struggle for Independence, vol. 2, 157 and 158.

²⁷⁵ Kissinger, Years of Renewal, 1014.

to get into the process again.”²⁷⁶ British ministers had hoped that, with Kissinger serving as an interlocutor, Smith and the Zimbabwean nationalists would be able to reach an agreement on their own. Assuming that their only duty would be to approve the deal struck by the two sides, British officials were caught off guard when they were asked to chair a Rhodesian conference. Having hoped to avoid wading back into the Rhodesian morass, they only agreed to do so only under a torrent of international pressure.²⁷⁷ There was, therefore, little optimism in London when Tony Crosland announced on September 29 that Britain would convene a conference in Geneva, the aim of which would be to work out the details of the interim government that would draft Zimbabwe’s independence constitution and oversee the country’s first set of elections.

Shortly thereafter, the British tapped their representative to the United Nations, Ivor Richard, to chair the conference. It was a strange choice. Not only was it customary for the Foreign Secretary to chair such talks, but the nationalists distrusted Richard, who, in the words of Joshua Nkomo, “had consistently vetoed every helpful proposal anyone made for Rhodesia” at the UN.²⁷⁸ Some scholars have viewed the decision to send Richard to Geneva as proof that the British did not take the conference seriously.²⁷⁹ More likely, the decision underscored the fact that Britain expected the Rhodesians and the nationalists to make most of the running. Whatever the case, Richard proved to be an ineffective chairman. He failed to develop a strong rapport with either the Rhodesians or the nationalists and allowed the conference to become bogged down in trivial matters. Not all of the blame can be laid on the chairman’s shoulders, however;

²⁷⁶ Memorandum of a Conversation between a British and American delegation, September 23, 1976, DNSA. For more on the IMF crisis, see Whitehead, *Britain in the Seventies*, 181-201.

²⁷⁷ Most notably, this pressure came from Henry Kissinger, Kenneth Kaunda, Julius Nyerere, and John Vorster. See, Telegram, Mervyn Brown to FCO, “My I.P.T.: Rhodesia,” September 27, 1976, FCO 36/1837; Telegram, Stephen Miles to FCO, “Rhodesia Joint Planning,” September 27, 1976, FCO 36/1837; and Untitled Telegram, David Scott to FCO, September 28, 1976, FCO 36/1837.

²⁷⁸ Nkomo, *The Story of My Life*, 172.

²⁷⁹ Stephan John Stedman, *Peacemaking in Civil War: International Mediation in Zimbabwe, 1974-1980*, (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1991): 105.

he was handicapped by the Foreign Office's lack of preparation. Operating under the assumption that the British role at Geneva would merely be to facilitate negotiations between Smith and the nationalists, the Foreign Office never developed a coherent strategy for prodding the sides toward an agreement. As one high-ranking British official subsequently recalled, his pre-conference briefing consisted of little more than being told, "Well, good luck. Have a good conference."²⁸⁰ Combined with Richard's poor chairmanship, this lack of a coherent strategy all but ensured that the talks would run aground.

While acknowledging that the British did not handle the Geneva Conference particularly well, many scholars of the Rhodesian crisis have blamed Henry Kissinger for handing the British a poisoned chalice.²⁸¹ Again, there is a good deal of truth to this claim. In his haste to get a deal done, the Secretary promised more than he – or Ivor Richard – could deliver. In his meeting with Ian Smith and John Vorster, Kissinger made two concessions that deviated from the Anglo-American-South Africans proposals. He told Smith that the Rhodesians could chair the interim government that would oversee Rhodesia's transition to majority rule. He also suggested that the Rhodesians could retain control of the army and the police during the transition. Neither the nationalists nor the Frontline Presidents had agreed to these conditions. When Kissinger subsequently met with Kenneth Kaunda and Joshua Nkomo, it quickly became clear that they had serious qualms about them. The proposed structure of the interim government seemed to leave too much power in the hands of the whites, while the prospect of leaving one of Smith's cronies in charge of the army and police raised questions as to whether these forces would be

²⁸⁰ According to this official, the Geneva Conference's main contribution to the search for Zimbabwean independence was that it served as "a lesson...in how not to run a Rhodesian constitutional conference." Robin Byatt in "Britain and Rhodesia: Route to Settlement" seminar held June 5, 2005 (Centre for Contemporary British History, 2007, <http://www.ccbh.ac.uk/downloads/rhodesia2.pdf>, 75-77.

²⁸¹ Stedman, *Peacemaking in Civil War*, 117-123 and David Martin and Phyllis Johnson, *The Struggle for Zimbabwe: The Chimurenga War*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1981): 259.

used to undermine majority rule.²⁸² Kissinger was so disturbed by the tepid reception that these proposals received from Kaunda and Nkomo that he resorted to a bit of deception, reassuring the Frontline Presidents that these matters were not set in stone while simultaneously intimating to Smith that the Presidents had okayed the terms of their September 19 agreement.²⁸³ Thus, it was only by “lying to all sides” that the Secretary managed to entice the Rhodesian Front and the Zimbabwean nationalists into coming to Geneva.

Kissinger hoped that Smith’s September 24 address would generate enough momentum to make the Geneva Conference a success.²⁸⁴ Unfortunately for Ivor Richard and the British, this did not prove to be the case. Smith believed he was going to Geneva to accept the deal that Kissinger had presented in Pretoria – including the crucial concessions regarding the make-up of the interim government and control of the army and police. As Smith had indicated in his September 24 statement, the “Kissinger proposals” represented the limit to which he was prepared to go. Once it became clear that the nationalists and the British regarded Kissinger’s terms as little more than “a basis for negotiations,” the Rhodesians quickly lost interest in the conference. Rather than working to achieve a settlement, they angled to ensure that the conference would collapse – and that the blame would be pinned on the nationalists.

The nationalists, for their part, had little interest in the “Kissinger proposals.” This was particularly true of ZANU, which was beginning to make major inroads against the Rhodesian security forces. Influenced by their ties to China, ZANU’s military commanders had adopted the Maoist techniques of infiltration, peasant mobilization, and guerrilla warfare. By 1976, these tactics, along with their bases in Mozambique, had enabled ZANU to knock Smith’s army on its

²⁸² Memorandum of Conversation between an American and a Zambian delegation, September 20, 1976, and Memorandum of Conversation between Henry Kissinger and Joshua Nkomo, September 21, 1976, DNSA.

²⁸³ Isaacson, *Kissinger*, 690-691.

²⁸⁴ Kissinger predicted that Smith’s announcement would hit Africa like “an earthquake.” Memorandum of Conversation between an American, Zambian, and ZAPU delegation, September 20, 1976, DNSA.

heels.²⁸⁵ Unaware of the behind-the-scenes pressure Vorster was applying on Smith, ZANU officials believed that it was the bush war which had prompted the Rhodesian leader to concede the principle of majority rule. They therefore assumed that an intensification of the war would bring the Rhodesians to their knees. As Robert Mugabe told a cadre of guerrillas, “We shouldn’t worry about the Kissinger-British proposals...When Smith’s army is tired, he will come to us and say: ‘Gentlemen, let’s talk about the transfer of power.’ The only time for negotiations is that time.”²⁸⁶ Given ZANU’s military prowess and Mugabe’s desire to transform Zimbabwe into a socialist state, it is unlikely that the ZANU leader would have accepted anything less than Smith’s unconditional surrender at Geneva. If, as some scholars have suggested, Mugabe felt compelled to assume an even more hardline position in order to appease ZANU’s guerrilla commanders, the chances of an agreement were virtually nil.²⁸⁷

Mugabe’s intransigence left Joshua Nkomo in a bind. The ZAPU leader had little appetite for guerrilla warfare and his views were more “moderate” than those of Mugabe and his “wild boys.” Nevertheless, Nkomo’s star had been on the wane since his abortive negotiations with Ian Smith earlier that year. In an attempt to revive his flagging fortunes, Nkomo did not resist when the Frontline Presidents urged ZANU and ZAPU to unite under the umbrella of the Patriotic Front.²⁸⁸ For both Mugabe and Nkomo, however, the Patriotic Front was little more than a marriage of convenience. ZANU had the support of the guerrillas, while ZAPU had more

²⁸⁵ Cole, *The Elite*, 39. See also, Terence Ranger, *Peasant Consciousness and Guerrilla War in Zimbabwe: A Comparative Study*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985) and Chris Cocks, *Fireforce: One Man’s War in the Rhodesian Light Infantry*, (Alberton, South Africa: Galago, 1988).

²⁸⁶ Meredith, *The Past is Another Country*, 266.

²⁸⁷ Some scholars have questioned whether Mugabe was effectively in control of ZANU at this point, or whether he was merely acting as a spokesman for the guerrilla leaders. Based on those closest to Mugabe, it seems that he had not solidified his position as ZANU’s unquestioned leader when the Geneva Conference got underway. David Martin and Phyllis Johnson have argued that a number of guerrilla leaders were preparing to depose Mugabe while he was in Geneva, and Joshua Nkomo has also questioned whether Mugabe was really in control of his delegation at Geneva. Martin and Johnson, *The Struggle for Zimbabwe*, 257-262 and Nkomo, *The Story of My Life*, 172.

²⁸⁸ The Patriotic Front was formed at the behest of the Frontline Presidents, who wanted to ensure that ZANU and ZAPU assumed a joint negotiating position at Geneva. The arrangement did not call for a military union as the Presidents had hoped, but the Presidents were optimistic that this merger would become more complete over time.

popular support within Rhodesia. Unfortunately for Nkomo, the arrangement worked to his disadvantage. He was the more senior politician, but his message of compromise and moderation was less appealing to a younger generation than was Mugabe's call for "power to the people." Thus, even though Nkomo was interested in settling at Geneva, he was conscious of his need to avoid being labeled a "sell-out." This meant that he could not afford to be seen as more conciliatory than Mugabe and his ZANU colleagues, and in an effort to prove his nationalist credentials, Nkomo found himself swept along by the ZANU leader's uncompromising positions.²⁸⁹ According to journalist Martin Meredith, the other nationalist leaders at Geneva (Bishop Abel Muzorewa and Ndabaningi Sithole) also felt unable to assume a more moderate position for fear of being discredited as "stooges."²⁹⁰ In this way, the group dynamic among the nationalist leaders ensured that Ivor Richard's task would be a Herculean one.

Further contributing to the unlikelihood that an accord would be reached at Geneva was the fact that the South Africans and the Frontline Presidents refused to lean too heavily on their clients to settle. According to Meredith and political scientist Stephan John Stedman, John Vorster accepted Smith's view that the "Kissinger proposals" were non-negotiable.²⁹¹ This seems plausible; for while Vorster wanted to install a moderate black government in Salisbury, he had no desire to see Robert Mugabe or his "radical" colleagues seize power. Unfortunately for Ivor Richard, this meant that Vorster was unwilling to force Smith to compromise. Nor were the Frontline Presidents willing to stick their necks out for what they regarded as a "Smith-Kissinger-Vorster" arrangement. They appreciated that the Secretary had compelled Smith to

²⁸⁹ Telegram, Henry Kissinger to John Reinhardt, "Talks with Nkomo," December 16, 1976, United Kingdom – State Department Telegrams to SECSTATE-NODIS (7), Presidential Country Files for Europe and Canada, Box 15, GRFL.

²⁹⁰ Meredith, *The Past in Another Country*, 276.

²⁹¹ Meredith, *The Past in Another Country*, 266-267, 281. Stephen Stedman has also alleged that Vorster's position was coming under renewed criticism from hardliners such as Defense Minister P.W. Botha. Stedman, *Peacemaking in Civil War*, 84, 113.

publicly acknowledge the need for majority rule but insisted that the deal the Rhodesian leader had accepted in Pretoria represented nothing more than “a basis for negotiations.” Thus, while the Frontline Presidents had compelled Mugabe and Nkomo to attend the Geneva Conference to see whether there was any give in Smith’s position, they were unwilling to force the co-leaders of the Patriotic Front to agree to terms once it became clear that Smith was not prepared to bargain in good faith.

Because the positions of the two sides were irreconcilable, and because their respective patrons were not willing to coerce their clients into accepting a compromise agreement, it should come as no surprise that the Geneva Conference quickly ground to a halt.²⁹² The Rhodesian delegation failed to table a single constructive resolution, clinging to its claim that the “Kissinger package” was non-negotiable. For their part, the nationalists were equally unwilling to compromise at the very moment their armed struggle was beginning to bear fruit. Mugabe, Nkomo, and their supporters spent most of their time in Geneva trying to brandish their revolutionary credentials by criticizing the British and making exorbitant demands.²⁹³ Amid bitter recriminations from both sides, Ivor Richard, spent nearly a month trying to get the delegations to agree upon a number of minor issues. When the delegations finally began to discuss the actual powers and structure of the transition government, they made virtually no headway. On December 3, after six weeks of frustration and stalemate, Richard informed the Foreign Office that an impasse had been reached. “[T]here is no evidence that any delegation is prepared to take part in an actual negotiation. Each delegation may be willing to criticise the proposals of the others, but each is likely to stand firm on his own position.”²⁹⁴ After consulting

²⁹² Nkomo has suggested that the conference was “doomed” from the beginning. Nkomo, The Story of My Life, 172.

²⁹³ Meredith, The Past is Another Country, 276-277.

²⁹⁴ Untitled Telegram, Ivor Richard to FCO, December 3, 1976, FCO 36/1808, TNA.

with Tony Crosland and Henry Kissinger, the chairman adjourned the conference on December 14. British and American officials hoped to reconvene the conference after the new year, but neither the Rhodesians nor the nationalists were willing to return to Geneva. Thus it was that Kissinger's Rhodesian initiative ended, not with a bang, but with a whimper.

Conclusion

Despite the underappreciated role played by the British, the 1976 Anglo-American-South African initiative bore Henry Kissinger's unmistakable footprint.²⁹⁵ For this reason, it seems reasonable to briefly examine the merits and demerits of the Secretary's Rhodesian diplomacy. Generally speaking, scholars have not tended to view Kissinger's actions in a favorable light. On the one hand, these negative assessments probably reflect the fact that it is highly unfashionable to view anything Kissinger did in a favorable light.²⁹⁶ On the other hand, however these criticisms reflect that fact that Kissinger made a number of mistakes which undermined his efforts to play peacemaker in southern Africa. Chief among these were his failure to take the wishes of the Zimbabwean nationalists and the Frontline Presidents seriously and his duplicitous negotiating style. Kissinger's tactics enabled him to get the Rhodesian protagonists to Geneva; however, they all but ensured that the conference would not succeed.²⁹⁷

These criticisms are fair, but they are also somewhat misleading. Implicit in them is the assumption that, if Kissinger had behaved differently, the Geneva Conference could have produced a workable arrangement – thereby sparing the people of southern Africa three years of

²⁹⁵ Historian Sue Onslow is the only scholar to appreciate Britain's role in Kissinger's Rhodesian diplomacy. Onslow, "'We Must Gain Time': South Africa, Rhodesia and the Kissinger Initiative of 1976," South African Historical Journal, vol. 56, no. 1 (2006): 123-153.

²⁹⁶ One critic has even suggested that the former Secretary of State is guilty of committing numerous war crimes and crimes against humanity. Christopher Hitchens, The Trial of Henry Kissinger, (New York: Verso, 2001).

²⁹⁷ See, for instance, Meredith, The Past is Another Country, 256-273; Martin and Johnson, The Struggle for Zimbabwe, 255-256; and Tamarkin, The Making of Zimbabwe, 146-147.

war and devastation. Unfortunately, there is little evidence to suggest that the Rhodesian leaders or the Zimbabwean nationalists were prepared to accept a negotiated settlement in 1976. To the contrary, both sides still believed they could achieve their aims on the battlefield and therefore did not need to bother with negotiations.²⁹⁸ Given that the British were the only party interested in reaching a settlement at Geneva, it is difficult to fault Kissinger too much for the conference's collapse. Even if the Secretary had played his hand differently, the Rhodesian protagonists were simply not prepared to enter into a power-sharing agreement in 1976.

While the Geneva Conference failed to resolve the Rhodesian crisis, Kissinger's African diplomacy was not a complete loss. First and foremost, it prevented southern Africa from sliding into an all-out race war. Using only his prestige and America's political and economic clout, the Secretary managed to convince John Vorster to put the squeeze on Ian Smith. With Vorster threatening to sever the South African lifeline, Smith was left with no choice but to publicly accept the need for majority rule within two years. Henry Kissinger (who appreciated the communist threat to southern Africa and refused to lecture the Afrikaners on the evils of apartheid) might have been the only statesman capable of persuading Vorster to sever South Africa's ties to the Rhodesian Front. The British had been trying to do so for years and had nothing to show for their efforts.²⁹⁹ Kissinger certainly benefitted from the poor state of South

²⁹⁸ According to Simbi Mubako, a member of Robert Mugabe's delegation, ZANU's leadership did everything it could to sabotage the Geneva Conference. "We didn't believe Geneva would succeed, nor did we want it to succeed, because if it had, it would have been bad for ZANU," Mubako later told an interviewer. "If Smith had said 'let's go home and have elections,' we would not have won." "Our demands were not met and we were happy they were not met," he continued. "We could go back to the bush and increase the fight [sic] and better ZANU's position." Nor was the Rhodesian delegation in the mood for compromise. Ken Flower, the chief of Rhodesia's Central Intelligence Organization, has suggested that Ian Smith never intended to implement the terms of his September 24 announcement. According to Flower, "[T]here were enough winks and nods to convince the electorate that whatever change there might be would be ephemeral." Mubako quoted in Stedman, Peacemaking in Civil War, 109. Flower quoted in Flower, Serving Secretly, 171-174.

²⁹⁹ Only days before the Vorster-Kissinger talks commenced, one high-ranking member of Britain's Rhodesia Department had bemoaned the fact that the South African Government, though "conscious of the need for a political settlement in Rhodesia which would bring to power a moderate African government," remained "unwilling to apply the pressure, which they alone can effectively exert to get the white minority regime [in Rhodesia] to accept early

African-Rhodesian relations in 1976, but his success cannot be attributed solely to the tension that existed between the regimes in Pretoria and Salisbury. As will become clear in the next chapter, the Carter Administration's hostility toward Pretoria prompted Vorster to reevaluate his willingness to support future Anglo-American initiatives in spite of his lingering disenchantment with the Rhodesian leadership.

It can be argued that in spite of all the pressure on him, Smith continued to believe that he could find a way to postpone the advent of black majority rule. His behavior at the Geneva Conference certainly suggests as much.³⁰⁰ Be that as it may, the psychological effect of his September 24 announcement cannot be gainsaid. Overnight, the terms of the debate shifted from *whether* there would be majority rule in Rhodesia to *when* it would arrive. This sudden reversal came as a shock to many Rhodesians, who had assumed that "good old Smithy" would continue to fight to preserve their privileged position. Many of the young men fighting the bush war began to ask why they should risk their lives for a lost cause.³⁰¹ Farmers and other Rhodesians who saw no future for themselves in a black-ruled country quietly absconded to South Africa, Britain, Australia, or the United States. Thus, whatever Smith may have felt about his ability to preserve minority rule in 1976, many of his countrymen began to see the writing on the wall.

Kissinger's Rhodesian initiative also made a considerable impact north of the Zambezi River. Most notably, it demonstrated America's new-found commitment to the cause of majority rule in southern Africa. Although the Geneva Conference came to naught, Kissinger's shuttle diplomacy resuscitated the seemingly-moribund negotiating process. This came as a great relief

majority rule. Draft Brief, Patrick Laver to Norman Aspin, "Rhodesia: Anglo-American Talks," June 9, 1976, FCO 36/1824, TNA.

³⁰⁰ Stedman, *Peacemaking in Civil War*, 117-123.

³⁰¹ In a letter that was subsequently reprinted in the *Rhodesian Herald*, one soldier asked the Minister of Defense, "Is it worth doing my next call-up in two months' time, because I don't want to lose my life or perhaps spend it in a wheelchair, only to see the leaders of this country sitting around a table with [the] terrorists?" Godwin and Hancock, "*Rhodesians Never Die*," 179.

to the Frontline Presidents – as evidenced by Kenneth Kaunda’s response to Kissinger’s Lusaka Address. For despite their fiery rhetoric, the Presidents preferred a negotiated settlement to a prolonged and costly military showdown with the Rhodesian security forces. By reviving the Presidents’ confidence that the Rhodesian crisis could be resolved by international mediation, Kissinger also managed to counter the appeal of the Soviet Union and Cuba, whose prestige in Africa had been at an all-time high after their decisive intervention in the Angolan civil war.

Thus, although Kissinger was unable to bring the Rhodesian crisis to an end, the significance of his shuttle diplomacy should not be overlooked. He may have been overly concerned with accommodating the Rhodesian whites and his methods may have been crude, but he managed to achieve about as much as could have been expected given the circumstances.³⁰²

This was why – despite his tendency to view African affairs through the lens of the Cold War and his “lone ranger” style of diplomacy – the Zambians and the British had been so eager to involve him in the search for Zimbabwean independence. As Prime Minister Callaghan explained to his West German counterpart, “Because of American power,” Kissinger “could do things which we could not in Southern Africa.”³⁰³ Thus, as happened so often in the post-1945 era, British policymakers hoped to use American might to achieve a foreign policy objective that otherwise would have been unachievable.³⁰⁴ Unfortunately for the British, not even the “Doctor of Diplomacy” could bridge the gap between the Rhodesians and the Zimbabwean nationalists in

³⁰² Most scholars agree that the “Kissinger initiative” marked a turning point in the search for Zimbabwean independence. See, for instance, DeRoche, Black, White, and Chrome, 228; Stephen Low, “The Zimbabwe Settlement, 1976-1979,” in eds. Saadia Touval and I. William Zartman, International Mediation in Theory and Practice, (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1985): 92; Martin Meredith, The Past is Another Country, 263; Martin and Johnson, The Struggle for Zimbabwe, 263; and Isaacson, Kissinger, 693.

³⁰³ Note on a Conversation between the Prime Minister and the Federal German Chancellor on 30 June 1976, FCO 36/1826, TNA.

³⁰⁴ This sentiment is illustrated by a 1944 Foreign Office minute which stated that, “It must be our purpose not to balance our power against that of America, but to make use of American power for the purposes which we regard as good...If we go about our business in the right way, we can help to steer this great unwieldy barge, the United States of America, into the right harbor.” Cited in Michael Hopkins, Oliver Franks and the Truman Administration: Anglo-American Relations, 1948-1952, (Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 2003): xvi.

1976. Moreover, it remained to be seen whether the Carter Administration would be as willing to promote a Rhodesian settlement as its predecessor had been.

Chapter Three

The Limits of Idealism: Jimmy Carter and the Rhodesian Crisis, 1977-1978

At 8:25 on the morning of August 9, 1976, an armed column of ten Rhodesian vehicles rumbled into a guerrilla training camp on the Nyadzonya River, approximately 20 miles inside of Mozambique. The vehicles were painted to resemble those used by the Mozambican army, and the men inside (the majority of whom were black Rhodesians) were disguised as Mozambican regulars. An estimated 5,250 guerrillas were present at the camp that morning. Their numbers shocked the Rhodesians, who were accustomed to encountering small pockets of guerrillas numbering no more than one hundred. “Jesus,” muttered one of the Rhodesian troops. “I just hope we don’t run out of ammunition.” The Rhodesians chanted guerrilla slogans as they approached the camp’s parade ground. “*Zimbabwe tatora*,” they proclaimed. “We have taken Zimbabwe.” As hundreds of unsuspecting guerrillas rushed forward to hear the news, the Rhodesians opened fire at point-blank range. The results were devastating. According to one Rhodesian account, “Hundreds of terrorists fell to the ground with the first onslaught of bullets, as though a gale wind had blown them off their feet.” This account was corroborated by a guerrilla report which described the camp as nothing short of a killing field. “After the first shot, all hell broke loose, light machine guns, sub-machineguns...and other sophisticated machine guns on the armoured cars opened up.” After roughly 40 minutes of carnage, the Rhodesians torched the camp and retreated back across the border.³⁰⁵

The raid left several hundred guerrillas (known in Rhodesia as terrorists, or “terrs” for short) dead. Hundreds more were injured. The commander in charge of the raid was particularly

³⁰⁵ Based on the account provided in Rod Reid-Daly and Peter Stiff, *Selous Scouts: Top Secret War*, (Alberton, South Africa: Galago Publishing, 1982): 178-222 and *New York Times*, “Rhodesia Says It Attacked Rebel Site in Mozambique,” August 11, 1976.

pleased by the number of wounded enemy combatants because “wounded men gave the enemy the additional problems of long-term care in back areas and clogged up their administration.” Moreover, “[t]he sight of legless comrades...did little to raise the martial ardour of new terrorist recruits.”³⁰⁶ The Nyadzonya raid marked a turning point in the Rhodesian bush war (known in Africa as the *Chimurenga*) in that it was the first large-scale raid the Rhodesian security forces had launched against a guerrilla target in a neighboring country. When restrictions against the use of air power were lifted in 1977, these cross-border assaults became even more lethal.³⁰⁷ While many in southern Africa condemned the Nyadzonya raid on humanitarian grounds (especially after the Mozambican authorities claimed that the base had actually been a refugee camp), the Rhodesians’ incursion into Mozambique threatened to ignite a race war, the consequences of which were deemed “too ghastly to contemplate.”³⁰⁸ As one New York Times editorial opined, “Whatever the provocation, the attack on a newly-independent neighboring state [Mozambique] only diminishes the already-slim chances for negotiating a peaceful transition to majority rule in Rhodesia.”³⁰⁹

Such wanton violence abhorred US president Jimmy Carter, a deeply religious man who had come to office in 1977 determined to fundamentally alter the direction of American foreign policy. He had made his intentions clear from day one, pledging in his inaugural address that America’s commitment to human rights would be “absolute” under his stewardship. Carter said relatively little about domestic issues in the address, dedicating the majority of the speech to foreign affairs. Unlike his Cold War predecessors, however, Carter refrained from saber-rattling and chastising the Soviet Union for its sins. Instead, he laid out a new vision of American

³⁰⁶ Quoted in Reid-Daly and Stiff, *Selous Scouts*, 251.

³⁰⁷ The use of Hawker Hunter jet fighters, Canberra bombers, and anti-personnel Alpha bombs made Rhodesian air raids extremely deadly. Reid-Daly and Stiff, *Selous Scouts*, 248-251, 341-344.

³⁰⁸ Quoted in *Time Magazine*, “Make Peace or Face War,” March 8, 1976.

³⁰⁹ *New York Times*, “Africa: Time Runs Out,” August 12, 1976.

diplomacy based upon regionalism, multilateralism, and the promotion of human rights.

“Because we are free we can never be indifferent to the fate of freedom elsewhere,” the President proclaimed, adding that “there can be no nobler nor more ambitious task for America to undertake on this day of a new beginning than to help shape a just and peaceful world that is truly humane.”³¹⁰ While Carter’s bland speaking style may have detracted somewhat from his message, his inaugural address was hardly the “themeless pudding, devoid of uplift or insight” that former Nixon speechwriter William Safire described it as.³¹¹ To the contrary, it marked the first time during the Cold War era that an American president had articulated a foreign policy based on anything other than virulent anti-communism.

This chapter will argue that Carter’s 1977 Rhodesian diplomacy reflected his desire to move away from the Cold War orthodoxy, or what he described as a foreign policy based on “an inordinate fear of communism.”³¹² Whereas Gerald Ford and Henry Kissinger had viewed the Rhodesian crisis through the prism of the East-West struggle, Jimmy Carter and his chief foreign policy advisers also regarded it as an opportunity to demonstrate their commitment to promoting human rights. Ultimately, however, their efforts foundered on the rocky shoals of Rhodesian intransigence when Prime Minister Ian Smith rejected an Anglo-American plan that would have brought nationalist leaders Robert Mugabe and Joshua Nkomo into the government of an independent Zimbabwe. Thus, this chapter will argue that for all his idealism, Jimmy Carter was initially no more successful in his efforts to play peacemaker in southern African than Kenneth Kaunda and Henry Kissinger had been.

³¹⁰ Jimmy Carter, “Inaugural Address,” January 20, 1977, in The Public Papers of the Presidents: Jimmy Carter: 1977, (hereafter, PPJC), vol. 1, 1-4.

³¹¹ “Nobody likes to say it, and everybody is trying to be kind, but the fact is that Jimmy Carter’s Inaugural address ranks slightly above Millard Fillmore’s and not quite up to Calvin Coolidge’s,” Safire editorialized. New York Times, “Pedestrian Inaugural,” January 22, 1977.

³¹² Jimmy Carter, “Notre Dame Commencement Address,” May 22, 1977, PPJC: 1977, vol. 1, 954-962.

Jimmy Carter, America's Human Rights President?

When Jimmy Carter left office in January 1981, his image was in serious need of rehabilitation. In a poll taken shortly before Ronald Reagan's inauguration, only 3% of respondents believed that Carter would be remembered as an "outstanding" president. More than half of those polled rated his performance as "poor" or "below average."³¹³ To many Americans, Carter had seemed in over his head. Long lines at the gas pump, "stagflation," and the "Killer Rabbit" incident were seen as illustrations of his weakness. The ledger seemed similarly bleak when it came to foreign affairs. The hostage crisis in Iran, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and the fall of sympathetic leaders such as Iran's Mohammad Reza Pahlavi and Nicaragua's Anastasio Somoza convinced many Americans that Carter was incapable of protecting the nation's interests abroad. The well-publicized feud between his National Security Adviser and Secretary of State provided critics with further evidence of Carter's ineffective leadership. Perhaps a New York Times article best captured the mood of the nation when it editorialized, "The most common view...is that while he can point to a few notable accomplishments, Mr. Carter will not bequeath a particularly distinguished legacy to the nation."³¹⁴ Many Americans agreed, viewing Carter as yet another in a string of failed presidents.

The first wave of scholarship on Carter's presidency tended to reflect this negative view.³¹⁵ History has been somewhat kinder to Carter, as a number of scholars have attempted to

³¹³ Scott Kaufman, Plans Unraveled: The Foreign Policy of the Carter Administration, (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2008), 3.

³¹⁴ Quoted in Kaufman, Plans Unraveled, 3.

³¹⁵ Some argued that the Carter Administration lacked a coherent worldview, which led it to pursue contradictory policies. See, for instance, Robert Osgood, "Carter Policy in Perspective," SAIS Review (Winter 1981): 111-125; James Fallows, "The Passionless Presidency," Atlantic Monthly, (May 1979): 42; and Arthur Schlesinger Jr., "The Great Carter Mystery," New Republic, (April 12, 1980): 21. Others accused Carter of naïveté in dealing with America's rivals, especially the Soviet Union. See, Donald Spencer, The Carter Implosion: Jimmy Carter and the Amateur Style of Diplomacy, (New York: Praeger, 1988). Burton Kaufman was the first scholar to use documents from the Carter Library to examine Carter's presidency. Although sympathetic to his subject's intentions, Kaufman concluded that Carter was a poor leader who was unable to work with Congress to translate his ideas into policy or

rehabilitate his image.³¹⁶ These revisionists tend to focus less on Carter's actual accomplishments than on his intentions, goals, and worldview. To many scholars writing after the fall of the Berlin Wall, Carter's desire to downplay America's struggle against the Soviet Union, promote human rights, forge stronger relationships with nations in the developing world, reduce America's global military presence, and eliminate nuclear stockpiles seem noble, responsible, and farsighted. Many of these revisionists see Carter's foreign policy agenda as so different from that of his immediate predecessors that they have dubbed it a "post-Cold War" vision of American diplomacy.³¹⁷ Nor do they tend to fault Carter for his inability to implement his agenda. They note that he was confronted with a burgeoning neoconservative movement bent on returning to a more staunchly anti-communist foreign policy, a fractured Democratic Party, and a host of uncooperative foreign leaders. Given these circumstances, they argue that few leaders could have done better.³¹⁸ By focusing on Carter's goals and the constraints under which he operated, these revisionists have gone some way toward resurrecting Carter's legacy.

While Carter's "post-Cold War" vision consisted of a number of elements (de-emphasizing the US-Soviet contest, reducing the US and Soviet nuclear arsenals, improving

to influence public opinion. Burton Kaufman, The Presidency of James Earl Carter, Jr., (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 1993). In a recent criticism of the Carter Administration, Scott Kaufman argues that Carter's "trustee mentality" and poorly-designed management system prevented him from exerting effective leadership. Scott Kaufman, Plans Unraveled, 4.

³¹⁶ See, for instance, Gaddis Smith, Morality, Reason, and Power: American Diplomacy in the Carter Years, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1987); Jerel Rosati, The Carter Administration's Quest for Global Community: Beliefs and Their Impact on Behavior, (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1987); John Dumbrell, The Carter Presidency: A Re-evaluation, 2nd ed., (New York: Manchester University Press, 1995); Douglas Brinkley, "The Rising Stock of Jimmy Carter: The 'Hands on Legacy' of our Thirty-Ninth President," Diplomatic History, vol. 20, (Fall 1996): 505-529; Robert Strong, Working in the World: Jimmy Carter and the Making of American Foreign Policy, (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2000); and David Schmitz and Vanessa Walker, "Jimmy Carter and the Foreign Policy of Human Rights: The Development of a Post-Cold War Foreign Policy," Diplomatic History, vol. 28, no. 1 (January 2004): 113-144.

³¹⁷ Probably the best overview of Carter's agenda came in his May 1977 commencement address at Notre Dame. As Carter wrote to British Prime Minister James Callaghan, "My Notre Dame speech was very carefully worded to express my views and goals quite accurately." Handwritten Letter, Carter to Callaghan, July 6, 1977, Great Britain, 6/77-12/80 folder, Plains File, Box 2, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library (hereafter, JECL).

³¹⁸ In particular, see David Skidmore, Reversing Course: Carter's Foreign Policy, Domestic Politics, and the Failure of Reform, (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 1996).

relations with nations in the developing world, reducing America's military presence abroad, slashing arms sales, and focusing on environmental and economic issues), scholars have tended to stress his human rights policy. Indeed, Carter's presidency is generally regarded by historians of US foreign relations as the apex of America's interest in human rights – at least during the Cold War era. Rather than allowing scholars to reach a consensus, however, this focus has raised new questions about the legacy of America's 39th President. For instance, some critics have asked whether Carter genuinely believed in the cause of human rights or whether his lofty rhetoric served some other purpose.³¹⁹ Others have asked how effective Carter was in pursuing his human rights agenda.³²⁰ Whichever side of these debates one comes down on, it seems clear that human rights has become one of the central metrics by which scholars have come to evaluate Jimmy Carter's presidency – to say nothing of his post-presidential career.³²¹

Although one or two critics have suggested otherwise, there can be little doubt that Carter's interest in human rights was heartfelt. In some respects, it was a natural outgrowth of his religious convictions. One former Carter speechwriter described his boss's interest in human rights as "pure Jimmy." In the words of another former speechwriter, "[T]he moral theme was something right in Carter's soul."³²² Once in office, Carter moved quickly to institutionalize his human rights agenda. Most notably, he elevated the head of the recently-established Bureau of Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs to cabinet status in an attempt to give the Bureau a major voice within his Administration. Under the leadership of former Civil Rights activist

³¹⁹ Joshua Muravchik has argued that Carter's interest in human rights was largely motivated by political expediency. Muravchik, *The Uncertain Crusade: Jimmy Carter and the Dilemmas of Human Rights Policy*, (New York: Hamilton Press, 1986): 1-18.

³²⁰ John Spanier, *American Foreign Policy Making and the Democratic Dilemmas*, (New York: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston, 1985): 227-29 and Itai Sneh, *The Future Almost Arrived: How Jimmy Carter Failed to Change US Foreign Policy*, (New York: Peter Land, 2008).

³²¹ For more on the latter, see, Douglas Brinkley, *The Unfinished Presidency: Jimmy Carter's Journey Beyond the White House*, (New York: Viking, 1998).

³²² Quoted in Muravchik, *The Uncertain Crusade*, 1.

Patricia Derian, the Bureau released annual reports grading each nation on how it treated its citizens. Some of the most egregious human rights violators were denied military and economic assistance.³²³ These actions stand in stark contrast to those undertaken by Henry Kissinger, who resisted Congressional efforts to place a greater emphasis on human rights because of his belief that it would be “dangerous for us to make the domestic policy of countries around the world a direct objective of American foreign policy.”³²⁴

However, historians are beginning to realize that political expediency also played an important role in Carter’s emphasis on human rights. During the 1976 campaign, the Georgian assailed Gerald Ford and Henry Kissinger for rooting their diplomacy in *realpolitik* rather than traditional American values.³²⁵ This proved to be an effective strategy in the aftermath of Vietnam and Watergate, and it helped Carter capture the presidency.³²⁶ Once in office, Carter hoped to use human rights to unite the fissiparous Democratic Party.³²⁷ Whereas Democrats had generally agreed on the necessity of containing communism during the early years of the Cold War, the political landscape had shifted dramatically by the time Carter took the oath of office. Generally speaking, Democrats in the 1970s fell into one of two camps when it came to foreign affairs: the “new internationalist” camp or the neoconservative camp. Led by Senator Frank Church of Idaho and Representatives Tom Harkin of Iowa and Donald Fraser of Minnesota, the

³²³ While these annual reports reflect Carter’s interest in promoting human rights, they were also required under the terms of Section 502B of the International Security Assistance and Arms Export Control Act of 1976. For more on this point (and Congress’s role in promoting human rights in the 1970s), see, Barbara Keys, “Congress, Kissinger, and the Origins of Human Rights Diplomacy,” Diplomatic History, vol. 34, no. 5 (November 2010): 823-851.

³²⁴ Quoted in Muravchik, The Uncertain Crusade, xviii. For more on Kissinger’s refusal to accept human rights as an objective of US diplomacy, see, Keys, “Congress, Kissinger, and the Origins of Human Rights Diplomacy.”

³²⁵ For Carter’s most famous campaign speech dealing with human rights, see, “Addressing B’nai B’rith,” in The Presidential Campaign 1976, vol. 1, part 2, (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1978): 709-714.

³²⁶ Carter’s National Security Adviser later remarked, “The commitment to human rights reflected Carter’s own religious beliefs, as well as his political acumen. He deeply believed in human rights and that commitment remained constant during his Administration. At the same time, he sensed...that the issue was an appealing one for it drew a sharp contrast between himself and the policies of Nixon and Kissinger.” Zbigniew Brzezinski, Power and Principle: Memoirs of a National Security Adviser, 1977-1981, (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1983): 43.

³²⁷ Dumbrell, The Carter Presidency, 4, 20, 114 and Scott Kaufman, Plans Unraveled, 11-15.

“new internationalists” believed that the Soviet Union posed less of a threat to America’s national security than did the nation’s misbehavior abroad. Conversely, neoconservatives like Senator Henry “Scoop” Jackson of Washington believed that the United States needed to assume a more bellicose posture vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. One of the few points these groups agreed on was that the United States should support human rights abroad – the “new internationalists” because they believed the United States had an obligation to ease the plight of peoples worldwide, and the neoconservatives because they hoped to use Soviet human rights violations to pillory leaders in Moscow.³²⁸ Thus, Carter’s focus on human rights was not simply a byproduct of his Southern Baptist faith. Rather, he hoped that it could become the basis of a new consensus that would unite the Democrats as they moved into a post-Cold War era.

Carter hoped to reap other benefits from his human rights policy as well. For one, he felt that a more moralistic foreign policy would allow him to gain the support of an American public that had grown disillusioned by Henry Kissinger’s perceived cynicism and amorality.³²⁹ Carter’s promotion of human rights also dovetailed with his desire to forge closer ties with nations in the developing world. Given the President’s interest in improving America’s image, it should come as little surprise that his Administration tailored its human rights policy to appeal to the international community. Indeed, the authors of one particularly important State Department document (Presidential Review Memorandum (PRM) 28) urged Carter to include economic and social rights in his human rights policy in order to make it more attractive to people in the developing world. “A policy which subordinated these rights would not be consistent with our

³²⁸ Daniel Patrick Moynihan recalled telling a leading “new internationalist” at the 1976 Democratic convention, “We’ll be against the dictators you don’t like the most...if you’ll be against the dictators we don’t like the most.” Quoted in Muravchik, *The Uncertain Crusade*, 4. For more on the neoconservative-new internationalist schism, see Kaufman, *Plans Unraveled*, 8-11 and Robert David Johnson, *Congress and the Cold War*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), xiv, 190-242.

³²⁹ Presidential Review Memorandum/NSC 28: Human Rights, August 15, 1977, NLC-132-44-6-1-9 (hereafter PRM-28), JECL.

humanitarian ideals and efforts, but would also be viewed unfavorably in those countries where the tendency is to view basic economic and social rights as the most important rights of all,” they asserted.³³⁰ In light of these facts, it seems clear that Carter was hardly the starry-eyed idealist that many detractors (and some supporters) have made him out to be. His human rights agenda reflected his own moral and ethical values, but it was also designed to strengthen America’s global position by winning support at home and abroad.

What remained to be seen was how this focus on human rights would be translated into action. Recently-declassified documents demonstrate that, in most cases, Carter and his advisers intended to move cautiously in implementing their agenda. They were well aware that their ability to alter the behavior of other nations was fairly limited. They also understood that criticizing foreign governments’ domestic policies ran the risk of provoking a backlash, thereby straining official relations and possibly leading to increased repression. Perhaps for these reasons, the authors of PRM-28 advocated using carrots (rewarding nations for human rights improvements) rather than sticks (taking punitive measures against human rights violators). In those cases in which the Administration felt it necessary to use coercion, the authors recommended a gradual escalation of pressures, beginning with quiet diplomatic demarches and moving to symbolic gestures, public statements, and finally, the cessation of military and economic assistance. Despite this rather cautious approach, the authors of PRM-28 cited several “exceptional circumstances” in which the United States would seek “dramatic improvements” in the short-term. Rhodesia was featured prominently on this list.³³¹ Thus, from the very

³³⁰ PRM-28, JECL.

³³¹ PRM-28, JECL. This conclusion was in line with a prior Presidential Review Memorandum dealing with southern Africa, which described promoting multi-racial democracy in Rhodesia as “a major US concern” and the Administration’s “highest priority” in the region. Presidential Review Memorandum: Rhodesia, Namibia, and South Africa, undated, NLC-18-4-6-1-1, JECL.

beginning, the Carter Administration viewed the situation in Rhodesia as a human rights crisis which needed to be resolved quickly.

Britain Looks “Down the Dark Rhodesian Tunnel”

While Jimmy Carter and his advisers were settling into their new posts, the British government was falling deeper into despair about the Rhodesian situation. The failure of the Geneva Conference had sent shockwaves throughout the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, where it had been assumed that once the protagonists in the Rhodesian crisis were gathered around the conference table, they would be able to reach a mutually-agreeable settlement. When this assumption proved incorrect, officials in London became unnerved. “[W]e have no idea what to do next,” Foreign Secretary Tony Crosland confessed to one high-ranking US official shortly after the collapse of the Geneva Conference. “It’s as simple as that.”³³² One particularly despondent member of Whitehall’s Rhodesia Department even suggested that the United Kingdom might want to contemplate washing its hands of the entire Rhodesian mess.³³³ As if to underscore the intractability of the Rhodesian question, Crosland suffered a fatal stroke on February 13 while examining papers on how to jumpstart the negotiating process.³³⁴

After a brief period of soul-searching, the British reached two vital conclusions. The first was that they could not afford to abandon their responsibility for Rhodesia’s fate. One reason for this was that many Labourites felt a lingering sense of responsibility for ensuring that Britain’s last African colony achieved majority rule. “Surely one of the major objectives of a Labour Government must be to solve the Rhodesian problem, and in doing so, complete the general

³³² President’s Daily Report File, February 3, 1977, NLC-1-1-8-19-1, JECL.

³³³ Untitled Memorandum, R.A.C Byatt to Tony Duff, January 11, 1977, FCO 36/1963, British National Archives (hereafter TNA).

³³⁴ Susan Crosland, Tony Crosland, (London: Cape, 1982): 394.

process begun two decades or more ago of freeing black Africans from colonialism,” Minister of State for African Affairs Ted Rowlands opined in a minute to the Prime Minister. “Whatever the difficulties, the prize of having freed [Ian] Smith’s political prisoners and of implementing majority rule rapidly and constitutionally is the greatest one of all. I believe we have this last crucial direct role to play in Africa.”³³⁵ Even more importantly, it was widely acknowledged that walking away from what was still regarded as a British problem would seriously damage relations with black Africa, the Commonwealth, and the United States.³³⁶ The second conclusion – and one with which David Owen, the new Foreign Secretary, wholeheartedly agreed – was that Her Majesty’s Government would not be able to make any headway in its search for a Rhodesian settlement without the full backing of the Carter Administration.³³⁷

Unfortunately, members of Whitehall’s Rhodesia Department were not certain that such support would be forthcoming. In retrospect, it may be easy to see that the Carter Administration was eager play an active role in the search for Zimbabwean independence, but the British did not have the gift of hindsight. In fact, because Jimmy Carter’s foreign policy talking points had remained vague and cautious throughout the 1976 presidential campaign, there was a great deal of uncertainty about the incoming Administration and its likely foreign policy goals. As Anatoli Dobrynin, the longtime Soviet Ambassador to Washington, later recalled, Carter seemed to have “no definite program” when he assumed office.³³⁸ Thus, while the British Embassy in Washington had been one of the few to accurately predict the outcome of the 1976 election, not

³³⁵ Memorandum, Ted Rowlands (Minister of State for African Affairs) to James Callaghan, “Rhodesia,” August 4, 1976, FCO 36/1828, TNA

³³⁶ Memorandum, Patrick Laver to Tony Duff, “Rhodesia: What’s Next?” February 1, 1977, FCO 36/1963, TNA.

³³⁷ The centrality of American support for a new Rhodesian initiative was a recurrent theme as the British attempted to devise a way to move forward in early 1977. See, for instance, Note for the Record: Meeting on Rhodesia, March 3, 1977, FCO 36/1963 and Draft Minute to the Prime Minister, contained in a packet from Patrick Laver to Philip Mansfield, “Rhodesia,” March 25, 1977, FCO 36/1964, TNA. See also, David Owen, *Time to Declare*, (London: Joseph, 1991): 271-73, 284.

³³⁸ Quoted in Anatoly Dobrynin, *In Confidence: Moscow's Ambassador to America's Six Cold War Presidents*, (New York: Random House: 1995): 374.

even the British were certain what to expect from the new Administration. “We know less about President-elect Carter and his future intentions than has been the case with any other recent incoming President,” lamented one beleaguered British diplomat. “In his previous public office [Governor of Georgia] he had little to do with foreign policy and [he] has left little public evidence of strong views on foreign policy issues.”³³⁹ In the weeks following Carter’s election, members of the British Embassy in Washington poured over campaign statements and post-election comments trying to divine the new Administration’s attitudes and likely goals.

British officials were able to discern several signs that new Administration might be eager to promote majority rule in southern Africa. The first was President’s human rights rhetoric. If Carter was serious about promoting human rights, Rhodesia seemed as good a place as any to begin. Indeed, the situation there was becoming increasingly bleak as the bush war raged on. Not only were cross-border raids like the one at Nyadzonya becoming more common, but both the Rhodesian regime and the guerrillas were guilty of numerous atrocities. One of the most egregious human rights violations committed by the government was its “protected villages” program. In an effort to isolate them from the guerrillas, the Rhodesian Front required tens of thousands of rural Zimbabweans to abandon their villages and move to one of several protected villages. The concept was modeled after the US army’s “strategic hamlet” program in Vietnam, and, as in Vietnam, it backfired. The overwhelming majority of Zimbabweans resented being expelled from their homes, and the squalid conditions awaiting them at the camps did nothing to ease their ire.³⁴⁰ While black MPs decried the program as inhumane and unjust,

³³⁹ Draft Minute, Ramsay Melhuish to Richard Sykes, “Future US Foreign Policy,” November 17, 1976, FCO 82/650, TNA. There are two folders in the British National Archives devoted to the Embassy’s attempts at predicting what direction the incoming administration was likely to take in its foreign policy.

³⁴⁰ Upon arriving, families received 125 square meters upon which to build a thatched hut. The perimeter of the camp was surrounded by barbed wire and illuminated at night by powerful electric lights. Zimbabweans were under strict curfew and were required to remain within the village between 6 p.m. and 6 a.m. While the government

perhaps the most searing criticism came from a member of the Rhodesian Front, J.M.

Williamson, who called the camps “a disgrace to those of us who purport to value civilized standards.”³⁴¹ For their part, the guerrillas were also guilty of numerous human rights violations. In one particularly gruesome instance, a family of 23 Zimbabweans was burned alive when the family’s patriarch refused to swear allegiance to Robert Mugabe’s Zimbabwean African Nationalist Union (ZANU).³⁴² Based upon the criteria set out in PRM-28, the situation in Rhodesia clearly constituted a full-fledged human rights crisis.

In addition to this wanton violence, Jimmy Carter abhorred the very idea of minority rule. Having been born and raised in the segregated American South, he was appalled that so much blood was being spilt in defense of white privilege. Indeed, nearly every account of Carter’s life has emphasized how his firsthand experience with Jim Crow made the man from Plains, Georgia, acutely sensitive to questions of racial discrimination.³⁴³ Moreover, Carter and several of his chief foreign policy advisers saw a direct parallel between the situation in southern Africa in the 1970s and that of the American South prior to the Civil Rights Movement.³⁴⁴ Having witnessed the success of the Civil Rights Movement firsthand, Carter believed that the United States was uniquely positioned to help establish multiracial democracy in Rhodesia, Namibia, and South

promised to provide to provide the relocated families with running water, electricity, and improved access to educational and medical services, these benefits were slow to materialize.

³⁴¹ Quoted in Peter Godwin and Ian Hancock, ‘Rhodesians Never Die’: The Impact of War and Political Change on White Rhodesia, c. 1970-1980, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993): 106. For more on the protected village program, see Godwin and Hancock, Rhodesians Never Die, 103-108.

³⁴² CIA Directorate of Intelligence, “Significant Developments Related to the US Stand on Human Rights,” August 5-11, 1977, NLC-28-10-11-1-7, JECL.

³⁴³ On the influence of growing up in the South, see Thomas Borstelmann, The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001): 242-259; Dumbrell, The Carter Administration, 86-109; Andrew DeRoche, “Standing Firm for Principles: Jimmy Carter and Rhodesia” in Diplomatic History, vol. 23, no.4, (Fall 1999): 657-685; Strong, Working in the World, 71-74. Also of interest is Carter’s memoir of his childhood. Carter, An Hour Before Daylight: Memories of a Rural Boyhood, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001).

³⁴⁴ See, for instance, Record of a National Security Council meeting, March 3, 1977, NLC-17-1-5-9-8, JECL. See also, Robert Massie, Loosing the Bonds: The United States and South Africa in the Apartheid Years, (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 410-411, 413.

Africa. “[T]he analogy with the civil rights movement informed everything we did in southern Africa,” Vice President Walter Mondale later recalled.³⁴⁵ Armed with this historical analogy, the Carter Administration believed it possessed a blueprint which would allow it to facilitate southern Africa’s transition to majority rule.

The personalities of the men Jimmy Carter selected to serve as his key foreign policy advisers shed further light upon the likely trajectory of his Administration. Much to the relief of America’s European allies, the President-elect tapped Cyrus Vance to serve as his Secretary of State.³⁴⁶ A veteran of the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations and a renowned New York lawyer, Vance was regarded as the consensus choice for the position.³⁴⁷ In contrast to his predecessor at Foggy Bottom, Vance hoped to improve US-African relations from the moment he assumed office. As historian Breck Walker has demonstrated, Carter’s chief diplomat shared his boss’s belief that African problems should be treated as regional problems to be resolved through diplomacy rather than as East-West problems to be resolved through the use of military force.³⁴⁸ In laying out the assumptions which undergird the Administration’s African policy, Vance explained to an audience in St. Louis, “We must proceed from a basic proposition: that our policies must recognize the unique identity of Africa. We can be neither right, nor effective,

³⁴⁵ Quoted in Nancy Mitchell, “Terrorists or Freedom Fighters? Jimmy Carter and Rhodesia,” in ed. Sue Onslow, *The Cold War in Southern Africa: White Power, Black Liberation*, (New York: Routledge, 2009): 191.

³⁴⁶ Permanent Undersecretary of State Sir Michael Palliser described Vance as “the best of the possible Democratic candidates for the job of Secretary of State” and further opined that the selection was “certainly a good choice from the point of view of Western European interests.” Record of a meeting between the Permanent Undersecretary of State and the State Secretary in the Federal German Foreign Office, December 8, 1976, FCO 82/650, TNA. Carter was well aware of his lack of foreign policy experience and, at least according to one interlocutor between Carter’s transition team and the British Embassy, this was a major reason why Carter elected to send Vance to Foggy Bottom despite previous indications that he might opt for a lesser-known figure. Letter, J. Davidson to Ramsay Melhuish, “Peter Bourne,” November 22, 1976, FCO 82/650, TNA.

³⁴⁷ Despite the break in their relationship caused by Vance’s 1980 resignation, Carter recalled in his memoirs that his foreign policy advisers had been unanimous in recommending Vance for the job. Jimmy Carter, *Keeping Faith: Memoirs of a President*, (New York: Bantam Books, 1982): 50. In his memoirs, Brzezinski has seconded this account. See, Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 11, 12.

³⁴⁸ Breck Walker, “‘Yesterday’s Answers or Tomorrow’s Solutions’: The Cold War Diplomacy of Cyrus Vance,” PhD Dissertation, Vanderbilt University, 2007: 109-111. For more on Vance’s African policy, see, Vance, *Hard Choices: Critical Years in American Foreign Policy*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1983): 21-27.

if we treat Africa simply as one part of the Third World, or as a testing ground of East-West competition.” Vance then proceeded to criticize the Ford Administration’s African diplomacy by suggesting that “the most effective policies toward Africa are affirmative policies. They should not be reactive to what other powers do, nor to crises as they arise...A negative, reactive American policy that seeks only to oppose Soviet or Cuban involvement in Africa would be both dangerous and futile. Our best course is to help resolve the problems which create opportunities for external intervention.”³⁴⁹ Thus, although Vance’s highest priority when he took office was the rapid conclusion of a new strategic arms limitation treaty with the Soviets (SALT II), he shared with Jimmy Carter a commitment to aggressively support the transition to majority rule in southern Africa.³⁵⁰

Andrew Young, the man Carter selected to serve as America’s Ambassador to the United Nations, was even more adamant about the need for the United States to assume a leadership role in the search for Zimbabwean independence. An African-American minister who had served as Martin Luther King Junior’s right-hand man in the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, Young quickly emerged as the Administration’s leading critic of minority rule.³⁵¹ In part, Young’s interest in southern Africa stemmed from his African-American heritage. More importantly, he shared Doctor King’s belief that the American Civil Rights Movement was only one component of a global quest for racial justice. Described by one British official as “an idealist for whom ethical concerns are paramount,” Young hoped to use his ambassadorship as a platform from which to promote the equality of mankind.³⁵²

³⁴⁹ Address by Secretary Vance, “The United States and Africa: Building Positive Relations,” July 1, 1977, Department of State Bulletin, vol. 77, no. 1984, (July 4, 1977): 165.

³⁵⁰ For more on Vance’s priorities and mindset upon entering office, see Walker, “Vance,” 270-304. For Vance’s views on the importance of SALT II, see Walker, “Vance,” 57-60.

³⁵¹ Young’s Congressional Testimony before being sworn in in January 1977

³⁵² Memorandum, Frank Kennedy to Mark Russell, “Andrew Young,” December 17, 1976, FCO 36/2005, TNA. For more on Young’s diplomatic career, see Andrew DeRoche, Andrew Young: Civil Rights Ambassador,

Domestic political considerations further suggested that the Carter Administration was likely to take a strong interest in the Rhodesian crisis. In large part, Carter owed his razor-thin margin of victory in the 1976 election to African-American voters.³⁵³ Their unprecedented support had enabled the Democratic nominee to carry key battleground states such as Louisiana, Mississippi, and North Carolina despite the fact that few whites in those states had enthusiastically backed his candidacy. One prominent Civil Rights leader and Carter partisan immediately grasped the significance of the election results, recalling that “when I heard that Mississippi had gone our way, I knew that the hands that picked cotton [had] finally picked the president.”³⁵⁴ Carter understood that his re-election hopes might well hinge upon his ability to retain this overwhelming degree of African-American support. As a fiscal conservative, Carter was unwilling to expand many of the domestic programs that appealed to many black voters. Nevertheless, he believed that facilitating the transition to majority rule in southern Africa would demonstrate his concern for racial equality, thereby helping to maintain his popularity among African-American voters. Thus, the British Ambassador to Washington, Sir Peter Ramsbotham, hit the nail on the head when he predicted that Carter was likely to “give our objectives in Rhodesia his full support” because he “abhors racial discrimination and will feel a commitment to the black community at home, which has given him overwhelming support.”³⁵⁵ In his own

(Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, Inc., 2003); Bartlett Jones, Flawed Triumphs: Andy Young at the United Nations, (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1996); and ed. Lee Clement, Andrew Young at the United Nations, (Salisbury, NC: Documentary Publications, 1978).

³⁵³ Carter prevailed by just over 1.5 million votes: 40,831,881 to 39,148,634. He received 50.1% of the electoral vote to Ford’s 48.0% – including 94% of the African-American vote. His campaign had received an initial boost when Martin Luther King Junior’s family and noted Civil Rights activist Andrew Young announced their support for his candidacy. Mitchell, “Tropes of the Cold War,” 265.

³⁵⁴ Quoted in Dumbrell, The Carter Administration, 88-89.

³⁵⁵ Telegram, Peter Ramsbotham to FCO, “Carter’s Foreign Policy,” November 3, 1976, FCO 82/650, TNA.

way, Rhodesian Prime Minister Ian Smith seconded this opinion, alleging that Carter's African policies were made "with one end in view – the Negro vote in the United States."³⁵⁶

London Calling: The March 1977 Anglo-American Summit

In London, Prime Minister James Callaghan watched the events unfolding across the Atlantic with great interest. The British had scored early points with several Carter Administration officials by predicting a Democratic victory in 1976, and the Prime Minister was eager to build upon this solid foundation. Like so many of his predecessors in the postwar era, Callaghan hoped to establish a good personal and working relationship with his American counterpart. In addition to forging a strong rapport with Carter (a task which the British Embassy in Washington predicted would be difficult to accomplish because of the President's prickly personality), Callaghan sought to convince the new Administration that Britain remained a valuable ally in spite of its continued economic and military decline.³⁵⁷ The Prime Minister also hoped to probe Carter's thinking about a host of international issues – most notably, the international economic downturn and the festering Rhodesian crisis.³⁵⁸ Eager to discuss these subjects with the new president, Callaghan pushed the Foreign Office to try to obtain an early US-UK summit meeting. These efforts were rewarded when the Prime Minister received an invitation to visit the White House in March 1977, making him the first foreign head of state to call on Jimmy Carter.

During the March summit, Callaghan succeeded in establishing an amicable rapport with his American counterpart, thereby helping to ensure that Britain would remain a valued ally and

³⁵⁶ Quoted in Mitchell, "Tropes of the Cold War," 273-274.

³⁵⁷ Untitled and Undated Memorandum, Tom McNally to James Callaghan, FCO 82/650, TNA.

³⁵⁸ Memorandum, G. Neil Smith to Mr. Edmonds, Richard Sykes, and PS/PUS, "Prime Minister's Visit to Washington, 9-11 March 1977, Objectives," February 10, 1977, FCO 82/754, TNA.

consultative partner. According to The Times of London's Washington correspondent, the atmosphere of the summit was one of “uncommon jocularity.”³⁵⁹ Foreign Secretary Owen recounted in his memoirs that as Baptists, farmers, and erstwhile naval officers, Callaghan and Carter “got on very well together.”³⁶⁰ The two leaders engaged in all the “hands-across-the-sea” rhetoric associated with the US-UK “special relationship” and toasted each other in the most generous of terms. “I don’t believe I have ever met anyone who was a distinguished political leader with whom I immediately felt more at home and a greater sense of genuine and personal friendship,” Carter remarked at a white-tie dinner held in Callaghan’s honor.³⁶¹ By all accounts, the March 1977 summit marked the beginning of a friendship that transcended mere political expediency. This “special, personal relationship” impressed National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski and infuriated West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt.³⁶²

In addition to establishing a strong rapport with Carter, Callaghan hoped to persuade the President to assume a more proactive role in the search for a Rhodesian settlement. Carter had evinced some interest in the subject, publicly condemning minority rule during the course of a January 23 press conference and dispatching Andrew Young to southern Africa in early February to consult with the Frontline Presidents. Nevertheless, he was reluctant to become as deeply

³⁵⁹ The Times of London, “All is jollity at first Callaghan-Carter meeting,” March 11, 1977.

³⁶⁰ Owen, Time to Declare, 285.

³⁶¹ Jimmy Carter, “Visit of Prime Minister Callaghan of Great Britain: Toasts of the President and the Prime Minister at a Dinner Honoring the Prime Minister,” March 10, 1977, PPJC, 1977, vol. 1, 359-361.

³⁶² After an economic summit held in London in May 1977, Brzezinski informed the President that Schmidt was “irritated...by what he perceived as a special, personal relationship that had developed between...[you] and Prime Minister Callaghan.” According to the National Security Adviser, Schmidt regarded Callaghan “as someone who has a weak political base at home, is of no help to the US in an economic sense, and contributes little to US security in Europe while demands are constantly being made of the F[ederal] R[epublic of] G[ermany].” Memorandum, Brzezinski to Jimmy Carter, July 8, 1977, NLC 1-2-4-38-3, JECL. By contrast, Brzezinski was “amazed how quickly Callaghan succeeded in establishing himself as Carter’s favorite, writing him friendly little notes, calling, talking like a genial older uncle, and lecturing Carter in a pleasant manner on the intricacies of inter-allied politics. Callaghan literally co-opted Carter in the course of a few relatively brief personal encounters.” Brzezinski, Power and Principle, 291. For more on the warmth of the Carter-Callaghan relationship, see, Peter Bourne, Jimmy Carter: A Comprehensive Biography from Plains to Post-Presidency, (New York: Scribner, 1997): 397-398 and Handwritten Note on a photograph from Carter to the Callaghans, Great Britain 6/77-12/80 folder, Plains File, Box 2, JECL. For more on the Carter-Schmidt feud, see Brzezinski, Power and Principle, 25-26.

entangled in the negotiating process as Henry Kissinger had been. As Young privately informed the British after returning from Africa, Carter was primarily interested in repealing the Byrd Amendment and providing developmental assistance once Zimbabwe achieved majority rule. He gave no indication that the President intended to become involved in the actual negotiations.³⁶³ British officials recognized that these steps would be helpful in their efforts to mediate the Rhodesian crisis, but they were eager for the Americans to play a more direct role. As Owen noted in a draft minute to the Prime Minister, “I must emphasise that the fullest support of the United States would be absolutely indispensable. It would be folly for us to attempt such an exercise on our own.”³⁶⁴ Callaghan agreed that little progress could be expected without the Americans’ wholehearted assistance, which he hoped to obtain when he met with Carter.

The Prime Minister would not be disappointed. During a March 10 meeting of Foreign Office and State Department officials, Owen admitted that the United Kingdom had no “amour propre” about US involvement in Rhodesia. To the contrary, he felt that “the more the United States and the United Kingdom could be seen to act together on all [s]outhern African problems, including Rhodesia,” the stronger Britain’s hand would be.³⁶⁵ Vance seconded this assessment and pledged that the United States would work “side by side with the United Kingdom” to resolve the Rhodesian conflict.³⁶⁶ Presumably briefed by his chief diplomat that he and Owen “saw eye to eye” on the need for Anglo-American collaboration, Carter promised to provide whatever assistance the British required to break the Rhodesian impasse. According to the

³⁶³ Carter’s press conference remarks are referenced in Steering Brief: Visit of the Vice President of the United States 27 January 1977, FCO 36/2005, TNA. For more on Andy Young’s meeting with British officials, see Record of a Conversation between Mr. Andrew Young and Mr. Ivor Richard at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on Wednesday 2 February 1977 at 4:25 pm, FCO 36/2006, TNA.

³⁶⁴ Draft Minute, David Owen to James Callaghan, “Rhodesia,” March 28, 1977, FCO 36/1964, TNA.

³⁶⁵ Record of a Discussion between the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the United States Secretary of State in the Cabinet Room of the White House on Thursday 10 March 1977 at 11:00 AM, FCO 82/759, TNA.

³⁶⁶ Record of a Discussion between the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the United States Secretary of State over Lunch at the State Department on Thursday 10 March 1977, FCO 82/759, TNA.

British record, Carter pledged to “back us to the hilt” after Callaghan warned that “the choice might well be between civil war in [s]outhern Africa and a greater use of US muscle.”³⁶⁷ This agreement marked the beginning of perhaps the closest period of Anglo-American cooperation during the entire Rhodesian crisis. Working in close consultation, British and American officials spent the next six months trying to prepare a draft of Zimbabwe’s independence constitution that would be acceptable to all sides.

The British had every reason to be pleased with Carter’s pledge of support, which seemed to go much further than the steps Andrew Young had outlined when he met with British officials the previous month. Nevertheless, it should be noted that, in spite of the “special personal relationship” that developed between Carter and Callaghan, the President’s promise to back the British “to the hilt” in their search for a Rhodesian settlement stemmed more from a calculated pursuit of American interests than from any desire to “pull the British chestnuts from the fire.” As recently-declassified documents make clear, the Administration regarded the resolution of the Rhodesian crisis as one of its highest priorities upon taking office, seeing it as an opportunity to demonstrate America’s newfound commitment to regional diplomacy and human rights.³⁶⁸ “It was essential to demonstrate to the Third World our understanding of and willingness to take a leading role in dealing with their problems,” Vance would later recall. If the Administration had failed to champion majority rule in Rhodesia, the Secretary feared that black Africans would have “dismiss[ed] our human rights policy as mere [C]old [W]ar propaganda, employed at the expense of the peoples of Africa.”³⁶⁹ While Carter and his chief foreign policy advisers recognized that the Rhodesian crisis remained, at root, a British problem, they also understood

³⁶⁷ Record of a Discussion between the Prime Minister and the President of the United States in the Cabinet Room of the White House on Thursday 10 March 1977 at 11:30 AM, FCO 82/759, TNA.

³⁶⁸ PRM-28, JECL.

³⁶⁹ Vance, Hard Choices, 256-257.

that they would need to play an active role if a solution was to be found. As Brzezinski informed the President in his summary of a Special Coordination Committee (SCC) meeting intended to iron out the Administration's African policy, "Everyone agreed that for now the best course of action is to support the British as vigorously as possible."³⁷⁰

"Acting in the Closest Concert:" The Anglo-American Proposals

After the March summit, Owen and Vance decided to alter their tactics. At Geneva, the Rhodesians and the Zimbabwean nationalists had resisted Ivor Richard's attempts to forge an interim government responsible for overseeing the colony's transition to majority rule. British and American officials hoped that once the sides had agreed on the terms of Zimbabwe's independence constitution, the details of the transition period would become less controversial. Thus, Owen and Vance hoped to consult with the leading protagonists in the Rhodesian crisis and produce a draft constitution. Once the draft had been completed, an "All-Party Conference" would be convened to scrutinize it. Only after the constitution had been finalized would the parties sit down to hammer out the details of how to transfer power to a democratically-elected president.³⁷¹ In part, this approach was designed to allay suspicions that Ian Smith and his followers would have too much say in the drafting of the Zimbabwean constitution.³⁷² It was also intended to demonstrate to the Patriotic Front, the Frontline Presidents, and the rest of the international community that officials in London and Washington were doing everything in their power to defuse the Rhodesian crisis before it spiraled out of control.³⁷³

³⁷⁰ Minutes of a Special Coordination Committee Meeting, 8 February 1977, Declassified Documents Reference System (hereafter DDRS).

³⁷¹ Steering Brief: Visit by Secretary of State 31 March/1 April, FCO 36/2011, TNA.

³⁷² This decision was undertaken, at least in part, at the behest of Joshua Nkomo. Untitled Telegram, Philip Mansfield to FCO, February 26, 1977, FCO 36/1963, TNA.

³⁷³ The British were particularly eager to be seen as making progress in the months leading up to the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting scheduled for June 1977. See, for instance, "Rhodesia: The Case of Preliminary

After consulting with the Americans and obtaining the Cabinet's approval, Owen departed for the African subcontinent. His primary objective was to determine whether the protagonists in the Rhodesian conflict were willing to support the new Anglo-American approach.³⁷⁴ However, it was clear from the outset that the Foreign Secretary's maiden trip to southern Africa would be a baptism by fire. Tensions were running high in the aftermath of the Geneva Conference's collapse, and neither the Rhodesians nor the nationalists seemed eager to compromise. Ian Smith remained committed to the idea of "responsible" rule, while Robert Mugabe (and, to a lesser degree, Joshua Nkomo) insisted that Smith and his followers would have to be driven from power by military force. The visits of Cuban President Fidel Castro and Soviet President Nikolai Podgorny to Africa in the weeks preceding Owen's arrival only served to exacerbate these tensions, rendering the Foreign Secretary's task that much more difficult.³⁷⁵

It was against this backdrop that Owen arrived in the Tanzanian capital of Dar es Salaam on April 11. The first African leader he met with was Robert Mugabe, the nominal head of ZANU.³⁷⁶ At this meeting, it quickly became apparent that the collapse of the Geneva Conference had sapped Mugabe's interest in diplomacy. The nationalist leader vowed to

Talks on Some Aspects of an Independence Constitution," contained in a packet from Philip Mansfield to Patrick Laver entitled "Rhodesia," March 8, 1977, FCO 36/1963; Minute, Tony Duff to Ted Rowlands, "Rhodesia – Future Policy," February 1, 1977, FCO 36/1963, TNA; Minute, David Owen to James Callaghan, "Rhodesia," undated, FCO 36/1964, TNA.

³⁷⁴ Telegram, Cyrus Vance to Zbigniew Brzezinski, "Rhodesia: Owen's Brief," March 31, 1977, Southern Africa – [3/77 – 4/77] folder, Donated Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Geographic Files, Box 14, JECL.

³⁷⁵ Castro toured the Horn of Africa and southern Africa in late-March 1977. Podgorny visited Tanzania, Zambia, and Mozambique, where he signed an arms deal with President Samora Machel. For more on these visits, see Carol Thompson, Challenge to Imperialism: The Frontline States in the Liberation of Zimbabwe, (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1986): 33-34 and Daniel Kempton, Soviet Strategy Toward Southern Africa: The National Liberation Movement Connection, (London: Pan Books, 1980): 297-298. For US and UK reactions, see, New York Times, "Shaper US-Soviet Duel in Africa is Seen in Wake of Podgorny Trip," April 5, 1977; "Briton is Critical of Soviet in Africa," April 27, 1977; and "The Core of Soviet Foreign Policy is to Go With Winners," May 8, 1977.

³⁷⁶ How much control Mugabe actually exerted over the guerrillas was the subject of much speculation in London and Washington. Draft minute, Patrick Laver to Tony Duff, "Rhodesia: What Next?" February 1, 1977, FCO 36/1963, TNA. See also, Record of a Conversation between the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the United States Secretary of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on Friday 6 May, FCO 36/1965, TNA. The Americans also questioned Mugabe's position with the ZANU hierarchy. Intelligence Memorandum, "Rhodesia: The Patriotic Front, Background and Prospects," June 13, 1977, NLC-6-88-4-5-0, JECL.

continue the bush war unless the British agreed to transfer power directly to the Patriotic Front. Realizing that this would be unacceptable to Rhodesian opinion (as well as to a large segment of the British public), Owen demurred. Mugabe lashed out at a subsequent press conference, revealing his lack of interest in returning to the conference table. “The struggle might be bitter, protracted, and bloody, but this is the price Zimbabweans should be prepared to pay,” he told reporters. “Dr. Owen has failed to convince us that Britain is in a position to effect [sic] the transfer of power to the people of Zimbabwe.”³⁷⁷ Owen’s meetings with the Frontline Presidents and South African Prime Minister John Vorster were only slightly more encouraging. The Presidents privately supported the new Anglo-American initiative but felt compelled to continue backing the guerrillas until the negotiations got off the ground.³⁷⁸ For his part, Vorster was reluctant to apply pressure on his Rhodesian counterpart – possibly because South African sentiment was rallying behind the Rhodesians.³⁷⁹

After meeting with Mugabe, Vorster, and the Frontline Presidents, Owen continued on to Salisbury to parley with Ian Smith. Although no Labour Cabinet Minister had set foot in Rhodesia since the colony had unilaterally severed ties with the British Crown in 1965, Owen was determined to discuss Rhodesia’s future with the Prime Minister in person. Unfortunately, this tête-à-tête failed to produce any discernible movement. Smith reiterated that he had no intention of allowing Robert Mugabe or Joshua Nkomo (both of whom he considered to be dangerous extremists) to seize the reins of power and took the opportunity to rail against the idea of one-man, one-vote democracy – which he likened to “the counting of sheep.”³⁸⁰ All things

³⁷⁷ Owen, *Time to Declare*, 301

³⁷⁸ Draft Speaking Note for Cabinet 21 April, FCO 36/1964, TNA.

³⁷⁹ Owen, *Time to Declare*, 300-305. The change in South African opinion began after the Geneva Conference and had solidified by August 1977. See, Telegram, David Scott to Patrick Laver, “Record of Conversation with AVM Hawkins,” August 11, 1977, FCO 36/1979, TNA.

³⁸⁰ Quoted in Martin Meredith, *The Past is Another Country: Rhodesia, UDI to Zimbabwe*, revised and expanded edition, (London: Pan Books, 1980): 249. It is interesting to compare Owen’s optimistic account of this meeting

considered, it is difficult to understand how Owen could have returned to London with a pronounced feeling of optimism, as he has claimed in his memoirs.³⁸¹ All the major players in the Rhodesian drama remained deeply suspicious of each other and skeptical about the viability of any future Anglo-American initiative.³⁸²

Perhaps the Foreign Secretary was not completely candid in his memoirs. For, upon returning from his eight-day, seven-nation African mission, he described the chances of reaching a Rhodesian settlement as “not terribly high.”³⁸³ Yet, while Owen had become “increasingly unenthusiastic” about the idea of calling an early constitutional conference, he feared that any slowdown in the negotiating process would lead to an escalation of the bush war. Cyrus Vance shared these concerns. Consequently, although the statesmen opted not to call a constitutional conference as they had originally intended to do, they agreed to commence “a phase of intensive, detailed consultations with the parties” about the nature of the Zimbabwean constitution.³⁸⁴ British and American officials hoped that conducting bilateral talks with the Rhodesians and the nationalists “away from the glare of publicity” would prevent either side from making extravagant demands intended for public consumption.³⁸⁵ They also hoped that these consultations would reveal areas of consensus among the protagonists. To this end, Owen and Vance agreed to form a joint consultative team headed by John Graham, Britain’s Deputy Undersecretary for African and Middle Eastern Affairs, and Stephen Low, America’s

with Smith’s. See Owen, Time to Declare, 305 and Ian Smith, The Great Betrayal: The Memoirs of Ian Douglas Smith, (London: Blake Publishing, 1997): 231.

³⁸¹ Owen, Time to Declare, 306

³⁸² In fact, the US Ambassador to Lusaka gained a far less rosy impression of Kenneth Kaunda’s response to the Owen proposals. See, Undated telegram, Stephen Low to State Department, FCO 36/1964, TNA.

³⁸³ Quoted in New York Times, “Black Asserts Geneva Demands,” April 18, 1977.

³⁸⁴ Record of a Discussion between the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the United States Secretary of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on Friday 6 May, FCO 36/1965, TNA.

³⁸⁵ US-UK Consultations in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office: 27-28 April 1977, FCO 36/1965, TNA.

Ambassador to Lusaka.³⁸⁶ The pair spent the next four months shuttling from one African capital to another, discussing their constitutional proposals with the protagonists and seeking to piece together a mutually-acceptable constitution.

On their first swing through southern Africa, Graham and Low (who quickly developed a good working relationship) solicited suggestions about the nature of the Zimbabwean executive, judiciary, and legislature – as well as ideas about how to provide for a peaceful and orderly transition period.³⁸⁷ The only items they considered non-negotiable were the establishment of a democratically-elected government and a bill of rights that would protect the liberties of all individuals.³⁸⁸ However, it quickly became apparent that no paper guarantees could overcome the enmity that had built up between the Rhodesians and the nationalists over the years.³⁸⁹ Graham and Low, therefore, sought to assemble a package deal that would satisfy the Zimbabweans that the transition to majority rule would be irreversible while also reassuring the Rhodesians that their interests would be safeguarded after independence.³⁹⁰ Between May and August, the pair cobbled together such a package, which came to be known as the Anglo-American Proposals.³⁹¹ British and American diplomats hoped that the package would contain

³⁸⁶ Record of a Discussion between the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the United States Secretary of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on Friday 6 May, FCO 36/1965, TNA.

³⁸⁷ Andrew DeRoche, Black, White and Chrome: The United States and Zimbabwe: 1953-1998, (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press Inc., 2001), 249.

³⁸⁸ This flexibility reflected the transatlantic allies' belief that resolving the Rhodesian crisis was more important than the exact terms of the settlement. As Stephen Low later acknowledged, "The primary role of the mediators was to find a formula for settlement and have it accepted. The substance of the formula was not their most important concern, although they made it clear from the beginning...that a condition of their participation was an election based on one-person-one-vote." Quoted in Stephen Low, "The Zimbabwe Settlement, 1976-1979," in eds. Saadia Touval and I. William Zartman, International Mediation in Theory and Practice, (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1985): 100.

³⁸⁹ See, for instance, Untitled telegram, John Graham to FCO, May 29, 1977, and Untitled telegram, Graham to FCO, May 30, 1977, FCO 36/1969, TNA.

³⁹⁰ In part, this was in deference to Smith, who conceded that while he considered the idea of one-man-one-vote "anathema," he would consider it if the rest of the package was sufficiently attractive to encourage "moderate" Rhodesians want to stay. Record of a Call by Low, Graham, Steel, and Flynn on Ian Smith at 4:40 pm on 27 May in Salisbury, FCO 36/1969, TNA.

³⁹¹ The key features of the Anglo-American Proposals included: the transfer of power from the Rhodesian Front to a British-administered interim government (which would oversee the election of the first Zimbabwean government), a

enough incentives to lure both sides back to the conference table. “There are...elements in the package which will be unwelcome to both sides,” David Owen’s speaking note for a July 1977 meeting of the Ministerial Group on Southern Africa pointed out. “Nevertheless, taken as a whole, we believe that it amounts to a fair and feasible proposition.”³⁹² With these proposals in hand, the Foreign Secretary returned to southern Africa to present the package to the protagonists in August 1977.

The Collapse of the Anglo-American Proposals

Unfortunately for British and American officials, neither the nationalists nor the Rhodesians regarded the Anglo-American Proposals as “fair and feasible.” The transatlantic allies had long questioned the Patriotic Front’s commitment to democracy, and its growing military strength, coupled with its lack of popular support in Rhodesia, did little to instill confidence in the nationalists’ democratic leanings. “[T]he Popular Front in Zimbabwe has questionable electoral strength but good prospects for shooting their way to power,” noted Thomas Thornton, one of the National Security Council’s African specialists. In Thornton’s estimation, Robert Mugabe and Joshua Nkomo preferred the military path to power over the democratic one. “[The] P[atriotic] F[ront] see things as going in their direction and would regard elections as an unnecessary risk that would inevitably dilute their power,” he opined. “Conquest by power of arms is an honorable tradition [in Africa] and avoids a lot of problems.”³⁹³ The Consultative Group’s discussions with the Patriotic Front confirmed these suspicions. With their

new constitution based on the principle of one-man-one-vote democracy, a bill of rights to protect the rights of individuals regardless of their race or ethnicity, a development fund worth approximately £15 million, and arrangements covering the composition of the Zimbabwean army and police force. For the complete text of the proposals, see “Rhodesia – Proposals for a Settlement, Text of Proposals,” Department of State Bulletin online, October 3, 1977, vol. 77 (October-December 1977): 424-439.

³⁹² Brief: Meeting of the Ministerial Group on Southern Africa at 11 am on Friday 1 July 1977, FCO 36/1973, TNA.

³⁹³ Memorandum, Thomas Thornton to Zbigniew Brzezinski, “Elections in Africa,” April 1, 1977, Southern Africa – [3/77 – 4/77] folder, Brzezinski Donated Material Collection, Geographic File, Box 14, JECL.

military prospects on the rise, Mugabe and Nkomo became increasingly disinterested in a negotiated settlement which envisioned some form of power-sharing.³⁹⁴ Consequently, they displayed scant interest in the Anglo-American Proposals throughout the summer of 1977.

Although it is more difficult to determine Ian Smith's true intentions, a number of high-ranking State Department and Foreign Office officials believed that the Rhodesian leader was coming to accept the need for majority rule.³⁹⁵ This may sound like wishful thinking, but there were several reasons why Smith might have been prepared to cut a deal in 1977. First and foremost was the escalation of the *Chimurenga*. Many of Smith's military advisers regarded the bush war as unwinnable and had been pressing the Prime Minister and his Cabinet colleagues to negotiate with the nationalists for some time.³⁹⁶ So had Ken Flower, the head of Rhodesia's Central Intelligence Organization (CIO).³⁹⁷ Moreover, the Rhodesian economy was sputtering, and white morale was rapidly declining – as evidenced by the steady stream of whites emigrating from Rhodesia.³⁹⁸ In addition to these domestic factors, the South African Government had been leaning on Smith to abdicate in favor of a moderate black government for some time. Thus, Graham and Low were not delusional for thinking that Smith might be willing to cut a deal. However, they recognized that he was not prepared to settle at any cost. “Mr. Smith is not at the

³⁹⁴ Telegram, John Graham to FCO, May 18, 1977, FCO 37/1967; Telegram, Graham to FCO, May 25, 1977, FCO 36/1969; Telegram, Graham to FCO, May 30, 1977, FCO 36/1969; and Telegram, Graham to FCO, July 7, 1977, FCO 36/1973, TNA.

³⁹⁵ After their first round of consultations, John Graham and Stephen Low concluded that “the [Rhodesian] regime clearly wants a settlement.” Rhodesia: Report by the Anglo-American Consultative Group for the Period of 16 May to 1 June 1977, FCO 36/1970, TNA.

³⁹⁶ Telegram, John Graham to FCO, July 10, 1977, FCO 36/1973, TNA.

³⁹⁷ Flower has noted in his memoirs that the CIO began pushing a settlement as early as 1972, when it realized that the Rhodesian security forces were fighting “a no win war.” By 1976, the CIO estimated that the “no-win war” had become a “losing” proposition. Ken Flower, Serving Secretly: A Security Chief on Record, Rhodesia into Zimbabwe, 1964 to 1981, (London: Murray, 1987): 120, 128-129.

³⁹⁸ As estimated 12,000 - 15,000 whites (out of a total population of approximately 270,000) had emigrated in 1976. Most international observers believed the figure would have been far higher without the strict currency exchange controls put in place by the Rhodesian Front. Brief: Meeting of the Ministerial Group on Southern Africa at 11:00 am on Friday 1 July 1977, FCO 36/1973, TNA. At least one prominent Rhodesian military commander has cited the increased frequency of military call-ups as a major source of discontent. Reid-Daly and Stiff, Selous Scouts, 107.

end of the road yet and is not prepared for unconditional surrender (a ‘sell-out’),” the envoys noted after meeting with the Prime Minister in May 1977. “He demands safeguards for the white Rhodesians sufficient to win their confidence in the new arrangements and to encourage them to remain in Rhodesia.”³⁹⁹

What were these safeguards? And were they really as important to Rhodesians as Smith alleged? In his dealings with the Consultative Group, Smith made it clear that he hoped to obtain a qualified franchise (based on property ownership and education) as well as a parliamentary blocking mechanism that would prevent the Zimbabwean constitution from being altered without the consent of the white community. He also wanted assurances that the Zimbabwean government would assume responsibility for pension obligations racked up under his regime and a guarantee that the new government would not confiscate white-owned lands. Finally, Smith was anxious that “law and order” should be maintained after the Rhodesian Front ceded power. Because he doubted the guerrillas could be trusted to ensure that the transition to majority rule would be orderly or to safeguard the white community’s interests after independence, Smith dismissed the Patriotic Front’s calls to disband the existing army, police force, and civil service and replace them with their own followers.⁴⁰⁰ Throughout the summer of 1977, the issue of “law and order” emerged as the Rhodesians’ greatest concern. Based on their consultations with the Rhodesian leadership, Graham and Low concluded that if they could somehow persuade the Patriotic Front and the Frontline Presidents to compromise on this issue (especially when it came

³⁹⁹ Rhodesia: Report by the Anglo-American Consultative Group for the Period of 16 May to 1 June 1977, FCO 36/1970, TNA.

⁴⁰⁰ Rhodesia: Report by the Anglo-American Consultative Group for the Period of 16 May to 1 June 1977, FCO 36/1970, TNA.

to the composition of the Zimbabwean army), Smith was likely to drop many of his other demands and go along with the Anglo-American Proposals.⁴⁰¹

However, convincing Ian Smith to accept the Anglo-American Proposals was only the first step on the road toward a negotiated settlement. As the Rhodesian Prime Minister repeatedly reminded the Consultative Group, he had to be able to “sell” the proposals to his public. To some extent, this was a negotiating ploy intended to extract greater concessions from the British and Americans. Nonetheless, certain influential segments of the Rhodesian populace remained stridently opposed to the idea of majority rule.⁴⁰² According to historians Peter Godwin and Ian Hancock, the business community and a tiny group of liberals could be counted on to accept majority rule but not the farmers who comprised the backbone of the Rhodesian Front. Indeed, only two months earlier, 12 Rhodesian Front MPs (out of 50 white MPs) had rebelled when Smith proposed repealing the Land Tenure Act – a piece of legislation which prevented blacks from purchasing certain residential, agricultural, industrial, and commercial lands. Although few blacks would have been able to afford the newly-available tracts, the 12 MPs denounced Smith as “a dangerous liberal” and charged that “the government was not adhering to party principles and election promises.”⁴⁰³ They formed the Rhodesian Action Party (RAP) in July 1977 and challenged the Rhodesian Front from the right.⁴⁰⁴ The RAP never posed a serious threat to Smith’s hold on power, but its very existence demonstrated that right-wing

⁴⁰¹ Telegram, John Graham to FCO, July 10, 1977, FCO 36/1973, TNA.

⁴⁰² Many Rhodesians were willing to follow “good old Smithy,” but white opinion was far more fragmented than outsiders appreciated. See, Godwin and Hancock, Rhodesians Never Die, 6-14.

⁴⁰³ “Dangerous Liberal” quoted in Godwin and Hancock, Rhodesians Never Die, 8. “Not adhering to party principles” quoted in Sue Onslow, “South Africa and the Owen/Vance Plan of 1977,” South African Historical Journal, vol. 51 no. 1 (2004): 141, footnote 30.

⁴⁰⁴ Meredith, The Past is Another Country, 295. For more on Smith’s effort to amend the Land Tenure Act and the RAP response, see, Godwin and Hitchcock, Rhodesians Never Die, 191-204.

opinion remained alive and well in Rhodesia.⁴⁰⁵ Thus, while many Westerners scoffed when Smith voiced concerns about his ability to convince the Rhodesian public that minority rule was no longer viable, a substantial number of hardliners continued to live in what Zambian President Kenneth Kaunda described as “cloud cuckoo-land.” But whether liberal or hardliner, almost all Rhodesians (and many Zimbabweans) insisted that the army and police should remain intact.⁴⁰⁶

Jimmy Carter was aware of this sentiment but ignored it in an attempt to retain the support of the Frontline Presidents.⁴⁰⁷ During the course of an August 1977 state visit to Washington, Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere persuaded Carter that the Rhodesian security forces should be dismantled and replaced by an army “based on liberation forces.”⁴⁰⁸ Historians have not offered a plausible explanation as to why Carter agreed to include this provision in the Anglo-American Proposals – perhaps because the record of the meeting remains classified. Whatever Carter’s motivation, the outcome was predictable. Ian Smith rejected the proposals, which he publicly denounced as “insane” when David Owen and Andrew Young presented them to him in September 1977.⁴⁰⁹ In Smith’s estimation, allowing the Zimbabwean army to be “based on liberation forces” was tantamount to handing the reins of power to the Patriotic Front. Nor was the Prime Minister alone in his concern. Low reported that the Rhodesian officials he met with “did not even try to disguise their surprise and dismay” when they learned that, under the Anglo-

⁴⁰⁵ Telegram, Mr. Bolen and Harold Saunders to Secretary and Phil Habib, “Southern African Developments,” April 1977, Southern Africa – [3/77 – 4/77] folder, Brzezinski Donated Material, Geographic File, Box 14, JECL

⁴⁰⁶ As Graham reported to the Foreign Office after meeting with members of the Rhodesian Cabinet and military, “In this emphasis on law and order, they faithfully reflect [the] anxieties of many moderate people we spoke to, whit[e] and black. Telegram, John Graham to FCO, May 29, 1977, FCO 36/1969, TNA

⁴⁰⁷ Carter had been briefed by David Owen on July 23. Memorandum of Conversation between an American delegation headed by Jimmy Carter and a British delegation headed by David Owen, July 23, 1977, Memcons: President, 7/77 folder, National Security Affairs (7), Subject File, Box 35, JECL. In a memorandum to the President, Brzezinski opined that while the concession “probably goes further than the British are willing to go,” it was the price that he to be paid in order to convince the Tanzanian President to support the Anglo-American Proposals. Telegram, Zbigniew Brzezinski to the President, “Points to Confirm with Nyerere,” August 4, 1977, Southern Africa – [5/77 – 5/79] folder, Brzezinski Donated Material, Geographic File, Box 14, JECL.

⁴⁰⁸ DeRoche, *Black, White, and Chrome*, 251.

⁴⁰⁹ Quoted in *New York Times*, “Rhodesia’s Leader Derides Peace Proposals as ‘Crazy,’” September 3, 1977

American Proposals, the Zimbabwean army would be comprised primarily of former guerrillas.⁴¹⁰ Convinced that the West was determined to foist the Patriotic Front on his country, Smith decided to take matters into his own hands.

It is entirely possible that Smith would have rejected the Anglo-American Proposals even without Carter's concession. There were indications that the Rhodesian leader had been looking for an excuse to do so for some time.⁴¹¹ Nevertheless, the provision stipulating that the army should be "based on liberation forces" provided him with the perfect pretext. Even worse, it allowed him to convince most Rhodesian and South African whites that the Anglo-American Proposals were nothing more than an underhanded effort to install Mugabe and Nkomo in power.⁴¹² Neither the Rhodesians nor the Afrikaners wanted to see the communist-backed Patriotic Front in control of Zimbabwe, and Smith exploited this fact to convince Rhodesian and South African whites to rally behind his "internal settlement," a scheme designed to bring "moderate" nationalist leaders like Bishop Abel Muzorewa and Reverend Ndabaningi Sithole into the government while excluding Mugabe, Nkomo, and their followers.

"Kicking the South Africans in the Teeth"

When he rejected Ivor Richard's proposals on January 24, 1977, Smith had hinted that he intended to pursue an "internal settlement" which would sideline the Patriotic Front. He hoped that by unilaterally implementing the "Kissinger package" he would be able to create a moderate, multiracial regime that would eventually gain international recognition. The outside world

⁴¹⁰ Quoted in DeRoche, Black, White, and Chrome, 255.

⁴¹¹ Telegram, David Scott to FCO, August 22, 1977, FCO 36/1979, TNA. See also, Onslow, "The Owen/Vance Plan of 1977," 134-147, 152.

⁴¹² "I think it is a very cunning scheme to insure that the Patriotic Front will be the next government of Rhodesia," Smith told reporters upon learning the details of the Anglo-American plan. New York Times, "Rhodesia's Leader Derides Peace Proposals as 'Crazy.'"

viewed the ploy as a major gamble (would Smith be able to convince any of the nationalist leaders to join his coalition? would such an arrangement be acceptable to the international community? would it be sufficient to convince the guerrillas to lay down their arms? could he bring a majority of Rhodesians to accept power-sharing?), but Smith viewed it as his best hope of preserving the Rhodesian way of life. With international opinion rapidly turning against his regime and guerrilla activity on the rise, Smith scrambled to reach an agreement that would prevent Robert Mugabe and Joshua Nkomo from attaining positions of authority.

Smith's gambit received a major boost when the South African Government decided to back it. Based solely on racial considerations, it seems obvious that South Africa's apartheid regime would have supported Smith's efforts to preserve white privilege in Rhodesia. However, concerns about national security – not race – were paramount for the Afrikaners as they decided how to handle the Rhodesian situation.⁴¹³ And it was quickly becoming apparent to some in the South African Government that Ian Smith's Rhodesia had outlived its usefulness. In fact, it had become an embarrassment and a hindrance to Prime Minister John Vorster's attempts to improve relations with black Africa and with the West. This is why Vorster had pressured Smith to attend the Geneva Conference in 1976 and why he continued to "hanker" after a negotiated settlement – provided that it would lead to the emergence of a "moderate" black government.⁴¹⁴ For this reason, South African support for Smith's internal settlement was not immediately forthcoming.

Despite his desire to see a "moderate" black regime assume power in Salisbury, John Vorster's worldview was quite different from that of Jimmy Carter. His willingness to cooperate in the search for Zimbabwean independence stemmed from his perception of what was in South

⁴¹³ For more on this point, see Chapter 2.

⁴¹⁴ Memorandum, Patrick Laver to Tony Duff, "Rhodesia: What Next?" February 1, 1977, FCO 36/1963, TNA. The Americans agreed with this assessment. See, for instance, Telegram, William Edmondson and William Bowdler to William Schaufele, "Comment on Talks with Scott and Hawkins," January 1977, South Africa, 1-4/77 folder, National Security Affairs (6), Country File, Box 69, JECL.

Africa's national interest rather than from any inherent sympathy for the idea of majority rule. Indeed, Vorster remained a staunch defender of apartheid even while working toward majority rule in Rhodesia. But whereas the Ford Administration had been willing to refrain from criticizing apartheid as long as the South Africans cooperated on the Rhodesian question, Carter was unwilling to make this tradeoff. The South Africans got their first glimpse of what was in store for them during a May 1977 summit meeting with Vice President Walter Mondale in Vienna. As the Vice President made clear before leaving Washington, his chief objective in meeting with the South Africans was to demonstrate the Administration's commitment to majority rule throughout southern Africa. "The absence of a clear-cut position on [s]outhern Africa, and especially apartheid by the past Administration may have led Vorster (and others) to conclude that we were really not serious about majority rule...and that we would accept solutions the principal impact of which would be to stem the threat of communism," Mondale commented shortly before leaving for Vienna. His task was to inform Vorster and his colleagues that the Carter Administration saw apartheid as a violation of its human rights agenda and had no intention of ignoring the situation inside the Republic. Thus, while Mondale hoped to persuade Vorster "to make it clear to [Ian] Smith that the day of decision has come," he also intended to serve notice that US-South African relations had reached "a watershed." Unless Vorster was prepared to commit to a "progressive transformation" of South African society, the United States would be forced to fundamentally reassess its relationship with the Republic.⁴¹⁵

The Afrikaners did not respond favorably to this ultimatum. Nor did they appreciate Mondale's suggestion that they begin moving toward a democratic system based on universal

⁴¹⁵ Memorandum, Walter Mondale to Cyrus Vance, Andrew Young, and Zbigniew Brzezinski, "Southern Africa – US Strategy and Meeting with Prime Minister Vorster," April 4, 1977, Southern Africa – [3/77 – 4/77] folder, Zbigniew Brzezinski Donated Material, Geographic File, Box 14, JECL

suffrage.⁴¹⁶ Foreign Minister Pik Botha (a liberal by South African standards) described the demand as a “knife in the back.”⁴¹⁷ The bellicose Vorster was more direct. “I can take kicks in the pants,” he shot back at Mondale, “but don’t kick me in the teeth.”⁴¹⁸ The South Africans regarded such interference in their domestic affairs as both misguided and wrongheaded, maintaining that the Americans did not understand the complexities of the situation in southern Africa and that Carter’s policy prescriptions were likely to result in “chaos and anarchy.”⁴¹⁹ When the Carter Administration elected to ignore such warnings, US-South African relations plummeted. Around the same time, American envoys in South Africa soon noticed a “laager” (siege mentality) setting in amongst the Afrikaners.⁴²⁰

The events of September and October 1977 further strained the bond between the United States and South Africa. On September 12, “black consciousness” leader Stephen Biko died in police custody after being brutally beaten, making him the 21st black detainee to die in police custody in 18 months. Justice Minister Jimmy Kruger issued a lengthy statement the following day, in which he attempted to reassure South Africans and the international community that

⁴¹⁶ The Vice President first raised this point during the Vienna summit and expanded upon it in his subsequent remarks to the press. Memorandum of Conversation, “Second Meeting Between Vice President Mondale and Prime Minister Botha: Namibia and South Africa,” May 19, 1977, and “Third Meeting Between Vice President Mondale and Prime Minister Botha: Rhodesia, Namibia, and South Africa,” May 20, 1977, South Africa: 6/77 folder, National Security Affairs (6), Country File, Box 69, JECL. When asked if he saw any compromise on the issue of one-man-one-vote, Mondale responded that he did not. “Every citizen should have the right to vote and every vote should be counted equally,” he replied. Quoted in Massie, *Loosing the Bonds*, 412. The South African leadership’s negative impression of the Carter Administration was reinforced when Young and Vance made similar statements.

⁴¹⁷ Information Memorandum, Zbigniew Brzezinski to the President, “Secretary Vance’s Talk with Botha,” June 30, 1977, South Africa: 7-8/77 folder, National Security Affairs (6), Country File, Box 70, JECL

⁴¹⁸ Memorandum of Conversation, “Third Meeting Between Vice President Mondale and Prime Minister Botha: Rhodesia, Namibia, and South Africa,” May 20, 1977, South Africa: 6/77 folder, National Security Affairs (6), Country File, Box 69, JECL

⁴¹⁹ Briefing Memorandum, Talcott Seeyle to Cyrus Vance, “Additional Points for Your Meeting with Pik Botha,” June 21, 1977, South Africa: 6/77 folder, National Security Affairs (6), Country File, Box 69, JECL

⁴²⁰ Young and Vance kept the pressure on South Africa. Massie, *Loosing the Bonds*, 412-414. Telegram, William Bowdler to Andrew Young, Richard Moose, and Donald McHenry, “Namibia: Withdrawal of South African Armed Forces,” August 1977, South Africa: 7-8/77 folder, National Security Affairs (6), Country File, Box 70, and Memorandum for the National Foreign Intelligence Board, “Interagency Assessment: South Africa: Policy Considerations Regarding a Nuclear Test,” August 18, 1977, South Africa: Kalahari Site, 8/77 folder, National Security Affairs (6), Country File, Box 71, JECL

Biko's death was the result of a weeklong hunger strike and not foul play. Many (including the State Department) suspected otherwise, and the incident sparked a wave of domestic protest and international outrage.⁴²¹ Vorster responded in the only way he knew how: by cracking down on South African dissidents. On September 15, the government arrested more than 1,200 black students who had gathered to mourn Biko's death.⁴²² As the protests grew in number and intensity, the police were placed on nationwide alert. And when two newspapers confirmed that Biko had indeed died of police brutality, Vorster's regime moved to crush all political dissent. On October 19, several leading black protest groups (including Biko's Black Consciousness movement and the Christian Institute of South Africa) were banned – as was the nation's leading black newspaper, The World. More than 50 anti-apartheid activists were arrested, and scores more were served with banning orders which effectively barred them from political activism.⁴²³ A defiant Vorster declared that he would never bow to domestic or international pressure when it came to apartheid. "I am definitely not going to let anybody prescribe to me what I should do and what I should not do," he lectured the press.⁴²⁴

By this time, the South African Government had also decided to abandon its support of the Anglo-American Proposals. While the South Africans had convinced Ian Smith not to reject the proposals throughout the summer of 1977, there was a discernible shift in Pretoria's policy after David Owen and Andrew Young presented the package to the South African Cabinet in late-August.⁴²⁵ The South Africans were aghast at Carter's decision to incorporate guerrillas into

⁴²¹ New York Times, "Young Black Leader Dies in Detention in South Africa, Raising Fears of New Unrest," September 14, 1977 and New York Times, "Too Late The Phalarope," September 15, 1977.

⁴²² New York Times, "South Africa Seizes 1,200 Marking Death of a Black Leader," September 16, 1977.

⁴²³ Massie, Loosing the Bonds, 424 and New York Times, "South Africans Ban Major Black Groups, Close Leading Paper," October 20, 1977.

⁴²⁴ Quoted in New York Times, "South Africa On Trial Again: Death of Black Brings Outrage and Questions," September 20, 1977.

⁴²⁵ Historian Sue Onslow has used recently-declassified South African documents to make this argument. See, Onslow, "The Owen/Vance Plan of 1977," 134-149

the Zimbabwean army, seeing it as yet another unnecessary concession to the Patriotic Front. In their eyes, basing the army on former guerrillas seemed like a recipe for disaster. Vorster had always harbored doubts about the West's resolve "when it came time to crack heads."⁴²⁶ His August 29 meeting with Owen and Young provided all the proof he needed on this point. Faced with the choice of supporting Smith's internal settlement or witnessing a Mugabe-Nkomo "takeover," Vorster chose the former.⁴²⁷

Assured of Pretoria's support, Smith moved rapidly to implement his internal settlement. After denouncing the Anglo-American Proposals as "insane," he intensified his courtship of Muzorewa and Sithole.⁴²⁸ A formal agreement to bring them into a governing coalition was reached in March 1978. Much to the dismay of the British and American governments, it was the so-called "Salisbury Agreement" – and not the Anglo-American Proposals – which would set the terms of the debate about Rhodesia's future for the next two years.

Conclusion

As this chapter has sought to demonstrate, Jimmy Carter attempted to bring a new sense of purpose to American foreign policy. While his human rights policy was also politically expedient, it formed the cornerstone of his "post-Cold War" vision of American diplomacy. This approach impressed many Western liberals and African leaders who had grown weary of Henry Kissinger's callous *realpolitik*. Unfortunately for the people of southern Africa, Carter was no more successful in convincing Ian Smith to accept majority rule than Kissinger had been. As his Administration began to suffer a number of setbacks in its foreign policy, Carter gradually

⁴²⁶ Telegram, William Bowdler to State Department, FCO 36/1964, TNA

⁴²⁷ Quoted in Onslow, "The Owen/Vance Plan of 1977," 156. For more on South Africa's diplomatic volte face, see *ibid.*, 153-154, 157-158

⁴²⁸ New York Times, "Rhodesia's Leader Derides Peace Proposals as 'Crazy,'" September 3, 1977.

jettisoned his “post-Cold War” approach to international relations in favor of a more conventional “Cold Warrior” approach. Beginning in the Horn of Africa in 1978, Soviet and Cuban adventurism in the developing world and domestic political considerations combined to derail his “post-Cold War” agenda. As Carter reluctantly came to embrace the very Cold War orthodoxy he had once hoped to discredit, his interest in Rhodesia came to be shaped less by concerns about human rights violations and more by a desire to prevent the Soviets and Cubans from gaining a predominant position in southern Africa.

Chapter Four

“Keeping Faith” in Rhodesia, 1978-1979

On May 15, 1979, a second-term Senator rose to address his colleagues about the Carter Administration’s Rhodesian policy. The speaker lauded the recent election of Bishop Abel Muzorewa, a Zimbabwean nationalist with widespread grassroots support, as Zimbabwe-Rhodesia’s first black prime minister. The Senator described Muzorewa as “a man who is deeply interested in his people” and a leader who was determined “to bring...peace and prosperity” to his war-torn country. The Senator also praised the process by which Muzorewa had come to power, describing the recent Rhodesian election as “the most free and open...in the history of the continent of Africa.” Finally, he commented upon the impressive voter turnout of 64%, wryly remarking that he could not recall “a record such as that in any election in the United States.” The feat was all the more remarkable given that the election had been held in the midst of a guerrilla war and that some voters had been forced to trek up to 10 miles to reach the nearest polling station. Given that majority rule had seemingly been achieved in Zimbabwe-Rhodesia, the Senator urged President Carter to lift sanctions against the fledgling nation. They had served their purpose, and the Senator could find “no further justification” for maintaining them.⁴²⁹

Nor was Senator Jesse Helms alone in his thinking. A recently-completed report by Freedom House (a non-governmental organization dedicated to the promotion of democracy, political freedom, and human rights) described the Rhodesian elections as “the most democratic” to have taken place anywhere on the African continent. The report carried special gravitas in some circles because it had been co-authored by Bayard Rustin, an African American and civil

⁴²⁹ “Lifting Sanctions Against Zimbabwe-Rhodesia,” Congressional Record – Senate, May 19, 1979, pgs.11238-11263, http://heinonline.org/HOL/Page?men_tab=srchresults&handle=hein.congrec/cr1250009&id=679&size=2&collection=congrec&terms=Rhodesia|RHODESIA|Rhodesia's&termtype=phrase&set_as_cursor=88#692

rights activist. According to Rustin and his colleagues, the Rhodesian elections had been “fair and free.” The candidates had been allowed to campaign publicly, the balloting had been conducted in secrecy, and governmental pressure had been minimal. In addition to singing the praises of the Rhodesian election, the Freedom House report speculated about the positive impact that a successful transition to majority rule in Zimbabwe could have for the rest of southern Africa. “Moderate South African leaders have stated that if the multi-racial experiment in Zimbabwe-Rhodesia succeeds, their own hand will almost certainly be strengthened sufficiently to move their own country toward more liberal and just racial policies. However, if the Zimbabwe-Rhodesia experiment fails...then the hard liners in South Africa will be correspondingly strengthened, and racial progress may be set back for years.” The report also mentioned the Cold War implications of the elections, noting that, “Zimbabwe seems likely to be an important test case to see whether the challenge of Soviet armed dissidents can be met and a truly free economy and a democratic multi-racial society established...in the southern part of the African continent.” For these reasons, the authors recommended that the Carter Administration recognize the new state and lift sanctions.⁴³⁰

It may seem strange that Jesse Helms (who had made his name disparaging the Civil Rights Movement – and other liberal causes – as a television pundit) and Bayard Rustin (the longtime Civil Rights activist) found themselves on the same side of the Rhodesian issue. It may seem even more surprising that Helms would need to prod Jimmy Carter (America’s self-appointed “human rights president”) to recognize Rhodesia’s first black Prime Minister. After all, Carter had committed his Administration to ending minority rule in Rhodesia, and many

⁴³⁰ “Lifting Sanctions Against Zimbabwe-Rhodesia,” Congressional Record – Senate, May 19, 1979, pgs.11238-11263, http://heinonline.org/HOL/Page?men_tab=srchresults&handle=hein.congrec/cr1250009&id=679&size=2&collection=congrec&terms=RhodesialRHODESIA/Rhodesia's&termtype=phrase&set_as_cursor=88#692

international observers concluded that Muzorewa's election accurately reflected the will of the Zimbabwean voters. Moreover, Muzorewa was expected to pursue capitalist economic policies and seek a close partnership with the West. This chapter will seek to explain why Jimmy Carter was reluctant to recognize Zimbabwe-Rhodesia and lift sanctions, arguing that his reticence was fuelled by both strategic and humanitarian concerns. It will also seek to demonstrate the limits of American influence in southern Africa. For while Carter was sympathetic to Muzorewa (a soft-spoken man of the cloth), foreign and domestic pressures ultimately prevented him from accepting what many Americans considered to be an ideal solution to the Rhodesian crisis.⁴³¹

“Absolutely Nobody Has Anything to be Happy About”

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, Ian Smith had only reluctantly entered into the internal settlement. In essence, he was gambling that bringing Muzorewa, Sithole, and Chirau into the government would give his regime a veneer of respectability and convince the guerrillas to lay down their arms. He also hoped that their presence in the Executive Council would persuade the international community to lift sanctions. But while sanctions were beginning to take a serious toll on the Rhodesian economy by 1978, the de-escalation of the bush war was Smith's highest priority.⁴³² Indeed, the number of guerrillas operating inside Rhodesia had tripled since 1976, from approximately 2,100 to 6,400.⁴³³ As a result of their increasing numbers, the guerrillas had seized control of many of the rural Tribal Trust Lands and

⁴³¹ Conservative journals and authors certainly saw it this way. See, for instance, George Will, “Rhodesia: Step-by-Step Democracy,” *Washington Post*, May 13, 1979.

⁴³² “Everything points to the fact that our very survival depends on stopping the war – and stopping it quickly,” Rhodesia's security chief noted in an April 1978 memorandum to the leaders of the Salisbury Group. “You, as leaders, would be tied in to the ‘cease-fire’ as an essential part of the Internal Settlement.” Ken Flower, *Serving Secretly: An Intelligence Chief on Record*, (London: John Murray, 1987): 201. For more on sanctions, see William Minter and Elizabeth Schmidt, “When Sanctions Worked: The Case of Rhodesia Reexamined,” *African Affairs*, vol. 87, no. 347 (April 1988): 207-238.

⁴³³ Memorandum, William Harrop and William Bowdler to Cyrus Vance, “African Trends: No. 70,” July 28, 1978, NLC-6-88-7-3-9, Jimmy Carter Library (hereafter, JECL).

undertaken a campaign of urban terror against Rhodesia's white population.⁴³⁴ In an effort to stem this violence, the Salisbury Group launched a series of raids ("external operations" in Rhodesian military parlance) against guerilla targets in Mozambique, Zambia, and Botswana.⁴³⁵ These raids were effective in a military sense, but they made negotiations with the Frontline Presidents and the Patriotic Front next to impossible. They also threatened to internationalize the *Chimurenga* by forcing the Frontline Presidents to call upon the Soviets and Cubans for military assistance. Thus, although neither side was expected to gain a decisive advantage in the bush war in the foreseeable future, US National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski speculated that the Frontline Presidents might eventually "feel compelled to break the stalemate" by asking for more Soviet and Cuban assistance if the conflict remained stalemated.⁴³⁶

Unfortunately for Smith, his gambit began to unravel almost immediately. As one of Brzezinski's advisers informed him in July 1978, "[W]ith regard to the effectiveness of the [i]nternal [s]ettlement, the evidence is clear: the Salisbury Group has failed to end the fighting and win the sympathies of the guerrillas."⁴³⁷ Indeed, Zimbabwean support for Muzorewa and Sithole quickly began to dissipate when the Executive Council failed to repeal discriminatory laws, dismantle the "protected villages," or lift the dusk-to-dawn curfew which affected the entire countryside. To many Zimbabweans, this lack of progress raised concerns as to whether the internal settlement would result in genuine majority rule.⁴³⁸ Given Muzorewa and Sithole's

⁴³⁴ Evening Report, North-South Cluster to Zbigniew Brzezinski, July 14, 1978, NLC-24-53-8-7-2, JECL.

⁴³⁵ For more on these operations, see, Ron Reid-Daly and Peter Stiff, Selous Scouts: Top Secret War, (Alberton, South Africa: Galago Publishing, 1982) and Barbara Cole, The Elite: The Story of the Rhodesian Special Air Service (Amanzimtoti, South Africa: Three Knights, 1984).

⁴³⁶ Memorandum, Zbigniew Brzezinski to the President, "Information Items," June 27, 1978, NLC-1-6-7-13-3, JECL.

⁴³⁷ Memorandum, Thomas Thornton to Zbigniew Brzezinski, "Rhodesia: State of Play," July 31, 1978, NLC-15-44-4-4-9, JECL.

⁴³⁸ Evening Report, North-South Cluster to Zbigniew Brzezinski, June 30, 1978, NLC-10-13-1-12-2, JECL. Indeed, so poor was the Executive Council's performance that Muzorewa, whose political acumen had never been rated highly by most African or Western observers, was nearly deposed by his party in August 1978. Memorandum, The

apparent inability to stand up to Smith, coupled with their constant bickering, it should come as no surprise that very few guerrillas agreed to lay down their arms under the terms of the Executive Council's amnesty program. Nor were most Rhodesians enamored with the Executive Council's performance. The group seemed no more capable of ending the war or reviving the economy than the Rhodesian Front had been, and an estimated 19,000 Rhodesians (eight percent of the colony's white population) showed their lack of confidence by emigrating in 1978 alone.⁴³⁹ These developments were not lost on Ian Smith, who tacitly admitted that the internal settlement was in trouble when he sent out feelers to determine whether his old negotiating partner, Joshua Nkomo, was willing to join the Executive Council.⁴⁴⁰

Although the internal settlement was not off to an auspicious start, Smith remained convinced that the scheme was the only way to sideline the more extreme members of the Patriotic Front. He therefore refused to enter into negotiations with the guerrilla leaders.⁴⁴¹ For their part, Muzorewa, Sithole, and Chirau had no interest in sharing power with Nkomo or Mugabe. "The men in the bush are not ours," commented one of Chirau's aides who worried that, "We may be the first to face the firing squads" if the Patriotic Front seized power.⁴⁴² The

Situation Room to Zbigniew Brzezinski, "Additional Information Items," August 8, 1978, NLC-1-7-4-42-3, JECL. For more on the Salisbury Group's travails, see Martin Meredith, The Past is Another Country: Rhodesia, UDI to Zimbabwe, revised and expanded edition, (London: Pan Books, 1980): 335-38 and Flower, Serving Secretly, 201-208, 216-217.

⁴³⁹ Evening Notes, The Situation Room to Zbigniew Brzezinski, December 13, 1978, NLC-10-17-3-10-8, JECL. These numbers did not include those who "went on holiday" and never returned. Therefore, the actual number of emigrants was larger than what the government reported.

⁴⁴⁰ Memorandum, "Responses to Questions on Rhodesia," April 7, 1978, NLC-6-88-6-3-0, JECL and Note for Cabinet, "Rhodesia: Draft US/UK Position Paper," June 21, 1978, FCO 36/2188, British National Archives (hereafter, TNA). According to Cyrus Vance, Smith had hoped to bring Nkomo in all along. Vance, Hard Choices: Critical Years in America's Foreign Policy, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983): 260. Ken Flower, on the other hand, has refuted this assertion. Flower, Serving Secretly, 209.

⁴⁴¹ Andrew DeRoche, Black, White, and Chrome: The United States and Zimbabwe, 1953-1998, (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, Inc., 2001): 263-65. Smith's resolve was bolstered by the support he received from South African Prime Minister John Vorster, who declared that his government would cooperate as a "good neighbor" with the Salisbury Group whether or not Rhodesia gained international recognition. Memorandum, Zbigniew Brzezinski to the President, "Information Items," March 11, 1978, NLC-1-5-5-49-7, JECL.

⁴⁴² Quoted in Meredith, The Past is Another Country, 327. Vance agreed, noting that, "As time went by, Muzorewa was becoming even more determined than Smith not to negotiate with the Patriotic Front. He expected to be [the]

Salisbury Group's unwillingness to negotiate in good faith was hardly seen as cause for concern by the leaders of the Patriotic Front. Not only had their ranks swelled in recent months, but the Soviets and Cubans were in the process of redoubling their support for the guerrillas. Indeed, Soviet military shipments to the Patriotic Front had tripled between 1976 and 1977, with large quantities of heavy artillery, armored vehicles, and anti-aircraft weapons arriving in southern Africa for the first time.⁴⁴³ Even more weaponry was expected after Joshua Nkomo concluded an arms deal with the Soviets during a January 1978 visit to Moscow.⁴⁴⁴ Confident that the tide was turning in their favor, Nkomo and Mugabe refused to countenance any deal which did not give them sufficient political and military power during the transition period to ensure that they would govern Zimbabwe after independence.⁴⁴⁵ Against this backdrop of increasing violence and intransigence, American and British calls for a negotiated solution had little effect. The best the transatlantic allies could do was to try to "keep...the diplomatic ball in play" while the Salisbury Group and the Patriotic Front tested their strength.⁴⁴⁶

If British and American officials had been pessimistic about their ability to mediate the Rhodesian crisis in the immediate aftermath of the internal settlement, subsequent events did nothing to bolster their confidence. One blow occurred when word leaked that Ian Smith and Joshua Nkomo had met in Zambia (unbeknownst to Robert Mugabe, Smith's "partners" in the Executive Council, or the other Frontline Presidents) under the auspices of President Kenneth

leader of Zimbabwe by 1979 and was confident that once he acceded to power many of the rank-and-file guerrillas would choose peace rather than fight a black government." Vance, Hard Choices, 289.

⁴⁴³ CIA National Foreign Assessment Center, "Communist Military Support for the Rhodesian Insurgency," April 1978, NLC-51-75-5-7-3, JECL. For a more detailed account of Moscow's relationship with the Zimbabwean guerrillas, see Vladimir Shubin, The Hot "Cold War": The USSR in Southern Africa, (London: Pluto Press, 2008): 151-175.

⁴⁴⁴ Teleletter, John Holmes to Roger Bone, "Nkomo in Moscow," January 11, 1978, FCO 28/3458, TNA.

⁴⁴⁵ Discussion Paper, "Rhodesia: The Next Step," February 2, 1978, FCO 36/2188, TNA.

⁴⁴⁶ Memorandum, Zbigniew Brzezinski to the President, "Mini-SCC Meeting on Zaire," June 2, 1978, NLC-15-57-10-9-3, JECL.

Kaunda.⁴⁴⁷ Not only did this news undermine the fragile union between Nkomo and Mugabe, it caused the Patriotic Front and Smith to publicly reject all possibility of a compromise in order to prove that they were not contemplating a “sell out.”⁴⁴⁸ The situation was thrown into further disarray when a team of ZAPU operatives downed an Air Rhodesia passenger jet in September 1978 and slaughtered ten of the 18 survivors – six of whom were well-to-do white women.⁴⁴⁹ Smith attempted to douse the flames, but the Rhodesian public would have none of it. When Nkomo boasted about the attack during a radio interview, they demanded vengeance. Smith acquiesced and ordered the Rhodesian Special Air Service to launch a massive raid against ZIPRA camps in Zambia and to assassinate “the Fat Man” at his Lusaka residence.⁴⁵⁰ Nkomo survived the attempt on his life, but it was clear to all that the negotiating process had been derailed. “The fiasco resulting from the Smith-Nkomo meeting was bad enough,” lamented Stephen Low, the US Ambassador to Lusaka, “but Nkomo’s taking credit for the shoot down of the Rhodesian airliner has made further negotiations all but impossible for the time being.”⁴⁵¹ The British glumly agreed with this assessment.⁴⁵² When asked about his willingness to attend an All-Parties Conference shortly after the attempt on his life, an enraged Nkomo told one senior American diplomat to “forget about the whole damn thing.”⁴⁵³

Further dimming the prospects of obtaining a negotiated settlement was the fact that neither the Frontline Presidents nor the South Africans seemed willing or able to rein in their

⁴⁴⁷ The meeting took place on August 14, 1978. It was arranged by the British and reluctantly okayed by Vance. For more, see, Meredith, The Past is Another Country, 345-47; Vance, Hard Choices, 287; and M. Tamarkin, The Making of Zimbabwe: Decolonization in Regional and International Politics, (London: Frank Cass, 1990): 249-250.

⁴⁴⁸ Richard Moose and William Bowdler to Cyrus Vance, “African Trends: No. 81,” September 6, 1978, NLC-1-7-4-42-3, JECL.

⁴⁴⁹ For more on the incident, see Meredith, The Past is Another Country, 347-48; Flower, Serving Secretly, 210-212; and Time, “Rhodesia: Seeds of Political Destruction,” September 18, 1978.

⁴⁵⁰ For more on the raid, see, Reid-Daly and Stiff, Selous Scouts, 346-368.

⁴⁵¹ Evening Report, North-South Cluster to David Aaron, September 7, 1978, NLC-24-100-2-6-6, JECL.

⁴⁵² “Nkomo may...have sabotaged once and for all any chance we had of persuading white Rhodesians...that he is a potential national leader and conciliator of all races and factions,” opined one high-ranking member of the Foreign Office. P.J. Barlow to H.M.S. Reid, “Rhodesia: State Department Paper,” September 8, 1978, FCO 36/2206, TNA.

⁴⁵³ Evening Report, Thomas Thornton to Zbigniew Brzezinski, October 20, 1978, NLC-24-52-3-3-0, JECL.

respective clients. Kenneth Kaunda's efforts to bring Smith and Nkomo together had caused considerable discord among the Frontline Presidents.⁴⁵⁴ Moreover, Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere, the unofficial chairman of the Frontline Presidents and the strongest advocate of the Anglo-American Proposals, was preoccupied by his country's war against Uganda and was unable to play a constructive role in the Rhodesian negotiations.⁴⁵⁵ Nor did South Africa's new Prime Minister, P.W. Botha, show any sign of withdrawing his country's support for the Salisbury Group.⁴⁵⁶ If anything, the attacks he launched against the leading Namibian nationalist organization earlier in the year seemed to suggest that "the Crocodile" would redouble his support for the Salisbury Group rather than allow the "extremist" leaders of the Patriotic Front to seize power in Salisbury.⁴⁵⁷ Thus, there was seemingly little the British and Americans could do as the Rhodesian situation deteriorated. Unconstrained by their patrons, Smith, Nkomo, and Mugabe did not evince even the slightest interest in attending an All Parties Conference when a British envoy visited southern Africa in December.⁴⁵⁸ As Stephen Low remarked, American and British officials seemed to be "going through the motions of support for a policy...that is no longer viable."⁴⁵⁹ Thus, as southern Africa drifted toward an all-out race war, there seemed to be

⁴⁵⁴ Relations between Tanzania and Zambia had been in decline since late-1977. See, for instance, W.K. Mayondi to S.G. Mwale, Report No. 11 for the Month of November 1977 and Mayondi to Mwale, Report No. 1 for the Month of January 1978, UNIP 7/23/64: Tanzania (Dar-es-Salaam) Monthly Reports (1977-78), United National Independence Party Archives (hereafter, UNIPA). Kaunda's October 1978 decision to resume using the Rhodesian railway (largely due to the unreliability of the TANZARA railroad) further damaged relations between Lusaka and Dar es Salaam. Memorandum, The Situation Room to Zbigniew Brzezinski, "Additional Information Items," October 10, 1978, NLC-1-8-1-42-5, JECL.

⁴⁵⁵ According to the Zambian High Commissioner to Dar es Salaam, the Kagera War (which was costing \$1 million per day) "dominated" Nyerere's schedule. W.K. Mayondi to W.M. Chakulya, Report No. 11-12/78 for the Months of Nov. and Dec. 1978, UNIP 7/23/70 folder, UNIPA.

⁴⁵⁶ Telegram, David Summerhays to FCO, "South Africa: P.W. Botha as Prime Minister," September 28, 1978, FCO 45/2369, TNA,

⁴⁵⁷ For more on this raid, see Piero Gleijeses, "A Test of Wills: Jimmy Carter, South Africa, and the Independence of Namibia," *Diplomatic History*, vol. 34, no. 5 (November 2010): 879-80.

⁴⁵⁸ Report, Cledwyn Hughes to James Callaghan, "Cledwyn Hughes' Report: Rhodesia," December 20, 1978, FCO 36/2559, TNA.

⁴⁵⁹ Zbigniew Brzezinski to the President, Weekly National Security Report #74, November 17, 1978, Weekly Reports to the President, 71-81: [9/78 - 12/78] folder, Zbigniew Brzezinski Donated Material, Subject File, Box 42, JECL. Indeed, the US Embassy in London saw the Anglo-American Proposals as simply "a way of filling time and

nothing that policymakers in Washington and London could do but wait for events to unfold in the hope that an opportunity for a new initiative would present itself.

As the situation in southern Africa deteriorated, a pervasive sense of defeatism settled over the White House. Zbigniew Brzezinski saw little chance of obtaining a solution along the lines of the Anglo-American Proposals and urged the President to quietly disengage from the negotiating process, turning the problem over to the United Nations or the British. The National Security Adviser first suggested that the Administration begin planning for “the possibility that a peaceful solution is not in the cards” in June 1978 and returned to this theme several weeks later.⁴⁶⁰ “We plunged heavily into African problems – which, alas, the British created,” Brzezinski wrote in one of his weekly reports to the President. “But should we be so heavily engaged?” While the National Security Adviser acknowledged that disengagement would not be an ideal outcome, he argued that “it may be better than being drawn into a massive conflict between the forces of apartheid and Soviet/Cuban dominated guerrillas.” Jimmy Carter may have been experiencing doubts of his own, for he wrote in the margins of Brzezinski’s memorandum that quiet withdrawal was “a good possibility.”⁴⁶¹ Whether this comment betrayed Carter’s true intention or merely a burst of frustration, the Rhodesian conflict was clearly proving to be far more intractable than the President had initially imagined.

Nor did the Rhodesian situation look any better from across the Atlantic. After meeting with Nkomo and Mugabe on the island of Malta, British Deputy Undersecretary for African Affairs Johnny Graham was left questioning the viability of reaching a negotiated settlement.

perhaps... moving things slightly off the track of increased violence that they are now on,” while the Hughes Mission was seen as nothing more than an effort “to distract the guerrillas.” Evening Report, Thomas Thornton to Zbigniew Brzezinski, November 20, 1978, NLC-24-54-4-4-8, and Evening Report, Thomas Thornton to Zbigniew Brzezinski, December 5, 1978, NLC-24-100-3-6-5, JECL.

⁴⁶⁰ Zbigniew Brzezinski to the President, Weekly National Security Report #64, June 23, 1978, Weekly Reports to the President, 61-71: [6/78 – 9/78] folder, Zbigniew Brzezinski Donated Material, Subject File, Box 41, JECL.

⁴⁶¹ Zbigniew Brzezinski to the President, Weekly National Security Report #66, July 7, 1978, Weekly Reports to the President, 61-71: [6/78 – 9/78] folder, Zbigniew Brzezinski Donated Material, Subject File, Box 41, JECL.

“[W]hile I think that the Anglo/American Proposals remain as a sort of yardstick, I see little prospect of their ever being put into effect,” he reported to the Foreign Office.⁴⁶² Even more disconcerting to British policymakers was the seeming divergence which had emerged between their own priorities in southern Africa and those of the Carter Administration. As the Anglo-American initiative bogged down, Whitehall officials began to wonder whether the Americans were more interested in maintaining good relations with the Frontline States and Nigeria than they were in mediating an end to the Rhodesian crisis.⁴⁶³ Indeed, it was well known that Brzezinski was advising Jimmy Carter to abandon the negotiating process, and there were signs that the President was leaning in that direction.⁴⁶⁴ Thus, as 1978 wound down, there seemed little reason for optimism. Not only did the Anglo-American Proposals seem increasingly irrelevant, but the British and Americans no longer even seemed to be on the same page concerning how to move forward.

Toward the Rhodesian Elections

As the Anglo-American initiative floundered, events in Rhodesia continued apace. On January 30, 1979, Rhodesians accepted a new constitution which called for majority rule on the basis of universal adult suffrage. To the surprise of many international observers, a whopping 85% of Rhodesia’s white electorate voted in favor of the constitution.⁴⁶⁵ In some respects, the vote was a monumental one. Ian Smith, the man who had once vowed that majority rule would not come to Rhodesia in his lifetime, had convinced his followers to transfer power to the colony’s black majority. The Rhodesian leader made little attempt to hide his displeasure about

⁴⁶² Johnny Graham to Private Secretary, “Untitled,” February 22, 1978, FCO 36/2232, TNA.

⁴⁶³ Philip Mansfield to Private Secretary, “Rhodesia: The Next Step,” April 11, 1978, FCO 36/2232, TNA.

⁴⁶⁴ “I would like to see [Ian] Smith give Rhodesia back to the British even if they don’t want it,” the President told his National Security Council during an October 6 meeting. Minutes of a National Security Council Meeting, October 6, 1978, NLC-17-2-4-12-4, JECL.

⁴⁶⁵ 85% cited in Meredith, The Past is Another Country, 357

the course of events, but he insisted that there was no alternative. Anyone hoping to preserve minority rule, he maintained, was living in a “fool’s paradise.”⁴⁶⁶

Despite the fact that the new constitution ceded control of parliament to Rhodesia’s black majority, most commentators agree it would hardly have deprived Rhodesians of their privileged position in society. For while it did ensure that there would be a black prime minister, the 1979 constitution left virtually every other instrument of power in white hands for a period of five to ten years.⁴⁶⁷ International observers were quick to pick up on this fact. African, Asian, and Caribbean members of the Commonwealth denounced the constitution as a “racist and anti-democratic document,” and few within the Callaghan government or the Carter Administration disagreed.⁴⁶⁸ For while granting concessions to white settlers was not exceptional in the context of British decolonization, many observers felt that Muzorewa, Sithole, and Chirau had gone too far in their efforts to appease Smith.⁴⁶⁹ Perhaps nothing better symbolized the shortcomings of the constitution than the fact that the new state was to be called “Zimbabwe-Rhodesia” rather than simply “Zimbabwe.” While seemingly only a symbolic concession, journalist Martin Meredith later reflected on the significance of the change. “For more than twenty years the nationalists had been united on little else but the name Zimbabwe. It had symbolized all their aspirations; in a sense, it had been their ultimate goal. Now it had been distended in a way which even many whites thought clumsy.” In Martin’s estimation, “[N]othing emphasized more how

⁴⁶⁶ Quoted in Telegram, William Edmondson to Cyrus Vance, “Rhodesia: Campaign for Referendum and Elections Begin,” January 15, 1979, Zimbabwe 10/78-3/79 folder, National Security Affairs (24), Box 199, JECL.

⁴⁶⁷ For more on the constitution, see Tamarkin, *The Making of Zimbabwe*, 210-219.

⁴⁶⁸ Commonwealth Secretariat’s Report, “An Analysis of the Illegal Regime’s ‘Constitution for Zimbabwe-Rhodesia.’” The head of Britain’s Rhodesia Department remarked that “in all essential respects” the Secretariat’s report “tallies with the analysis which we ourselves have made of the new constitution.” Minute, P.J. Barlow to Tony Duff, “Rhodesia: Commonwealth Secretariat’s Analysis of the Regime’s Constitution,” March 23, 1979, FCO 36/2655, TNA. In a similar light, one State Department official commented that it largely followed the terms of the Salisbury Agreement but noted that it contained several “significant changes that further entrench white control.” William Harrop and David Mark to Cyrus Vance, “African Trends: No. 128,” January 5, 1979, NLC-4-16-6-8-6, JECL.

⁴⁶⁹ Similar concessions had been made in Kenya, another British colony in Africa with a sizeable white population.

far the nationalists negotiating with Smith were prepared to go in placating the whites than their agreement on the new state's name."⁴⁷⁰

But whatever foreigners thought of the new constitution, Smith and his colleagues in the Executive Council maintained that what mattered most was the reaction of the Zimbabwean people. And the best way to gauge their attitude, the Salisbury Group averred, was by measuring the turnout for the elections slated to be held in April 1979. In making this case, Smith, Muzorewa, Sithole, and Chirau were attempting to transform the upcoming election into a referendum on the new constitution. They asserted that a high turnout would demonstrate not only the popularity of the new government but also the acceptance of the Zimbabwean people of the new constitution.⁴⁷¹ A low turnout, by contrast, would have the opposite effect.

Because they were excluded from the elections, a low turnout was exactly what Robert Mugabe and Joshua Nkomo hoped to see. And to this end, they ratcheted up the guerrilla campaign. In December 1978, a team of Mugabe's ZANLA operatives destroyed a major fuel depot in Salisbury, igniting a fire which took five days to douse. The following February, a cadre of Nkomo's ZIPRA operatives downed a second Rhodesian jetliner. According to Martin Meredith, roadside ambushes became so common that all major roads were deemed unsafe to travel on after dark. The Salisbury Group responded by mobilizing as many men as possible to prevent the elections from being disrupted. All leave for regular troops and police was cancelled, and white men between the ages of 50 and 59 were called upon to help protect urban areas. By April 1979, the government had mobilized nearly 100,000 men – the largest display of force in the colony's history.⁴⁷²

⁴⁷⁰ Meredith, The Past is Another Country, 354-355.

⁴⁷¹ Telegram, G. Chipampata to W.M. Chakulya, Report No. 3/79, April 18, 1979, UNIP 7/23/70, United National Independence Party Archives (hereafter, UNIPA).

⁴⁷² Meredith, The Past is Another Country, 358, 359, 362 and Tamarkin, The Making of Zimbabwe, 221-230.

The Salisbury Group simultaneously launched a propaganda campaign designed to convince Zimbabwean voters to turn out in high numbers. “We have to work up a frenzy – almost an hysteria,” remarked one government official. “A maximum percentage poll is our future.”⁴⁷³ This mindset was reflected in the slogan, “We are all going to vote,” which appeared on nearly every political poster that appeared in Rhodesia during the 1979 campaign.⁴⁷⁴ In an effort to appeal to voters, Muzorewa, Sithole, and Chirau pledged to create jobs, build schools, and open new health clinics. These issues were undoubtedly important to Zimbabweans, but their overwhelming concern was the de-escalation of the *Chimurenga*. Consequently, the candidates sought to assure their supporters that a high turnout would bring peace and prosperity. They promised that a black government would be recognized by the international community, that sanctions would be lifted, and that the war would wind down.⁴⁷⁵ It was an alluring message for a people who had suffered so much for so long. “We have had the war because we had no African leader,” one Zimbabwean voter told reporters. “Now that we are voting one in, we hope he will bring an end to the fighting.” Another Zimbabwean was even more succinct. “Peace is really what we want,” he declared.⁴⁷⁶ Many Zimbabweans seem to have shared this sentiment, for voter turnout far exceeded expectations. Out of an estimated 2.8 million eligible black voters, nearly 1.9 million ballots were cast (a 64% turnout).⁴⁷⁷

When all the votes were tallied, it was clear that Muzorewa and his United African National Congress (UANC) party had scored a commanding victory. The UANC won 67% of the votes cast and took 51 of the 72 black seats in parliament. Sithole, perhaps the only person to

⁴⁷³ Quoted in Meredith, *The Past is Another Country*, 360.

⁴⁷⁴ Rhodesian political flyer, “Know your party, its symbol, and its leader,” contained in Report to the Prime Minister on the Elections held in Zimbabwe/Rhodesia in April 1979, PREM 19/117, TNA.

⁴⁷⁵ Meredith, *The Past is Another Country*, 359-360.

⁴⁷⁶ *Time Magazine*, “Now, Zimbabwe-Rhodesia,” April 30, 1979.

⁴⁷⁷ Meredith, *The Past is Another Country*, 361-363.

have questioned Muzorewa's chances prior to the election, finished a distant second. To no one's surprise, the Rhodesian Front captured all 28 white seats.⁴⁷⁸ After a transition period of several weeks, Muzorewa was sworn in as the first Prime Minister of Zimbabwe-Rhodesia on June 1, 1979.⁴⁷⁹ And so, 15 months after the conclusion of the Salisbury Agreement, minority rule in Rhodesia came to an end. After more than 13 years of UDI, Ian Smith had done the unthinkable: he had ceded power to a black leader selected by the Zimbabwean people. Despite these heretofore unthinkable changes, it remained to be seen whether Muzorewa's election would lead to the establishment of a peaceful and prosperous state or whether the exclusion of the Patriotic Front from the elections would lead to the further stoking of the flames raging across southern Africa. It was at this moment that all eyes turned west toward the United States, where Jimmy Carter and his advisers pondered whether or not they should lift sanctions and recognize the new state.

The Rhodesia Lobby

As Carter agonized over his decision, many Americans urged the President to recognize Muzorewa's government and lift sanctions. This should come as no surprise given that Rhodesian whites had enjoyed a fair amount of support in the United States since their unilateral declaration of independence in 1965. Consequently, the Carter Administration's Rhodesian diplomacy, which focused on building bridges between the Salisbury Group and the Patriotic Front, had attracted many domestic critics. It may be tempting to assume that these critics were primarily motivated by racial considerations, but historian Carl Watts has shown that the so-

⁴⁷⁸ Meredith, *The Past is Another Country*, 362-363.

⁴⁷⁹ *New York Times*, "Nation of Zimbabwe Rhodesia Is Proclaimed and Muzorewa Hails Black Victory," June 1, 1979.

called “Rhodesia lobby” in the United States was more diverse than might be expected.⁴⁸⁰

Undoubtedly, some of its members saw the situation in southern Africa as analogous to that in the US South prior to the Civil Rights Movement and were determined to hold the line this time around.⁴⁸¹ However, there were other reasons for conservatives to oppose the Administration’s Rhodesian policy. Some politicians and activists simply saw an opportunity to rally their bases and score political points. Other critics – most notably former Secretary of State Dean Acheson – argued the United States had no business meddling in Rhodesia’s domestic affairs.⁴⁸² Still others were opposed to collaborating with the United Nations or the British.⁴⁸³ But in spite of the varied motives of its members, the “Rhodesia lobby” had actively and effectively promoted the Rhodesian cause since the 1960s – organizing American tours to Rhodesia, sponsoring sympathetic speakers, orchestrating letter-writing campaigns, and raising funds to support Ian Smith’s regime.

This support remained strong throughout the 1970s – as evidenced by the outrage that Henry Kissinger’s Rhodesian diplomacy generated in 1976. Members of the “Rhodesia lobby” were further enraged by the March 1977 repeal of the Byrd Amendment and the guerrillas’ escalating terror campaign. But perhaps the most important reason for the “Rhodesia lobby’s” renewed activism in 1978 was the conclusion of the Salisbury Agreement, which provided Ian

⁴⁸⁰ Carl Watts, “African Americans and US Foreign Policy: The American Negro Leadership Conference on Africa and the Rhodesian Crisis,” in eds. Andrew Johnstone and Helen Laville, The US Public and American Foreign Policy, (New York: Routledge, 2010): 114.

⁴⁸¹ Letter, Otis Snipes Junior (Commander of the Mississippi Division of the Sons of the Confederacy) to the President, June 21, 1966, CO 250 1/6/66 – [2 of 2] folder, White House Central File, Countries, Box 65, Lyndon Johnson Presidential Library (hereafter, LBJL).

⁴⁸² Douglas Brinkley, Dean Acheson: The Cold War Years, 1953-71, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992): 316-328.

⁴⁸³ “Are we puppets of England or just plain stupid?” asked one member of the Virginia House of Delegates upon learning that the Johnson Administration intended to apply sanctions against Rhodesia at Britain’s request. Letter, Ralph James to the President, December 10, 1965, CO 250 1/6/66 – [2 of 2] folder, White House Central File, Countries, Box 65, LBJL. Conversely, some members of the US “Rhodesia lobby” had ties to the “Rhodesia lobby” in the UK. See, for instance, Pamphlet by John Biggs-Davison of British Monday Club, “Facing the Facts on Rhodesia,” enclosed in packet from Alexander Hutchings to LBJ, CO 250 1/6/66 – [2 of 2] folder, White House Central File, Countries, Box 65, LBJL.

Smith's American supporters with a plan around which they could rally. To many conservatives, the arrangement seemed to offer an opportunity to transform Rhodesia into a multiracial state while preserving its status as an anti-Communist bulwark. Thus, support for some type of "internal settlement" began to mount in the United States even before the Salisbury Plan was unveiled.⁴⁸⁴ In a letter dated December 27, 1977, Senator Bob Dole of Kansas urged Jimmy Carter to support Smith, Muzorewa, and Sithole in their efforts to sponsor elections based on the principle of universal suffrage. The alternative, he warned, would be to see "the Soviet-supported guerrilla leaders" – a clear reference to Joshua Nkomo and Robert Mugabe – seize the reins of power in Salisbury.⁴⁸⁵ Less than a month later, a group of eight Congressmen expressed similar sentiments in a letter to the President. "We believe that the United States should give its support to the constructive endeavors of [the] political leaders in Rhodesia who are prepared to submit their aspirations to the test of the ballot box, and not to a militant faction that is openly scornful of the democratic order," they admonished in what would become an all-too-familiar critique.⁴⁸⁶

Indeed, the most successful criticism of the Carter Administration's Rhodesian policy was that it amounted to pandering to a group of Communist-backed agitators who were more interested in securing power for themselves than they were in building a prosperous, democratic Zimbabwe. In the months after the internal settlement was concluded, groups such as the Friends of Rhodesian Independence, the American-Southern Africa Council, the American Conservative Union, and the Coalition of Peace through Strength sought to contrast the

⁴⁸⁴ Memorandum, Zbigniew Brzezinski to the President, "Relations with Congress on Rhodesia," undated, Zimbabwe 11/77-2/78 folder, National Security Affairs (24), Staff Material, North/South, Box 119, JECL.

⁴⁸⁵ "We have to make it clear to all concerned... that we support these efforts and have very little sympathy for those forces unwilling to either discuss peaceful solutions or submit themselves and their ideas to the people via free election," Dole advised. Letter, Bob Dole to Jimmy Carter, December 27, 1977, CO 129: Executive 1/1/78 – 6/30/78 folder, White House Central Files, Box CO-50, JECL.

⁴⁸⁶ Letter, Representative Edward Derwinski and seven colleagues to Jimmy Carter, January 19, 1978, CO 129: Executive 1/1/78 – 6/30/78 folder, White House Central Files, Box CO-50, JECL.

“democratic,” “peaceful,” and “multiracial” Salisbury Group against the “Marxist” and “terrorist” leaders of the Patriotic Front. This strategy proved effective in rallying support from an American public that tended to be poorly informed about developments in sub-Saharan Africa – especially once the guerrillas began to escalate their urban terror campaign. For while members of the “Rhodesia lobby” often turned a blind eye to the atrocities committed by the Salisbury regime, the slaying of missionaries, the downing of civilian airliners, and the murder of unarmed civilians horrified many Americans.⁴⁸⁷ Under these circumstances, it was not long before some prominent academics and members of the press began to condemn the Administration’s determination to include the Patriotic Front in any Rhodesian settlement. “If mediation rather than partisanship is called for, why do we tilt so consistently on the side of [the] guerrilla groups led by Joshua Nkomo and his nominal Patriotic Front ally, Robert Mugabe?” queried Chester Crocker, an academic destined to become Ronald Reagan’s top African diplomat.⁴⁸⁸ Nor was Crocker alone in condemning the “Carter-Young policy” of discrediting the internal settlement.⁴⁸⁹

However, the guerrilla campaign was not the only development fuelling criticism of the Administration’s Rhodesian policy. Criticism also mounted when it became apparent that the Soviets and Cubans were willing to use military force to expand their influence in Africa – a trend which first became apparent during the conflict in the Horn of Africa. Located on the continent’s northeast corner, astride the shipping lines through which most of the world’s oil supplies pass, the region was considered strategically important. Thus, US officials took note in

⁴⁸⁷ See, for instance, Time Magazine, “Rhodesia: Savagery and Terror,” July 10, 1978 and Washington Post, “Church Becomes Target of Rebel Drive in Rhodesia,” June 26, 1978.

⁴⁸⁸ Chester Crocker, “The Trouble With Our Rhodesia Policy,” Washington Post, September 25, 1978.

⁴⁸⁹ Syndicated columnist Joseph Kraft asked why the Administration was so intent on supporting “radical black leaders who have forces outside Rhodesia but have little following within?” Washington Post, “The Trouble With Our African Policy,” May 23, 1978.

July 1977, when Somalia's army invaded a sparsely-populated stretch of desert in southeastern Ethiopia known as the Ogaden. There has been much debate as to whether the United States inadvertently encouraged Somali President Siad Barré to launch the invasion. And, indeed, the evidence seems to suggest that the Administration had been seeking to cozy up to Somalia in the early months of 1977.⁴⁹⁰ Nevertheless, US officials understood that they could not publicly support Siad (whose disregard for human rights prompted one senior US official to dub him “one of the least attractive figures who has stepped through the backwaters of modern history”) or his irredentist agenda.⁴⁹¹ Therefore, National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski and Secretary of State Cyrus Vance urged the President to keep his distance and allow the Organization of African Unity (OAU) to take the lead in mediating an end to the conflict.⁴⁹² Jimmy Carter heartily agreed and supported the OAU's initiatives to broker a settlement.⁴⁹³

Initially, the war in the Horn garnered little publicity in the American press. It was seen as simply the latest in a seemingly-endless string of African crises. However, the internationalization of the conflict caused some Americans to take notice. The turning point

⁴⁹⁰ Paul Henze, the National Security Council member responsible for events in the Horn has argued that the Somalis and the Soviets bore the brunt of the blame for events in the Horn of Africa. Henze, The Horn of Africa: From War to Peace, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991): 148. Scholars have tended to disagree with this assessment, arguing that Siad interpreted US efforts to cozy up to his regime (most notably, the Administration's decision to supply Somalia with defensive weapons) as tacit support for an invasion of the Ogaden. See, for instance, Raymond Garthoff, Détente and Confrontation: American-Soviet Relations from Nixon to Reagan, revised edition, (Washington DC: The Brookings Institution, 1994): 698-702, 710 and Breck Walker, “‘Yesterday's Answers or Tomorrow's Solutions': The Cold War Diplomacy of Cyrus Vance,” PhD Dissertation, Vanderbilt University, (2007): 122-37.

⁴⁹¹ Memorandum, Paul Henze to Zbigniew Brzezinski, “The Carter Administration and the Horn – What Have We Learned?” March 10, 1978, 3/78 folder, National Security Affairs (27), Staff Material, Horn/Special, Box 2, JECL.

⁴⁹² Donna Jackson, “The Carter Administration and Somalia,” Diplomatic History, vol. 31, no. 4 (September 2007): 708.

⁴⁹³ “President Carter is under no illusions about the magnitude of the difficulties that stand in the way of a settlement,” the US Ambassador to the Somali capital of Mogadishu informed Siad. “He is convinced, however, that the only settlement which is likely to bring peace and stability to the region and to end the suffering of the people is one worked out by peaceful negotiations and acceptable to all, rather than one imposed by force, which will inevitably invite the use of counter-force to upset it.” The Ambassador further noted that Carter “strongly” supported the OAU's efforts to mediate an end to the crisis. Message from President Carter to be delivered orally by Ambassador Loughran, undated, 10-11/77 folder, National Security Affairs (27), Staff Material, Horn/Special, Box 1, JECL.

came in November 1977, when it became apparent that the Soviets and Cubans were far more deeply involved in the Horn than they had initially let on. In mid-November, US officials learned that the Soviets and Cubans had been pouring military aid into Ethiopia for months, culminating in a massive airlift of Soviet equipment (including artillery, armor, and aircraft) and Cuban military personnel.⁴⁹⁴ By early 1978, the influx of Soviet and Cuban support (which, by April 1978, consisted of an estimated 15,000 Cuban troops and more than \$1 billion in Soviet military equipment) had enabled the Ethiopians to repel the Somali invasion.⁴⁹⁵ When the dust settled, the communist powers had solidified their relationship with Ethiopia (a nation which had been a close American ally since World War II) and rescued their new allies from certain defeat at the hands of the Somalis by mounting what one US official described as “one of the most massive efforts at foreign intervention in Africa that has taken place in recent years.”⁴⁹⁶

The outcome of the crisis in the Horn enraged many conservatives, who decried the Administration’s diplomacy in the Horn as amateurish and ineffective. Nowhere was this outrage felt more strongly than in the halls of Congress, which had shifted considerably to the right since the 1974 midterm elections. Indeed, Congressional critics seized upon the crisis as manna from heaven – for it not only allowed them to argue that the Soviets were playing fast and

⁴⁹⁴ It remains unclear exactly when this aid began arriving in Ethiopia. Ethiopian Leader Mengistu Haile Mariam paid a state visit to Moscow in May 1977, during which he concluded a major arms deal with the Soviets. However, it seems that outside assistance remained at a relatively low level until November 1977. Raymond Garthoff has speculated that this change was precipitated by Siad’s November 13 decision to abrogate the Soviet-Somali Friendship Treaty of 1974 and expel all Soviet (and Cuban) military advisers from his country. Upon realizing that they could not maintain good relations with Ethiopia and Somalia, the Soviets decided to airlift massive quantities of material and personnel to Ethiopia. Garthoff, Détente and Confrontation, 704. Historian Odd Arne Westad has also noted the importance of Siad’s decision to expel all Soviet and Cuban military personnel from Somalia, but argues that the airlift began in September 1977 when it became clear that Mengistu’s regime would not survive without a massive influx of foreign military assistance. Westad, The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007): 275-76.

⁴⁹⁵ The Soviets also dispatched the First Deputy Commander in Chief of the Soviet Army to Ethiopia to direct the counteroffensive. Odd Arne Westad, ed., The Fall of Détente: Soviet-American Relations during the Carter Years, (Boston: Scandinavian University Press, 1997): 20.

⁴⁹⁶ Paul Henze to Zbigniew Brzezinski, Weekly Report, December 6, 1977, Evening Reports File, 11/77 – 1/78, National Security Affairs (27), Staff Material, Horn/Special, Box 5, JECL.

loose with the “rules” of détente, it also enabled them to question the Administration’s willingness to stand up to the challenge. Speaking on behalf of his “concerned” Republican colleagues, Senate Minority Leader Howard Baker of Tennessee described the Administration as “weak, ineffective, soft in critical negotiations, and unwilling to resist Soviet adventurism.” In a wide-ranging critique of the Administration’s foreign policy, Baker mocked the “hypocrisy of Moscow’s attempts to portray itself as a peace-loving nation concerned about the oppressed peoples of the world.” He charged that the Soviet Union had “taken advantage of tribal, racial and regional disputes...to forge its own brand of 20th century colonialism with Cuban rifle-bearers” and expressed amazement that some Administration officials seemed “unwilling or unable to recognize or acknowledge that the Soviets and Cubans have and will continue to exploit situations of opportunity in Africa wherever and whenever they can.” This included Rhodesia, which, Baker argued, the Administration seemed intent on delivering into Soviet hands. “The Administration should abandon its rigid insistence on the inclusion of Soviet supported and armed guerrillas in the establishment of a black majority government,” the Minority Leader crowed, adding that “the settlement negotiated between the black moderate leaders and the Smith government should be given a chance.”⁴⁹⁷ Other friends of Rhodesia, including Senator Harry Byrd Junior of Virginia, heartily agreed.⁴⁹⁸ Thus, while Congressional conservatives were primarily interested in blocking the Panama Canal treaties and SALT II in the early months of 1978, they were more than willing to take the Carter Administration to task for what they regarded as its failure to protect American interests in Africa.

⁴⁹⁷ “Republican Declaration on National Security and Foreign Policy,” May 4, 1978, Congressional Record – Senate, pgs. 12645-12652,

http://heinonline.org/HOL/Page?handle=hein.congrec/cr1240010&div=7&collection=congrec&set_as_cursor=75&men_tab=srchresults&terms=rhodesia&type=matchall#339

⁴⁹⁸ Statement, Harry F. Byrd Junior, May 4, 1978, Congressional Record – Senate, pgs. 12674-12676,

http://heinonline.org/HOL/Page?handle=hein.congrec/cr1240010&div=7&collection=congrec&set_as_cursor=75&men_tab=srchresults&terms=rhodesia&type=matchall#339

Two of the most outspoken opponents of the Administration's Rhodesian diplomacy were Senators Jesse Helms of North Carolina and Samuel Ichiye Hayakawa of California. Ardent supporters of the internal settlement, Helms and Hayakawa were eager to overturn Carter's Rhodesian policy by forcing the President to lift sanctions. On June 28, 1978, Helms introduced a bill which would have forced the President to do exactly that. From the Senate floor, he described the internal settlement as a major accomplishment that deserved American support. He praised the moderation of Bishop Muzorewa, Reverend Sithole, and Chief Chirau, juxtaposing them against Robert Mugabe and Joshua Nkomo, who seemed wedded to "their bloody and murderous campaign against the missionaries, women and children of Rhodesia."⁴⁹⁹ Senators Hayakawa, Byrd, Dole, and Goldwater spoke in favor of the "Helms Amendment," arguing that unless the United States supported the internal settlement, "[T]he next African nation to become a Soviet-dominated one will be Rhodesia."⁵⁰⁰ As these statements illustrate, conservative Senators were increasingly coming to view events in Africa through the lens of the Cold War. After the communist powers' unprecedented intervention in the Horn, their logic was difficult to refute.

The Helms Amendment came uncomfortably close to making it out of the Senate, falling only four votes shy. Undeterred, Helms and his allies made no secret of their intention to renew their efforts to force Jimmy Carter to lift sanctions. In an effort to undercut the North Carolinian, Administration officials backed a compromise bill co-sponsored by Senators Clifford Case of New Jersey and Jacob Javits of New York. The so-called "Case-Javits Amendment" required

⁴⁹⁹ The South African government wholeheartedly agreed with Helms's assessment, with one official calling the internal settlement a "historic event" that "will lead to majority rule in Rhodesia." Charge d'Affaires to Secretary for Foreign Affairs, "Rhodesia: Transitional Government Established," March 22, 1978, BTS 1/156/7 vol. 1, South African Department of International Relations and Cooperation Archives (hereafter, SAA).

⁵⁰⁰ "Foreign Relations Authorization Act, 1979," Congressional Record – Senate, June 28, 1978, pgs. 19211-19224, http://heinonline.org/HOL/Page?men_tab=srchresults&handle=hein.congrec/cr1240015&id=142&size=2&collection=congrec&terms=Rhodesia|Rhodesia's|RHODESIA&termtype=phrase&set_as_cursor=131#141

that the President lift sanctions by December 31, 1978, if he determined that the Salisbury Group had held “free and fair” elections and displayed a willingness to attend an all-parties conference with the leaders of the Patriotic Front.⁵⁰¹ The bill was considered less damaging than the Helms Amendment because it bought the Administration some breathing room and left the final decision in the hands of the President. Nevertheless, it was a bitter pill for many Administration officials to swallow. Not only did it reflect a rightward shift in Congress, but it also revealed that the Administration’s argument that any settlement which excluded the Patriotic Front would fail had fallen on deaf ears. In the words of one New York Times editorial, the Case-Javits Amendment reflected the Senate’s belief that the Administration was showing “too little sympathy” for the efforts of the Salisbury Group and too much for the guerrillas.⁵⁰²

Unfortunately for the President and his allies, the assaults on their Rhodesian policy had gained considerable traction by the time the Rhodesian elections were held in April 1979. A host of influential editors, journalists, and academics had come to accept the conservatives’ position and were urging the Administration to recognize Zimbabwe-Rhodesia.⁵⁰³ According to public opinion polls, many everyday Americans were coming to share this sentiment. “[W]e have lost, hands down, the battle of gut images,” concluded one Administration official. “Our position is seemingly vague, hopelessly complex, paints no good and bad guys, and offers no simple game plan. Muzorewa/Smith and their supporters paint a vivid picture of good (multiracial, democratic, pro-Western, anti-terrorism) against bad (guerrillas/terrorists, guns instead of ballots, Soviets & Cubans...). Moreover, the public is told that the solution is simple and costless: lift

⁵⁰¹ For more on the Case-Javits Amendment, see DeRoche, Black, White, and Chrome, 266-268.

⁵⁰² New York Times, “The Senate’s Two Votes on Foreign Policy,” July 28, 1978.

⁵⁰³ As of October 1978, editorials in major newspapers opposed the Administration’s Rhodesian policy by a 3-to-1 margin. Memorandum, Hodding Carter III to Richard Moose, “Editorial Comment on Rhodesia Prior to the Smith Visit,” October 13, 1978, CO 129: Executive 7/1/78-12/31/78 folder, White House Central File, Subject File, Box CO-51, JECL. See for instance, Washington Post, “Sanctimony and Rhodesia,” April 23, 1979.

sanctions.”⁵⁰⁴ This sentiment was becoming increasingly widespread on Capitol Hill as well – especially after the 1978 midterm elections gave Congress a more conservative hue.⁵⁰⁵ Indeed, even the Democratic House Majority Leader seemed to favor lifting sanctions under the terms of the Case-Javits Amendment.⁵⁰⁶ It was against this background of rising conservatism that Carter had to decide whether to reverse his Rhodesian policy or defy an increasingly-restless Congress. Making the President’s decision all the more difficult was his awareness that he would need all the allies he could muster if he hoped to get major legislation – including the controversial SALT II treaty – through Congress.

Countervailing Forces

At the same time that Congress and the “Rhodesia lobby” were pushing Jimmy Carter to lift sanctions, the President faced countervailing pressures from influential groups who vehemently opposed his doing so. In the United States, this movement was spearheaded by a number of prominent African Americans – some of whom had regarded the Rhodesian crisis as an important issue dating back to 1965.⁵⁰⁷ Because many African American leaders supported the Patriotic Front (which they regarded as the legitimate voice of the Zimbabwean people) rather than the Salisbury Group, Carter’s advisers fully expected to hear from opponents of the “internal settlement” before the President made his decision about whether or not to lift sanctions. “I have talked with Blacks in various Washington circles, and there is no doubt in my mind that if it [Rhodesia] is not a big ‘domestic’ issue with them yet, it will become one,” NSC

⁵⁰⁴ Memorandum, “June Roper Poll Results on Rhodesian Sanctions,” July 12, 1979, Zimbabwe (Rhodesia) 7-11/79 folder, National Security Affairs (6), Brzezinski Material, Country File, Box 89, JECL.

⁵⁰⁵ Senator Dick Clark, the sympathetic chairman of the Senate Committee on Africa, and Representative Donald Fraser were among the allies Carter lost in the 1978 elections.

⁵⁰⁶ In the words of Jim Wright, the Democratic House Majority Leader, “Surely US policy is not to be bound nor influenced by terrorist leaders who publicly assert that they intend to derive power through the barrel of a gun.” Letter, Representative Jim Wright to Cyrus Vance, February 23, 1979, Zimbabwe 11/77-2/78 folder, National Security Affairs (24), Staff Material, North/South, Box 119, JECL.

⁵⁰⁷ For more on this point, see Chapter One.

staffer Madeline Albright informed Zbigniew Brzezinski shortly after the Rhodesian elections.⁵⁰⁸ Louis Martin, Carter's liaison with the African American community, seconded this assessment. "While the rank and file of US Blacks may not be well-informed about political developments in Rhodesia, they can be expected to support the Black organizations and Black leadership that are opposing the lifting of sanctions," he predicted in a memorandum to the President⁵⁰⁹

As anticipated, letters from prominent African Americans poured into the White House mail room while the President weighed his options. Almost all of them urged him not to lift sanctions. Coretta Scott King, the widow of Martin Luther King Junior (who had himself taken a strong stand against UDI in 1965), called the lifting of sanctions "both premature and unconscionable."⁵¹⁰ She regarded Ian Smith as a "world outlaw" and urged US officials not to have anything to do with his schemes.⁵¹¹ Atlanta's Mayor, Maynard Jackson, called the White House to reiterate the importance that black voters attached to the issue, assuring the President that a decision to lift sanctions would undermine the credibility of his human rights agenda and cost him at the polls. "Africa is our Israel," Jackson warned.⁵¹² Other political and professional organizations, including the Congressional Black Caucus, the National Conference of Black Mayors, the National Urban League, and the National Bar Association echoed these sentiments.⁵¹³

⁵⁰⁸ Memorandum, Madeline Albright to Zbigniew Brzezinski and David Aaron, "Rhodesian Sanctions and Congress," May 2, 1979, Zimbabwe, 5/79 folder, National Security Affairs (24), Box 119, JECL.

⁵⁰⁹ Memorandum, Louis Martin to the President, "US Blacks and Rhodesia-Zimbabwe," May 29, 1979, CO 129 Executive 5/1/79-6/30/79 folder, White House Central Files, Subject File, Box CO-51, JECL.

⁵¹⁰ Letter, Coretta Scott King to Jimmy Carter, May 25, 1979, CO 129 Executive 5/1/79-6/30/79 folder, White House Central Files, Subject File, Box CO-51, JECL.

⁵¹¹ Chicago Sun Times, "Mr. Smith Goes to Washington," October 11, 1978, BTS 1/156/7 vol. 1, SAA.

⁵¹² Untitled Memorandum to the President, May 23, 1979, CO 129 Executive 5/1/79-6/30/79 folder, White House Central Files, Subject File, Box CO-51, JECL.

⁵¹³ "[W]e have to say that the Black community has come to perceive the lifting of sanctions as a major issue... which goes to basic attitudes of fairness towards all persons of African descent," representatives of the Caucus warned in a letter to the President. Any failure by the Administration to provide strong leadership against the lifting of sanctions would leave "the Black community" in America "disillusioned." Letter, Representatives Charles Diggs Jr., Cardiss Collins, and William Gray III to the President, April 25, 1979, Zimbabwe, 5/79 folder,

While his Republican predecessors might have been able to disregard the opinions of African American leaders, Jimmy Carter could not. As previously noted, Carter owed his slim victory in the 1976 presidential election to black voters. Given his mixed record in office, the Georgian's re-election hopes were likely to rest in their hands again in 1980. Taking domestic politics into consideration, Madeline Albright strongly recommended against lifting sanctions under the terms of the Case-Javits Amendment. "I do not believe that the President is in a position to alienate that constituency further," she remarked in reference to African Americans.⁵¹⁴ Thus, while the "Rhodesia lobby" was busy rallying support for Muzorewa's regime in the spring of 1979, domestic political considerations ensured that Jimmy Carter would think twice before lifting sanctions. To UN Representative Andrew Young, this high degree of African American activism signaled the emergence of a "new constituency for US-African affairs."⁵¹⁵ It was a constituency which would not only help to shape the Carter Administration's Rhodesian policy, but which would also play a major role in forcing Ronald Reagan to impose economic sanctions against South Africa in the 1980s.

However, African Americans were not the only influential group urging Jimmy Carter to maintain sanctions. African leaders were equally dismissive of the April elections and insisted that the United States not do anything to aid Muzorewa. Although Rhodesia was legally a British problem, African leaders attached special importance to the US decision because several "moderate" states (including Kenya, the Ivory Coast, and Zaire) were expected to follow

National Security Affairs (24) collection, Staff Materials, North-South, Box 119, JECL. Letter, Mayor Richard Hatcher to Jimmy Carter, May 15, 1979, and Letter, Vernon Jordan Junior of the National Urban League to Jimmy Carter, June 8, 1979, CO 129 Executive 5/1/79-6/30/79 folder, White House Central Files, Subject File, Box CO-51, JECL.

⁵¹⁴ Memorandum, Madeline Albright to Zbigniew Brzezinski and David Aaron, "Rhodesian Sanctions and Congress," May 2, 1979, Zimbabwe, 5/79 folder, National Security Affairs (24), Box 119, JECL.

⁵¹⁵ Quoted in Andrew Young, "The United States and Africa: Victory for Diplomacy," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 59, no. 3 (1980-1981): 651.

America's lead.⁵¹⁶ Given that opposition to minority rule was one of the few issues holding the OAU together, a decision by even a handful of member states to lift sanctions had the potential to destabilize the body and unleash a wave of acrimony across the continent. For this reason, Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere publicly warned the United States not to recognize the Rhodesian elections.⁵¹⁷ So did the Nigerians. "The Federal military government of Nigeria unequivocally rejects the bogus elections recently held in Rhodesia with the regrettable aim of installing an African puppet regime as the convenient vehicle for perpetuating the enslavement of our African brothers and sisters," declared the Nigerian Minister of Foreign Affairs. "Any attempts to accord recognition or respectability to the outcome of the illegal and pretentious elections, therefore, offend against reason and the peace of Africa," the Minister added in a not-so-subtle warning to US officials.⁵¹⁸ Coming from Africa's most populous nation and America's second largest supplier of crude oil, these words could hardly have failed to make an impression. Even Liberia's pro-Western President informed American leaders that a decision to lift sanctions would seriously damage US-African relations.⁵¹⁹ Given this chorus of voices, it was clear that a decision to recognize the Rhodesian elections and lift sanctions would have undermined the Administration's standing throughout black Africa – a point which officials opposed to the lifting of sanctions spelled out in no uncertain terms.⁵²⁰

⁵¹⁶ Summary History, undated, Zimbabwe, 4-10/77 folder, National Security Affairs (24), Box 119, JECL. In this respect, the Front Line Presidents agreed with Muzorewa, who remarked in a letter to Jimmy Carter, "I have no doubt at all that if you, as the acknowledged leader of the free world, were to give an immediate and positive indication of your intention to recognise my government as soon as it takes office, and, at the same time, to lift sanctions, it would have a dramatic effect." Quoted in Telegram, Sir David Scott to Foreign and Commonwealth Office, May 11, 1979, PREM 19/106, TNA.

⁵¹⁷ Washington Post, "Tanzanian Cautions US on Rhodesia," May 30, 1979.

⁵¹⁸ Evening Report, North-South Cluster to Zbigniew Brzezinski, May 16, 1979, NLC-10-20-7-7-4, JECL.

⁵¹⁹ Letter, President William Tolbert to Congressman Stephen Solarz, May 16, 1979, Zimbabwe, 6/79 folder, National Security Affairs (24), Box 119, JECL.

⁵²⁰ Memorandum, Henry Richardson to Zbigniew Brzezinski and David Aaron, "The Undesirability of 'Internal' Solutions in Rhodesia and Namibia," January 5, 1978, Zimbabwe, 11/77-2/78 folder, National Security Affairs (24), Box 119, JECL.

While previous scholars of the search for Zimbabwean independence have examined the ways in which African American and African pressure influenced the Carter Administration's thinking, they have tended to overlook the fact that Cold War considerations also weighed heavily on policymakers' minds as they considered their next move in Rhodesia. As previously noted, many of the Administration's leading figures had been concerned about Soviet and Cuban involvement in southern Africa since assuming office. The communist powers' involvement in the Horn of Africa only served to heighten these anxieties – particularly those of National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski, who, like his predecessor and academic rival, Henry Kissinger, had little interest in the global periphery. This was especially true of Africa, which he regarded as a “morass.”⁵²¹ But while Brzezinski had little sympathy for Africans' struggles to overcome the legacies of colonialism, he was well aware that the continent had the potential to become a sparring ground for the superpowers. And despite his disinterest in African affairs, Brzezinski was not prepared to stand by as America's chief Cold War rivals expanded their influence on the continent. “Current African events can be seen in terms of two broad interpretations, each yielding a contradictory conclusion,” Brzezinski postulated in one of his weekly reports to the President. “The first is that Africa is in the midst of a social-political upheaval, with post-colonial structures simply collapsing.” In this case, he argued that it was “clearly inadvisable” for the United States to become involved. “On the other hand,” he noted, “events in Africa can also be seen as part of a broad East-West struggle, with pro-Western regimes being challenged by pro-Soviet regimes. This dictates resistance to Soviet efforts.”⁵²² This memorandum conveyed Brzezinski's basic approach to African affairs: unless the Soviets

⁵²¹ Quoted in Maria Stella Rognoni, “Carter and the African Morass: US Policy and the Failure of the State-Building Process in Angola and the Congo,” in eds. Max Guderzo and Bruna Bagnato, The Globalization of the Cold War: Diplomacy and Local Confrontation, 1975-85, (New York: Routledge, 2010): 99, footnote 8.

⁵²² Zbigniew Brzezinski to the President, Weekly National Security Report #7, April 1, 1977, Weekly Reports to the President, 1-15: [2/77 – 6/77] folder, Zbigniew Brzezinski Donated Material, Subject File, Box 41, JECL.

and Cubans were involved, the United States should seek to avoid entanglements in the African “morass.”

Given this attitude, it should come as little surprise that the National Security Adviser urged caution when the Ogaden crisis first erupted. He regarded it as a skirmish between two unsavory despots and urged the President to allow the OAU to take the lead in mediating an end to the conflict.⁵²³ But once it became clear that the Soviets and Cubans were providing the Ethiopians with massive amounts of military assistance, Brzezinski quickly reversed his position. He had never been as optimistic about US-Soviet relations as Jimmy Carter or Cyrus Vance (perhaps because of his background as a Polish émigré) and events in the Horn seemed to confirm his suspicions.⁵²⁴ To Brzezinski, the Soviet airlift demonstrated that Leonid Brezhnev and his Politburo colleagues were more interested in improving Moscow’s global position than they were in promoting a stable world order. Thus, while Brzezinski was initially unsure whether the Soviets were acting “merely in response to an apparent opportunity” or whether their actions in the Horn were “part of a wider strategic design,” it hardly mattered.⁵²⁵ By seeking to cooperate only in fields where it was to their advantage, the Soviets had “stomped all over the

⁵²³ Brzezinski had initially agreed with Cyrus Vance that the crisis in the Horn was an African problem which required an African solution. Jackson, “The Carter Administration and Somalia,” 708. Siad’s disregard for human rights prompted one senior US official to dub him “one of the least attractive figures who has stepped through the backwaters of modern history” while Mengistu’s ruling D.E.R.G. was deemed “a military-thug regime.” Memorandum, Paul Henze to Zbigniew Brzezinski, “The Carter Administration and the Horn – What Have We Learned?” March 10, 1978, 3/78 folder, National Security Affairs (27), Staff Material, Horn/Special, Box 2, JECL and Note, Henze to Brzezinski, “PRM on Horn of Africa,” March 16, 1977, 3/77 folder, National Security Affairs (27), Staff Material, Horn/Special, Box 1, JECL.

⁵²⁴ Carter and Vance’s outlook is captured in Presidential Directive/NSC-18, which postulated that in its competition with the Soviet Union, the US enjoyed “a number of critical advantages.” “[I]t has a more creative technological and economic system, its political structure can adapt more easily to popular demands and relies on freely given popular support, and it is supported internationally by allies and friends who genuinely share similar aspirations.” <http://www.jimmycarterlibrary.gov/documents/pddirectives/pd18.pdf>

⁵²⁵ Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle: Memoirs of the National Security Adviser, 1977-1981*, (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1983): 181. For Brzezinski’s recollections on the Horn crisis, see *ibid.*, 179-87.

code of détente” and demonstrated their untrustworthiness.⁵²⁶ Having concluded that genuine partnership with the Soviets was not possible, Brzezinski began to doubt the viability of the Carter Administration’s “post-Cold War” agenda and instead began to champion a more hawkish foreign policy based upon the containment of the Soviet Union.⁵²⁷

As Brzezinski became increasingly skeptical of Soviet intentions, he began to worry about the broader implications of events in the Horn. During the course of a March 1978 meeting of the National Security Council’s Special Coordination Committee (SCC), he wondered aloud whether the Soviets and Cubans would be tempted to intervene elsewhere in Africa in the aftermath of their successful intervention in the Horn. He cited Rhodesia as the most likely target.⁵²⁸ “The longer term problem,” he warned, “is how to deter further interventions of this sort by the Soviets [and Cubans], particularly in [s]outhern Africa where [Ian] Smith’s internal settlement may provide a pretext for similar large-scale intervention.”⁵²⁹ Given his anxieties, Brzezinski could not have taken solace in an April 1978 CIA report which revealed that the Soviets were providing increasing quantities of sophisticated weaponry to the Patriotic Front – primarily to their longtime ally Joshua Nkomo and his Zimbabwe African

⁵²⁶ Zbigniew Brzezinski to the President, Weekly National Security Report #65, June 30, 1978, Weekly Reports to the President, 60-71: [6/78 – 9/78] folder, Zbigniew Brzezinski Donated Material, Subject File, Box 41, JECL.

⁵²⁷ Brzezinski later acknowledged that Soviet actions in the Horn of Africa prompted him to adopt a more confrontational agenda, averring in his memoirs that détente “lies buried in the sands of the Ogaden.” Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 189.

⁵²⁸ “The Soviets are demonstrating a predisposition to exploit a local conflict for larger purposes,” Brzezinski warned the SCC. “They are frightening more countries in the region and they are creating a precedent for more involvement elsewhere. The Cubans are offering 800 men to ZAPU [Joshua Nkomo’s Zimbabwe African People’s Union]. If the Cubans and Soviets are going to get massively involved in Rhodesia, we are going to be in a worse bind there.” SCC Meeting on the Horn of Africa, March 2, 1978, Meetings – SCC 61: 3/2/78 folder, Zbigniew Brzezinski Donated Material, Subject File, Box 28, JECL.

⁵²⁹ Memorandum, Zbigniew Brzezinski to Jimmy Carter, “Information Items,” February 21, 1978, NLC-1-5-4-20-9, JECL.

People's Union.⁵³⁰ After witnessing the communist powers' brazen intervention in the Horn, Brzezinski sensed that the African "dominoes" were about to start falling.⁵³¹

Concerned that America's credibility was at stake, the National Security Adviser clamored for an aggressive response to the communist powers' intervention in the Horn. He urged his SCC colleagues to quietly encourage regional allies such as Iran, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia to transfer weapons to Somalia in the hopes that the Somalis would be able to "make the Soviets and Cubans bleed."⁵³² He also lobbied to deploy an aircraft carrier task force to the Indian Ocean as a show of strength. Even if the action proved to be little more than a symbolic gesture, Brzezinski maintained that it was important to undertake some action to try to deter the Soviets and reassure America's allies in the region.⁵³³ When Brzezinski's colleagues rejected his proposed countermeasures, he raised the possibility of linking Soviet actions in the Horn to other aspects of the US-Soviet relationship (a practice which had been known as "linkage" during the Kissinger years). Delaying talks on the demilitarization of the Indian Ocean, halting technology transfers, and cancelling space agreements all appealed to him as levers with which to influence Soviet policy.⁵³⁴ However, Brzezinski soon concluded that these measures did not go far enough and began considering more controversial ones – such as linking Soviet actions in the Horn to progress on SALT II or to the transfer of American technology (and possibly the sale of advanced weapons) to China. A red-faced Cyrus Vance reacted sharply to these suggestions.

⁵³⁰ The CIA reported that Soviet military assistance to the guerrillas (primarily funneled through Angola, Tanzania, and Mozambique) had tripled in 1977, with the Soviets providing heavy artillery, armored vehicles, small arms, and mortars. CIA National Foreign Assessment Center, "Communist Military Support for the Rhodesian Insurgency," April 1978, NLC-31-75-5-7-3, JECL.

⁵³¹ Most scholars regard Brzezinski's response to events in the Horn as a major overreaction, but historian Odd Arne Westad has described the Soviet intervention there as "the most important Soviet-led military operation outside the area of the Warsaw Pact since the Korean War." Westad, *The Global Cold War*, 277.

⁵³² Summary of Conclusions, Special Coordination Committee Meeting, February 21, 1978, Meetings – SCC 59A: 2/22/78 folder, Zbigniew Brzezinski Donated Material, Subject Files, Box 28, JECL.

⁵³³ Summary of Conclusions, Special Coordination Committee Meeting, February 21, 1978, Meetings – SCC 59: 2/21/78 folder, Zbigniew Brzezinski Donated Material, Subject Files, Box 28, JECL.

⁵³⁴ SCC Meeting on the Horn of Africa, February 22, 1978, Meetings – SCC 59A: 2/22/78 folder, Zbigniew Brzezinski Donated Material, Subject File, Box 28, JECL.

“This is where you and I part,” he chided Brzezinski. “The consequences of doing something like this are very dangerous...[W]e are on the brink of ending up with a real souring of relations between ourselves and the Soviet Union.”⁵³⁵ Rebuffed by his colleagues, Brzezinski took his case to the President. He decried the Soviets’ “insistence on defining détente in a purely selective way, retaining for [themselves] the right to use force in order to promote wider political objectives.” He also warned that a passive response to Soviet and Cuban adventurism in the Horn would have negative ramifications at home, predicting that, “It is only a matter of time before the right wing in this country begins to argue that the above demonstrates our incompetence as well as our weakness.” Having outlined his case for a more confrontational response, Brzezinski offered Carter a list of options. These included many of the measures the SCC had rejected just days earlier.⁵³⁶

The President never had a chance to respond to these proposals as events overtook the Administration’s contingency planning. On March 9, 1978, Siad agreed to withdraw what was left of his army from the Ogaden. Despite concerns that the Ethiopians would carry the battle to Mogadishu, the Ethiopian forces halted at the border, thus restoring the *status quo ante*. From an American standpoint, however, what is most significant about the incident was not its denouement but the effect it seems to have had on Jimmy Carter’s worldview. The evidence

⁵³⁵ SCC Meeting on the Horn of Africa, March 2, 1978, Meetings – SCC 61: 3/2/78 folder, Zbigniew Brzezinski Donated Material, Subject File, Box 28, JECL.

⁵³⁶ Memorandum, Zbigniew Brzezinski to the President, “The Soviet Union and Ethiopia: Implications for US-Soviet Relations,” March 3, 1978, Meetings – SCC 61: 3/2/78 folder, Zbigniew Brzezinski Donated Material, Subject File, Box 28, JECL. Brzezinski and Paul Henze, the NSC’s regional specialist for the Horn, also hoped to use linkage to persuade Cuba to refrain from acting as “Moscow’s proxy” in the developing world. As Henze noted in a memorandum to his boss, actions – not words – were needed to deter Castro from playing such an active role in Africa. Henze lamented “the futility of yattering away at Castro about his involvement in Africa. The more agitated we seem about it the more delighted he is and the more convinced [that] he is doing the right thing. Only...concrete actions against Cuba and actions that make the cost of Cuban involvement greater will have any impact on Castro.” At the March 2 SCC meeting, Brzezinski raised the possibility of supplying arms to the guerrillas fighting in Angola in an attempt to “increase...[Cuban] casualties and the costs of their involvement there.” Memorandum, Paul Henze to Zbigniew Brzezinski, “Cubans in Africa,” February 10, 1978, 2/78 folder, National Security Affairs (27), Staff Material, Horn/Special, Box 2, and SCC Meeting on the Horn of Africa, March 2, 1978, Meetings – SCC 61: 3/2/78 folder, Zbigniew Brzezinski Donated Material, Subject File, Box 28, JECL.

suggests that the President became far more pessimistic about US-Soviet relations after the crisis. He began to wonder whether the Soviet leadership harbored hegemonic intentions after all.⁵³⁷ Thereafter, Carter became increasingly suspicious of Soviet and Cuban involvement in the developing world and increasingly attracted to Zbigniew Brzezinski's more hardline policy prescriptions.⁵³⁸ A May 1978 crisis in Zaire, which bore all the hallmarks of Soviet and Cuban involvement, convinced Carter and Brzezinski that the crisis in the Horn was not an isolated incident but rather the opening salvo of an overarching challenge to America's position in the developing world.⁵³⁹ From that point onward, they increasingly tended to view events in Africa through the lens of the Cold War. Indeed, so dramatic was this shift that it prompted one concerned Nigerian envoy to ask Brzezinski's deputy "whether US policy towards Africa had slipped backwards to pre-Carter conceptions of Africa solely in East-West terms?"⁵⁴⁰

Officials in Moscow and Havana did nothing to allay these fears. Buoyed by their success in the Horn, the Soviets and Cubans seemed more determined than ever to help the Patriotic Front shoot its way to power. Soviet leaders reiterated that they would "never

⁵³⁷ See, for instance, Carter's copy of Brzezinski's weekly report to the President dated April 7, 1978, in which Brzezinski lobbied the President to tell the Soviets that their actions in Africa were "intolerable" and were jeopardizing détente. Carter underlined the word "intolerable" and put a check in the margin. When Brzezinski urged Carter to tell the Soviets that they were in violation of the "principles of detente" laid out in the 1973 Nixon-Brezhnev communiqué, Carter scrawled in the margins, "[G]ive me a copy." Zbigniew Brzezinski to the President, Weekly National Security Report #53, April 7, 1978, Weekly Reports to the President, 53-60: [4/78 – 5/78] folder, Zbigniew Brzezinski Donated Material, Subject File, Box 41, JECL.

⁵³⁸ For more on the effect of the crisis in the Horn of Africa on Jimmy Carter's outlook, see Walker, "Yesterday's Answers' or Tomorrow's Solutions," 163-64, Raymond Garthoff, Détente and Confrontation: American-Soviet Relations from Nixon to Reagan, revised edition, (Washington: DC The Brookings Institution, 1994): 659, and Westad, The Global Cold War, 282-84.

⁵³⁹ For a more detailed account of the so-called "Shaba II" affair, see Garthoff, Détente and Confrontation, 687-694. Brzezinski was especially worried about sub-Saharan Africa, where he saw Soviet activities in Angola, Guinea, Mali, Nigeria, Rhodesia, and Tanzania as part of an overarching Soviet challenge to America's position. Zbigniew Brzezinski to the President, Weekly National Security Report #49, March 3, 1978, Weekly Reports to the President, 42-52: [1/78 – 3/78] folder, Zbigniew Brzezinski Donated Material, Subject File, Box 41, JECL.

⁵⁴⁰ Memorandum of Conversation, "Meeting between David Aaron and Dr. Bolaji Akinyemi, Director, Nigerian Institute for International Affairs," June 22, 1978, Memcons: Aaron, David, 2/77-12/78 folder, National Security Affairs (7), Brzezinski Material, Subject File, Box 33, JECL. The press certainly thought so. See, for instance, Washington Post, "Tougher Policy Toward Russia, Africa," May 24, 1978 and "Africa Turnabout: Concern Over Soviets, Cubans Transforms US Policy," June 4, 1978.

compromise” on their right to aid “progressive” movements in the developing world.⁵⁴¹

Similarly, the Cuban Vice President told a US contact that his nation reserved “the right to help its friends” in Africa – including those in Rhodesia.⁵⁴² With this support in hand, it became more apparent than ever that a settlement which excluded the Patriotic Front stood little chance of success. Rather than ending the *Chimurenga*, any “internal” solution was likely to exacerbate it.⁵⁴³ Policymakers in Washington feared that a military victory by the Patriotic Front would deliver Zimbabwe into the hands of their Soviet and Cuban backers. Along with Angola and Mozambique, this would have given the communist powers unprecedented access to Africa’s mineral-rich “southern sixth.” Seemingly the only way to prevent such an outcome was to keep the negotiating process in Rhodesia alive. And since it was only the African community’s faith in Jimmy Carter as a “moral man” which made negotiations credible, a decision to lift sanctions might well have discredited Carter and foreclosed the possibility of achieving a negotiated settlement – and with it, the possibility of limiting Soviet and Cuban influence in southern Africa.⁵⁴⁴ Nor were Carter and Brzezinski alone in their concerns; even Richard Moose (one of

⁵⁴¹ Washington Post, “US-Soviet Tensions Seen on the Rise: Political Climate Darkens for Talks on Arms Reductions,” May 25, 1978.

⁵⁴² Washington Post, “Citing Contradictions, Senators Ask for Evidence of Cuban Role in Zaire,” May 27, 1978.

⁵⁴³ US officials had been making this point for more than a year. See, for instance, Memorandum, Stansfield Turner to the President, “Rhodesian General Elections – and Beyond,” August 24, 1977, NLC-6-88-5-2-2, JECL. Interestingly, and contrary to what previous scholars have written, Carter seems to have been intrigued by the possibility of the internal settlement. “I don’t agree w[ith] this,” he scrawled in the margins of a daily briefing which urged him to publicly condemn the internal settlement. “Internal settlements are better than nothing” he suggested on a separate occasion. Indeed, so strong was the President’s interest that when the Salisbury Agreement was announced in March 1978, some concerned National Security Council staff members noted that the President seemed to be “tilting strongly toward the internal settlement option.” NLC-5-13-4-14-3; Evening Report to the President, December 28, 1977, Evening Reports (State): 1977 folder, National Security Affairs (), Box 19, JECL; and Memorandum, Thomas Thornton to Zbigniew Brzezinski, “Andy Young’s Letter and the Monday Meeting,” undated, Zimbabwe, 3-9/78 folder, National Security Affairs (24), Box 119, JECL. Given this prolonged dalliance with the possibility of supporting an internal settlement that would have done little to benefit Rhodesia’s black majority, Carter comes across as less of an idealist than a pragmatist.

⁵⁴⁴ Memorandum of Conversation, January 19, 1977, Zambia, 1/77-12/78 folder, National Security Affairs (24), Box 118, JECL. As one of Brzezinski’s advisers subsequently noted, Kenneth Kaunda “sees our role as a product of President Carter’s personal and moral stand and commitment.” Memorandum, Peter Tarnoff to Zbigniew Brzezinski, “President Kaunda of Zambia’s Request that the President Receive his Special Envoy,” December 2, 1977, Zambia, 1/77-5/78 folder, National Security Affairs (6), Box 88, JECL.

the Administration's most ardent "Africanists") was becoming concerned about the increasing threat of Soviet and Cuban involvement in the Rhodesian bush war.⁵⁴⁵

Conclusion

As demonstrated in the preceding sections, there were compelling reasons for Jimmy Carter to lift sanctions and compelling reasons for him not to do so. Champions and opponents of Zimbabwe-Rhodesia eagerly awaited the President's decision once Bishop Abel Muzorewa assumed the prime ministership on June 1, 1979. The interested parties would not have long to wait. During a June 7 press conference, Carter announced that he would not lift sanctions. In his opinion, the April elections had not been "free or fair" enough to justify doing so under the terms of the Case-Javits Amendment. The President described his decision as one of principle. "It means a lot to our country to do what's right and what's decent...and what is principled," he told the reporters gathered in the White House Briefing Room.⁵⁴⁶ During a subsequent press briefing, Cyrus Vance reiterated this message, emphasizing that the President's decision "was taken for reasons of deep principle."⁵⁴⁷ Few of Carter's advisers seem to have been caught off guard by the decision. "It is the President's policy and always has been and that's why I didn't really have any doubts about where he would come down," an aide later remarked.⁵⁴⁸

Despite these appeals to high morals, the question remains: did Carter's decision really come "from the heart" – as one New York Times article alleged it had? Previous scholars of the

⁵⁴⁵ Meeting on the Rhodesian Situation held at H.F. Verwoerd Building on 21 February 1979, BTS 1/156/1, vol. 2, SAA.

⁵⁴⁶ Quoted in President Carter's Remarks, June 7, 1979, Department of State Bulletin, vol. 79, no. 2029 (August 1979): 25.

⁵⁴⁷ Quoted in Secretary Vance's Press Briefing, June 7, 1979, Department of State Bulletin, vol. 79, no. 2029 (August 1979): 25.

⁵⁴⁸ New York Times, "President's Decision on Rhodesia Is Said to Have Come "From the Heart," June 10, 1979.

search for Zimbabwean independence have tended to take the President at his word.⁵⁴⁹ And to some extent, they are probably right. While even the President's most sympathetic aides were forced to admit that the elections had been administered in a reasonably unbiased manner, the new nation's constitution was so riddled with compromises that few international observers doubted that power would remain in white hands even after the election of a black prime minister. Under the constitution (which Zimbabweans had not voted on), the Rhodesians would continue to enjoy disproportionate representation in parliament. They would also retain effective control of the army, police, judiciary, and civil service.⁵⁵⁰ Furthermore, the CIA predicted that white opposition would require the new government to move slowly and cautiously when it came to providing Zimbabweans with better housing, education, and health care facilities.⁵⁵¹ As a Southerner who was acutely sensitive to issues of racial discrimination, Jimmy Carter must have felt uneasy about such compromises. Perhaps these concerns are what fuelled his belief that maintaining sanctions was "the right thing to do."⁵⁵²

Nevertheless, the decision facing the President was hardly a matter of black and white. According to watchdog organizations such as Freedom House, the elections had been more "free and fair" than many in Africa. The parties had been allowed to campaign openly, overt intimidation was minimal, the secrecy of the ballot had been respected, and the results, as far as

⁵⁴⁹ Andrew DeRoche, Thomas Borstelmann, and Nancy Mitchell have all placed special emphasis on the moral aspect of Carter's decision not to lift sanctions. DeRoche, "Standing Firm for Principles: Jimmy Carter and Zimbabwe," Diplomatic History, vol. 23, no. 4, (Fall 1999): 657-685; Thomas Borstelmann, The Cold War and the Color Line; pgs.; and Nancy Mitchell, "Tropes of the Cold War: Jimmy Carter and Rhodesia," Cold War History, vol. 7, no. 2 (May 2007): 263-283.

⁵⁵⁰ Memorandum, Jerry Funk to Zbigniew Brzezinski, "Rhodesian View of UK All-Party Parliamentary Delegation," March 26, 1979, Zimbabwe 10/78-3/79 folder, National Security Affairs (24), Staff Material, North/South, Box 119, JECL.

⁵⁵¹ CIA National Foreign Assessment Center Memorandum, "Rhodesia: The Status of Blacks," April 25, 1979, Zimbabwe, 10/78-3/79 folder, National Security Affairs (24), Staff Material, North/South, Box 119, JECL.

⁵⁵² New York Times, "President's Decision on Rhodesia Is Said to Have Come "From the Heart," June 10, 1979.

anyone could tell, accurately reflected the preferences of the Zimbabwean people.⁵⁵³ British and Australian observers reached much the same conclusion.⁵⁵⁴ Furthermore, while the new constitution was imperfect, many saw it as an acceptable compromise. Thus, National Security staffer Jerry Funk put it best when he informed Zbigniew Brzezinski that “a good case on paper can be made either way on the Case-Javits Amendment.”⁵⁵⁵ Given the conclusions reached by the British, Freedom House, and Administration officials, there would have been ample justification for recognizing the Rhodesian elections and lifting sanctions had Carter wished to do so. Such a decision might have placated Americans who wanted to wash their hands of the Rhodesian affair and could have paved the way for smoother relations with Congress.

But he did not – a decision that seems all the more baffling given that the outcome of the April 1979 election was exactly what the Ford and Carter Administrations had hoped for since 1976. Muzorewa was a moderate nationalist with genuine grassroots support. He had no desire to run the whites out of Zimbabwe-Rhodesia and was eager to develop close ties with the West. The fact that he was an ordained Methodist minister made him all the more attractive to many Americans – including Jimmy Carter, a born-again Christian.⁵⁵⁶ These factors made Carter’s decision all the more bewildering to many Americans – including Idaho Senator Roger Jepsen, who declared, “I find it strange that we find fault with our friends and give aid and comfort to our enemies.”⁵⁵⁷ Many Americans, who could not understand the Administration’s apparent infatuation with the Patriotic Front voiced similar opinions. “Is it not possible for Jimmy Carter

⁵⁵³ Memorandum, Jerry Funk to Zbigniew Brzezinski, “Freedom House on Rhodesia,” May 1, 1979, Zimbabwe, 5/79 folder, National Security Affairs (24), Box 119, JECL.

⁵⁵⁴ Report to the Prime Minister on the Election Held in Zimbabwe/Rhodesia, May 16, 1979, PREM 19/117 and Telegram, Mr. Tebbit to FCO, “Australian Observer’s Report on Rhodesian Elections,” June 7, 1979, PREM 19/107, TNA.

⁵⁵⁵ Memorandum, Jerry Funk to Zbigniew Brzezinski, “Rhodesian Elections: What Now?” April 23, 1979, Zimbabwe, 10/78-3/79 folder, National Security Affairs (24), Staff Materials, North-South, Box 119, JECL.

⁵⁵⁶ Memorandum, Stephen Wall to Robin Renwick, “Talk with Vice-President Mondale: Rhodesia,” July 20, 1979, FCO 36/2539, TNA.

⁵⁵⁷ Quoted in Mitchell, “Tropes of the Cold War,” 263.

to say, just for once, that the elections in Zimbabwe-Rhodesia were an impressive feat for a place that has never had multiracial elections before; that they were a lot more impressive than the fake polls and military grabs by which power is sorted out in most other African countries,” queried one Washington Post editorial.⁵⁵⁸ Indeed, without understanding the broader constraints which Jimmy Carter felt himself to be under, his decision not to accept what many Americans considered an ideal solution to the Rhodesian conflict certainly seems puzzling.

One explanation is that Carter was acting upon moral impulses when he decided not to lift sanctions against Zimbabwe-Rhodesia. However, it seems likely that he was also influenced by other, less spiritual considerations. By keeping sanctions in place, he hoped to solidify his standing with African American voters, preserve America’s improved relations with black Africa, and keep the Soviets and Cubans at bay. Interestingly, Carter dwelled at much greater length on the ways in which his decision would protect American interests during his June 7 press conference than he did on the ways in which it would benefit the people of Zimbabwe-Rhodesia. “It should preserve our diplomatic and ties of trade with friendly African governments,” Carter remarked. He also asserted that the decision to maintain sanctions would “limit the opportunity of outside powers [a clear reference to the Soviets and Cubans] to take advantage of the situation in southern Africa at the expense of the United States” – a factor which he considered “very important.” Only at the end of his remarks did Carter describe his decision as a matter of principle.⁵⁵⁹ If this speech is any indication, Jimmy Carter’s human rights agenda had taken a backseat to political and geostrategic concerns – a conclusion at which some

⁵⁵⁸ Washington Post, “The President’s Rhodesia Blunder,” June 8, 1979.

⁵⁵⁹ Quoted in, “Africa: Decision on Southern Rhodesia Sanctions,” Department of State Bulletin, vol. 79, no. 2029, (August 1979): 25.

scholars of Carter's Latin American policy have recently arrived.⁵⁶⁰ And if Carter did place his human rights agenda on the backburner as Cold War considerations resurfaced, scholars would be wise to view the President as less of a starry-eyed idealist and more of a hard-nosed pragmatist. But whether inspired by principle, pragmatism, or some combination thereof, Carter's decision not to lift sanctions left the Rhodesian situation in limbo. It would be up to the new government in the United Kingdom to bring the long-festering crisis to an end. As the President told his advisers shortly before announcing his decision to maintain sanctions, "[T]he monkey is now back on Britain's back."⁵⁶¹

⁵⁶⁰ See, for instance, William Schmidli, "Institutionalizing Human Rights in US Foreign Policy: US-Argentine Relations, 1976-1980," *Diplomatic History*, vol. 35, no. 2 (April 2011), 351-377.

⁵⁶¹ Quoted in, *New York Times*, "President's Decision on Rhodesia Is Said to Have Come 'From the Heart,'" June 10, 1979.

Chapter Five

The Limits of Western Influence: Nigeria, The Frontline States, and the Lancaster House

Settlement of 1979

On May 4, 1979, Margaret Thatcher and the Conservatives trounced James Callaghan's Labour Party at the polls. The outcome was generally attributed to a decade of economic stagnation and social unrest that had culminated in the "winter of discontent" – during which a spate of strikes had caused garbage to go uncollected and corpses to go unburied.⁵⁶² Although the election had been fought primarily over domestic issues, the change in governments raised considerable uncertainty as to the direction of Britain's Rhodesian policy. During the campaign, the Tories had assailed Labour's handling of the Rhodesian crisis and pledged that, if elected, they would move to recognize Abel Muzorewa's regime and lift sanctions.⁵⁶³ Francis Pym, the frontrunner to succeed David Owen as Foreign Secretary, publicly stated that the Labour government would be committing a "diplomatic error" if it ignored the Rhodesian elections.⁵⁶⁴ As long as the elections took place "in reasonably free and fair conditions and with a reasonable turnout," Pym asserted "it would be the responsibility of the British Government to bring Rhodesia back to legality and do everything possible to make sure that the new independent state receives international recognition."⁵⁶⁵ Since Pym was widely regarded as Thatcher's "yes man," many international commentators saw his speech as proof that the Tories intended to recognize

⁵⁶² For more on the "winter of discontent," which drew its name from the opening line of Shakespeare's *Richard III*, see Philip Whitehead, *The Writing on the Wall: Britain in the Seventies*, (London: Michael Joseph, 1986): 279-286.

⁵⁶³ See, for instance, 1979 Conservative Party General Election Manifesto, <http://www.conservative-party.net/manifestos/1979/1979-conservative-manifesto.shtml>. For a Rhodesian assessment of the manifesto, see Ken Flower, *Serving Secretly: An Intelligence Chief on Record*, (London: John Murray, 1987): 225. For a Zimbabwean perspective, see Joshua Nkomo, *Nkomo: The Story of My Life*, (London: Methuen, 1984):191. See also, Peter Carrington, *Reflect on Things Past: The Memoirs of Lord Carrington*, (London: Collins, 1988): 290-291.

⁵⁶⁴ *Washington Post*, "Tories Would Rule Out British Sanctions Against South Africans or Rhodesians," April 12, 1979.

⁵⁶⁵ Commonwealth Committee on Southern Africa: Minutes from the Meeting on the Committee on Southern Africa, 18 May 1979, FCO 36/2527, British National Archives (hereafter, TNA).

Zimbabwe-Rhodesia as long as the April 1979 Rhodesian elections went ahead as scheduled.⁵⁶⁶

An interview that Thatcher gave to Time magazine just days after her election further fuelled speculation that the Conservatives intended to recognize Muzorewa's government and wash their hands of the Rhodesian problem once and for all.⁵⁶⁷

While some scholars have questioned how serious the Tories' campaign rhetoric really was, many African leaders regarded Thatcher's ascension to the prime ministership as cause for concern.⁵⁶⁸ Zambian officials were particularly concerned about Britain's new leader, whom they regarded as nothing short of a "colonial cardboard cut-out."⁵⁶⁹ In the estimation of L.P. Chibesakunda, the Zambian High Commissioner to London, Thatcher had displayed "total ignorance" about African affairs during the election campaign. The Zambians therefore feared that Thatcher would quickly move to lift sanctions and recognize Muzorewa's government.⁵⁷⁰ Zambian officials were not alone in their concern. Several other governments in sub-Saharan Africa – including those of Nigeria, Tanzania, and Angola – expected Thatcher to recognize the newly-elected government in Salisbury.⁵⁷¹ So did many members of Muzorewa's entourage, which explains why many of them rejoiced when they learned of Thatcher's electoral victory. Ken Flower, the head of Zimbabwe-Rhodesia's Central Intelligence Organization (CIO), was particularly confident that Thatcher would adhere to her party's election manifesto and recognize

⁵⁶⁶ See, for instance, New York Times, "Tory Recognition of Rhodesia a Possibility," April 8, 1979. The South African government was far more skeptical. They noted that Conservative policy "while holding some sympathy for the internal settlement is ill defined and goes no further than public urging for an internal effort to try and ensure that the April ballot is as fair and free as possible." Sue Onslow, "'Noises Off: South Africa and the Lancaster House Settlement, 1979-1980," Journal of Southern African Studies, vol. 35, no. 2 (June 2009): 493.

⁵⁶⁷ Time, "An Interview with Thatcher," May 14, 1979.

⁵⁶⁸ See, for instance, Andrew DeRoche, Black, White, and Chrome: The United States and Zimbabwe, 1953-1998, (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, Inc., 1991): 276.

⁵⁶⁹ Quoted in Margaret Thatcher, The Downing Street Years, (New York: Harper Collins, 1993): 76.

⁵⁷⁰ Political Report, L.P. Chibesakunda to Minister of Foreign Affairs, April 1979, UNIP 7/23/71, United National Independence Party Archives (hereafter, UNIPA).

⁵⁷¹ See, for instance, Telegrams, Mervyn Brown to FCO, "Rhodesia – Political Consultation," May 29, 1979; Peter Moon to FCO, "My I.P.T. Rhodesia," May 28, 1979; and Mr. Thompson to FCO, "Rhodesia and South Africa," May 17, 1979, PREM 19/106, TNA.

Zimbabwe-Rhodesia. Once Britain had done so, he expected the European Community and several countries in Francophone Africa to follow suit.⁵⁷²

While there was reason for optimism in May 1979, the Rhodesians' hopes hinged upon Thatcher acting quickly and decisively. Contrary to expectations, she failed to do so – a decision which rankled in Salisbury.⁵⁷³ This chapter will seek to explain why Thatcher decided to push for a settlement that included guerrilla leaders Robert Mugabe and Joshua Nkomo rather than recognizing Muzorewa's "internal settlement." It will argue that the diplomatic and economic pressure leveled by members of the Commonwealth and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) influenced Thatcher's policy to a degree that scholars have not previously appreciated. It will also seek to demonstrate that an influential group of African leaders played an underappreciated role in ensuring that the 1979 Lancaster House negotiations yielded a settlement. By highlighting the role that British, African, and (to a lesser extent) American statesmen played in facilitating Rhodesia's transition to majority rule, this chapter will seek to emphasize the international dimensions of the Rhodesian settlement.⁵⁷⁴

⁵⁷² Ken Flower, *Serving Secretly: An Intelligence Chief on Record*, (London: John Murray, 1987): 225-226.

⁵⁷³ "By the time Ian Smith had officially handed power over to Muzorewa," Flower recalled, "we had been shown that a Conservative government could be just as ambivalent as a Labour government in its attitude towards our country...[W]here we had expected strength – from Margaret Thatcher, whom the Russians had dubbed 'The Iron Lady' because of her belligerence in Opposition – we now found weakness." Flower, *Serving Secretly*, 225-226.

⁵⁷⁴ This transnational approach stands in stark contrast to many previous studies of the search for Zimbabwean independence, which tend to focus on the contribution of individual nations or groups. For instance, Terence Ranger has focused on the guerrilla's contribution; Andrew DeRoche has focused on the American contribution; Robin Renwick has focused on the British contribution; and Sue Onslow has focused on the South African contribution. Ranger, *Peasant Consciousness and Guerrilla War in Zimbabwe*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985); DeRoche, *Black, White, and Chrome*; Renwick, *Unconventional Diplomacy in Southern Africa*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997); and Onslow, "South Africa and the Owen/Vance Plan of 1977," *South African Historical Journal*, vol. 51 no. 1 (2004): 130-158; "A Question of Timing: South Africa and Rhodesia's Unilateral Declaration of Independence, 1964-65," *Cold War History*, vol. 5, no. 2 (2005): 129-159; "'We Must Gain Time': South Africa, Rhodesia and the Kissinger Initiative of 1976," *South African Historical Journal*, vol. 56, no. 1 (2006): 123-153; and "Noises Off."

Explaining Thatcher's *Volte-Face*

Although some scholars have questioned whether Thatcher actually intended to recognize Zimbabwe-Rhodesia, recently-declassified documents reveal such doubts to be unfounded. The Prime Minister believed that the Rhodesian elections had been as “free and fair” as any that had taken place south of the Sahara.⁵⁷⁵ Moreover, she did not view Zimbabwe-Rhodesia’s constitution as deficient – at least not within the African context. As she pointedly reminded the Commonwealth Secretary General, the United Kingdom (along with many other nations) had recently recognized “a number of African regimes – for example, Uganda and Ghana – who did not owe their authority to any kind of democratic elections and whose constitutions were in no way superior” to that of Zimbabwe-Rhodesia.⁵⁷⁶ Thatcher’s willingness to accept the Rhodesian elections at face value was likely bolstered by the hostility she felt toward the leaders of the Patriotic Front. In her memoirs, Thatcher recalled that she was “not at all keen” to deal with Robert Mugabe and Joshua Nkomo.⁵⁷⁷ Recently-declassified documents suggest that this account drastically understates Thatcher’s reluctance to negotiate with the guerrilla leaders. “[P]lease do not meet [with the] leaders of the Patriotic Front,” she instructed a British envoy headed to southern Africa for consultations with the Frontline Presidents. “I have never done business with terrorists until after they became Prime Ministers.”⁵⁷⁸ A number of other documents confirm that, upon assuming office, Thatcher planned to recognize Muzorewa’s government, leaving Mugabe and Nkomo out in the cold.⁵⁷⁹

⁵⁷⁵ “Tell me of another country in Africa which [has] had one person/one vote [elections] for 4 different political parties,” Thatcher challenged her Cabinet Secretary. Memorandum, Sir John Hunt to the Prime Minister, “Rhodesia,” May 4, 1979, PREM 19/106, TNA.

⁵⁷⁶ Call on the Prime Minister by the Commonwealth Secretary General at 10 Downing Street on 18 June 1979, FCO 36/2528, TNA.

⁵⁷⁷ Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, 71-72.

⁵⁷⁸ Letter, Stephen Wall to Bryan Cartledge, May 25, 1979, PREM 19/106, TNA.

⁵⁷⁹ See, for instance, Minute, Tony Duff to Robin Renwick, “Rhodesia,” May 3, 1979, FCO 36/2489; Memorandum, Sir John Hunt to the Prime Minister, “Rhodesia,” May 4, 1979, PREM 19/106; and PM Giscard Meeting Note, June

In addition to Thatcher's disdain for the guerilla leaders, she was under considerable pressure to recognize the newly-elected regime in Salisbury. Among the most vocal of Muzorewa's supporters were members of the Monday Club, an ultraconservative organization which one prominent newsmagazine described as "not really to the right of Genghis Khan."⁵⁸⁰ Preoccupied with racial issues at home and abroad, one of the group's highest priorities was rallying support for their "kith and kin" in Rhodesia. Its leaders demonized any politician they deemed too eager to sell the Rhodesians down the river – a group which included Thatcher's Foreign Secretary, Peter Carrington, who had the temerity to suggest that any agreement which excluded the Patriotic Front was unlikely to produce a lasting settlement. The Monday Club responded by displaying "Hang Carrington" banners at its meetings.⁵⁸¹ Few Britons quite so emotionally invested in the Rhodesian issue. Nevertheless, the "internal settlement" enjoyed widespread support from mainstream Conservatives as well as the British press.⁵⁸² Given these pressures, Thatcher appreciated that she probably would not be able to persuade her parliamentary colleagues to renew sanctions when they lapsed in November.⁵⁸³ With only months before sanctions were set to expire, she may have felt resigned to recognizing Zimbabwe-Rhodesia and hoping for the best.⁵⁸⁴

5, 1979, PREM 19/107, TNA. See also, Carrington, Reflect on Things Past: The Memoirs of Lord Carrington, (London: Collins, 1988): 292.

⁵⁸⁰ Time, "Britain: Bloody Monday," April 30, 1973.

⁵⁸¹ Carrington, Reflect on Things Past, 298.

⁵⁸² Memorandum, Zbigniew Brzezinski to Jimmy Carter, "Information Items," February 21, 1978, NLC-1-5-4-20-9, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, (hereafter, JECL).

⁵⁸³ See, for instance, Untitled Memorandum, Martin Reid to H.A. Geldenhuys, July 3, 1979, BTS 1/156/7 vol. 2, South African Department of International Relations and Cooperation Archives (hereafter, SAA). That it would be difficult for the Tories to maintain sanctions after the April 1979 Rhodesian elections came as little surprise. Then-Shadow Foreign Secretary John Davies had informed an American contact in mid-1978 that if the Patriotic Front remained obstructionist and the Salisbury Group held "free and fair" elections, many in his party were likely to vote against renewing sanctions. Memorandum, The Situation Room to Zbigniew Brzezinski, "State Morning Summary," July 15, 1978, NLC-4-14-2-14-5, JECL.

⁵⁸⁴ Peter Carrington, who was much more attuned to the nuances of the situation, agreed that if a negotiated settlement had not been reached by October, the British would have to turn their energies toward the task of minimizing the fallout from the inevitable lifting of sanctions. Record of a Meeting between the Foreign and

Given that Thatcher and many of her Conservative colleagues supported the “internal settlement,” those African leaders who feared that she would recognize Muzorewa’s regime seem justified in their concern. However, this raises the question: why did Thatcher ultimately opt against this course of action? Perhaps the most important factor was the economic and diplomatic pressure applied by African nations. As noted in the previous chapter, most African leaders dismissed the “internal settlement” as a ruse designed to perpetuate white rule in Rhodesia.⁵⁸⁵ Their fears were reaffirmed when the Salisbury Group unveiled its independence constitution. After studying the document, the OAU Secretary General concluded that, “The Rhodesian constitution did not solve the country’s problems.” Because it left the whites in effective control of the army, judiciary, and economy (in addition to enabling them to veto any proposed constitutional amendment), the Secretary General asserted that the new constitution “seemed to institutionalize a form of discrimination.”⁵⁸⁶ The OAU Liberation Committee reached a similar conclusion and branded Muzorewa and his ministers as “traitors” guilty of “betraying the people of Zimbabwe.”⁵⁸⁷ Member states were urged not to recognize the Salisbury regime or provide its leaders with any aid or assistance.⁵⁸⁸ Some “moderate” African leaders were sympathetic to Muzorewa’s position, but none were willing to deviate from the OAU line.⁵⁸⁹ To the contrary, Margaret Thatcher received “[t]elegram after telegram” from African leaders informing her that until some of the more egregious shortcomings of Zimbabwe-

Commonwealth Secretary and the Australian Foreign Minister held at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on 15 June 1979, FCO 36/2528, TNA.

⁵⁸⁵ Interestingly, Carrington was not unsympathetic to this view. Carrington, *Reflect on Things Past*, 290.

⁵⁸⁶ Telegram, R.M. Tesh to FCO, “OAU and Rhodesia,” May 21, 1979, FCO 36/2552, TNA.

⁵⁸⁷ Telegram, Peter Moon to FCO, “OAU Liberation Committee: Rhodesia,” January 26, 1979, FCO 36/2552, TNA.

⁵⁸⁸ Telegram, R.M. Tesh to FCO, “OAU and Rhodesia,” May 21, 1979,” FCO 36/2552, TNA.

⁵⁸⁹ See, for instance, Visit by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary to Khartoum, 10 July 1979, Brief No. 1: Rhodesia, July 6, 1979, FCO 36/2553, TNA.

Rhodesia's constitution had been rectified, the country stood no chance of gaining international recognition.⁵⁹⁰

In the months following Muzorewa's election, the OAU did everything in its power to isolate the Bishop and his regime. In May, the organization issued a statement denouncing the "sham elections" that had brought "a few misguided and ambitious black politicians" to power. "[T]he issue in Zimbabwe is not just ensuring that a black face is at the head of a government," the statement began. "The whole struggle is to ensure that there is black majority rule in which the blacks have real power." Because the 1979 constitution failed to place the country's black and white citizens on an equal footing, the OAU pledged to continue its support for the *Chimurenga*. The statement concluded with a warning to those nations considering recognizing Muzorewa's regime. "While there is still time they should work toward an internationally accepted solution in Zimbabwe. To defy reason and African opinion is to plunge themselves into a situation the consequences of which they cannot predict."⁵⁹¹ The OAU issued a more pointed statement at the conclusion of a July meeting held in the Liberian capital of Monrovia. It urged member states to take whatever cultural, political, or economic measures they deemed practicable against any nation that lifted sanctions or recognized Zimbabwe-Rhodesia.⁵⁹² As these resolutions demonstrated, OAU members stood united in their opposition to a regime that sought to protect the interests of Rhodesia's white minority at the expense of its black majority.

Noble as such expressions of pan-African solidarity may have been, international commentators realized that it would take more than moral suasion to convince Margaret Thatcher to reverse her Rhodesian policy. For, as the Zambian High Commissioner to London

⁵⁹⁰ Note on the Prime Minister's Meeting with Bishop Abel Muzorewa at 10 Downing Street on 13 July, FCO 36/2416, TNA.

⁵⁹¹ Telegram, R.M. Tesh to FCO, "OAU and Rhodesia," May 23, 1979, FCO 36/2552, TNA.

⁵⁹² Telegram, Mr. Donald to FCO, "Consultations with OAU," July 12, 1979 and Annex, 16th Meeting of the Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity, Monrovia, 17-20 July 1979, FCO 36/2553, TNA.

noted, Britain's new Prime Minister "tended to view all international issues only in relation to British interests."⁵⁹³ While the Zambian High Commissioner lamented Thatcher's approach to foreign affairs, other nations sought to exploit it. Foremost among those seeking to influence British policy at this crucial juncture was the Federal Military Government of Nigeria.⁵⁹⁴

Without having conducted research in the Nigerian archives, it is difficult determine exactly why the Nigerians were so opposed to Muzorewa's regime. Peter Carrington suspected that the Nigerian leader, General Olusegun Obasanjo, harbored a grudge against the Bishop.⁵⁹⁵ Other British officials believed the Nigerian leader was simply opposed to a constitution that left too much power in the hands of the whites.⁵⁹⁶ And the British High Commissioner to Lagos, Mervyn Brown, suspected that Obasanjo was seeking to bolster his legacy as he prepared to retire from public life.⁵⁹⁷

Whatever the Nigerian government's motives, it was clear that Obasanjo was unlikely to accept the new regime in Salisbury. Moreover, the Nigerian government was capable of severely damaging Britain's international position if Thatcher acted too hastily in Rhodesia. Perhaps no one was more alert to this fact than Mervyn Brown, who warned that early recognition of Zimbabwe-Rhodesia could have "disastrous" consequences for Britain. The High Commissioner predicted that lifting sanctions (which the Nigerians regarded as the first step toward recognition)

⁵⁹³ Political Report, L.P. Chibesakunda to Minister of Foreign Affairs, April 1979, UNIP 7/23/70, UNIPA.

⁵⁹⁴ Historian R.F. Holland has suggested that Nigeria would have played a greater role earlier in the Rhodesian crisis had the country not been so indebted to Britain from the war of Biafran secession. Holland, European Decolonization, 1918-1981: An Introductory Survey, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985): 282-283.

⁵⁹⁵ Carrington, Reflect on Things Past, 290.

⁵⁹⁶ In an attempt to dispel the notion that Obasanjo was conducting some sort of personal vendetta, the British High Commissioner to Lagos sent a cable to the Foreign Office, averring that the Nigerians were not acting out of "pique." To the contrary, he maintained, "Their case is simply that the present situation in Rhodesia falls a long way short of a genuine transfer to the black majority, which they regard as necessary before legal independence can be granted." Telegram, Mervyn Brown to Derek Day, "Nigeria and Rhodesia," May 21, 1979, FCO 36/2508, TNA.

⁵⁹⁷ Telegram, Mervyn Brown to FCO, "Nigerian Attitude to Rhodesia," May 24, 1979, FCO 36/2508, TNA.

would lead to anti-British riots, a breach in diplomatic relations, and economic reprisals.⁵⁹⁸

While policymakers in London were concerned about the safety of British nationals in Nigeria, they were primarily worried about the possibility of Nigeria waging economic warfare against them. This concern is not surprising since Nigeria was Britain's ninth largest export market and most important trading partner outside of Western Europe and North America. And at a time when the British economy was in the doldrums, Nigeria was one of the few countries with which Britain maintained a favorable balance of trade.⁵⁹⁹ Furthermore, Nigeria was just beginning to benefit from the oil-boom of the late-1970s. British officials predicted that if they could maintain their share of the Nigerian market (which stood at a remarkable 22%), British firms could expect to reap the benefits as Nigeria began to modernize its military and infrastructure.⁶⁰⁰

Conversely, Britain stood to lose a great deal if relations between the two countries soured. For, while highly profitable, Britain's economic links with Nigeria were far from secure. "[T]he bulk of the goods and services we supply, and the technology and expertise we provide, could be met relatively quickly and easily from other sources if the Nigerians decided on a boycott," concluded one British official. Moreover, British firms were "highly vulnerable" to Nigerian reprisals.⁶⁰¹ The oil giant British Petroleum (BP) had invested heavily in Nigeria, and British officials worried that General Obasanjo might nationalize the company's Nigerian holdings as punishment for recognizing Zimbabwe-Rhodesia. In addition to taking action against BP, the British Deputy High Commissioner to Lagos warned of a range of punitive

⁵⁹⁸ Letter, Mervyn Brown to Tony Duff, "Rhodesia," April 17, 1979, FCO 36/2508, TNA.

⁵⁹⁹ British exports to Nigeria in 1978 were valued at more than £1 billion, which almost equaled British exports to the rest of sub-Saharan Africa combined. British imports from Nigeria, by contrast, were less than a quarter of that amount.

⁶⁰⁰ Report, D.P.R. Mackilligin to J.R. Williams, "Rhodesia: Nigerian Action Against British Interests," June 1, 1979, FCO 36/ 2508, TNA and Teleletter, Mervyn Brown to Unknown, "The Nigerian View of Rhodesia," June 5, 1979, FCO 36/2489, TNA.

⁶⁰¹ Report, D.P.R. Mackilligin to J.R. Williams, "Rhodesia: Nigerian Action against British Interests," June 1, 1979, FCO 36/ 2508, TNA.

measures the Federal Military Government had under consideration. These included: embargoing British imports, preventing British firms from bidding on public sector contracts, and nationalizing British assets in Nigeria.⁶⁰² By contrast, the scope for effective countermeasures was deemed to be “negligible.” Britain’s balance of trade with Nigeria was so favorable, and British firms stood to profit so handsomely from Nigeria’s economic boom, that almost any retaliatory measure was likely to redound to Britain’s disadvantage. At a time when the British economy was in a shambles, Margaret Thatcher and her advisers must have had serious qualms about risking such lucrative ties for the sake of Ian Smith and Abel Muzorewa.⁶⁰³

Fears in London were exacerbated by the fact that the Nigerians seemed prepared to use their economic leverage. The state-owned New Nigerian, which had described Thatcher’s victory as “a major disaster” for Africa, carried a string of editorials warning the Prime Minister not to recognize Zimbabwe-Rhodesia.⁶⁰⁴ Nigerian officials reiterated these warnings in private contacts with their British counterparts. As one prominent Nigerian explained to Mervyn Brown, Thatcher’s Rhodesian policy had placed their countries on a “collision course.” If forced to choose between “a Muzorewa government backed by Britain and the Patriotic Front backed by the Front Line States,” there would be no question as to where Nigeria’s loyalties would lay. It would side with “the forces of black liberation.”⁶⁰⁵ In early June, the Nigerians barred British firms from bidding on public sector contracts until the Tories “clarified” their position on the

⁶⁰² Telegram, Frank Kennedy to FCO, “Rhodesia,” July 8, 1979, FCO 36/2553, TNA. At the time, Britain was far and away Nigeria’s largest foreign investor. British firms were heavily invested in the oil, manufacturing, construction, banking, and insurance industries. The £2.5 billion that British investors had poured into Nigeria represented more than half of Lagos’s foreign investment. Some British officials feared that they would lose all this if Thatcher acted too hastily in Rhodesia. Report, D.P.R. Mackilligin to J.R. Williams, “Rhodesia: Nigerian Action against British Interests,” June 1, 1979, FCO 36/2508, TNA.

⁶⁰³ Meeting held at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on 19 July 1979, “Rhodesia: Counter-Retaliatory Action against OAU States in Event of Action by Them Against UK Interests,” FCO 36/2553, TNA; Memorandum, J.R. Williams to Private Secretary, “Possible Retaliatory Action Against Nigeria,” July 9, 1979, FCO 36/2508, TNA; and Report, D.P.R. Mackilligin to J.R. Williams, “Rhodesia: Nigerian Action Against British Interests,” June 1, 1979, FCO 36/2508, TNA.

⁶⁰⁴ Telegram, Mervyn Brown to FCO, “Press Comment on Election,” May 10, 1979, FCO 36/2508, TNA.

⁶⁰⁵ Untitled Telegram, Mervyn Brown to FCO, May 30, 1979, PREM 19/106, TNA.

Rhodesian situation. The decision, which was allegedly taken at the behest of General Obasanjo, left little doubt but that the Nigerians meant business.⁶⁰⁶

Important as these commercial ties were, they were not the only source of leverage the Nigerians held over the Thatcher government. British officials were also worried by Obasanjo's threats to bring the Commonwealth crashing down. The Nigerian press had been speculating for some time about the nation's membership in the Commonwealth, and shortly after Thatcher's election, the Nigerians began publicly linking their country's future participation in the organization to Britain's Rhodesian policy. A decision to recognize Muzorewa's regime, the New Nigerian warned "must mean the end of the Commonwealth."⁶⁰⁷ Although Nigeria was not the first African nation to threaten to withdraw from the Commonwealth, British officials viewed this threat with special concern. Because Nigeria exercised considerable clout in international forums, its withdrawal would have represented a serious blow to the Commonwealth. Moreover, policymakers in London had ample evidence to suggest that the Federal Military Government was prepared to make good on its threat. Not only was Nigeria's "sentimental commitment" to the Commonwealth deemed to be "virtually nil," but it was well known that some members of the country's Ministry of Foreign Affairs had been pushing for withdrawal for some time.⁶⁰⁸ Nor were British officials alone their concern. Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser warned Margaret Thatcher that the Rhodesian issue "has the potential to split the Commonwealth at a time when all the other signs have been pointing in the direction of enhanced Commonwealth

⁶⁰⁶ Telegram, Mervyn Brown to FCO, "Rhodesia – Political Consultation," May 29, 1979, PREM 19/106, TNA. See also, David Martin and Phyllis Johnson, The Struggle for Zimbabwe: The Chimurenga War, (London: Faber and Faber, 1981): 302-303.

⁶⁰⁷ Telegram, Mervyn Brown to FCO, "General Election: Nigerian Press Comment," May 7, 1979, FCO 36/2508, TNA.

⁶⁰⁸ It is unclear whether the British knew that General Obasanjo had been authorized to pull Nigeria out of the Commonwealth if he felt that British policies warranted such drastic action. Telegram, R.A.R. Barltrop to J.R. Johnson, "Nigeria and the Commonwealth," September 19, 1979, FCO 36/2509; Telegram, Mr. Bourke to FCO, "Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHGM) 1979," April 30, 1979, FCO 36/2508; and Telegram, Frank Kennedy to FCO, "Rhodesia," July 8, 1979, FCO 36/2553, TNA.

unity.”⁶⁰⁹ Given the importance that British officials attached to their country’s role as the leader of a multiracial Commonwealth, the threat of its demise provided further incentive for Thatcher to reconsider her stance on Rhodesia.

In his memoirs, Peter Carrington credited the Nigerians with orchestrating the opposition to Muzorewa’s regime.⁶¹⁰ While this recollection probably reflects the fact that British officials were more concerned about the Nigerians’ “bite” than the OAU’s “bark,” it ignores the important role that other Commonwealth states played in opposing to the “internal settlement.”⁶¹¹ The Zambian and Tanzanian governments played especially important roles in marshaling support against Muzorewa’s regime. In large part, this opposition was based on principle; neither Zambian President Kenneth Kaunda nor Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere believed that the “internal settlement” would result in a genuine transfer of power. Both agreed with the Zambian High Commissioner to Gaborone, who concluded that the 1979 constitution would permit Ian Smith and his followers to “remain in effective control of things.”⁶¹² The Zambians were particularly cognizant of the need for Africa to present a united front – not only to deter Britain from recognizing the newly-elected regime in Salisbury,⁶¹³ but to keep other African

⁶⁰⁹ Letter, Malcolm Fraser to Margaret Thatcher, May 19, 1979, PREM 19/106, TNA.

⁶¹⁰ Carrington, *Reflect on Things Past*, 290.

⁶¹¹ Nigerian officials were not shy about acknowledging that they were acting on behalf of other, less influential African nations. See, for instance, Telegram, Mervyn Brown to FCO, “Rhodesia – Political Consultations,” May 29, 1979, FCO 36/2508, TNA.

⁶¹² Of course, the Zambians were also motivated by pragmatism. Muzorewa was known to loathe Kaunda and his country. “[A]s far as the Bishop is concerned,” noted the Zambian High Commissioner to Gaborone, “there is no problem that Rhodesia has faced which has not been created by President Kaunda. The man is violently opposed to Zambia.” For this reason, Muzorewa had pledged to support any group or individual who sought to depose the Zambian leader. He had also pledged to halt maize shipments to Lusaka, which would have produced a major food shortage. G. Chipampata to W.M. Chakulya, Report No. 4-5/79, June 19, 1979, UNIP 7/23/71, UNIPA.

⁶¹³ In the words of the Acting Zambian High Commissioner to London, “It is felt that more than ever before there is [a] need for total unity among OAU states in not only refusing to recognise the Muzorewa government but also in applying sanctions against Britain should she decide to recognize Muzorewa.” Special Report, E.N. Nyirenda to Minister of Foreign Affairs, undated, UNIP 7/23/71, UNIPA.

nations in line.⁶¹⁴ In the months following the 1979 Rhodesian elections, Nigerian, Zambian, and Tanzanian officials worked to preserve an African consensus on the Rhodesian issue.

Other Commonwealth countries also protested the Tories' Rhodesian policy. On May 18, the Commonwealth Committee on Southern Africa met to discuss the recent developments in Zimbabwe-Rhodesia. Those present agreed that the April elections did not represent a genuine transfer of power. While the Nigerian representative was among the most strident critics of Zimbabwe-Rhodesia's constitution, the Zambian and Ghanaian representatives echoed his sentiments. Non-African nations such as India and Jamaica also voiced their opposition to the "internal settlement."⁶¹⁵ As Britain's Undersecretary for Southern Africa subsequently reported, "There was no doubt...about the anxiety felt by all Commonwealth representatives" over the Rhodesian issue. He added that concern had not been limited "to those who are instinctively hostile to the Bishop (e.g., Nigeria, Zambia, Tanzania)" but had included "other more moderate and uncommitted Commonwealth representatives who genuinely feared that Rhodesia was an issue which could pull the Commonwealth apart."⁶¹⁶ As a follow-up, eight High Commissioners met with Peter Carrington to express their concern about Thatcher's apparent tilt toward Muzorewa.⁶¹⁷ The British recognized that "[n]o other African country can hurt us the way the Nigerians can." Nevertheless, they could hardly afford to disregard such widely-held concerns

⁶¹⁴ As the Zambian High Commissioner to London reported, "[A]lthough it is unlikely that many African governments will lend respectability to the new regime immediately [after] it is established, some could do so if the OAU is not united in its condemnation and rejection." L.P. Chibesakunda to W.M. Chakulya, Special Report, May 1979, UNIP 7/23/71, UNIPA. The Zambians worried not only that much of Francophone Africa would eventually recognize Zimbabwe-Rhodesia but that some Anglophone African nations would "sit on the fence" unless prodded in the right direction. Special Report, E.N. Nyirenda to Minister of Foreign Affairs, June 1979, UNIP 7/23/71, UNIPA.

⁶¹⁵ Commonwealth Committee on Southern Africa: Minutes from the Meeting on the Committee on Southern Africa, 18 May 1979, FCO 36/2527, TNA.

⁶¹⁶ Memorandum, Derek Day to Stephen Wall, "Call by Commonwealth High Commissioners," May 22, 1979, FCO 36/2527, TNA.

⁶¹⁷ Telegram, Peter Carrington to British High Commission Lagos, "Rhodesia: Meeting with Commonwealth High Commissioners," May 24, 1979, FCO 36/2528, TNA.

about the Rhodesian constitution – for fear that the OAU and the Commonwealth could do “lasting damage” to Britain’s reputation and interests if they acted collectively.⁶¹⁸

Winning the Commonwealth Seal of Approval

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office got the message loud and clear.⁶¹⁹ More importantly, so did the Prime Minister. Indeed, this deluge of protest seems to have convinced Thatcher to reassess her Rhodesian policy. As the Acting Zambian High Commissioner to London reported in June, concerns about a hostile Commonwealth and OAU reaction “seem to be producing a sense of caution” in spite of the fact that right-wing pressure on Thatcher to recognize Zimbabwe-Rhodesia continued unabated.⁶²⁰ This pause for reflection enabled the Prime Minister, who, in the words of her Foreign Secretary, “had not particularly bent her mind to Africa” to appreciate that the “internal settlement” was not a panacea for her Rhodesian dilemma.⁶²¹ Few (if any) African or Commonwealth countries could be expected to recognize Zimbabwe-Rhodesia regardless of what Britain did. Not only was premature recognition likely to jeopardize British interests abroad, therefore, it was unlikely to bring the *Chimurenga* to an end.⁶²² After a month on the job, Thatcher was coming to appreciate that international

⁶¹⁸ Report, D.P.R. Mackilligin to J.R. Williams, “Rhodesia: Nigerian Action against British Interests,” June 1, 1979, FCO 36/ 2508, TNA.

⁶¹⁹ “In the worst possible scenario of an ‘all out bust-up’ they [the Nigerians] could inflict really grave and probably permanent damage to our political, commercial and economic interests,” concluded one British official. For this reason, he concluded, “We must do all we can to avoid a confrontation with the Nigerians. We stand to lose a great deal if... we cannot carry them with us at least most of the way.” Report, D.P.R. Mackilligin to J.R. Williams, “Rhodesia: Nigerian Action against British Interests,” June 1, 1979, FCO 36/ 2508, TNA.

⁶²⁰ Political Report, E.N. Nyirenda to W.M. Chakulya, June 1979, UNIP 7/23/71, UNIPA.

⁶²¹ Carrington, Reflect on Things Past, 292.

⁶²² By the summer of 1979, the bush war was claiming more than 1,000 casualties a month, prompting the Red Cross to label the Rhodesian crisis a “rapidly deteriorating humanitarian situation.” Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting Lusaka, August 1979: Report of the Commonwealth Committee on Southern Africa, June 1977-June 1979, FCO 36/2528, TNA.

recognition was what Zimbabwe-Rhodesia needed.⁶²³ She therefore abandoned her earlier determination to recognize the “internal settlement” and decided to seek a settlement that would attract “the widest possible international acceptance.”⁶²⁴

The first indication of Thatcher’s more cautious approach was her decision to send an envoy to liaise with the African leaders most directly involved in the Rhodesian crisis. David Harlech, a former ambassador to the United States, was selected for the mission. He embarked on a seven-nation tour of southern Africa on June 12. His consultations reaffirmed Peter Carrington’s belief that not even the most moderate African leaders were prepared to accept the current set-up in Zimbabwe-Rhodesia. “It was obvious that not one of the governments whose leaders I met would give us even tacit support if we granted Rhodesia independence on the basis of the status quo,” Harlech reported at the conclusion of his mission. However, a glimmer of hope did emerge when Harlech learned that African leaders’ opposition to the “internal settlement” stemmed primarily from their dissatisfaction with the 1979 constitution.⁶²⁵ If the constitution could be amended so as to give more power to the Zimbabweans and if new elections were held, the Frontline Presidents seemed prepared to accept any regime that emerged in Salisbury.⁶²⁶ Thus, despite getting off to a rocky start in her handling of Rhodesian affairs, it seemed that Margaret Thatcher might attain her internationally-acceptable settlement after all.

⁶²³ As the steering brief for a meeting with Rhodesian officials instructed: “If Muzorewa seeks to argue that Britain should recognise his government immediately and lift sanctions he should be told that if we were to proceed to do so in present circumstances it is most unlikely that other countries (except South Africa) would follow suit. The lifting of sanctions is a step to which we are anxious to proceed as soon as possible. But the Bishop’s real need is for international acceptance; this is the way to bring an end to the war.” Steering Brief: Lord Harlech’s Visit to Salisbury: 3-4 July 1979, June 29, 1979, FCO 36/2563, TNA.

⁶²⁴ Draft Letter, Margaret Thatcher to Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser, May 31, 1979, PREM 19/106, TNA.

⁶²⁵ Report by Lord Harlech, “Rhodesia: Moving Towards a Settlement,” June 25, 1979, FCO 36/2563, TNA.

⁶²⁶ Memorandum, Robin Renwick to Stephen Wall, “Rhodesia: Lord Harlech’s Mission,” June 22, 1979, FCO 36/2563, TNA. While the Frontline Presidents joked that they would welcome Ian Smith into the OAU if he prevailed in a “free and fair” Zimbabwean election, they fully expected Mugabe and Nkomo to triumph.

While Harlech's consultations offered a roadmap for achieving an internationally-acceptable Rhodesian settlement, they also revealed that no constitution produced in Salisbury would be acceptable to African opinion. "There was a unanimous view that, whatever the content of the eventual settlement, in form it must be seen to be British and not merely the legalisation after the event of a solution which Britain, the colonial power, had played no role in working out," Harlech informed the Foreign Office.⁶²⁷ In order to avoid charges of colluding with the Salisbury regime (charges that would have delegitimized the revised Zimbabwean constitution in African eyes), the Patriotic Front would have to be included in the drafting process. For whatever British policymakers may have felt about Robert Mugabe and Joshua Nkomo, the guerrilla leaders had many supporters in Zimbabwe-Rhodesia. More importantly, they had the backing of the Frontline Presidents and the OAU. By late June, therefore, Thatcher and Carrington had arrived at a familiar formula: they would need to convene an all-parties conference to hammer out the details of Zimbabwe's independence constitution, implement a ceasefire, and sponsor internationally-supervised elections to determine who would lead the new state to independence.⁶²⁸

Having decided on how to proceed, Thatcher was determined to get the Commonwealth behind her plan. The upcoming Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting offered the Prime Minister an ideal opportunity to make her case. Since the conference was slated to be held in the Zambian capital of Lusaka (a mere 250 miles north of Salisbury), the Rhodesian issue

⁶²⁷ Report by Lord Harlech, "Rhodesia: Moving Towards a Settlement," June 25, 1979, FCO 36/2563, TNA.

⁶²⁸ The idea of sponsoring another constitutional conference seems to have emerged in early June 1979. Memorandum, Robin Renwick to Tony Duff and David Harlech, "Rhodesia," June 8, 1979, FCO 36/2563, TNA. Harlech's consultations seem to have convinced the British that an all-parties conference represented the best way forward. See, for instance, Memorandum, Bryan Cartledge to Stephen Wall, "Rhodesia," June 26, 1979, and Memorandum, Robin Renwick to Stephen Wall "Rhodesia," June 22, 1979, FCO 36/2563, TNA.

figured to be at the top of the meeting's agenda.⁶²⁹ Unfortunately for Thatcher, the atmosphere in Lusaka promised to be highly charged. Many international commentators expected the debate over Rhodesia's future to be acrimonious.⁶³⁰ Kenneth Kaunda, the conference's host, fuelled such speculation when he publicly acknowledged that the Rhodesian issue might cause the conference – and perhaps the Commonwealth itself – to collapse.⁶³¹ General Obasanjo's decision to nationalize BP's Nigerian assets on the eve of the meeting (an action which one British official described as “an immature and inept attempt at pressure”) only served to ratchet up tensions.⁶³² Thus it was that on July 30, 1979, Margaret Thatcher stepped into a veritable lions' den when her RAF VC10 touched down in Lusaka.⁶³³

In an effort to allow tempers to cool, the conference planners decided to delay the discussion of Rhodesian affairs until the third day. The debate got off to an auspicious start when Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere gave a restrained opening speech in which he described the “internal settlement” as an important step in the search for Zimbabwean independence. What the colony needed next, Nyerere maintained, was a constitution that would guarantee immediate majority rule and new elections in which all parties could compete.⁶³⁴

⁶²⁹ “I know it had been our hope that Southern African questions should not dominate the discussion at Lusaka,” opined one British official, “but this aspiration is looking increasingly forlorn.” Teleletter, Ivor Roberts to Robin Renwick, “Rhodesia and CHOGM,” June 7, 1979, FCO 36/2528, TNA.

⁶³⁰ The Americans predicted that African hostility would render a compromise at Lusaka next to impossible. The Situation Room to Zbigniew Brzezinski, “Noon Notes,” July 31, 1979, NLC-1-11-6-27-3, JECL.

⁶³¹ Telegram, Leonard Allinson to FCO, “Rhodesia and Anglo/Zambian Relations,” July 31, 1979, FCO 36/2523, TNA. Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere had issued similar warnings. M. Tamarkin, The Making of Zimbabwe: Decolonization in Regional and International Politics, (London: Frank Cass, 1990): 249.

⁶³² Miles Hudson, Triumph or Tragedy? Rhodesia to Zimbabwe, (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1981): 164. Both Thatcher and Carrington deemed the Nigerians' actions important enough to include in their memoirs. Thatcher, The Downing Street Years, 74 and Carrington, Reflect on Things Past, 296.

⁶³³ In her memoirs Thatcher recalls being attacked by a hostile and demanding press corps upon her arrival. However, the Prime Minister was also prepared for a different kind of attack, donning special protective glasses in case someone tried to throw acid in her eyes. Thatcher, The Downing Street Years, 74; Renwick, Unconventional Diplomacy, 26.

⁶³⁴ Martin Meredith, The Past is Another Country: Rhodesia, UDI to Zimbabwe, (London: Pan Bok, 1980): 373 and Renwick, Unconventional Diplomacy, 26-27. On the eve of the conference, Thatcher had expressed anxiety that the Tanzanian leader would succumb to temptations to make a polemical speech, thereby setting a confrontational tone. Note on the Prime Minister's Discussion with Mr. Robert Muldoon on 1 August 1979, FCO 36/2544, TNA.

Thatcher surprised many of her colleagues by responding in kind. Although she insisted that “the change that has taken place in Rhodesia cannot be dismissed as of no consequence,” she adopted a conciliatory tone. She conceded that the constitution under which Muzorewa had been elected was “defective in certain important respects” and stated that her aim was “to bring Rhodesia to legal independence on a basis which the Commonwealth and the international community as a whole will find acceptable.”⁶³⁵ These opening speeches greatly improved the atmosphere in Lusaka, demonstrating that the gap between Thatcher’s position and that of her Commonwealth colleagues was not as wide as many had assumed.

Ultimately, however, the formal sessions proved less important than the informal gatherings which Thatcher and Carrington used to sound out their Commonwealth colleagues. With the support of a small but influential group of leaders (which included Kenneth Kaunda, Julius Nyerere, Malcolm Fraser, and Jamaica’s Michael Manley), Thatcher and Carrington persuaded their colleagues to endorse Britain’s plan to draw up a new constitution, convene a constitutional convention to which Muzorewa, Mugabe, and Nkomo would be invited, and sponsor a fresh set of elections. In return, the other Commonwealth members pledged to allow Britain to conduct the conference as it saw fit and to do everything in their power to ensure that the negotiations bore fruit. The sailing was far from smooth, and Thatcher recalled that “some very pointed comments” were made in Lusaka.⁶³⁶ Nevertheless, she and her Foreign Secretary obtained the Commonwealth’s seal of approval – a prize which would prove invaluable during the difficult negotiations that lay ahead.

⁶³⁵ Speech by the Rt. Hon. Margaret Thatcher at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, 3 August 1979, FCO 36/2544, TNA; Tamarkin, *The Making of Zimbabwe*, 251.

⁶³⁶ Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, 76. For more on the conference, see Tamarkin, *The Making of Zimbabwe*, 250-252.

On the whole, Commonwealth members were elated by the Lusaka agreement. Because the British had played their cards close to the vest, most delegates had expected Thatcher to press for the immediate recognition of Zimbabwe-Rhodesia. They were shocked to find the “Iron Lady” so willing to accommodate their concerns. As Peter Carrington later recalled, “Those present, or most of them, did not expect a Tory Prime Minister – and one whose reputation was well to the right – to be so forthcoming, so apparently ready to welcome all antagonists in the Rhodesian imbroglio to sit around one table in London.”⁶³⁷ The host government was particularly pleased with the deal that had been struck. The government-owned Times of Zambia, which had been especially critical of Thatcher, described the outcome as “a spectacular success.”⁶³⁸ The Americans agreed. Secretary of State Cyrus Vance wrote his British counterpart to congratulate him for the “great skill” with which he and the Prime Minister had handled the Rhodesian issue at Lusaka.⁶³⁹ The Soviets and Rhodesians were among the few critics of the agreement.⁶⁴⁰ Overall, the 1979 Commonwealth Conference marked an important turning point in the search for Zimbabwean independence. Whereas many had expected the meeting to be marred by bitter clashes over the Rhodesian issue, Thatcher managed to convince her Commonwealth colleagues of her sincerity. As a result, she left Lusaka with their support in hand.

⁶³⁷ Carrington, Reflect on Things Past, 296. See also Stephen John Stedman, Peacemaking in Civil War: International Mediation in Zimbabwe, 1974-1980, (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 1991): 170.

⁶³⁸ Telegram, Leonard Allinson to FCO, “CHOGM and Rhodesia,” August 9, 1979, FCO 36/2409, TNA.

⁶³⁹ Letter, Cyrus Vance to Peter Carrington, August 6, 1979, FCO 36/2507, TNA.

⁶⁴⁰ The Soviet press denounced the deal as an imperialist trick designed to deprive the Zimbabwean people of real power, while the Rhodesia Herald was left wondering, “Is Mrs. Thatcher a Labour Prime Minister dressed in drag?” Teleletter, Stephen Wordsworth to David Broucher, “CHGM/Rhodesia: Soviet Comment,” August 10, 1979, FCO 36/2503, TNA and Meredith, The Past is Another Country, 374.

A “First Class” Solution at Lancaster House?

The British wasted little time in moving to implement the Lusaka agreement. On August 10, only four days after the conclusion of the Commonwealth Conference, Thatcher’s Cabinet agreed to convene an all-parties conference in London. Its aims were: to amend Zimbabwe-Rhodesia’s constitution so as to ensure that power rested in the hands of the country’s black majority; to convince Muzorewa, Mugabe, and Nkomo to participate in a fresh set of elections; and to arrange for a cease-fire so that the Zimbabweans could cast their ballots without fear of intimidation or retaliation.⁶⁴¹ As a symbol of her determination to settle the Rhodesian crisis once and for all, Thatcher opted to conduct the talks at Lancaster House, a 19th-century palace which had hosted several prior constitutional conferences.⁶⁴² On August 14, Abel Muzorewa, Robert Mugabe, and Joshua Nkomo were invited to participate in the negotiations.

However, the speed with which the British acted belied a deep sense of pessimism. They had obtained the Commonwealth’s seal of approval, yet few Whitehall officials were optimistic that the Lancaster House negotiations would produce a mutually-acceptable settlement.⁶⁴³ Not even Peter Carrington, the man charged with overseeing the conference, was betting on a successful outcome. “I thought it likely that the invited parties would come, and then create trouble at the moment they decided most favourable, break off the proceedings, [and] walk out,” he recounted in his memoirs.⁶⁴⁴ In fact, Carrington was so confident that the conference would fail that he saw one of his primary objectives as simply keeping the negotiations going until after the Nigerian elections – in the hopes that the new Nigerian president would be less likely to

⁶⁴¹ Conclusions of a Meeting of the Cabinet held on 10 August 1979, CAB 128/66/13, TNA.

⁶⁴² For more on the significance of the venue, see Jeffrey Davidow, A Peace in Southern Africa: The Lancaster House Conference on Rhodesia, 1979, (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1984): 104-105.

⁶⁴³ Renwick, Unconventional Diplomacy, 30.

⁶⁴⁴ Carrington, Reflect on Things Past, 297.

retaliate against British interests than Olusegun Obasanjo.⁶⁴⁵ Many international commentators were similarly pessimistic. “It sounds difficult because it is,” is how one New York Times editorial described the Foreign Secretary’s task at Lancaster House.⁶⁴⁶

The attitudes of the Rhodesian protagonists seemed to justify this sense of gloom. Years of isolation from the global community had left Ian Smith and his followers with little conception of international expectations and norms. They had difficulty accepting that the “internal settlement” was incapable of garnering widespread support and refused to contemplate any further curtailment of their constitutional powers.⁶⁴⁷ Because Muzorewa’s ability to remain in office rested on his ability to retain the confidence of Rhodesia’s white community, he was also reluctant to bargain away the white community’s privileged position.⁶⁴⁸ British officials eventually managed to disabuse Muzorewa of his belief that the “internal settlement” would attract widespread support, but the Bishop continued to worry that any drastic constitutional changes would unnerve the Rhodesians and trigger a mass exodus.⁶⁴⁹ British officials therefore recognized that it was not going to be easy to convince the Salisbury regime to implement the types of reforms that the Lusaka agreement called for.⁶⁵⁰

⁶⁴⁵ Undated minute, Peter Carrington to Margaret Thatcher, “Rhodesia: Constitutional Conference,” PREM 19/348, TNA.

⁶⁴⁶ New York Times, “The Thatcher Gambit in Africa,” August 8, 1979. The CIA agreed that the odds of the sides reaching an agreement at Lancaster House were “not good.” CIA National Foreign Assessment Center Paper, “Zimbabwe-Rhodesia: Settlement Prospects,” August 1979, NLC-133-66-12-5-3, JECL. For an overview of the British press’s skepticism, see Davidow, A Peace in Southern Africa, 53. For an example of the African press’s skepticism, see, “Commentary, Radio Maputo, September 10, 1979,” in ed. Goswin Baumhogger, The Struggle for Independence: Documents on the Recent Developments of Zimbabwe, (Hamburg: Institute of African Studies, 1984): vol. 6, 1047.

⁶⁴⁷ This misplaced faith in the “internal settlement’s” ability to placate international critics is in line with the conclusion of two Rhodesian scholars who have averred that many Rhodesians possessed “an almost infinite capacity for self-deception.” Peter Godwin and Ian Hancock, “Rhodesians Never Die,” The Impact of War and Political Change on White Rhodesia, c. 1970-1980, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993): 11.

⁶⁴⁸ Telegram, Derek Day to FCO, “Meeting with Bishop Muzorewa,” June 14, 1979, FCO 36/2652, TNA.

⁶⁴⁹ Minute, Charles Powell to Tony Duff and PS, “Meeting with Rhodesian Delegation,” September 14, 1979, FCO 36/2437, TNA.

⁶⁵⁰ “The Bishop will not, of his own volition, move at the speed we would wish in order to enhance the credibility of his government in the Third World,” reported one British official. “We will have to urge him on.” Memorandum, Derek Day to Tony Duff and PS/PUS, “Prospects for a Settlement,” June 21, 1979, FCO 36/2652, TNA.

The guerrilla leaders, for their part, were even less interested in returning to the negotiating table. This was especially true of Robert Mugabe and his Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) colleagues. They saw that white morale was disintegrating and that the Salisbury regime was riven with divisions. Time seemed to be on their side, and they were in no hurry to reach an agreement unless it ensured that they would gain unfettered control of Zimbabwe when independence came.⁶⁵¹ Given Mugabe's incentive structure, British and American officials predicted that he would not come to the conference with any intention of negotiating seriously.⁶⁵² Joshua Nkomo and a number of his Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) compatriots were seen as less committed to the bush war than their ZANU counterparts, yet few believed that Nkomo would run the risk of tarnishing his nationalist credentials by accepting a deal that Mugabe and his followers found wanting.⁶⁵³ Thus, despite the initial burst of optimism generated by the successful conclusion of the Commonwealth Conference, it seemed unlikely that the agreement reached in Lusaka would actually be implemented.

Further contributing to this sense of pessimism was the fact that the Lancaster House Conference nearly failed to get off the ground. Muzorewa grudgingly agreed to participate, but the leaders of the Patriotic Front demurred. In part, this opposition reflected Mugabe and Nkomo's outrage that the Commonwealth leaders had endorsed a plan which called for them to negotiate with the Salisbury regime. From their perspective, the timing of the Commonwealth agreement – coming only weeks after the Organization of African Unity had anointed the Patriotic Front “the sole, legitimate, and authentic representative” of the Zimbabwean people –

⁶⁵¹ Derek Day in “Britain and Rhodesia: Route to Settlement,” seminar held 5 June 2005 (Centre for Contemporary British History), <http://www.ccbh.ac.uk/downloads/rhodesia2.pdf>, 85-86.

⁶⁵² Undated document, “Rhodesia Constitutional Conference: Attitudes of the Parties,” PREM 19/348, TNA and CIA National Foreign Assessment Center Paper, “Zimbabwe-Rhodesia: Settlement Prospects,” August 1979, NLC-133-66-12-5-3, JECL.

⁶⁵³ Meredith, *The Past is Another Country*, 377.

could hardly have been worse.⁶⁵⁴ In addition to their reluctance to negotiate with Muzorewa's "puppet" government, Mugabe and Nkomo harbored serious reservations about certain aspects of the Commonwealth plan. Most notably, they rejected the principle of special parliamentary representation for whites and questioned Britain's ability to impartially oversee a fresh set of elections. Because of these concerns, the guerrilla leaders announced that they would not attend the Lancaster House Conference.⁶⁵⁵

What Mugabe and Nkomo had overlooked, however, was that their patrons' commitment to the *Chimurenga* was beginning to ebb. The Zambian and Mozambican economies were in a shambles as a result of the Salisbury regime's "external raids," and an increasing number of Zambians and Mozambicans were beginning to question whether their support for the guerrillas was worth the cost.⁶⁵⁶ This sentiment was especially pronounced in Zambia, where Nkomo's forces had worn out their welcome. The increasing number of armed robberies, murders, and rapes committed by ZAPU guerrillas in 1978 and 1979 prompted one British official to quip, "[T]he Zambians seem to suffer as much from the depredations of their guests as from those of their enemies."⁶⁵⁷ Parliamentary backbenchers and other educated Zambians scorned Kenneth Kaunda's preoccupation with the Rhodesian crisis at a time when conditions at home were rapidly deteriorating.⁶⁵⁸ In Dar es Salaam, Julius Nyerere was facing his own problems. The war against Uganda – combined with food shortages, a cholera outbreak, and Nyerere's disastrous

⁶⁵⁴ Brief by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office for the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, Lusaka, 1-8 August 1979, FCO 36/2553, TNA.

⁶⁵⁵ Tamarkin, *The Making of Zimbabwe*, 252 and *Washington Post*, "Nkomo Sets Terms for Ending Dispute," August 10, 1979.

⁶⁵⁶ For more on these raids, and the devastating toll they took on the Zambian and Mozambican economies, see Barbara Cole, *The Elite: The Story of the Rhodesian Special Air Service*, (Amanzimtoti, South Africa: Three Kings, 1984): 223-412.

⁶⁵⁷ Teleletter, Bernard Everett to Miss Gillian Davidson, "Zambia and Her Racist Neighbours," March 20, 1979, FCO 36/2522, TNA.

⁶⁵⁸ See, for instance, Telegram, Leonard Allinson to FCO, "Zambian Foreign Policy," March 31, 1978 and Teleletter, Bernard Everett to Miss Gillian Watts, "Zambia/Rhodesia," March 20, 1978, FCO 36/2218, TNA.

economic policies – had generated considerable dissatisfaction.⁶⁵⁹ Faced with such grave challenges, the Frontline Presidents were eager for a settlement that would restore peace to the region. They therefore exerted considerable pressure on the leaders of the Patriotic Front to attend the Lancaster House Conference. Mozambican President Samora Machel threatened to discontinue his country's support for the bush war unless Mugabe and Nkomo attended the conference, while Nyerere told the guerrilla leaders that they could either go to London or “they could go to hell.”⁶⁶⁰

Given how difficult it had been to get the rival factions to show up at Lancaster House, Peter Carrington realized that his task would not be an easy one. In an effort to prevent the conference from becoming another Geneva-type fiasco, the Foreign Secretary decided to adopt a “step-by-step” approach. He would tackle one issue at a time, and negotiations would not proceed to the next stage until both parties had reached an agreement on the question at hand. This strategy was intended to prevent either delegation from stringing out the negotiations by continually referring back to other matters. It was also designed to generate a sense of momentum that would make it more difficult for either side to walk away from the table.⁶⁶¹ Cognizant of the role the Frontline Presidents had played in securing the Patriotic Front's attendance at the conference, Carrington made sure to obtain their support for his strategy.⁶⁶² For

⁶⁵⁹ W.K. Mayondi to W.M. Chakulya, Report No. 3/4 for the Months of March and April, 1979, June 6, 1979, UNIP 7/23/71, UNIPA.

⁶⁶⁰ DeRoche, Black, White, and Chrome, 282-283; Robert Jaster, A Regional Security Role for Africa's Front-Line States: Experience and Prospects, (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1983): 12, Davidow, A Peace in Southern Africa, 52-53, and John Doble in “Britain and Rhodesia: Route to Settlement,” seminar held 5 June 2005 (Centre for Contemporary British History), <http://www.ccbh.ac.uk/downloads/rhodesia2.pdf>, 72. Nyerere quoted in Teleletter, Peter Hinchcliffe to Miss Rosemary Spencer, “CHGM: Rhodesia,” August 10, 1979, FCO 36/2515, TNA.

⁶⁶¹ As Margaret Thatcher explained in her memoirs, “We calculated that the longer the conference continued, the less any of the interested parties would be willing to take responsibility for breaking it up.” Thatcher, The Downing Street Years, 77.

⁶⁶² Telegram, Peter Carrington to British High Commission Dar es Salaam, “Rhodesia,” August 30, 1979, FCO 36/2516, TNA. Of course, the Zambians had their own agenda. As one Zambian diplomat put it, the Frontline States' objective was to ensure that the two wings of the Patriotic Front remained united throughout the negotiations.

he understood that his ability to get the leaders of the Patriotic Front to negotiate in good faith “will depend to a considerable extent on the attitudes of the Front Line States.”⁶⁶³

The first issue Carrington decided to tackle when the conference convened on September 10 was the constitution.⁶⁶⁴ The draft constitution Carrington tabled on September 12 bore a striking resemblance to Zimbabwe-Rhodesia’s 1979 constitution – although the British had taken care to alter the document’s most objectionable clauses. One major difference was that, under the British proposals, the whites would not be permitted to thwart constitutional change. They would receive a handful of extra seats in the Zimbabwean House of Assembly for a short period after independence, but they would not have enough votes to veto any measure that had the unanimous support of the country’s black MPs.⁶⁶⁵ The other major difference was that the British proposals empowered the Zimbabwean head of government to appoint anyone he wanted to fill senior posts in the army, police force, judiciary, and civil service. Once tabled, the British stood firmly behind their proposals, making only a few minor alterations – for fear that any sign

“Unless they do so there could arise fresh realignments of parties which could weaken the chance of the Patriotic Front winning the elections,” warned the Zambian High Commissioner to Gaborone. Zambian officials were especially concerned that the British would try to engineer a split between Mugabe and Nkomo in order to benefit Muzorewa. Political Report, E.N. Nyirenda to W.M. Chakulya, August 1979, UNIP 7/23/72, UNIPA.

⁶⁶³ Telegram, Peter Carrington to UK High Commission Dar es Salaam and other posts, “Rhodesia,” October 30, 1979, FCO 36/2454, TNA. The Americans agreed with this assessment. Telegram, Zbigniew Brzezinski to Robert Gates, “Secretary’s Morning Summary, Current Reports and INR Analysis – November 1, 1979,” November 1, 1979, NLC-4-40-2-28-1, JECL.

⁶⁶⁴ This approach was the reverse of that taken by the Anglo-American Proposals, which had sought to first reach an agreement on power-sharing arrangements and the composition of the Zimbabwean army. This new tack reflected the Foreign Office’s belief that the crux of the Rhodesian crisis was to provide the colony with an independence constitution which provided for genuine majority rule. Once a constitutional agreement had been reached, the British reckoned, the Chimurenga would be reduced to an internal power struggle. Cast in this light, British officials were confident that the warring parties could be pressured into laying down their arms and participating in the electoral process. Renwick, *Unconventional Diplomacy*, 29.

⁶⁶⁵ The proposed constitution reserved 20 seats in the Zimbabwean House of Assembly for whites for a fixed period after independence (down from 28 under the 1979 constitution). However, the major difference was that only 70 votes would be needed to amend the constitution under the British plan, thereby stripping the whites of their ability to block constitutional change.

of flexibility would encourage both delegations to engage in an endless process of wrangling as they had done in Geneva.⁶⁶⁶

Predictably, neither delegation was satisfied with the British proposals. Ian Smith, reinvigorated by the hero's welcome he had received from conservative supporters in England, lashed out against the British terms.⁶⁶⁷ He averred that there was no need to amend the Zimbabwe-Rhodesia constitution and vowed to do everything in his power to defend the safeguards contained within it. Peter Carrington lamented the former Rhodesian leader's decision to fight "a protracted rearguard action against our constitutional proposals."⁶⁶⁸ Despite the fact that Smith still carried considerable clout in some Rhodesian circles, his ability to derail the negotiations was limited. His influence was on the wane (Finance Minister David Smith privately referred to him as a "has been"), and he found himself in a minority of one when the other members of the Salisbury delegation recognized that Carrington's terms represented the best deal they were going to get.⁶⁶⁹ On September 21, all but one member of Muzorewa's delegation voted to accept the British proposals (Ian Smith was the lone dissenter). The Bishop publicly announced the decision on October 5.⁶⁷⁰

⁶⁶⁶ As the head of Britain's Rhodesia Department subsequently explained, "It would have been extremely damaging to permit the constitutional changes we were seeking to be whittled away or [to] engage in a process of haggling about them. We had to...lay down what Britain could accept and then to stick to it." Renwick, Unconventional Diplomacy, 31.

⁶⁶⁷ Ian Smith, The Great Betrayal: The Memoirs of Ian Douglas Smith, (Blake: London, 1997): 315-320.

⁶⁶⁸ Telegram, Peter Carrington to British High Commission Singapore, "Rhodesia: Constitutional Conference," September 21, 1979, FCO 36/2530, TNA.

⁶⁶⁹ The head of Britain's Rhodesia Department recalled that first month of the Lancaster House Conference was spent trying to isolate Ian Smith within the Salisbury delegation. Renwick, Unconventional Diplomacy, 37-38. David Smith quoted in Minute, G.G.H. Walden to Robin Renwick, "Rhodesia: Constitutional Conference," September 18, 1979, FCO 36/2437, TNA. According to journalist Martin Meredith, the turning point came when Rhodesian General Peter Walls and security chief Ken Flower failed to support Smith's stand. Finance Minister David Smith's opposition demonstrated that not only had Ian Smith lost the military community but also younger members of the Rhodesian political establishment. Meredith, The Past is Another Country, 378-379.

⁶⁷⁰ Security chief Ken Flower described Muzorewa's ability to override Ian Smith's objections to the British constitutional proposals as the Bishop's "greatest success" at Lancaster House. Flower, Serving Secretly, 233.

Having secured the Salisbury group's approval, Carrington went to work on the Patriotic Front.⁶⁷¹ In what would emerge as a familiar pattern, Mugabe and Nkomo initially rejected Carrington's proposals, claiming (with some justification) that Britain's draft constitution was more concerned with protecting the rights of the white community than with meeting Zimbabwe's future needs. They were particularly appalled by the idea of reserving 20% of the seats in the House of Assembly for whites for seven years after independence. Mugabe and Nkomo protested this clause for two weeks before mysteriously dropping their opposition on September 24.⁶⁷² What caused the Patriotic Front's sudden quiescence? Many scholars believe it was the result of pressure applied on them by the Frontline Presidents.⁶⁷³ This suggestion seems plausible. African nations such as Kenya, Zambia, and Tanzania had all included provisions guaranteeing white settlers additional parliamentary seats for a short period after independence, and it seems unlikely that the Frontline Presidents would have wanted to see the conference falter over a relatively uncontroversial point.

The Patriotic Front's acquiescence represented an important step forward; however it did not mean that the remaining obstacles would be easily overcome. Far from it. Mugabe and Nkomo may have found their backs against the wall on the issue of white representation, but

⁶⁷¹ After years of bitter struggle, the Rhodesian delegations refused to negotiate with each other directly. Thus, in a bit of "unconventional diplomacy," all negotiations were conducted bilaterally, between the British and the Salisbury delegation or between the British and the Patriotic Front delegation. In another departure from normal diplomatic protocol, most of the negotiations were conducted behind closed doors. Plenary sessions, which offered ample opportunities for grandstanding, were kept to a bare minimum. Renwick, *Unconventional Diplomacy*, 34. On the few occasions when Muzorewa referred to the Patriotic Front delegation, he referred to them as "terrorists," the term commonly used by white Rhodesians. Mugabe and Nkomo reciprocated by referring to the Bishop and his black ministers as "the puppet [g]overnment." *New York Times*, "For Ian Smith, a Strange Encounter," September 20, 1979.

⁶⁷² Evening Report, North-South Department to Zbigniew Brzezinski, September 24, 1979, NLC-10-23-7-46-8, JECL.

⁶⁷³ See, for instance, Jaster, *Africa's Front-Line States*, 14-15; Meredith, *The Past is Another Country*, 379; Tamarkin, *The Making of Zimbabwe*, 263; and Davidow, *A Peace in Southern Africa*, 59-60.

they found the Frontline Presidents more sympathetic on the issue of “land redistribution.”⁶⁷⁴ Julius Nyerere was particularly adamant that there could be no true majority rule in Zimbabwe as long as 3% of the population (the whites) owned 80% of the best land.⁶⁷⁵ By contrast, the British proposals barred the Zimbabwean government from confiscating land without paying the (presumably) white landholders “fair market value.” Since this clause could not be amended for a period of ten years, it drastically limited the possibilities for immediate “land redistribution.” Nyerere and his Frontline colleagues recognized that the British could not accept a constitution that allowed for the expropriation of property without compensation, but they maintained that the Zimbabwean government could not be expected to remunerate white landowners who had stolen the land in the first place. Nyerere therefore insisted that if white farmers were to receive any compensation, the funds would have to come from London.⁶⁷⁶ Backed by the Frontline Presidents, Mugabe and Nkomo stood their ground. “Land is what we have been fighting the war about,” Nkomo told reporters in London. “Can they really expect us to yield?”⁶⁷⁷

When the British balked at this demand, the Lancaster House negotiations seemed to be on the verge of collapse. If the British were not prepared to compromise, the guerrilla leaders warned, they would return to the bush and resume the *Chimurenga*.⁶⁷⁸ Some scholars have questioned whether Mugabe and Nkomo were prepared to follow through on this threat – or whether the Frontline Presidents would have allowed them to break up the conference over the issue of “land redistribution.”⁶⁷⁹ Without documentary evidence, it is difficult to determine

⁶⁷⁴ Tamarkin, *The Making of Zimbabwe*, 264 and *Time*, “The Zimbabwe Rhodesia Breakthrough,” October 29, 1979. This Frontline support seems to substantiate the Rhodesian security chief’s claim that Mugabe and Nkomo were under pressure to settle, but not at any cost. Flower, *Serving Secretly*, 232.

⁶⁷⁵ BBC News, “US Backed Zimbabwe Land Reform,” August 22, 2007, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/6958418.stm>

⁶⁷⁶ Telegram, Turner to FCO, “Rhodesia: Front Line Meeting,” October 18, 1979, FCO 36/2536, TNA.

⁶⁷⁷ *New York Times*, “Land Issue at Heart of Rhodesia Impasse,” October 15, 1979.

⁶⁷⁸ Davidow, *A Peace in Southern Africa*, 63.

⁶⁷⁹ See, for instance, Meredith, *The Past is Another Country*, 379, Tamarkin, *The Making of Zimbabwe*, 263-265, and Jaster, *Africa’s Front-Line States*, 15.

whether or not the guerrilla leaders were bluffing. But given that they seemed to have the Frontline Presidents in their corner, British officials took this threat seriously.⁶⁸⁰ So did the Commonwealth Secretary General, who later recalled, “We were at a stage where Mugabe and Nkomo were packing their bags.”⁶⁸¹

Thus, the land issue brought the British face-to-face with a choice they had hoped to avoid: whether or not to proceed without the Patriotic Front. Some scholars of the Rhodesian crisis have assumed that Britain would not have dared exclude the Patriotic Front from any settlement because of the adverse ramifications such a decision would have had on British interests abroad.⁶⁸² However, the memoirs of former British officials as well as a spate of recently-declassified documents show that the British were prepared to reach a deal that omitted the Patriotic Front.⁶⁸³ Peter Carrington and a number of his Foreign Office colleagues certainly hoped to achieve a “first class solution” (that is, one which included both the Salisbury regime and the Patriotic Front), but they agreed that Mugabe and Nkomo could not be given a veto over the negotiations. If the guerrilla leaders refused to accept the terms put forth at Lancaster House, Carrington was prepared to settle for a “second-class solution” that excluded them.

It was his willingness to accept a “second-class solution” that provided Carrington with his principal source of leverage throughout the proceedings. As the head of Britain’s Rhodesia Department later explained, the British strategy at Lancaster House was to first convince the

⁶⁸⁰ See, for instance, Telegram, Tony Duff to British High Commission Canberra, “Rhodesia,” October 16, 1979, FCO 36/2530 and Telegram, Peter Carrington to British High Commission Canberra, “Rhodesia,” October 16, 1979, FCO 36/2440, TNA. The Patriotic Front also had the support of the Soviets, who, according to the British Ambassador to Maputo, “wanted the process to fail” and “was doing everything possible to undermine it. John Doble in “Britain and Rhodesia: Route to Settlement,” seminar held 5 June 2005 (Centre for Contemporary British History), 93.

⁶⁸¹ BBC News, “US Backed Zimbabwe Land Reform,” August 22, 2007.

⁶⁸² M. Tamarkin is the strongest proponent of this theory. *The Making of Zimbabwe*, 262.

⁶⁸³ See, for instance, Memorandum, Robin Renwick to Stephen Wall, “Rhodesia,” June 22, 1979 and Memorandum, Bryan Cartledge to Stephen Wall, “Rhodesia,” June 26, 1979, FCO 36/2563, TNA. See also, Carrington, *Reflect on Things Past*, 297 and Renwick, *Unconventional Diplomacy*, 30.

Salisbury delegation to accept their proposals and to then threaten to cut a separate deal with the Bishop if the Patriotic Front refused to yield.⁶⁸⁴ In order to maintain the viability of the “second-class solution,” however, Carrington needed to be able to portray the Salisbury delegation as “the reasonable party” if the negotiations broke down.⁶⁸⁵ This strategy required the Salisbury delegation to accept Britain’s terms quickly and with minimal ado. Carrington was able to exploit Zimbabwe-Rhodesia’s economic plight in order to entice them into going along with his proposals. With its counterinsurgency efforts consuming 37% of the colony’s GDP, Zimbabwe-Rhodesia was in dire financial straits by the time the Lancaster House Conference got underway. The Salisbury regime desperately needed the British to lift sanctions (both in order to maintain its war efforts and to invest in social programs that would bolster the regime’s popularity), and Carrington pledged to do so as long as the Salisbury delegation accepted his proposals.⁶⁸⁶

Once the Salisbury delegation had come to terms, the British planned to use the threat of a “second-class solution” to pressure the Patriotic Front into accepting the proposals that Muzorewa’s delegation had already accepted.⁶⁸⁷ In the event that Mugabe and Nkomo refused to do so, Carrington hoped that the Frontline Presidents would pressure them into reconsidering their position.⁶⁸⁸ If the Frontline Presidents failed to bring the guerrilla leaders into line, the British hoped to rally international support for a “second-class solution” by placing the blame squarely on the shoulders of the Patriotic Front. As Carrington told the British Ambassador to

⁶⁸⁴ Renwick, *Unconventional Diplomacy*, 34.

⁶⁸⁵ Untitled Minute, Robin Renwick to Tony Duff, August 27, 1979, FCO 36/2436, TNA.

⁶⁸⁶ According to Martin and Johnson, the cost of the war had risen to approximately £600,000 per day (37% of Zimbabwe-Rhodesia’s GDP). Thus, it should come as no surprise that Lieutenant-General Peter Walls, the head of the Rhodesian military forces, was strongly advocating the need for a settlement. Martin and Johnson, *The Struggle for Zimbabwe*, 309.

⁶⁸⁷ Renwick, *Unconventional Diplomacy*, 34.

⁶⁸⁸ According to Robert Jaster, Julius Nyerere played the most important role among the Frontline Presidents during the 15-week conference. This makes sense, given Nyerere’s role as the group’s unofficial chairman. Given that the Tanzanian had signed off on the British proposals before Carrington tabled them, it stands to reason that Nyerere and his Frontline colleagues were quietly pressing the Patriotic Front to accept the British constitution. Jaster, *Africa’s Front-Line States*, 14, 15.

Washington, it was “very important” to ensure that “if the Patriotic Front got off the train, it was seen to be their fault.”⁶⁸⁹ By pinning the blame on Mugabe and Nkomo, the British hoped to minimize the fallout that was bound to result from their decision to proceed without the guerrilla leaders.⁶⁹⁰ In this way, the British hoped to use the possibility of a “second-class solution” to prod both delegations toward a compromise agreement.

This approach worked well during the constitutional negotiations. In an effort to grease the wheel, a British envoy had gone to Salisbury on the eve of the conference to explain exactly what types of constitutional changes Carrington had in mind.⁶⁹¹ The British also went to great lengths at Lancaster House to reassure Muzorewa and his supporters that their chief aim was “to see the Bishop confirmed in office as [the] Prime Minister of a moderate, pro-Western government.”⁶⁹² Despite Ian Smith’s obstinacy, the Salisbury delegation accepted the British proposals relatively quickly. Carrington then turned the screws on the Patriotic Front. After Mugabe and Nkomo ignored two ultimatums, Carrington announced during an October 15 press conference that he would begin the next round of negotiations with the Salisbury delegation the following day. He stressed that Mugabe and Nkomo were welcome to join the discussions – but only after they had accepted the constitutional proposals to which the Salisbury delegation had already agreed. International commentators had little difficulty reading between the lines.

“Carrington Decides to Go Ahead Without the P[atritotic] F[ront],” declared The Guardian.⁶⁹³ “A ‘Second-Class Solution’ for Rhodesians,” announced the New York Times.⁶⁹⁴ The Patriotic

⁶⁸⁹ Telegram, Peter Carrington to British Embassy Washington, “Rhodesia,” November 9, 1979, FCO 36/2540, TNA.

⁶⁹⁰ Memorandum, Robin Renwick to Stephen Wall, “Rhodesia,” June 22, 1979, FCO 36/2563, TNA.

⁶⁹¹ Minute, Tony Duff to Derek Day, “Rhodesia: Constitutional Conference,” September 6, 1979, FCO 36/2436, TNA.

⁶⁹² Flower, Serving Secretly, 232. Summary Record of a Private Meeting Between the Lord Privy Seal, Mr. Day, and Bishop Muzorewa on 9 October 1979, FCO 36/2439, TNA.

⁶⁹³ Davidow, A Peace in Southern Africa, 64.

⁶⁹⁴ New York Times, “A Second-Class Solution for Rhodesians,” October 16, 1979.

Front and its supporters howled about the Foreign Secretary's tactics, but to no avail.⁶⁹⁵

Carrington was prepared to move ahead with or without them.

Ultimately, some behind-the-scenes diplomacy spared the British from having to resort to a "second-class solution." On October 12, the British asked for the Carter Administration to help foot the bill for "land redistribution."⁶⁹⁶ Unbeknownst to them, Commonwealth Secretary General Shridath Ramphal had approached the US Ambassador to London with a similar request. National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski urged Jimmy Carter to provide the necessary funds, and the President agreed to do so. On October 15, the American Ambassador to London informed the British that his country was willing to contribute \$40 million for "general development assistance" in Zimbabwe.⁶⁹⁷ Tanzanian and Zambian officials were elated when they learned of the offer. Satisfied that the Patriotic Front's concerns had been met, the Frontline Presidents instructed their representatives in London to "put the heat" on Mugabe and Nkomo.⁶⁹⁸ They did, and the guerrilla leaders accepted Carrington's constitutional proposals shortly thereafter. Joshua Nkomo publicly lauded the Carter Administration's timely intervention. "[I]f the US had not stepped in it would have been very difficult to move on this question," he told reporters.⁶⁹⁹ Whether or not he and Mugabe were pleased to be moving on, Carrington's plan seemed to be working. A combination of his no-nonsense style, American largesse, and pressure from the Frontline Presidents enabled the conference to clear its first major hurdle.

⁶⁹⁵ See, for instance, Editorial Zambia Daily Mail, October 18, 1979 in ed. Baumhogger, The Struggle for Independence, vol. 6, 1109.

⁶⁹⁶ Action memorandum, Jerry Funk to Zbigniew Brzezinski and David Aaron, "UK Request for Assistance in Lancaster House Negotiations," October 12, 1979, Zimbabwe 7-11/79 folder, National Security Affairs (24), Box 118, JECL.

⁶⁹⁷ BBC News, "US Backed Zimbabwe Land Reform," August 22, 2007.

⁶⁹⁸ Note, Tony Duff to PS, "Rhodesia," October 15, 1979, FCO 36/2540, TNA.

⁶⁹⁹ Davidow, A Peace in Southern Africa, 65.

Arriving at a “First Class” Solution

With the constitutional negotiations behind them, the parties at Lancaster House turned to the details of the period leading up to elections, known as the “interim” or “transition” period. British officials expected these negotiations to be even more contentious than the constitutional wrangling that they had endured for the previous five weeks because, while the constitution could be altered at a later date, the transitional arrangements were likely to play a major role in determining who would emerge as Zimbabwe’s first post-independence leader. Disagreements over who should hold power during the run-up to elections had derailed both the Geneva Conference and the Anglo-American Proposals, and there was every reason to believe that the pre-independence arrangements would frustrate the Lancaster House negotiations as well. “[W]e’re not quite home and dry yet,” Peter Carrington cautioned his American counterpart, Cyrus Vance. “Fasten your seat belt.”⁷⁰⁰ International commentators agreed with this assessment. While substantial progress had been made at Lancaster House, the path ahead remained fraught with uncertainty.⁷⁰¹

As he had done during the constitutional negotiations, Carrington tabled a series of proposals to serve as the basis for negotiations. His plan called for a British governor to exercise executive and legislative authority over Rhodesia during the transition period. According to Carrington’s proposals, the governor (with the assistance of a group of Commonwealth representatives) would be responsible for administering the elections and ensuring that the results accurately reflected the will of the Zimbabwean people. The governor would also be responsible

⁷⁰⁰ Telephone Conversation between Lord Carrington and Mr. Vance on Monday 19 November 1979, FCO 36/2507, TNA.

⁷⁰¹ As Cyrus Vance concluded, “Our preliminary reading is that the arrangements the British have in mind will not please either the Salisbury delegation or the Patriotic Front, so hard bargaining lies ahead.” Untitled memorandum, Cyrus Vance to Jimmy Carter, October 18, 1979, NLC-17-78-4-9-5, JECL. See also, New York Times, “Talks on Rhodesia Resume, but a New Snag Develops,” October 29, 1979 and The Guardian, “Carrington Plan Gets Tough Double Veto,” October 20, 1979 in ed. Baumhögger, The Struggle for Independence, vol. 6, 1119.

for maintaining law and order during the interim period, relying on the existing police force and army to do so.⁷⁰² While Thatcher and Carrington understood that Britain would have to sponsor the elections and oversee the cease-fire if they were to convince the international community that the results of the election were legitimate, they had no desire to remain in charge of Rhodesia any longer than they deemed absolutely necessary. Carrington therefore insisted that the interim period would last no longer than two months.⁷⁰³

Predictably, neither delegation viewed the British arrangements with equanimity. Muzorewa and his ministers hardly relished the idea of abdicating in favor of a British governor, whom they suspected would tilt in favor of the Patriotic Front when push came to shove. As far as they were concerned, they had been elected to govern Zimbabwe-Rhodesia and should therefore be the ones to organize the elections and administer the country during the interim period.⁷⁰⁴ Mugabe and Nkomo were equally unenthusiastic about the idea of a British governor in Salisbury. Deeply suspicious of the Tories' intentions, they feared that the governor would do everything in his power to "fix" the elections in Muzorewa's favor.⁷⁰⁵ Carrington's insistence that the interim period be no longer than two months further angered Mugabe and Nkomo, who

⁷⁰² In part, this decision reflected the Foreign Office's desire to leave such controversial measures as the composition of the Zimbabwean army and police forces for the future Zimbabwean government to decide. However, the decision also reflected Britain's need to convince the existing military chiefs to go along with their plan. Zimbabwe-Rhodesia's military commanders recognized that the bush war was unwinnable, but they refused to contemplate confining their troops to barracks during the transition or dismantling existing military structures before independence. Undated Draft Minute, "The Rhodesian Armed Forces," FCO 36/2443, TNA and Renwick, Unconventional Diplomacy, 45-46.

⁷⁰³ Lancaster House Conference: British Proposals on "Pre-Independence Arrangements for Implementing the Constitution," October 22, 1979 in ed. Baumhogger, The Struggle for Independence, vol. 6, 1124. Although these proposals did not spell out the duration of the transitional period, Carrington made it clear in his oral remarks to the delegations that the British considered two months ample time. Lancaster House Conference: Lord Carrington's Statement on Introducing the British Proposals for Pre-Independence Arrangements, October 22, 1979 in ed. Baumhogger, The Struggle for Independence, vol. 6, 1123.

⁷⁰⁴ Telegram, Peter Carrington to British High Commission Lusaka, "Rhodesia: Constitutional Conference," October 17, 1979, FCO 36/2440, TNA.

⁷⁰⁵ Telegram, Mr. Taylor to FCO, "Mugabe's Visit," October 22, 1979, FCO 36/2409, TNA. These suspicions were reinforced by the fact that the very security forces the British planned to rely on to keep the peace launched a series of devastating raids into Zambia and Mozambique while the Lancaster House negotiations were being conducted. Cole, The Elite, 327-412.

felt they would need at least six months to adequately prepare for elections. On account of these concerns, the Patriotic Front rejected the British plan. Instead they called for an elaborate power-sharing scheme and a United Nations peacekeeping force during the transition period.⁷⁰⁶

In an effort to bridge the gap between the delegations, Carrington utilized the approach that had worked so well during the constitutional negotiations. He first went to work on the Salisbury delegation, insisting that Muzorewa and his ministers abnegate their offices so that the governor could exercise complete authority during the interim period. After many hours of prayer, the Bishop agreed to stand down. In his memoirs, Zimbabwe-Rhodesia's security chief stressed Muzorewa's selflessness, noting that his decision to relinquish power was without precedent in post-colonial Africa.⁷⁰⁷ In reality, however, the Bishop had little choice. Faced with the prospect of an endless civil war, Zimbabwe-Rhodesia's military and intelligence leaders insisted that he accept Britain's terms.⁷⁰⁸ Seeing no alternative, Muzorewa heeded this advice. Peter Carrington praised the Bishop for his "statesman-like" decision – a not-so-subtle criticism of Mugabe and Nkomo, who were continuing to fight the British proposals tooth and nail.⁷⁰⁹

Having convinced the Salisbury delegation to accept his plan for the interim period, Carrington employed a familiar strategy to bring the Patriotic Front into line. He first made a few concessions – the most significant of which was his decision to establish a Commonwealth group to monitor the cease-fire that would eventually be enacted. He also agreed to extend the interim period by two weeks and reaffirmed his intention to employ a team of Commonwealth

⁷⁰⁶ Meredith, *The Past is Another Country*, 382 and Renwick, *Unconventional Diplomacy*, 46.

⁷⁰⁷ Flower, *Serving Secretly*, 239.

⁷⁰⁸ Security Chief Ken Flower has stressed his own role in helping the Bishop arrive at this decision; however, scholars have tended to stress the influence of Lieutenant-General Peter Walls, the head of Zimbabwe-Rhodesia's military. See, Flower, *Serving Secretly*, 232; Davidow, *A Peace in Southern Africa*, 70; and Renwick, *Unconventional Diplomacy*, 45-46.

⁷⁰⁹ Davidow, *A Peace in Southern Africa*, 70.

observers to ensure that the elections were truly “free and fair.”⁷¹⁰ The Foreign Secretary then used the threat of a “second-class solution” to force the guerrilla leaders’ hand. On November 7, Carrington’s deputy introduced the Southern Rhodesia Bill (a piece of legislation which empowered Margaret Thatcher to implement the agreed-upon constitution, appoint a governor, hold new elections, and return Zimbabwe-Rhodesia to legality) in the House of Commons. In subsequent interviews, the Deputy Foreign Secretary refused to deny that the bill was designed to pave the way for a “second-class solution.”⁷¹¹ Carrington clarified the Foreign Office’s position in a statement delivered before the House of Lords. “We want, and shall continue to strive for, a settlement involving all parties,” the Foreign Secretary vowed. “But, if that is not attainable, we cannot allow the best to become the enemy of the good.”⁷¹² The Salisbury regime had already accepted Britain’s constitutional proposals and agreed to participate in a new round of elections under the supervision of a British governor, Carrington reminded his fellow Lords. Nothing more could be asked of them. A settlement was at hand, and if Mugabe and Nkomo refused to join in, they would have no one to blame but themselves.⁷¹³

Once again, the Foreign Secretary’s high-wire act succeeded because of some behind-the-scenes diplomacy by the Frontline Presidents. The Presidents were sympathetic to the Patriotic Front’s concerns, but they were unwilling to support the guerrilla leaders’ demands to

⁷¹⁰ Tamarkin has claimed that these concessions were made at the behest of Zambian President Kenneth Kaunda, who flew to London on November 8 in an effort to break the impasse. Tamarkin, The Making of Zimbabwe, 268. The Commonwealth Secretary General played a major role in convincing Carrington to grant the Commonwealth observers a substantive role. Michael Charlton, The Last Colony in Africa: Diplomacy and the Independence of Rhodesia, (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1990): 109-110.

⁷¹¹ Davidow, A Peace in Southern Africa, 72.

⁷¹² Statement by Lord Carrington at the second reading of the Southern Rhodesia Bill in the House of Lords, November 13, 1979, in ed. Baumhogger, The Struggle for Independence, vol. 6, 1164-1165.

⁷¹³ By this point, British officials were preparing for the possibility of a “second-class solution.” On November 2, Carrington informed the British High Commissioner to Lusaka that a break down seemed inevitable. The High Commissioner was instructed to warn British nationals in Zambia to be prepared for a hostile ZAPU reaction if the Patriotic Front walked out of the negotiations. British officials also began trying to convince “moderate” African leaders to recognize Zimbabwe-Rhodesia in the event that Carrington had to settle for a “second-class solution.” Telegram, Peter Carrington to British High Commission Lusaka, “Rhodesia Conference,” November 2, 1979, FCO 36/2626 and Note, Roderic Lyne to D.B. Alexander, “Rhodesia,” November 7, 1979, FCO 36/2454, TNA.

superintend the transition.⁷¹⁴ The Presidents' support for the British proposals was made manifest when a frustrated Robert Mugabe flew to Addis Ababa on November 10 to determine whether the Ethiopians would be willing to provide any assistance if the Lancaster House talks broke down. Despite his reputation as a "radical" anti-imperialist, Ethiopian leader Haile Mengistu refused to make any promises – allegedly at the behest of the Frontline Presidents.⁷¹⁵ With nowhere to turn, Mugabe and Nkomo grudgingly accepted Carrington's proposals on November 15.⁷¹⁶ Much to everyone's surprise, the conference had cleared another hurdle.

Having progressed further than anyone had thought possible, the conference moved on to its third and final topic: the terms of the cease-fire that would bring the *Chimurenga* to an end. Despite what some scholars have subsequently written, there was no sense of inevitability as the cease-fire discussions got underway.⁷¹⁷ Both delegations had been forced to accept a number of unsatisfactory compromises during the first two rounds of negotiations, and there were questions as to how far each side would be willing to bend when it came to the military arrangements. The Times of London informed its readers that, "[The] coming negotiations on a ceasefire may prove

⁷¹⁴ This stance was due less to the Frontline Presidents' enthusiasm for democracy (Tanzania, Mozambique, and Zambia were all one-party states) than their confidence that the Patriotic Front would trounce Muzorewa in a free election. Minute, Richard Luce to Peter Carrington, "Visit to Africa: 19-25 October," October 26, 1979, FCO 36/2565; Telegram, Cyrus Vance to US Embassy London, "London Conference on Rhodesia," September 5, 1979, FCO 36/2453; Telegram, Mr. Maguire to US Embassy London, "London Conference on Rhodesia: Mozambique Observers," September 4, 1979, FCO 36/2453; and Telegram, Leonard Allinson to FCO, "Rhodesian Conference," October 30, 1979, FCO 36/2140, TNA.

⁷¹⁵ Telegram, R.M. Tesh to FCO, "Mugabe Visit to Ethiopia," November 12, 1979, FCO 36/2409, TNA.

⁷¹⁶ As a face-saving measure, Carrington agreed to declare that the British governor would treat the guerrilla armies and the Rhodesian security forces as equals. Given that the Rhodesian police and army would be used to maintain law and order during the interim period while the guerrillas would be confined to a set of assembly points, it was clear that Carrington's pledge was little more than a paper concession. Nevertheless, it enabled Mugabe and Nkomo to "sell" the agreement to their followers, thereby facilitating the Patriotic Front's agreement. Tamarkin, The Making of Zimbabwe, 268; Meredith, The Past is Another Country, 383; and Davidow, A Peace in Southern Africa, 75-76.

⁷¹⁷ David Martin and Phyllis Johnson have claimed that "an air of inevitability hung over Lancaster House." Martin Meredith has asserted that "no one expected it [the conference] to fail when so much had already been achieved." Similarly, M. Tamarkin has posited, "The success of the conference at that stage was a foregone conclusion." Martin and Johnson, The Struggle for Zimbabwe, 318; Meredith, The Past is Another Country, 383; and Tamarkin, The Making of Zimbabwe, 269.

as difficult as anything that has gone before at the Lancaster House talks.”⁷¹⁸ The British press was not alone in its skepticism.⁷¹⁹

In an effort to prevent the agreement from unraveling, Peter Carrington wasted no time in tabling Britain’s cease-fire proposals, presenting his plan the morning after the Patriotic Front had accepted Britain’s transition arrangements. True to form, the Salisbury delegation quickly accepted the British terms. While this acquiescence probably reflected the regime’s desire to preserve its image as “the reasonable party,” it also reflected the fact that the deal was highly favorable from Salisbury’s point of view. It left the existing military forces intact during the transition period while confining the guerrilla forces to 14 assembly points around the country’s perimeter.⁷²⁰ If the ceasefire broke down, the Rhodesians’ superior air- and fire-power would have enabled them to eliminate many of the guerrillas corralled at the assembly points. The Salisbury delegation’s rapid acceptance of the British terms also reflected the regime’s belief that the sooner an agreement was reached, the better. It was little secret that Mugabe and Nkomo had infiltrated thousands of their supporters into Zimbabwe-Rhodesia since the negotiations had gotten underway.⁷²¹ Every day that went by without a settlement meant that there would be more guerrillas inside the colony to influence the election results. “At present the advantage lies with Muzorewa,” the Bishop’s intelligence chief remarked. “But in six months, even in three months’ time, the position could have changed. Every week, every day, in fact, is crucial to us.”⁷²²

⁷¹⁸ Times of London, “Crux of Rhodesian Ceasefire is Separation of Forces,” November 17, 1979.

⁷¹⁹ See, for instance, The Globe and Mail (Toronto), “Talks on Ceasefire Start Today,” November 16, 1979.

⁷²⁰ Perhaps these favorable terms should come as no surprise since Peter Walls had spent nearly a month discussing the terms of the cease-fire with British officials before the Foreign Secretary unveiled his proposals. Davidow, A Peace in Southern Africa, 78.

⁷²¹ CIA Foreign Assessment Center Intelligence Memorandum, “Zimbabwe-Rhodesia: Meeting Patriotic Front Concerns in the London Talks,” October 1979, NLC-6-89-3-3-2, JECL. This infiltration became more rampant as the negotiations wound to a close. Telegram, Peter Carrington to British High Commission Canberra, “Rhodesia,” December 9, 1979, FCO 36/2443, TNA.

⁷²² Meredith, The Past is Another Country, 384.

Also true to form, the Patriotic Front rejected the British proposals, listing a series of objections. Following his established practice, Carrington ignored most of the Patriotic Front's counterproposals, made a few concessions, and threatened to proceed to the "second-class solution." When the Patriotic Front ignored his December 3 deadline, the Foreign Secretary issued a thinly-veiled ultimatum. "I do not despair of reaching an agreement: but I am as close to despairing as I have been in the whole three months of this negotiation," he stated. "No doors have been finally closed: but we simply cannot wait forever for the Patriotic Front's reply."⁷²³ After a week of silence, Carrington pressed ahead. Aware that his inability to drag the conference across the finish line was making the Salisbury delegation jittery, the Foreign Secretary announced that Christopher Soames would serve as Britain's governor.⁷²⁴ The Conservative Party leader in the House of Lords, a former ambassador to Paris and Brussels, and the son-in-law of Winston Churchill, Soames was a man of considerable renown. His appointment reaffirmed Britain's determination to resolve the Rhodesian crisis. On December 7, in an effort to increase the pressure on the Patriotic Front, Carrington announced that Soames would depart for Rhodesia within the next week – regardless of whether an agreement had been reached with all parties. Sanctions would be terminated upon the governor's arrival.⁷²⁵ Sending a British governor into the middle of a civil war was a major gamble on Carrington's part. It was not one that James Callaghan's Labour government would have taken. Nevertheless, Carrington

⁷²³ Telegram, Peter Carrington to British High Commission Lusaka, "Rhodesia," December 3, 1979, FCO 36/2442, TNA.

⁷²⁴ Minute, Roderic Lyne to Robin Renwick, "Call on Lord Carrington by the Salisbury Delegation," December 3, 1979, FCO 36/2442, TNA.

⁷²⁵ In the words of the head of Britain's Rhodesia Department, the Patriotic Front "had only been pushed over previous hurdles by the threat of proceeding without them. Now they were being asked to take the final decision which committed them to the whole agreement. On this occasion they were only likely to be persuaded to jump by the sight of the bus actually leaving the station." Renwick, Unconventional Diplomacy, 58. Britain's move received a boost when the Carter Administration agreed to lift sanctions on December 16 – after the election commission had been established and voter registration was underway. Cyrus Vance, Hard Choices: Critical Years in American Foreign Policy, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983): 300-301.

felt he had no choice. Unless he acted quickly, he feared that the Patriotic Front would string out the negotiations to the point where the Salisbury delegation would abandon them, thus preventing Britain from achieving a “first-class” or a “second-class” solution.⁷²⁶

By this time, Joshua Nkomo was ready to settle. At 62 and in poor health, British officials suspected that “Father Zimbabwe” was anxious to end his time in exile. In case Nkomo required any additional incentive to compromise, it was supplied by Kenneth Kaunda, who left his protégé in no doubt about his need to accept the Lancaster House proposals. Two days into the negotiations, Kaunda sent a personal envoy to deliver the following message to Nkomo: “Zambia has taken all the punishment that it can on behalf of ZAPU; it is time ZAPU came to a settlement and moved back to their own country.”⁷²⁷ Kaunda made a similar statement several weeks later, publicly acknowledging that he would not give shelter to any Zimbabwean faction that refused to take its chances at the polls.⁷²⁸ The message was unmistakable: if Nkomo and his ZAPU compatriots wished to continue the bush war, they would have to do so from another country. They would not be welcome back in Zambia.⁷²⁹ Under such pressure from his primary patron, Nkomo became increasingly amenable to Carrington’s proposals.

Unlike his ZAPU counterpart, Robert Mugabe remained unwilling to compromise.⁷³⁰ Scholars continue to debate whether the ZANU leader was motivated by his distrust of the British, his desire to return to Rhodesia as a conquering hero, or his concern that a compromise

⁷²⁶ Vance, *Hard Choices*, 300-301.

⁷²⁷ Telegram, Leonard Allinson to FCO, “Rhodesia: Constitutional Conference,” September 12, 1979, FCO 36/2140, TNA.

⁷²⁸ Telegram, Leonard Allinson to FCO, “Rhodesian Conference,” October 30, 1979, FCO 36/2523, TNA.

⁷²⁹ Interestingly, however, US sources revealed that Nkomo obtained conditional permission to base his forces in Angola if the conference failed. Evening Report, Jerry Funk to Zbigniew Brzezinski, November 5, 1979, NLC-10-25-1-9-3, JECL.

⁷³⁰ Telegram, Peter Carrington to British High Commission Lusaka, “Rhodesia,” December 3, 1979, FCO 36/2442, TNA.

settlement would limit his ability to transform Zimbabwe into a socialist state.⁷³¹ Whatever his motivations, Mugabe decided to break up the Lancaster House negotiations and take his case before the United Nations. Only the forceful intervention of Mozambican President Samora Machel prevented him from doing so. British officials had long recognized that the Mozambican President might play a decisive role if the negotiations became bogged down, and this is exactly what happened.⁷³² During a November 24-25 meeting between the Frontline Presidents and the Patriotic Front, Machel dismissed the guerrilla leaders' concerns about the British cease-fire proposals. "We hear what you are saying," he told Mugabe and Nkomo, "but we know you will hear us when we say the war must end."⁷³³ When Mugabe continued to balk at the British terms, Machel upped the ante. He instructed his Foreign Minister, who was in London to observe the Lancaster House proceedings, to make it clear that there could be no question of *la luta continua* at Mozambique's expense. If Mugabe wished to continue the war, he would have to find a new base of operations.⁷³⁴ With Nkomo itching to settle and Machel threatening to expel his army from Mozambique, Robert Mugabe relented.

Conclusion

On December 21, 1979, in the gilded halls of Lancaster House's long gallery, the Rhodesian protagonists finally signed a peace agreement. It was an accord which had taken

⁷³¹ See, for instance, Davidow, *A Peace in Southern Africa*, 88-89 and Meredith, *The Past is Another Country*, 388.

⁷³² Teleletter, John Doble to John Sankey, "Mozambique/UK," August 20, 1979, FCO 36/2519, TNA.

⁷³³ Tamarkin, *The Making of Zimbabwe*, 270. During a subsequent meeting between the Frontline Presidents and the Patriotic Front, Machel insisted that the British terms were satisfactory, and that there was no reason to hold out for more concessions. Telegram, Achilles Papadopoulos to FCO, "Rhodesia," December 12, 1979, FCO 36/2520, TNA. Given such actions, it is no wonder that Margaret Thatcher told Jimmy Carter that Machel was playing an "extremely helpful" role in moving the negotiations forward. Record of a Meeting between the Prime Minister and the President of the United States at the White House on 17 December 1979, Part II, FCO 36/2507, TNA.

⁷³⁴ Telegram, Peter Carrington to British High Commission Salisbury and British Embassy Maputo, "Rhodesia: The Mozambican Attitude," December 16, 1979, FCO 36/2520, TNA. This story has been substantiated by many subsequent accounts. See, for instance, Davidow, *A Peace in Southern Africa*, 89; Meredith, *The Past is Another Country*, 388; Tamarkin, *The Making of Zimbabwe*, 272-273; Charlton, *The Last Colony in Africa*, 119-124, 126-127; Renwick, *Unconventional Diplomacy*, 60; and Jaster, *Africa's Front-Line States*, 16.

nearly 15 years to achieve and had cost more than 20,000 lives. Peter Carrington did not recall the conference fondly in his memoirs, describing those 15 weeks as “a tempestuous and testing time, as hard as any I ever experienced.”⁷³⁵ Nevertheless, he managed to succeed where so many of his predecessors had failed: in procuring a settlement that put Rhodesia on the path to genuine majority rule. In so doing, he also demonstrated to the international community that seemingly-intractable conflicts could be resolved by the ballot rather than the bullet. “You have given the people of Rhodesia and the neighboring countries new hope for the future,” the Foreign Secretary told Muzorewa, Mugabe, and Nkomo during a brief signing ceremony, “that at the end of a bitter conflict lies the prospect of national reconciliation.”⁷³⁶ Thus it was that seven years to the day after the *Chimurenga* had begun, the Lancaster House settlement brought the conflict to a close.⁷³⁷

Aside from the long-suffering people of Rhodesia, perhaps no one was more pleased with the conference’s outcome than Margaret Thatcher. The settlement provided her with something which had eluded Harold Wilson, Ted Heath, and James Callaghan: an honorable way out of the Rhodesian imbroglio. As Thatcher noted in her memoirs, the settlement had “large benefits” for Britain.⁷³⁸ Diplomatically, it removed a continual source of irritation in Britain’s relations with other Commonwealth countries and enabled Britain to play a more effective role in promoting change in Namibia and South Africa. Economically, the settlement meant that Thatcher would no longer have to worry about Nigeria or other African nations resorting to economic blackmail over her Rhodesian policies. And domestically, the accord removed one of the most contentious

⁷³⁵ Carrington, Reflect on Things Past, 299.

⁷³⁶ “ABC News,” December 21, 1979, Vanderbilt TV News Archives (hereafter, VTVA).

⁷³⁷ Most scholars view the December 21, 1972 attack on Altena Farm as the bush war’s starting date – although there had been sporadic guerrilla activity against Ian Smith’s regime before that date. Martin and Johnson, The Struggle for Zimbabwe, 1-2, 73-74.

⁷³⁸ Thatcher, The Downing Street Years, 78.

issues from the British landscape. Thatcher expressed her gratitude to her Foreign Secretary in a memorandum on December 21. “Today sees the successful conclusion of an extraordinary piece of diplomacy. The period ahead in Rhodesia is not going to be easy but the signature of the Agreement at the end of the Lancaster House Conference later this morning will nonetheless be a milestone of major significance.”⁷³⁹

The Western media breathed a sigh of relief once the Rhodesian protagonists had signed the peace agreement.⁷⁴⁰ So did the Carter Administration, which labeled the Lancaster House settlement “a triumph of reason and an extraordinary diplomatic success.”⁷⁴¹ To Jimmy Carter and many of his chief foreign policy advisers, the accord vindicated their efforts to bring majority rule to Rhodesia. At a time when renewed US-Soviet tensions were threatening to undermine Carter’s “post-Cold War” approach to foreign policy, the Lancaster House settlement demonstrated that dealing with problems on their own terms (rather than as part of the East-West struggle) could pay dividends.⁷⁴² And on the domestic front, Carter’s political advisers expected the settlement to appeal to African Americans and liberals – two important constituencies that felt let down by many of the Administration’s centrist policies.⁷⁴³

While much of the credit for the Lancaster House agreement has rightfully gone to Peter Carrington and Margaret Thatcher, scholars have tended to overlook the fact that the Frontline Presidents played an important role in resolving the Rhodesian crisis. After years of harboring

⁷³⁹ Minute, Margaret Thatcher to Peter Carrington, “The Rhodesia Conference,” December 21, 1979, FCO 36/2443, TNA.

⁷⁴⁰ See, for instance, New York Times, “In the Nation: A Chance in Rhodesia,” December 18, 1979 and Washington Post, “Three Cheers for Rhodesia,” December 19, 1979.

⁷⁴¹ Statement on Rhodesia, undated, Zimbabwe (Rhodesia) 12/79 folder, National Security Affairs (6), Brzezinski Material, Country File, Box 89, JECL.

⁷⁴² As the British Ambassador to Washington reported earlier that year, “The Russian bogey in enjoying a new lease on life in the US.” Telegram, Peter Jay to FCO, “M.I.P.T.,” January 31, 1979, FCO 36/2504, TNA. Ironically, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan officially began three days after the conclusion of the Lancaster House proceedings. For more on US-Soviet relations during the Carter years, see Raymond Garthoff, Détente and Confrontation: American-Soviet Relations from Nixon to Reagan, revised ed., (Washington: Brookings Institute, 1994): 623-1121.

⁷⁴³ Memorandum, Louis Martin to Jimmy Carter, “US Blacks and Rhodesia-Zimbabwe,” May 29, 1979, CO-129 Executive 5/1/79 – 6/30/79 folder, White House Central Files, Subject File, Box CO-51, JECL.

the Zimbabwean guerrillas and enduring “external raids,” the Frontline Presidents had become “fed up with the war.”⁷⁴⁴ Once they realized that the British proposals would lead to a genuine transfer of power in Rhodesia, they strong-armed their clients into accepting the Lancaster House proposals. One possible explanation for this oversight is that Frontline Presidents were not eager to be seen as applying pressure on their clients to settle with Muzorewa’s “puppet” regime. For domestic political reasons, they were eager to be seen backing Robert Mugabe and Joshua Nkomo to the hilt in their “war of national liberation.” In an effort to preserve this façade of unwavering support, the Presidents often took a hardline stance in public while privately pressing the Patriotic Front to make concessions.⁷⁴⁵ As this chapter has sought to demonstrate, Samora Machel, Kenneth Kaunda, Julius Nyerere, and Olusegun Obasanjo played a crucial role in the search for Zimbabwean independence. From pressing Margaret Thatcher to abandon her initial support for the “internal settlement” to forcing Mugabe and Nkomo to accept Britain’s proposals, the Lancaster House accord owed as much to the efforts of these African leaders as it did to British statesmanship. Whether the settlement they helped to broker represented “a victory for diplomacy” (as some have suggested), remains an open question.⁷⁴⁶

⁷⁴⁴ “ABC News,” December 21, 1979, VTVA.

⁷⁴⁵ The Presidents’ abrasive public pronouncements, coupled with their behind-the-scenes maneuvering, raised British hackles on more than one occasion. See, for instance, Telegram, Peter Moon to FCO, “M.I.P.T.: Rhodesia,” November 13, 1979, FCO 36/2516, TNA.

⁷⁴⁶ Andrew Young, “The United States and Africa: Victory for Diplomacy,” *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 59, no. 3 (1980): 648-666.

Epilogue

Robert Mugabe and the Limits of the Lancaster House Settlement, 1980-2012

On April 16, 1980, the sun finally set on Britain's African empire. Dignitaries and leaders from more than 100 countries gathered in Rufaro soccer stadium on the outskirts of Salisbury to witness the birth of Africa's newest nation. The stadium, like the rest of the capital, proudly displayed flags and bunting bearing Zimbabwe's official colors. The ceremony took on a somewhat surreal feeling as white soldiers (formerly members of the Rhodesian security forces) stood at attention while a military band played the guerrilla anthem, "God Bless Africa." The black soldiers (formerly guerrillas) reciprocated, saluting as the band played "God Save the Queen" while a British policeman lowered the Union Jack for the final time. The 40,000 Africans on hand rejoiced as the Zimbabwean flag was raised in its place. After a 21-gun salute, Bob Marley and the Wailers took to the stage to perform their new single, "Zimbabwe." The usually-quiet streets of Salisbury erupted as gleeful Africans sang and danced in celebration. At long last, they had achieved independence under majority rule.⁷⁴⁷

By far the most impressive figure at the independence proceedings was Prime Minister Robert Mugabe.⁷⁴⁸ Belying his reputation as a radical Marxist, Mugabe struck a conciliatory tone at the independence ceremony. He spoke of the need for peace and reconciliation. "The wrongs of the past must now stand forgiven and forgotten," he solemnly declared. "If we ever look to the past, let us do so for the lesson the past has taught us, namely that oppression and racism are inequalities that must never find scope in our political and social system. It could

⁷⁴⁷ New York Times, "Rhodesia Becomes the Nation of Zimbabwe," April 17, 1980 and Daily News (Dar es Salaam), "Millions Celebrate Zimbabwe Uhuru," April 19, 1980, in ed. Goswin Baumhogger, The Struggle for Independence: Documents on the Recent Development of Zimbabwe, (Hamburg: Institute of African Studies, 1984), vol. 7, 1446.

⁷⁴⁸ Mugabe's ZANU-PF party won 63% of the vote, securing 57 of the 80 black seats in the Zimbabwean House of Assembly. Joshua Nkomo's ZAPU party gained 20 seats, while Bishop Abel Muzorewa's UANC party gained a mere three seats. Under the terms of the Lancaster House Agreement, 20 whites rounded out the 100-member Zimbabwean parliament.

never be a correct justification that because the whites oppressed us yesterday when they had power, the blacks must oppress them today because they have power. An evil remains an evil whether practised by white against black or black against white.”⁷⁴⁹ These words echoed the call for national unity that Mugabe had issued on March 4, the day on which British officials announced that he had won a sweeping electoral victory. “There is no intention on our part to use the advantage of the majority we have secured today...to...victimize the minority,” Mugabe had pledged on that occasion. “We will ensure that there is a place in this country for everybody.”⁷⁵⁰

This Robert Mugabe seemed a completely different man than the guerrilla leader whom many whites had come to regard as “the apostle of Satan.” During the bush war, he had insisted on the need for a one-party state, pledged that Ian Smith and his “criminal gang” would be tried and shot, maintained that private industry would be abolished, and declared that the white “exploiters” would be kicked off their land. Once elected, however, Mugabe rapidly changed his tune. According to one CIA report, the Prime Minister-elect was “keenly sensitive to the need to maintain white confidence” and acted accordingly.⁷⁵¹ He abandoned his plans for nationalization, promised that his government would not attempt to redistribute white-owned lands, and allowed the whites to retain several key cabinet positions. He invited Joshua Nkomo to join him in a government of national unity and, to everyone’s surprise, struck up a rapport

⁷⁴⁹ Quoted in Martin Meredith, Our Votes, Our Guns: Robert Mugabe and the Tragedy of Zimbabwe, (New York: Public Affairs, 2002), 15.

⁷⁵⁰ ABC News, March 4, 1980, Vanderbilt TV News Archives (hereafter, VTVA). Mugabe spoke in similar terms in private. “He had no hard feelings at all,” recounted a high-ranking Rhodesian security official who met with Mugabe in 1980. “We agreed that we had had an unnecessary war in which a lot of good young people had died...Eventually, he told me that we had done some terrible things and they had done some terrible things. ‘It was war,’ I said. And he replied, ‘You are right; it was war. But now...the war is over. Now we can sit and talk as friends.’” Heidi Holland, Dinner with Mugabe: The Untold Story of a Freedom Fighter who Became a Tyrant, (Johannesburg: Penguin Books, 2008), 33.

⁷⁵¹ CIA Current Assessment, “Zimbabwe: The Current Situation and Prospects,” undated, NLC-24-120-3-1-8, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library (hereafter, JECL).

with Ian Smith. In an unexpected display of goodwill, the former enemies walked side-by-side into the Zimbabwean House of Assembly when it opened on May 15.⁷⁵²

Such displays of moderation and tolerance surprised many of Mugabe's countrymen. "We were really worried," explained one white farmer. "But now, Mr. Mugabe...has shattered us all by his reasonableness [sic]. He's absolutely marvelous."⁷⁵³ Many white Zimbabweans began to wonder if life under Mugabe might not be as bad as the Rhodesian Front's propaganda machine had predicted it would be. Many Westerners shared this sense of cautious optimism. Indeed, South African envoys throughout Western Europe and North America reported that the Zimbabwean election results had been accepted "with equanimity and even pleasure."⁷⁵⁴ Much to the chagrin of the apartheid regime, most of the Western world seemed willing to give Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe a chance.⁷⁵⁵ Even Ian Smith was forced to admit that his former *bête noire* was doing an impressive job and that "things could turn out better than we had originally thought" if Mugabe continued down the path he was on.⁷⁵⁶

Life greatly improved for the Zimbabwean people in the years after independence. Despite the ravages of war, the country was well positioned to prosper. It possessed a wealth of natural resources, a developed economy, a larger black middle class than any other African nation had enjoyed at the time of independence, and an unprecedented number of skilled laborers. Moreover, Zimbabwe was one of the few nations in southern Africa capable of producing enough food to feed its people. "You have inherited a jewel," Tanzanian President

⁷⁵² Meredith, *Our Votes, Our Guns*, 41-44.

⁷⁵³ NBC News, April 16, 1980, VTVA.

⁷⁵⁴ Embassy Paris to Secretary for Foreign Affairs, "French View of Recent Political Development in Southern Africa," March 19, 1980, BTS 1/156/7 vol. 3, South African Department of International Relations and Cooperation Archives (hereafter, SAA).

⁷⁵⁵ Untitled telegram, South African Embassy Ottawa to Director-General for Foreign Affairs and Information, "Canadian Media Attitude towards Robert Mugabe," May 28, 1980, BTS 1/156/7, vol. 3 and Untitled telegram, South African Embassy Bonn to Secretary for External Affairs, April 24, 1980, BTS 152/10/5/1, vol. 2, SAA.

⁷⁵⁶ Quoted in Ian Smith, *The Great Betrayal: The Memoirs of Ian Douglas Smith*, (London: Blake, 1997), 361.

Julius Nyerere told his Zimbabwean counterpart.⁷⁵⁷ With the end of the *Chimurenga*, the economy grew by leaps and bounds (an estimated 24% in two years).⁷⁵⁸ Western donors rushed to provide the fledgling nation with economic aid, and a wave of foreign workers arrived to help rebuild the country. “We are the darling of the world,” an elated Mugabe told an audience of white farmers.⁷⁵⁹ Black Zimbabweans benefitted from Mugabe’s initiatives to provide free health care and primary education, to increase the minimum wage, and to train black civil servants. By 1990, 70% of black Zimbabweans were attending high school (as compared to 2% before independence); the country’s literacy rate had risen to 92% (the highest on the continent); and health care facilities had multiplied to the point that many rural Zimbabweans were able to walk to the nearest clinic.⁷⁶⁰ With Mugabe at the helm, the country seemed poised to achieve great things.

An International Success Story

The Zimbabwean people were not the only ones who regarded Robert Mugabe’s ascension to the prime ministership as cause for celebration. It was also seen as a triumph for the developing world – most notably for the Frontline States, the Commonwealth, and the Organization of African Unity (OAU). While previous accounts of the Rhodesian crisis have tended to focus on the guerrilla war or Western attempts at mediation, this dissertation has sought to demonstrate the important role that the Frontline States, the Commonwealth, and the

⁷⁵⁷ Quoted in Meredith, *Our Votes, Our Guns*, 15.

⁷⁵⁸ Meredith, *Our Votes, Our Guns*, 46.

⁷⁵⁹ Zimbabwe received nearly £900 million in aid in its first year of independence alone. Meredith, *Our Votes, Our Guns*, 46-47.

⁷⁶⁰ Holland, *Dinner with Mugabe*, xx; Peter Godwin, *The Fear: Robert Mugabe and the Martyrdom of Zimbabwe*, (New York: Little, Brown, and Company: 2010): 323.

OAU played in the search for Zimbabwean independence.⁷⁶¹ As demonstrated in Chapter One, Zambian President Kenneth Kaunda tirelessly lobbied the United Kingdom and the United States to use their clout to topple the Rhodesian Front. Although these efforts did not immediately bear fruit, Kaunda's persistence was rewarded in 1976 when the Americans finally decided to assume a leadership role in the search for Zimbabwean independence. As demonstrated in Chapter Five, the Frontline Presidents, the Commonwealth, and the OAU used the threat of economic reprisals and the severance of diplomatic relations to convince Margaret Thatcher not to accept the "internal settlement." Moreover, the bush war which ultimately forced Smith to abdicate would not have been possible without the assistance of the Frontline Presidents and the OAU's Liberation Committee. However, this support was not entirely one-sided. As noted in Chapter Five, the Frontline Presidents insisted that Robert Mugabe and Joshua Nkomo attend the Lancaster House conference and strong-armed the guerrilla leaders into participating in British-sponsored elections.

The Carter Administration also regarded Mugabe's election as a success for its human rights policy. Having grown up in the heart of Dixie, Jimmy Carter had been committed to the cause of African majority rule since his inauguration. Thus, it should come as no surprise that a profound sense of triumphalism was evident during Mugabe's first state visit to Washington. A crowd of several hundred Americans (including government officials, business leaders, and civil rights activists) crammed into the East Room to meet with the Zimbabwean leader. Carter waxed rhapsodic about Zimbabwe's potential and its leader. "Your nation has been blessed by very fine natural resources; mineral deposits not even yet explored, certainly not exploited; productive land, the potential of which has not nearly been reached; eager, well-trained, highly

⁷⁶¹ Terence Ranger, *Peasant Consciousness and Guerilla War in Zimbabwe*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985) and Norma Kriger, *Zimbabwe's Guerilla War: Peasant Voices*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

motivated people who want to work in a sense of peace for future progress,” the President remarked. But even more important than Zimbabwe’s untapped riches was the idealism of its people. “I think the greatness of any nation is measured not just in...what it possesses, but what it stands for,” Carter told his Zimbabwean counterpart. “And I'm very proud...to realize that the principles and ideals of our two countries, as exemplified by you and your new government, are very similar, perhaps even identical.”⁷⁶² As these remarks indicate, the President saw Zimbabwe as a powerful ally in his global human rights campaign.

Carter was also aware that Mugabe’s election had important Cold War implications at a time when the Soviets and their allies seemed to be on the march in the developing world. First and foremost, it brought the *Chimurenga* to an end, thereby ensuring that the Soviets and Cubans would not replicate their Angolan triumph. Moreover, Mugabe had few ties to Moscow, which had backed Joshua Nkomo’s Zimbabwe African People’s Union (ZAPU) rather than his Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) throughout the bush war. US officials hoped that this would prevent Zimbabwe from establishing good relations with Moscow. And, indeed, this is exactly what happened in the early months of 1980. Mugabe denounced the Soviet Union for seeking to keep the nations it provided with aid in thrall, rejected a Soviet military assistance package, and refused to allow the Russians to open an embassy in Salisbury.⁷⁶³ While US officials expected Zimbabwe to follow a more non-aligned path in the future, these actions suggested that Mugabe saw the West as his closest ally and would be very cautious in dealing with the Eastern bloc.

⁷⁶² Jimmy Carter, “Meeting with Prime Minister Robert Mugabe: Remarks at a White House Reception,” August 27, 1980, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Jimmy Carter: 1980-81*, vol. 2, 1579-1584.

⁷⁶³ Telegram, Christopher Soames to FCO, “Rhodesia,” March 21, 1980, PREM 19/347; Minute, John Doble to Unknown, “ZANU/USSR,” March 17, 1980, FCO 36/2756; and *Morning Star*, “Mugabe Asks for USSR Embassy,” October 15, 1980, FCO 36/2756, British National Archives (hereafter, TNA).

This dissertation has focused on Cold War considerations for two reasons. The first is that scholars of the Rhodesian crisis have tended to overlook the ways in which the re-emergence of East-West tensions in the late-1970s influenced Jimmy Carter's African policy. The second reason is that scholars in recent years have written extensively about the ways in which the Cold War affected the decolonization process in Africa.⁷⁶⁴ In general, they have concluded that the relationship was harmful to colonized peoples who were seeking to cast off the yoke of European imperialism.⁷⁶⁵ Historian Donal Lowry has demonstrated that anti-communism was central to the Rhodesian Front's staying power. Because many Rhodesians saw Robert Mugabe, Joshua Nkomo, and their ilk as communist-inspired rabble-rousers, Lowry argues, they failed to take the nationalists' grievances seriously. This left armed struggle as the only means of achieving majority rule in Rhodesia.⁷⁶⁶ According to historian John Daniel, a similar dynamic was at work in South Africa.⁷⁶⁷

Generally speaking, American policymakers also had difficulty adapting to the demise of the colonial order and the emergence of dozens of states that were more interested in economic development and the ending of white rule than in the clash between the superpowers. US officials were quick to spot a communist conspiracy behind third world uprisings, and nationalist

⁷⁶⁴ See, for instance, Thomas Noer, Cold War and Black Liberation: The United States and White Rule in Africa, 1948-1968, (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1985); Thomas Borstelmann, The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001); Sue Onslow, ed., Cold War in Southern Africa: White Power, Black Liberation, (London: Routledge, 2009); Piero Gleijeses, Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington, and Africa, 1959-1976, (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Odd Arne Westad, The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Andrew DeRoche, Black, White, and Chrome: The United States and Zimbabwe, 1953-1998, (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, Inc., 2001); and Vladimir Shubin, The Hot Cold War: The USSR in Southern Africa, (London: Pluto Press, 2008).

⁷⁶⁵ Sue Onslow has argued that the Cold War "intensified and prolonged the struggle between the remaining white minorities in power and black nationalist movements." Onslow, "Introduction," in Cold War in Southern Africa, 1, 241. See also, Borstelmann, The Cold War and the Color Line, 269 and Noer, Cold War and Black Liberation, 253.

⁷⁶⁶ Donal Lowry, "The Impact of Anti-Communism on White Rhodesian Political Culture, ca. 1920-1980," Cold War History, vol. 7, no. 2 (May 2007): 169-194.

⁷⁶⁷ John Daniel, "Racism, the Cold War, and South Africa's Regional Security Strategies," in ed. Sue Onslow, Cold War in Southern Africa, 35-54.

leaders who attempted to remain neutral in the US-Soviet struggle were frequently portrayed as Soviet pawns. Fearing that the “loss” of any country to the communist bloc could undermine American credibility and set the dominos in motion, US officials looked to remove leaders who seemed susceptible to Moscow’s siren song. Overtly or covertly, they sought to topple perceived enemies such as Mohammad Mossadeq in Iran, Jacobo Árbenz in Guatemala, and Fidel Castro in Cuba. Conversely, they supported right-wing strongmen such as the Shah of Iran, Ngô Đình Diệm in South Vietnam, and the Somoza family in Nicaragua because, for all their flaws, they were seen as allies in the struggle against communism.

The dynamic was no different in sub-Saharan Africa. Many of the elite white males responsible for crafting America’s foreign policy carried racist assumptions about black Africans.⁷⁶⁸ They fretted that “primitive” and “emotional” African leaders would be susceptible to communist subversion. By contrast, the colonial powers and the South Africans were seen as “rational” actors who would keep the communists at bay. Thus, despite the anti-colonial rhetoric of such documents as the Atlantic Charter and the United Nations Charter, successive US administrations were reluctant to embrace African nationalism. While many US officials recognized that black Africa would achieve independence at some point, they favored a gradual transition to majority rule. They were especially concerned that if black Africans gained independence before they were “prepared,” they would not exercise it “responsibly.” Whatever else they may have meant by this term, US officials were first and foremost concerned that post-colonial nations remain aligned with the Western bloc.⁷⁶⁹ Although this attitude was most prevalent during the Truman and Eisenhower Administrations, it persisted well into the 1980s.

⁷⁶⁸ Michael Krenn, *Black Diplomacy: African Americans and the State Department, 1945-1969*, (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1999).

⁷⁶⁹ As scholar Gerald Bender has noted, US officials worried “that if the Europeans were forced to end colonialism in Africa, they would be replaced, ipso facto, by the Soviet Union.” Quoted in Phil Muehlenbeck, “Betting on the

In addition to racist assumptions, these concerns about “premature independence” reflected a lack of knowledge about sub-Saharan Africa. According to historian James Meriwether, few African Americans had an accurate understanding of what Africa was like in the immediate post-World War II era.⁷⁷⁰ The elite white men in the White House and the State Department tended to be even less knowledgeable about the continent and its affairs. The Africa they imagined was something straight out of a Tarzan movie – a mysterious land filled with jungles, cannibals, witchcraft, and wild animals.⁷⁷¹ Given their ignorance about Africa, it should come as little surprise that US officials repeatedly confused the continent’s territories, mistaking Niger for Nigeria, Southern Rhodesia for South Africa, and (in a true feat of geographic ineptitude) Tunisia for Indonesia.⁷⁷² The situation remained largely unchanged until the State Department established a bureau to deal specifically with African affairs in 1958. Prior to that, African matters had been handled by the State Department’s European Bureau – a clear indication that US officials continued to regard African territories as colonial possessions rather than future members of the international community.

Even as the “wind of change” began to sweep across Africa, the continent received little attention from those at the upper echelons in Washington. In large part this was because it remained relatively devoid of Soviet intrigue. With periodic exceptions (most notably the crisis in the Congo), sub-Saharan Africa remained, in the words of one recent study, “a distant front in

Dark Horses: John F. Kennedy’s Courting of African Nationalist Leaders,” PhD Dissertation, George Washington University, (2007): 18.

⁷⁷⁰ James Meriwether, Proudly We Can Be Africans: Black Americans and Africa, 1935-1961, (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2002): 16-26.

⁷⁷¹ Cannibalism was a familiar trope in White House discussions of Africa. Lyndon Johnson worried about the possibility of Americans in the Congo being “eaten” while Richard Nixon voiced similar concerns about Americans in Uganda. Andrew DeRoche, “Dreams and Disappointments: Kenneth Kaunda and the United States, 1960-1964,” Safundi: The Journal of South African and American Studies, vol. 9, no. 4, (October 2008): 387-388 and <http://nixontapes.org/hak/154-007.mp3>. DeRoche claims that these discussions may have been fuelled by articles about cannibalism in The New York Times and Life magazine. DeRoche, “Dreams and Disappointments,” 388-389.

⁷⁷² Muehlenbeck, “Betting on the Dark Horses,” 21 and Noer, Cold War and Black Liberation, 240.

the Cold War.”⁷⁷³ Because the Soviets seemed incapable of winning hearts and minds in black Africa, US officials saw little need to alter their policy of offering rhetorical support for majority rule while attempting to maintain sound relations with the colonial powers and apartheid South Africa.

While this approach may seem cynical, it illustrates the difficulties American statesmen faced in balancing geostrategic considerations with democratic ideals. Indeed, there were a number of US officials who regarded white rule as immoral and sympathized with black Africans’ aspirations for self-determination.⁷⁷⁴ Unfortunately for those who wished to champion majority rule in Africa, geostrategic and geopolitical concerns hindered their ability to do so.⁷⁷⁵ One such concern was economics. In the early post-war years, the United States was eager to see Europe rebuild itself – preferably at minimal cost to the American taxpayer. American corporations needed new markets, and a crippled Europe could not provide them. Many in the Truman and Eisenhower Administrations hoped that the riches of their empires would help the colonial powers recover from the devastation wrought by World War II.⁷⁷⁶ US officials were also hesitant to offend their NATO allies by criticizing their colonial policies. And, of course, the United States was hardly in a position to assail other nations for their handling of racial issues at a time when Jim Crow remained in full force.⁷⁷⁷ Other practicalities further muddled the situation. For example, US officials were eager to stay on good terms with the Portuguese so

⁷⁷³ Sergei Mazov, A Distant Front in the Cold War: The USSR in West Africa and the Congo, 1955-1964, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010).

⁷⁷⁴ Perhaps the foremost “Africanist” during the early years of the Cold War was G. Mennen “Soapy” Williams, who served as Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs under John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson. For more, see, Noer, Soapy: A Biography of G. Mennen Williams, (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2005).

⁷⁷⁵ “Soapy” was rebuked by JFK and Secretary of State Dean Rusk for declaring “Africa for the Africans” during a 1960 speech in Nairobi. Noer, Cold War and Black Liberation, 69.

⁷⁷⁶ As one high-ranking member of the Eisenhower Administration stated, “[A] sudden break in economic relations [between the colonial powers and their African colonies] might seriously injure the European economies upon which our Atlantic system depends.” Muehlenbeck, “Betting on the Dark Horses,” 20.

⁷⁷⁷ In her groundbreaking work, historian Mary Dudziak has demonstrated how Cold War considerations helped convince a reluctant Kennedy Administration to support the Civil Rights movement. Dudziak, Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000).

that they could retain access to the military base located in the Azores. Similarly, South Africa was seen as a strategically and economically important partner despite its apartheid policies.⁷⁷⁸

These factors compelled US officials to walk a fine line between condemning white rule in Africa and condoning immediate majority rule.⁷⁷⁹

Ironically, however, Cold War considerations played a major role in prompting US officials to reassess their “middle road” policy in the mid-1970s. As demonstrated in Chapter Two, the Angolan civil war transformed southern Africa into a Cold War hot spot. After his disastrous foray into the Angolan civil war, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger came to appreciate that supporting minority regimes was no longer an effective means of containing Soviet (and Cuban) expansionism in the region. To the contrary, nationalist leaders who saw America’s gradualist policies as tantamount to supporting white supremacy had begun to look to the communist bloc for assistance. US officials had long feared this possibility, believing that violent struggles for majority rule would bring more “radical” nationalist leaders to the fore and produce more “radical” states. In an effort to minimize the opportunities for communist involvement in southern Africa, American foreign policymakers hoped “to eliminate violence as the vehicle for political change.”⁷⁸⁰ Henry Kissinger, the self-proclaimed high priest of *realpolitik*, understood this reality only too well. It was for this reason that he travelled to Lusaka in 1976 to proclaim America’s “unrelenting opposition” to minority rule.

⁷⁷⁸ For more on US-South African relations during the early years of the Cold War, see Thomas Borstelmann, *Apartheid’s Reluctant Uncle: The United States and Southern Africa in the early Cold War*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993). For more on US-Portuguese relations, see Noer, *Cold War and Black Liberation*, 61-125.

⁷⁷⁹ In this respect, I agree with historian Thomas Noer, who has argued that the United States consistently sought to steer a “middle road” between open support for white supremacy and unconditional support for black rule. “There was a basic continuity in goals and assumptions throughout 1948-1968. Despite the differences in the personalities and styles of the presidents and their advisers...stability, anticommunism, and the avoidance of violent conflict remained the overriding concerns. There were disputes over the correct tactics to obtain these objectives, but the prevailing view of Africa as an arena of US-Soviet rivalry remained consistent.” Noer further surmises, “The essential American objective in Africa, as in the other areas of the third world was the containment of radicalism at a minimal risk to [America’s] other global interests.” Noer, *Cold War and Black Liberation*, 254, 256. For an account that challenges Noer’s continuity thesis, see Muehlenbeck, “Betting on the Dark Horses.”

⁷⁸⁰ Noer, *Cold War and Black Liberation*, 253.

Cold calculations rather than moral misgivings prompted Kissinger to emerge as a champion of majority rule in 1976. While the Secretary's conversion may not have been heartfelt, it represented an important turning point in US-African relations. After three decades of hedging its bets, the United States had unequivocally aligned itself with black Africans' quest for self-determination. That it was Henry Kissinger (whose disregard for southern Africa's black population has been well-documented) who delivered this message only serves to underscore the centrality of Cold War considerations when it came to US-African relations. As demonstrated in Chapters Three and Four, Jimmy Carter and his chief foreign policy advisers shared Kissinger's concern about the possibility of southern Africa falling into communist hands. Although Carter's sympathies were more in tune with those of the African people, geostrategic imperatives reinforced his desire to resolve the Rhodesian crisis before the communist powers exploited it to strengthen their position in southern Africa.⁷⁸¹ Thus, at least in this instance, Cold War considerations prompted the United States to side with a non-white people in their struggle against a right-wing, anti-communist regime.

While the Carter Administration was pleased with the outcome of the Rhodesian crisis, many African Americans were elated. Their joy can be seen in the hero's welcome that Robert Mugabe received when he visited the United States in August 1980. Thousands of African Americans turned out to hear the Prime Minister speak in Harlem. He received a similar

⁷⁸¹ The South African ambassador to Washington noted in 1979 that Carter's desire to resolve the Rhodesian crisis was motivated by a combination of political, moral, and geostrategic concerns. "While Mr. Carter is unquestionably concerned about re-election," the ambassador wrote in a telegram to Pretoria, "it would be excessively cynical to discount the thinking of...his National Security Adviser, the Pentagon, CIA, and even sections of the State Department about increasing Cuban activity [in Africa and Central America]." He concluded, "The national security interest of the United States is thus brought into confluence with the concern of the Administration for human rights." W.R. Retief to Secretary for Foreign Affairs, "Rhodesia-Zimbabwe: USA Involvement," November 2, 1979, BTS 1/156/7, vol. 2, SAA.

reception when he visited Howard University several days later.⁷⁸² More than 2,000 students gathered to catch a glimpse of the man whose army had struck a crippling blow against white rule in southern Africa. “Mugabe, Mugabe,” they chanted as he appeared on stage. Amid tumultuous applause and some black power salutes, Mayor Marion Barry presented the Prime Minister with the key to the city.⁷⁸³

These raucous receptions reflect the support that African Americans had provided the Zimbabwean cause since 1965. That black Americans lobbied against minority rule in southern Africa should come as no surprise. A rapidly-growing body of literature has documented the ways in which they opposed white supremacy, colonialism, and economic exploitation in the post-1945 era.⁷⁸⁴ In the words of Walter White, Executive Secretary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), “World War II has given the Negro...a sense of kinship with the other colored – and also oppressed – peoples of the world.”⁷⁸⁵ While the NAACP (along with organizations such as the National Negro Congress (NNC) and the Civil Rights Congress (CRC)) opposed colonial rule the world over, their ancestral ties to Africa led black Americans to take a special interest in that continent. Seeing their own struggle for civil

⁷⁸² Telegram, Mr. Fretwell to FCO, “Mugabe’s Visit to the US, 22-27 August,” August 27, 1980, FCO 36/2571, TNA.

⁷⁸³ The Washington Star, “Electrifies Students at Howard,” August 28, 1980, FCO 36/2751, TNA.

⁷⁸⁴ See, for instance, Brenda Gayle Plummer, Rising Wind: Black Americans and US Foreign Affairs, 1935-1960, (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Penny von Eschen, Race against Empire: Black Americans and Anti-colonialism, 1937-1957, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996); Carol Anderson, Eyes Off the Prize: The United Nations and the African American Struggle for Human Rights, 1944-1955, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Kevin Gaines, American Africans in Ghana: Black Expatriates and the Civil Rights Era, (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2006); Gerald Horne, Black and Red: W.E.B. DuBois and the Afro-American Response to the Cold War, 1944-1963, (Albany NY: State University of New York Press, 1986); Gerald Horne, From the Barrel of a Gun: The United States and the War Against Zimbabwe (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); and Borstelmann, The Cold War and the Color Line. For other works on the importance of “race” and American foreign policy, see, Gerald Horne, “Race to Insight: The US and the World,” in eds. Michael Hogan and Thomas Paterson, Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations, 2nd ed., (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 323-335; Michael Hunt, Ideology and US Foreign Policy, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987); and John Dower, War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986).

⁷⁸⁵ Quoted in Elizabeth Bogwardt, A New Deal for the World: America’s Vision of Human Rights, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005): 84.

rights as part and parcel of a global quest for racial equality, members of these organizations worked to debunk the myth of the “white man’s burden” in the years after World War II, documenting how the colonial powers had underdeveloped Africa and exploited its people.

Some scholars have suggested that African Americans abandoned their internationalist agenda during the 1950s.⁷⁸⁶ There is some truth to this argument. The NAACP leadership took a step back in the early 1950s in an effort to preserve the organization’s relationship with the Truman Administration and to avoid prosecution by the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC).⁷⁸⁷ Groups like the CRC, which were more leftward-leaning, fell prey to HUAC during the Red Scare of the 1950s. Nevertheless, African Americans’ relative silence on colonial questions during this period should be seen as a strategic retreat rather than an abject surrender. With the passing of McCarthyism and the inspiration provided by pan-Africanist leaders like Kwame Nkrumah, African American activists reasserted the connection between the Civil Rights movement at home and African independence movements abroad in the late-1950s and early-1960s. New organizations such as the American Negro Leadership Congress on Africa (ANLCA) emerged to join the crusade for racial equality.⁷⁸⁸

However, as historian James Meriwether has pointed out, African American activists were confronted with a major challenge in the mid-1960s as a number of African nations (most notably, Ghana, the Congo, and Nigeria) became mired in economic recessions, experienced mounting political repression, and became embroiled in ethnically-based civil wars. According to Meriwether, groups such as the NAACP and the ANLCA responded by ignoring the problems

⁷⁸⁶ James Roark, “American Black Leaders: The Response to Colonialism and the Cold War, 1943-1953,” African Historical Studies, vol. 4, no. 2 (1971): 253-270.

⁷⁸⁷ As Anderson has concluded, “The barely veiled threat of extinction compelled the NAACP leadership to retreat to the haven of civil rights, wrap itself in the flag, and distance the Association from the now-tainted struggle for human rights.” Anderson, Eyes Off the Prize, 273.

⁷⁸⁸ For more on the ANLCA, see, Carl Watts, “African Americans and US Foreign Policy: The American Negro Leadership Conference on Africa and the Rhodesian Crisis,” in eds. Andrew Johnstone and Helen Laville, The US Public and American Foreign Policy, (New York: Routledge, 2010) 107-122.

facing independent African nations and focusing on the injustice of white rule in southern Africa.⁷⁸⁹ Indeed, historian Eric Morgan has recently documented how black activists continued to protest South Africa's apartheid policies, urging successive administrations to sever ties with Pretoria unless the Afrikaners agreed to scuttle their racially-oppressive policies.⁷⁹⁰ As demonstrated in Chapter One, African American activists also protested Ian Smith's unilateral declaration of independence in 1965. Many black leaders (including Martin Luther King Junior, James Farmer, and Roy Wilkins) recognized that Rhodesian independence would spell disaster for the colony's black population and urged Lyndon Johnson to bring the rebellion to a halt before Ian Smith transformed Rhodesia into another South Africa.

Unfortunately for the people of southern Africa, this pressure did not convince LBJ to take drastic measures. Preoccupied by Vietnam and a spate of other crises, the Johnson Administration was content to follow the British lead on Rhodesia. Despite this inertia, African American activists continued to speak out against white rule in southern Africa during the 1960s and 1970s. With the passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act, a number of African Americans were elected to Congress. Charles Diggs, Andrew Young, and many of their colleagues in the Congressional Black Caucus used their positions to attack Richard Nixon's "do-nothing" African policy.⁷⁹¹ Lobbying groups such as Randall Robinson's Trans-Africa joined the fray during the 1970s.⁷⁹² These activists found a sympathetic leader in Jimmy Carter who, not coincidentally, had ridden a wave of African American support to the White House. While Carter and his chief

⁷⁸⁹ Meriwether, *Proudly We Can Be Africans*, 5.

⁷⁹⁰ Eric Morgan, "Into the Struggle: Confronting Apartheid in the United States and South Africa," PhD dissertation, University of Colorado, 2009.

⁷⁹¹ Carolyn DuBose, *The Untold Story of Charles Diggs: The Public Figure, The Private Man*, (Arlington, VA: Barton Pub. House, 1998) and Andrew DeRoche, *Andrew Young: Civil Rights Ambassador*, (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 2003).

⁷⁹² In fact, Trans-Africa had become so active by 1979 that the South African Ambassador to Washington bemoaned its activities in a telegram to Pretoria. D.B. Sole to Secretary for Foreign Affairs, "Visit of Mayor Barry of Washington to Africa," August 3, 1979, BTS 1/156/1/19/2, vol. 4, SAA.

foreign policy advisers were no less concerned about the Cold War implications of the Rhodesian crisis than Gerald Ford and Henry Kissinger had been, Carter could ill afford to ignore what African Americans had to say about his African policies. Thus, when they overwhelmingly objected to recognizing the “internal settlement,” Carter listened. Robert Mugabe was well aware of black activists’ efforts on his behalf as well as their pan-Africanist vision. Thus, when he visited Harlem, Mugabe drew a direct link between their struggle for Civil Rights and Zimbabwe’s struggle for majority rule. “The African people, you and I, refused to submit,” Mugabe told his audience, adding that “master and slave have now become equals.”⁷⁹³

British officials also saw Mugabe’s election as a victory of sorts. Although Margaret Thatcher had initially viewed Robert Mugabe and Joshua Nkomo as “terrorists,” she was glad to have the Rhodesian crisis behind her. The Prime Minister and her Foreign Secretary earned international acclaim for successfully mediating a crisis which many pundits had come to regard as intractable. British officials were also pleasantly surprised by Mugabe’s moderate policies and his willingness to let bygones be bygones. A country assessment sheet compiled by the Foreign Office at the end of 1980 praised the Zimbabwean Prime Minister for reaching out to the country’s white citizens. The paper also concluded that although technically non-aligned, Zimbabwe’s ties to the West were much stronger than its ties to the Soviet bloc. Finally, and perhaps most importantly from Britain’s perspective, because of Mugabe’s “pragmatic” economic policies, Zimbabwe was likely to become a valuable trading partner in the near future.⁷⁹⁴ Moreover, the successful resolution of the Rhodesian crisis strengthened Britain’s

⁷⁹³ New York Times, “Mugabe Cheered in Harlem as He Stresses ‘One-ness,’” August 25, 1980.

⁷⁹⁴ Country Assessment Paper: Zimbabwe, December 4, 1980, FCO 36/2727, TNA.

relations with its Commonwealth partners and enabled Thatcher and her Cabinet colleagues to focus their energies on more pressing issues.

The Rhodesian crisis also demonstrated the value of the Anglo-American “special relationship.” Much has been written about the partnership between the United States and the United Kingdom. Scholars and statesmen have long debated how “special” it really is and the extent to which it has allowed the British to influence the American foreign policymaking process.⁷⁹⁵ The Rhodesian case seems to support John Dumbrell’s “neo-functionalist” model, which posits that common interests have comprised the heart of the relationship. Indeed, by the mid-1970s, both nations saw it as in their interest to facilitate Rhodesia’s transition to majority rule as quickly as possible. Although the Americans were more concerned about Cold War considerations than were their British counterparts, the transatlantic allies worked together to bring the crisis to an end. Henry Kissinger managed to force Ian Smith to publicly accept the need for majority rule within two years – thereby reassuring the Frontline Presidents that a negotiated settlement remained within reach at a moment when the Presidents were coming to

⁷⁹⁵ The literature on the “special relationship” is voluminous, but it can be separated into four main schools. The first school, known as the “evangelical school,” took as a given that the “English-speaking peoples” of the United States and the United Kingdom were united by bonds of culture and language. Seminal works in this school include Winston Churchill, A History of the English-Speaking People, 4 vols., (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1958) and H.C. Allen, Great Britain and the United States: A History of Anglo-American Relations (1783-1952), (London: Odhams Press, 1954). As tensions between the countries mounted in the 1960s and 1970s, a second wave of scholars emerged who adhered to the “functionalist school.” To these authors, shared interests – rather than a shared culture – formed the basis of the Anglo-American relationship. See, for instance, Christopher Thorne, Allies of a Kind: The United States and Britain in the War against Japan, 1941-1945, (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1978); James R. Leutze, Bargaining for Supremacy: Anglo-American Naval Collaboration, 1937-1941, (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1977); and Robert M. Hathaway, Ambiguous Partnership: Britain and America, 1944-1947, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981). Other seminal works of the “functionalist school” include: David Reynolds, “A ‘Special Relationship?’ America, Britain, and the International Order Since the Second World War,” International Affairs, Vol. 62, No. 1, (Winter 1985-86): 1-20 and Reynolds, “Rethinking Anglo-American Relations,” International Affairs, Vol. 65, No. 1, (Winter 1988-89): 89-111. With the demise of the Soviet Union, scholars of the Anglo-American relationship were again forced into a period of reassessment. Members of the “terminalist school,” such as John Dickie, argued that the “special relationship” ended with the passing of the Soviet threat. Dickie, ‘Special’ No More: Anglo-American Relations: Rhetoric and Reality, (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1994). Others, most prominently John Dumbrell, have gone in a different direction, arguing that the relationship continues into the post-Cold War era, fuelled by a combination of shared ideology and common interests. Dumbrell, A Special Relationship: Anglo-American Relations in the Cold War and After, (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2001).

regard armed struggle as the only path to majority rule in Rhodesia. The Carter Administration picked up where Kissinger had left off, launching a series of Anglo-American initiatives. Although these initiatives failed to bring the crisis to an end, they kept the door open for the negotiated settlement that Margaret Thatcher and Peter Carrington brokered in December 1979. Although the transatlantic allies did not always see eye-to-eye, British officials recognized that American support had been “indispensable” in bringing the Rhodesian crisis to an end.⁷⁹⁶

The Demise of the Lancaster House Order

Unfortunately for the people of Zimbabwe, the halcyon days of 1980 would not last. In recent years, scholars have focused on Mugabe’s efforts to thwart democratic change, clinging to power through the use of fraud and violence.⁷⁹⁷ Peter Godwin, a Zimbabwean expatriate, has recently published a chilling account of Mugabe’s efforts to steal the 2008 election from Morgan Tsvangirai and his party, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). According to Godwin, after the MDC narrowly outpolled ZANU-PF in the initial round of balloting, ZANU-PF officials unleashed a wave of murder, torture, and rape designed to cow opponents prior to the run-off vote. The atrocities Godwin catalogues are not for the faint of heart. Thousands of those who dared to vote for the MDC were beaten, burned, castrated, and worse. According to the author, the Zimbabwean people have dubbed this campaign *chidudu*, which means, simply, “the fear.”⁷⁹⁸

Unfortunately for the Zimbabwean people, such tactics are nothing new for Mugabe. During the 1980 electoral campaign, he and his supporters used violence and intimidation to

⁷⁹⁶ Minute, Nigel Sheinwald to P.J. Barlow and Derek Day, “Dispatch: US Policy towards Rhodesia, May 1979 to April 1980,” May 22, 1980, FCO 36/2751, TNA.

⁷⁹⁷ See, for instance, *The Association for Concerned Africa Scholars (ACAS) Bulletin*, no. 79 (Spring 2008), <http://concernedafricascholars.org/docs/acasbulletin79.pdf> and no. 80 (Winter 2008), <http://concernedafricascholars.org/docs/acasbulletin80.pdf>.

⁷⁹⁸ Godwin, *The Fear*, 109.

ensure that rural Zimbabweans voted “the right way.” Many were told that unless ZANU-PF won the election, Mugabe would return to the bush and resume the war. Others were told that if they failed to vote for ZANU-PF, they would be killed.⁷⁹⁹ Mugabe’s opponents were prevented from campaigning in the country’s Shona-speaking eastern provinces, and more than a few of those who attempted to do so were abducted and never seen or heard from again.⁸⁰⁰ By February 1980, Christopher Soames, the British Governor responsible for overseeing the elections, was sending a steady stream of cables to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office detailing the “systematic campaign of violence and intimidation being conducted by ZANU (PF) throughout the eastern provinces.” In the Governor’s mind, this “campaign of terror” was providing ZANU with “a wholly unfair advantage over its rivals.”⁸⁰¹ It was only Britain’s desire to remove the Rhodesian albatross from around its neck that prevented Soames from disqualifying ZANU-PF in certain regions of the country.⁸⁰²

Time and again, Mugabe and his ZANU-PF colleagues have resorted to violence in an effort to preserve their grip on power. In 1983, they unleashed a special North Korean-trained paramilitary force (known as the Fifth Brigade) against supporters of Joshua Nkomo’s ZAPU party. Using the pretext of rural lawlessness, Mugabe dispatched the Fifth Brigade to Matabeleland (the Ndebele-speaking region from which ZAPU drew its support) in January 1983. From the moment the troops arrived, they waged a campaign of violence so savage that one journalist has described it as “far worse than anything that had occurred during the

⁷⁹⁹ Telegram, Christopher Soames to FCO, “ZANLA: Observance of the Cease-Fire,” January 12, 1980, PREM 19/343, TNA.

⁸⁰⁰ Telegram, Christopher Soames to FCO, “Rhodesia: ZANLA Activity,” February 17, 1980, PREM 19/345, TNA.

⁸⁰¹ Telegram, Christopher Soames to FCO, “Rhodesia: Elections,” February 7, 1980, PREM 19/344, TNA.

⁸⁰² This attitude was spelt out in a telegram from Foreign Secretary Peter Carrington to British officials stationed in Salisbury. “I regard it as vital that we should not ban ZANU (PF) except in extremis. This would give Mugabe an excuse to continue the war, thus depriving the settlement of much of its value. Continuing conflict and instability would be bad for the Rhodesians and bad for us. Only if we can show that Mugabe has had a fair chance to win power through elections but has failed can we be sure that he will not get outside support for continuing the war.” Telegram, Peter Carrington to British Consulate Salisbury, “Rhodesia,” January 21, 1980. FCO 36/2679, TNA.

Rhodesian war.”⁸⁰³ More than 2,000 civilians were killed in the span of six weeks. Thousands more were tortured and driven from their homes. The campaign, known as Operation *Gukurahundi* (“the rain that washes away the chaff”), continued for four years, until ZAPU’s back had been broken. By that time, some 20,000 Zimbabweans (mostly Ndebele and Kalanga) had been killed. Countless others had been tortured, maimed, and chased into exile. Mugabe’s henchmen made little attempt to cover up their involvement in the genocide. “ZANU-PF rules this country,” remarked police chief Enos Nkala, “and anyone who disputes that is a dissident and should be dealt with.”⁸⁰⁴

And so they have been. Every time Mugabe and his inner circle have sensed their grip on power beginning to slip away, they have responded with brutal force. By 2000, party officials had come to regard the country’s white population as the greatest threat to their power. On February 26, they initiated their infamous “fast-track” land reform program. In essence, “land reform” consisted of chasing white farmers – who had produced more than 90% of Zimbabwe’s maize (the country’s main staple) and almost all of the country’s export crops – from their land. The result has been nothing short of catastrophic, as a country which once served as the breadbasket of southern Africa has been ravaged by famine.⁸⁰⁵ The famine and subsequent economic collapse triggered a mass exodus of doctors, teachers, and skilled laborers, which sent the country into a tailspin from which it has yet to recover.⁸⁰⁶ As a result, Mugabe and his ministers now preside over a nation pockmarked by hyperinflation, the near complete collapse of

⁸⁰³ Meredith, *Our Votes, Our Guns*, 67.

⁸⁰⁴ Nkala quoted Meredith, *Our Votes, Our Guns*, 73. For more on Operation Gukurahundi, see *ibid.*, 59-76. See also, Joshua Nkomo, *Nkomo: The Story of My Life*, (London: Methuen, 1983), 235-245.

⁸⁰⁵ Meredith, *Our Votes, Our Guns*, 111-145, 166-189.

⁸⁰⁶ Historians may be especially interested to read Terence Ranger’s account of how ZANU-PF has attempted to propagate a one-sided account of Zimbabwean history called “patriotic history.” Ranger, “Nationalist Historiography, Patriotic History, and the History of the Nations: The Struggles over the Past in Zimbabwe,” *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol. 30, no. 2 (June 2004): 215-234.

its infrastructure, and a myriad of pandemics including malnutrition, malaria, cholera, and AIDS.⁸⁰⁷

Tempting as it may be to do so, Zimbabwe's woes cannot all be blamed on one man (not even a "strongman" like Robert Mugabe). Even many of Mugabe's critics recognize that the prime minister faced a number of daunting challenges upon assuming office in 1980. Perhaps the most vexing of these was the issue of "land reform." As noted in Chapter Five, the Lancaster House agreement sought to ensure that the Zimbabwean government did not confiscate white-owned farms after independence. While the British regarded this provision as vital to preventing a white exodus, it crystalized a situation in which a few thousand white farmers owned a disproportionate amount of the country's best farmland. Given that the unequal distribution of land had played a major role in fuelling the *Chimurenga*, it is widely acknowledged that the Lancaster House arrangement was not sustainable.⁸⁰⁸ Political scientist Mahmood Mamdani has recently suggested that although the methods employed were harsh, the "land redistribution" initiatives of the early 2000s were well-received by many Zimbabweans.⁸⁰⁹ A number of scholars have disputed this claim, yet even the least sympathetic among them have acknowledged that some segments of society viewed the farm invasions in a favorable light. "Mahmood Mamdani is correct to stress that Robert Mugabe is not just a crazed dictator or a corrupt thug," historian Terence Ranger wrote in 2009, "but that he promotes a programme and

⁸⁰⁷ See, for instance, *New York Times*, "Robert Mugabe vs. Zimbabwe," October 21, 2009.

⁸⁰⁸ Both critics and supporters of the "fast-track" land reform policies agree that there was a genuine need for land redistribution in Zimbabwe. See Mahmood Mamdani, "Lessons of Zimbabwe," *London Review of Books*, vol. 30, no. 4 (December 2008): 1-14 and the response by Timothy Scarnecchia et al, "Letters," *London Review of Books*, vol. 31, no. 1 January 1, 2009): 19-21, <http://www.lrb.co.uk/v30/n23/mahmood-mamdani/lessons-of-zimbabwe>.

⁸⁰⁹ "The people of Zimbabwe are likely to remember 2000-3 [the years when the last remaining white farmers were driven from their land] as the...the dawn of true independence" and "the end of the settler colonial era," Mamdani wrote in 2008. Mamdani, "Lessons of Zimbabwe," 2. The article touched off a storm of protest. See, for instance, eds. Sean Jacobs and Jacob Mundy, "Reflections on Mahmood Mamdani's Lessons of Zimbabwe," *ACAS Bulletin*, no. 82 (Summer 2009): 1-63, <http://concernedafricascholars.org/docs/acasbulletin82.pdf>

an ideology that are attractive to many in Africa and some in Zimbabwe itself.”⁸¹⁰ Cast in this light, Mugabe comes across less as an out-of-control despot than as a nationalist leader trying to redress the most egregious shortcomings of the Lancaster House agreement.

Some scholars have also suggested that Mugabe’s influence has been less pronounced in recent years than many outsiders appreciate. For instance, Sam Moyo and Paris Yeros have asserted that the land occupations of the early 2000s were not orchestrated by ZANU-PF elites, but rather, by a group of impoverished Zimbabweans unwilling to tolerate the white community’s continued dominance of the agricultural sector. It was not until 2003, they argue, that ZANU-PF officials decided to co-opt the movement.⁸¹¹ In this respect, Moyo and Yeros are in agreement with Mamdani, who has asserted that a group of land-hungry war veterans initiated the farm invasions against Mugabe’s wishes.⁸¹² In a similar vein, some scholars have questioned Mugabe’s role in the violence that followed the March 2008 elections. Political scientist Norma Kriger is among those who have suggested that Operation *Mavhoterapapi* (which translates to “where did you put your ‘x’?” or “how did you vote?”) was initiated by ZANU-PF hawks rather than by Mugabe himself.⁸¹³ Although these claims remain hotly-contested, they serve as a reminder that Zimbabwe’s problems run deeper than the country’s octogenarian leader and his determination to hold onto power. Indeed, Mugabe is hardly the only African leader to be afflicted from what political scientists have described as “big man syndrome.”⁸¹⁴

⁸¹⁰ Terrence Ranger, “Re: Lessons of Zimbabwe,” in *ACAS Bulletin*, vol. 82: 14.

⁸¹¹ Sam Moyo and Paris Yeros, “Zimbabwe Ten Years On: Results and Prospects,” *ACAS Bulletin*, no. 82: 28-35.

⁸¹² Mamdani, “Lessons of Zimbabwe,” 3-4, 6-7.

⁸¹³ See, for instance, Norma Krieger, “Can Elections End Mugabe’s Dictatorship?” in eds. Timothy Scarnecchia and Wendy Urban-Mead, “Special Issue on the 2008 Zimbabwe Elections,” *ACAS Bulletin*, no. 79 (Spring 2008): 3-4, <http://concernedafricascholars.org/docs/acasbulletin79.pdf>. Peter Godwin has also noted that Mugabe’s confessor suggested that “the old man” was prepared to step down after the 2008 elections, thereby reinforcing the notion that party hawks – rather than Mugabe himself – initiated Operation Mavhoterapapi. Godwin, *The Fear*, 24, 102.

⁸¹⁴ See, for instance, Richard Joseph, “Progress and Retreat in Africa: Challenges of a Frontier Region,” *Journal of Democratic Studies*, vol. 19, no. 2 (April 2008): 94-107.

Given the chaos which has enveloped Zimbabwe, few now regard the diplomatic process which enabled ZANU-PF to seize power as a resounding success. To the contrary, the country's downward spiral has spawned a veritable cottage industry as journalists, scholars, and pundits have attempted to answer the question: "what went wrong in Zimbabwe?"⁸¹⁵ Some critics – most notably Ian Smith – seem to revel in ZANU-PF's missteps.⁸¹⁶ While such criticism is to be expected from the former Rhodesian Prime Minister, some black Zimbabweans have joined Smith in mourning the passing of his white-supremacist regime. "When the country changed from Rhodesia to Zimbabwe, we were very excited," one man recently told a New York Times reporter. "But we didn't realize the ones we chased away were better and the ones we put in power would oppress us." Another Zimbabwean expressed similar sentiments. "It would have been better if whites had continued to rule," he opined. "It was better under Rhodesia. Then we could get jobs. Things were cheaper in stores. Now we have no money, no food."⁸¹⁷ This opinion is far from universally held, but it is hard to imagine a stronger indictment of Zimbabwe's current plight than the fact that some of those individuals whom the Rhodesian Front deprived of their most basic rights and liberties now yearn for the days of minority rule.

While it is difficult to do, historians must strive to avoid taking a teleological approach when studying the Rhodesian crisis, the Lancaster House settlement, and the country's 1980 election. For, as previously demonstrated, many people (both inside Zimbabwe and around the world) hailed the process which brought Mugabe to power as a resounding success for African

⁸¹⁵ There is a rapidly-growing body of scholarship on Mugabe's presidency. See, for example, Meredith, Our Votes, Our Guns; Godwin, The Fear; Holland, Dinner with Mugabe; Stephen Chan, Robert Mugabe: A Life of Power and Violence, (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2003); David Blair, Degrees in Violence: Robert Mugabe and the Struggle for Power in Zimbabwe, (New York: Continuum, 2002); and Andrew Norman, Robert Mugabe and the Betrayal of Zimbabwe, (Jefferson, NC: McFarland Publishers, 2004). Also of interest is the 2009 documentary, "Mugabe and the White African," which depicts one family's struggle to prevent Mugabe's thugs from seizing their farm.

⁸¹⁶ Smith, The Great Betrayal, 399.

⁸¹⁷ New York Times, "Postcard from Zimbabwe," April 7, 2010.

nationalism and a major blow against white rule in southern Africa.⁸¹⁸ Reggae icon Bob Marley, who performed at Zimbabwe's independence ceremony shortly before succumbing to a malignant form of melanoma, took this view. In his song "Zimbabwe," Marley congratulated those who had played a role in liberating Zimbabwe and urged them to put aside their differences for the good of their country. Many Westerners shared this hopeful vision. They praised the Lancaster House agreement and the popular election of a black prime minister. While some doubts about Mugabe's newfound moderation lingered, the worst case scenario of a black-white showdown seemed to have been averted. And with the end of the bush war, many hoped that a stable and prosperous Zimbabwe would encourage the South African government to begin dismantling apartheid.⁸¹⁹

None of this analysis should be seen as an excuse for Mugabe's disastrous economic policies and human rights violations. Nor is it meant to argue that the Lancaster House agreement was perfect. Nevertheless, it is important to remember that Zimbabwe's fate was not preordained. The country was dealt a difficult hand, but historical contingency has played an important role in its demise. Millions of Zimbabwean freely cast their ballot for Robert Mugabe in 1980, and amid the independence festivities, a sense of possibility pervaded the country. "There was a charged atmosphere of possibility," one white Zimbabwean later recalled. "We would show the world just what could be achieved in Africa's newest independent nation."⁸²⁰

The Christian Science Monitor was similarly optimistic about Zimbabwe's prospects. The

⁸¹⁸ Times of Zambia, "Zimbabwe is born! And the world celebrates," April 18, 1980, National Archives of Zambia, (hereafter NAZ). See also, New York Times, "Politics Without Revenge," April 24, 1980.

⁸¹⁹ As one high-ranking US official put it, "The success of Zimbabwe's experiment with nationhood sends a clear message to the region and the world about the prospects of lasting negotiated settlements in southern Africa and of reconciliation among the region's strife-torn peoples." Quoted in Meredith, Our Votes, Our Guns, 47. Jimmy Carter agreed, noting that, "At the time, it was clear to everyone that the end of apartheid [sic] in Rhodesia would set an example for future action in South Africa." Jimmy Carter, White House Diary, (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2010): 20.

⁸²⁰ Godwin, The Fear, 19.

situation there was enough to “put a glow in the heart when one considers the strife out of which Zimbabwe was born,” one article concluded.⁸²¹ That these expectations have not been realized is the true “tragedy of Zimbabwe.”

⁸²¹ Christian Science Monitor, “Reagan’s Right Course on Zimbabwe,” March 25, 1981, BTS, 1/33/8/3, vol. 37, SAA.

Conclusion

In introducing Henry Kissinger on April 27, 1976, Zambian Foreign Secretary Rupiah Banda noted that it was his country's "fervent hope" that the United States would "identify herself more positively with the oppressed peoples of southern Africa" and join the search for a Rhodesian settlement.⁸²² The Foreign Secretary's comment clearly reflected Kenneth Kaunda's belief that the United States was the only power capable of mediating the Rhodesian crisis before it spiraled out of control. This conviction helps to explain the Zambian President's emotional response to Kissinger's Lusaka Address; Kaunda was overjoyed that the Americans had finally decided to support the Zimbabwean cause after a decade of sitting on the fence. Henry Kissinger was hardly the white knight Kaunda had envisioned. Nevertheless, he hoped that the Secretary's Lusaka Address would mark the beginning of the end of the Rhodesian crisis.

But had the Zambians miscalculated by pinning their hopes on American intervention? In a sense, they had. For, as this dissertation has attempted to demonstrate, the United States was just one of the actors that helped to defuse the Rhodesian crisis. Moreover, the United States was far from the most important player in the mediation process. As demonstrated in Chapter Five, the Americans exercised virtually no influence over the 1979 Heads of Commonwealth Meeting and were only minor players during the Lancaster House negotiations. This may explain why few scholars have focused on the role that America played in facilitating Rhodesia's transition from minority rule to majority rule. In another respect, however, the American contribution was a significant one. Between 1976 and 1979, the Ford and Carter Administrations helped to convince African leaders such as Kenneth Kaunda, Samora Machel, and Julius Nyerere that a negotiated settlement remained within reach. By doing so, US officials helped to prevent

⁸²² Telegram, Henry Kissinger to State Department, "Exchange of Toasts: Secretary of State Kissinger and Foreign Minister Banda," April 27, 1976, <http://aad.archives.gov/aad/createpdf?rid=61643&dt=2082&dl=1345>.

southern Africa from sliding into an all-out race war that almost certainly would have prevented an agreement from being reached. Put another way, America's contribution to the Zimbabwean cause was not its ability to resolve the crisis but rather its ability to buy time for others to do so.

Interestingly, there were a number of US officials viewed who viewed the Rhodesian crisis as a British problem and would have preferred to let the British handle it on their own. As Robert Komer, a high-ranking member of the Johnson Administration opined in a December 1965 memorandum to the President, "There's no doubt that we ought to duck this mess if we can afford to, leaving it to the British or others. We already have enough even larger problems on our plate. But can we?"⁸²³

For a myriad of reasons, "ducking" the crisis did not prove to be a realistic option. One reason for this was domestic politics. In recent years, a number of historians of American foreign relations have emphasized the interrelationship between domestic politics and foreign policymaking. All seem to be in agreement that politics do not, in fact, stop at the water's edge.⁸²⁴ This was certainly the case during the Rhodesian crisis. As we have seen, domestic political considerations helped to shape America's Rhodesian policy – especially during the presidencies of Lyndon Johnson and Jimmy Carter. A number of prominent African Americans saw the Rhodesian crisis as an opportunity for their country to reaffirm its commitment to racial equality. Although Johnson and Carter were personally sympathetic toward the Zimbabweans'

⁸²³ Untitled Memorandum, Robert Komer to Lyndon Johnson, December 6, 1965, Rhodesia folder, National Security File, Files of Edward K. Hamilton, Box 3, Lyndon Johnson Presidential Library (hereafter, LBJL).

⁸²⁴ For more on the interrelationship between domestic politics and foreign policy, see Thomas Schwartz, "'Henry... Winning an Election is Terribly Important': Partisan Politics in the History of US Foreign Relations," Diplomatic History, vol. 33, no. 2, (April 2009): 173-190; Julian Zelizer, Arsenal of Democracy: The Politics of National Security – from World War II to the War on Terrorism, (New York: Basic Books, 2010); and Melvin Small, Democracy and Diplomacy: The Impact of Domestic Politics on U.S. Foreign Policy, 1789–1994, (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1996). These works support the models produced by political scientists such as Robert Putnam, Alex Mintz, and James Ray. See, Putnam, "Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games," International Organization, vol. 42, no. 3 (Summer 1988): 427-460; Mintz, "How Do Leaders Makes Decisions? A Poliheuristic Perspective," The Journal of Conflict Resolution, vol. 48, no. 1 (February 2004): 3-13; and Ray, "Rational Political Ambition Theory," ed. James Ray, American Foreign Policy and Rational Political Ambition, (Washington DC: CQ Press, 2008): 50-59.

plight, their support for the Zimbabwean cause was hardly rooted in altruism. To the contrary, both men believed that supporting majority rule in southern Africa would translate into more black votes come election time.

While the domestic angle cannot be ignored, it should not be overemphasized either. For although many African Americans urged US officials to back the Zimbabweans in their struggle for majority rule, there were powerful countervailing forces at work. A number of influential Americans (including former Secretary of State Dean Acheson, Senator Harry Byrd Junior, and presidential hopeful Ronald Reagan) sought to ensure that Ian Smith and his white supporters retained an inordinate amount of power in Rhodesia. At times, they were able to marshal a considerable degree of grassroots support.⁸²⁵ Despite these periodic bouts of interest, however, it is unlikely that many Americans lost much sleep worrying about Rhodesia. During the course of his African shuttle diplomacy, Henry Kissinger frequently told interlocutors that most Americans had never heard of such places as Rhodesia, which he quipped, “[T]hey probably think...is a country club on the way from New York to Westchester Country.”⁸²⁶ Polls tended to confirm Kissinger’s dim view of the American public’s knowledge of sub-Saharan Africa, suggesting that even many African Americans were not particularly well-informed about developments there.⁸²⁷ As a black-white issue, the Rhodesian crisis had the ability to incite passions.

⁸²⁵ Some Ford Administration officials believed that Henry Kissinger’s Lusaka speech (which was delivered on April 27, 1976) cost Ford the 1976 Texas primary (which was held on May 1). In his memoirs, Ford admitted that Kissinger’s Lusaka speech probably contributed to Reagan’s surprise victory in Texas. Memorandum, Dorrance Smith to Doug Blaser, “Re: Attached Report,” July 26, 1976, Press Office Improvement Sessions, 8/6-7/76 - Press Advance (2) folder, Ron Nessen Papers, Box 24, Gerald Ford Presidential Library (hereafter, GRFL) and Gerald Ford, *A Time to Heal: The Autobiography of Gerald R. Ford*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1979): 380-381.

⁸²⁶ Memorandum of a Conversation between Henry Kissinger and Joseph Mobutu, September 22, 1976, Digital National Security Archives (hereafter, DNSA).

⁸²⁷ Memorandum, Louis Martin to Jimmy Carter, “US Blacks and Rhodesia-Zimbabwe,” May 29, 1979, CO 129 Executive 5/1/79-6/30/79 folder, White House Central Files, Subject File, Box CO-51, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, (hereafter, JECL).

Nevertheless, most Americans remained much more concerned about domestic issues than they did about what was happening in faraway Rhodesia.

Given that Rhodesia's fate was not a major concern for most Americans, it seems fair to conclude that US officials were probably more concerned about the geopolitical and geostrategic implications of the Rhodesian crisis than they were about its domestic impact. More than anything, they were concerned about the possibility of the *Chimurenga* igniting a race war in southern Africa and about how African leaders would view the US response to Ian Smith's unilateral declaration of independence. As one member of the Johnson Administration surmised in a memorandum to the President, "Rhodesia itself isn't very important to us. But the point is that it's critical to all the other Africans. They see it as a straight anti-colonial issue, and their anti-white instincts are aroused. So our stance on this issue will greatly affect our influence throughout Africa – it will be a test of whether we mean what we say about self-determination and racialism."⁸²⁸ At a time when they were trying to gain as many allies as possible in their contest against the Soviet Union, US officials hoped to avoid alienating nations in the developing world (particularly in Africa) by overtly or tacitly supporting the Rhodesian rebels.

This brings us to the heart of the matter – namely, that US policymakers were deeply conscious of Cold War considerations as they crafted their Rhodesian policy. (For that matter, they were extremely aware of Cold War considerations as they crafted their African policy more generally – especially after the Congo crisis of the early 1960s).⁸²⁹ For although the Cold War was primarily fought in Europe and Asia between 1945 and 1975, US officials were determined

⁸²⁸ Untitled Memorandum, Robert Komer to Lyndon Johnson, December 6, 1965, Rhodesia folder, National Security File (NSF), Files of Edward K. Hamilton, Box 3, LBJL.

⁸²⁹ See, for instance, Richard Mahoney, *JFK: Ordeal in Africa*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983): 34-58 and Sean Kelly, *America's Tyrant: The CIA and Mobutu of Zaire*, (Lanham, MD: American University Press, 1993)

to preserve the Western bloc's position in sub-Saharan Africa.⁸³⁰ The Truman and Eisenhower Administrations had hoped that America's European allies would be able to prevent communism from taking root in Africa, but by the 1960s, as the continent began to emerge from colonial rule, it became apparent that the United States would either have to develop a more proactive African policy or risk "losing" the continent to the communist powers.⁸³¹ After Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev pledged to assist "wars of national liberation throughout the world" in 1961, American foreign policymakers became convinced that the Soviets were looking to exploit racial conflicts in southern Africa in order to carve out their own sphere of influence in the region.⁸³²

These fears of communist penetration were compounded by the assumption that African leaders were particularly vulnerable to communist subversion because they were politically "naïve" and unduly "emotional." This racially-informed attitude is evident in the comments of one of Lyndon Johnson's top aides, who warned that unless the Western powers took decisive action to quell the Rhodesian rebellion, they risked losing control of the situation to "a gaggle of irresponsible Africans, perhaps with Soviet support."⁸³³ This comment speaks not only to American concerns about Soviet involvement in southern Africa, but it probably also reflects a deeply-rooted racial hierarchy which placed Anglo-Europeans at the top and black Africans at the bottom.⁸³⁴ In order to prevent "irresponsible" African leaders from acting "precipitously,"

⁸³⁰ Even "Africanists" such as G. Mennen Williams were deeply concerned about Soviet and Chinese activities in sub-Saharan Africa. See, for instance, Untitled and undated memorandum by Mennen Williams, Rhodesia Memos & Misc. [1 of 2], Vol. 1: 12/63-1/66 folder, National Security File, Country File, Box 97, LBJL.

⁸³¹ Telegram, US Embassy London to Dean Rusk, "US-UK Talks on Africa," March 23, 1965 United Kingdom Cables, Vol. 3: 2/65-4/65 folder, National Security File, Country File, Box 207, LBJL.

⁸³² For more on Khrushchev's "wars of national liberation" speech and the American response to it, see Philip Muehlenbeck, *Betting on the Africans: John F. Kennedy's Courting of African Nationalist Leaders*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012): xi-xii.

⁸³³ Untitled memorandum, Robert Komer to Lyndon Johnson, December 6, 1965, Rhodesia folder, National Security File (NSF), Files of Edward K. Hamilton, Box 3, LBJL.

⁸³⁴ Many whites in Western Europe and North America has long regarded black Africans as the least physically, mentally, and morally developed "race." Indeed, a 1789 textbook unabashedly stated that black Africans were "a brutish people, having little more of humanity than the form." During the 19th century, notions of racial hierarchy were reinforced by pseudo-scientific "findings." According to prevalent theories of the day, black Africans were

US officials recognized that the West would need to engineer a solution to the Rhodesian crisis that brought a “moderate” black regime to power. They hoped the British would be able to achieve this feat, but once it became clear that the British were not up to the task, US officials became more directly involved in the mediation efforts. Thus, even in an area widely regarded as “a distant front in the Cold War,” American foreign policymakers could not escape the logic of the containment policy.

African Agency and the Rhodesian Crisis

While this dissertation has focused at length on America’s role in mediating the Rhodesian crisis, it has also sought to highlight the critical role that African statesmen played in this process. That African leaders played an important role in shaping the future of their continent should come as no surprise to scholars. After all, scholars have documented the many ways in which Africans resisted and ultimately undermined European colonial rule.⁸³⁵ While a number of scholars have examined the role that the Zimbabwean guerrillas played in bringing minority rule in Rhodesia to an end, the contributions of statesmen such as Kenneth Kaunda, Samora Machel, Julius Nyerere, and Olusegun Obasanjo have often gone unrecognized.⁸³⁶ This

“childlike,” incapable of dealing with the modern world, and in dire need of Anglo or European “uplift.” For more on race as a determinant of US foreign policy, see Michael Hunt, *Ideology and US Foreign Policy*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987): 46-91. It is interesting to note that such racially-charged language was rarely used to describe nationalist leaders in Latin America or Asia during the Cold War era. This may reflect the fact that these two groups had long occupied a higher position on the “racial ladder” than black Africans.

⁸³⁵ Most historians now operate under the assumption that Africans were the driving force behind decolonization. See, for instance, Frederick Cooper, “Conflict and Connection: Rethinking Colonial African History,” *The American Historical Review*, vol. 99, no. 5 (1994): 1516-1545 and Femi James Kolapo, Kwabena O Akurang-Parry, and A S Kanya-Forstner, eds., *African Agency and European Colonialism: Latitudes of Negotiation and Containment* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2007). See also a recent H-Diplo roundtable in which one author was taken to task for downplaying the agency of African actors. H-Diplo Roundtable Review of James P. Hubbard, *The United States and the End of British Colonial Rule in Africa, 1941-1968*, October 31, 2011.

⁸³⁶ See, for instance, David Martin and Phyllis Johnson, *The Struggle for Independence: The Chimurenga War*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1981); Terence Ranger, *Peasant Consciousness and Guerilla War in Zimbabwe*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985); and Norma Kriger, *Zimbabwe's Guerilla War: Peasant Voices*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

historical blind spot is difficult to explain since contemporary journalists were not shy about acknowledging the crucial role that Frontline Presidents and their colleagues in the Organization of African Unity (OAU) played in facilitating Rhodesia's transition to majority rule.⁸³⁷ In an effort to demonstrate the international nature of the search for Zimbabwean independence, this dissertation has attempted to at least partially rectify this omission.

As we have seen, the Frontline Presidents, the Commonwealth, and the OAU called upon the Western powers to crush the Rhodesian rebellion beginning in 1965. Because the British and their American allies never sent troops to Rhodesia, most scholars have deemed these calls impractical and ineffective. However, these assumptions must be questioned in light of recently-declassified archival materials. Members of the Johnson and Carter administrations feared that African leaders would regard their handling of the Rhodesian crisis as inadequate. And if American policymakers were worried about this possibility, the British (whose economic investments and Commonwealth ties meant that Africa was far more important to the United Kingdom than it was to the United States) were downright terrified about it. Although Harold Wilson opted to pursue a policy of economic sanctions, recently-declassified documents reveal that some British officials urged military intervention in Rhodesia if the only alternative was a break in relations with most of black Africa.⁸³⁸ Although sanctions were initially ineffective, they at least marked Rhodesia as a pariah state and ensured that the rebellious colony would not be recognized as a legitimate member of the international community. In this sense, while

⁸³⁷ See, for instance, New York Times, "Good News From Three Continents," November 19, 1979; "The Force of Diplomacy on Rhodesia," December 7, 1979; "Light Brightens in Rhodesian Tunnel," December 9, 1979, "Sheathing the Sword in Rhodesia," December 25, 1979; and The Washington Post, "Three Cheers for Rhodesia," December 19, 1979.

⁸³⁸ CIA Special Memorandum No. 30-65, "Possible UK Military Intervention in Southern Rhodesia," December 21, 1965, Rhodesia Memos & Misc. [1 of 2], Vol. 1: 12/63-1/66 folder, National Security File, Country File (Africa-Rhodesia), Box 97, LBJL. Declassified documents in the British National Archives confirm that although the use of military force in Rhodesia was considered incredibly risky, it was not entirely ruled out. Note by the Commonwealth Relations Office, "The Use of Military Force in Rhodesia," April 20, 1966, DO 164/89, British National Archives (hereafter, TNA).

Kenneth Kaunda and his African colleagues failed to convince the British and Americans to drive Ian Smith and his followers from power, they were able to ensure that Rhodesia did not become “another South Africa” (i.e., an internationally-recognized apartheid state).

African statesmen further contributed to the Zimbabwean cause by providing public support, weapons, and safe havens for the Zimbabwean guerrillas. Although this dissertation has not focused explicitly on the *Chimurenga*, it was the bush war more than any other single factor which brought Rhodesia’s white-supremacist leaders to the negotiating table. Ian Smith and his followers were not about to voluntarily cede power, and Britain was in no position to bludgeon them into doing so. It is therefore unlikely that the Rhodesian Front would have agreed to relinquish power if not for the bush war. But while much has been written about the guerrillas, less attention has been paid to the price that the Frontline Presidents (most notably, Kenneth Kaunda and Samora Machel) paid for allowing ZANU and ZAPU to operate out of their countries. Rhodesian raids (such as the one on Nyadzonya) could be devastating, and the guerrillas eventually wore out their welcome. For these reasons, it should come as no surprise that Kaunda and Machel’s steadfast support for the *Chimurenga* caused their domestic support to dwindle over time. Thus, while recognizing the important role that the Zimbabwean guerrillas played in bringing majority rule to Rhodesia, it is also important to recognize the sacrifices that the Frontline Presidents made on their behalf.

In addition to supporting the *Chimurenga*, African statesmen used their diplomatic and economic leverage to facilitate a Rhodesian settlement in 1979. Shortly after Ian Smith broke with the British in 1965, Ghanaian President Kwame Nkrumah bemoaned the Commonwealth’s inability to convince Britain to impose majority rule at gunpoint. “[I]t is very doubtful if effective pressure can...be brought to bear against Britain by the Commonwealth on the

Southern Rhodesian issue,” he lamented in a letter to his Nigerian counterpart.⁸³⁹ While frustrated over Britain’s refusal to use force, Nkrumah’s pessimism was largely unjustified. Not only did African pressure compel British officials to assume a more confrontational position vis-à-vis the Rhodesian Front than they otherwise would have done, but Nigeria’s oil wealth enabled General Obasanjo to convince Margaret Thatcher to abandon her support for the “internal settlement” in 1979. The Frontline Presidents also applied considerable pressure on Robert Mugabe and Joshua Nkomo at key moments during the Lancaster House negotiations – all but forcing the guerrilla leaders to accept Britain’s final terms.

Although the Lancaster House agreement has been far from perfect, it was seen as a diplomatic coup at the time. Not only was it expected to prevent the racial conflagration that many international commentators had seen as inevitable, but it was also expected to set a precedent for change in Namibia and South Africa. International commentators realized that there were key differences the Rhodesian and Namibian cases, yet they maintained that the situations were linked “politically and psychologically” and that “a breakthrough on one would encourage [the] resolution of the other.”⁸⁴⁰ Pundits also expected the successful mediation of the Rhodesian crisis to “play usefully” in the intense debate that South Africans were conducting about their country’s future.⁸⁴¹ The search for Zimbabwean independence had been long and arduous, but in the end, many international commentators concluded that it had been worth it. One particularly-optimistic New York Times article lauded Margaret Thatcher and Jimmy Carter for resisting right-wing pressure to recognize the “internal settlement.” “The success of the...[Lancaster House] Conference supports the position of those in America and Britain who

⁸³⁹ Untitled telegram, Commonwealth Relations Office to British High Commission Canberra and other posts, January 7, 1966, DO 153/33, TNA.

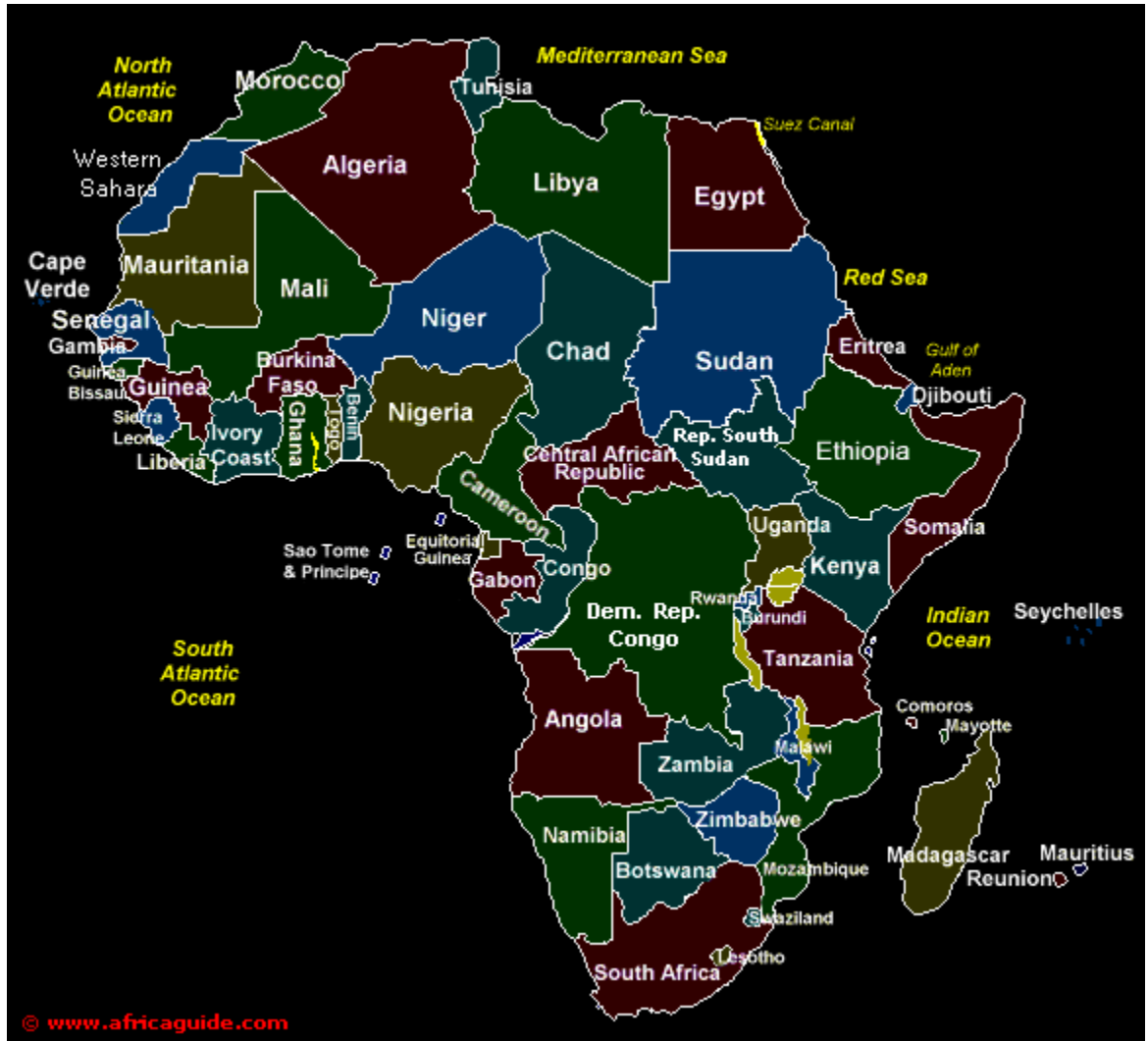
⁸⁴⁰ New York Times, “Rhodesian Settlement Raising US Hopes for Namibia,” December 26, 1979.

⁸⁴¹ Washington Post, “Three Cheers for Rhodesia,” December 19, 1979.

have argued that our interest lies in settling African problems in an African, not an East-West context,” the author noted.⁸⁴² While such articles reflect the optimism generated by the Lancaster House agreement, they give far too much credit to the British and Americans. For, as this dissertation has attempted to demonstrate, it took the combined efforts of the Organization of African Unity, the Commonwealth, the United Kingdom, and the United States to finally defuse the Rhodesian crisis.

⁸⁴² New York Times, “At Home Abroad: Lessons of Rhodesia,” December 20, 1979.

Africa, 2012



Southern Africa



Zimbabwe



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