The Right in this country is having a growing impact on U.S. policy toward Zimbabwe and the rest of southern Africa that threatens to entangle the U.S. in opposition to human rights and majority rule. However, some voices within the Administration and increasingly in Congress favor phony solutions like the "internal settlement" in Rhodesia in which Africans would have nominal political control, but would not be able to fundamentally change the institutions which sustain the privilege of the white few amidst the poverty and powerlessness of the black majority.

As the liberation movements in Zimbabwe (Rhodesia) and Namibia have come closer to winning self-determination, the Right wing has placed a high priority on opposing what they regard as "communist, terrorist Africans backed by the Soviet Union." Since the March 3rd agreement, the Right has been wooing organizations, members of Congress and influential media which consider themselves moderate or even liberal. The Washington Post, the New Republic and the Coalition for a Democratic Majority have all expressed sympathy for the Rhodesian "internal settlement," indicating the success of this strategy.

At the same time, the Administration is caught in the dilemma of espousing self-determination for the people of Zimbabwe while trying to ensure that this process does not endanger Western economic and strategic interests. The Carter Administration broke new ground in announcing its support for majority rule in all of southern Africa. But it has done little to force the Smith regime to yield power to the African majority in Zimbabwe.

Right Wing Initiatives: The Push to Lift Sanctions

In early 1978, the Republican party declared that the Carter Administration's failure to stop "marxist terrorists" in southern African would be a key issue against the President's record. Rep. John Ashbrook (R-Ohio) summarized this view: "President Carter is . . . more willing to embrace terrorists and guerillas than a moderate anti-Communist government in Rhodesia."

What followed was an array of Right-wing initiatives in Congress to help Ian Smith's regime. Led by Sen. Jesse Helms (R-NC), a long-time enemy of the civil rights movement, the goal was to end U.S. compliance with sanctions against Rhodesia. The United Nations, with U.S. support, had imposed mandatory international diplomatic and economic sanctions against Rhodesia in response to Smith's unilateral declaration of independence in 1965. On June 28, 1978, an amendment to unconditionally lift sanctions against Rhodesia for one year failed by only six votes.

One month later, a second attempt to lift sanctions resulted in the adoption of the compromise "Case-Javits amendment." It requires the President to lift sanctions if he determines that the Smith regime is committed to an all-parties conference and free elections have been held under international observation.

Ian Smith's visit to the U.S. in October was a fitting climax to the 1978 Right-wing campaign. Invited by Sen. S.I. Hayakawa (R-CA) and 27 of his colleagues, Smith and other members of the Rhodesian executive council launched a major propaganda campaign aimed at Congress and the public. The Right organized and programmed Smith's show—from Senate press conferences to prime time T.V. talk-shows and interviews.

Receptions for Smith were sponsored by such groups as the Coalition for Peace Through Strength, the American Security Council and the American Conservative Union. Among Republican notables who met with him and generally supported the internal settlement were Gerald R. Ford, Henry Kissinger, David Rockefeller, John Connolly and Ronald Reagan.

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on March 3, 1978 Ian Smith and three leading African moderates, Abel Muzorewa, Ndabinini Sithole and Jeremiah Chirau, agreed to commit Rhodesia to ten more years of white domination of its government and economy.

The March 3rd Agreement promised a new constitution and elections by December 31, 1978. However, elections have been postponed at least until April 20, 1979, and the promise of democracy continues unfulfilled. If and when elections are held, blacks will not be registered to vote; whites will be. Blacks will have to vote a straight party ticket; whites will vote for whomever they please. Whites will be permitted a referendum on the new constitution; blacks will not. In addition, the two Patriotic Front parties which control one-half to two-thirds of the country are banned and, therefore, excluded from the elections.

The March 3rd Agreement included constitutional provisions which could not be altered for ten years. For at least ten years the civil service, police, military and judges appointed by Smith's Rhodesian Front Party will stay intact. Property and pension rights, the only rights enumerated in a proposed Declaration of Rights, are also immutable.

The Agreement mandated a legislature in which black representation would increase but be circumscribed by the white minority's power to veto any legislation involving substantive change. The black 96% of the population would vote for 72 of the 100 seats in the legislature. The 3-4% white population would vote for all 100 seats with 28 seats reserved for whites. Even if all black legislators supported a proposed change, 21% of the white legislators would have to support it for it to be enacted. Under these provisions each white vote will have nine times the weight of each black vote.

Political Participation and Majority Rule

The most glaring defect in the Internal Settlement is its exclusion of the people who have struggled since 1961 first to reform and later,—when banned, persecuted and imprisoned,—to overthrow the Smith government. The Patriotic Front is a union of two political parties, ZANU and ZAPU, which combine diverse political philosophies and share a commitment to immediate transfer of power to the African majority.

The Patriotic Front took up arms against Ian Smith more than six years ago. Robert Mugabe and Joshua Nkomo, leaders of the Patriotic Front, were imprisoned by Smith for ten years for opposing minority rule. They have consistently offered to negotiate with Smith and his colleagues on the basis of the British-American proposals. The Patriotic Front has not accepted the ten-year framework for majority rule set forth in the March 3rd Agreement since its goal is a society in which blacks and whites can contribute and benefit equally, and where white privileges will be ended.

Smith continues to oppose the British-American proposals. In October 1978 he said he would negotiate with no preconditions. The Patriotic Front, knowing Smith as they do, are suspicious of such an offer. They maintain that Smith only wants the West to perceive his offer as reasonable and a just cause for lifting sanctions. With the war costing his government $1 million a day and with whites emigrating at a rate of 1500 a month, Smith needs Western support to continue in power.

In moments of candor Smith himself admits that his seeming acceptance of eventual majority rule is a myth designed for Western consumption. In an interview with the South African newspaper, The Rand Daily Mail (6/1/78), he said:

"...[1976] was the first time we had indicated we were prepared to accept this thing called majority rule. Before that we had been opposed to it, I believed rightly so. In principle I am still opposed to it. I think it is the wrong thing."

Maneuvers to Lift Sanctions?

In 1977 Britain and the U.S. proposed a plan to create an independent Zimbabwe with majority rule and protection of the minority. The plan was accepted as a basis of negotiation by the Patriotic Front and the Front-Line States which border Rhodesia. The plan included 1) surrender of the Smith government to a British-supervised transitional administration, 2) appointment of a British Resident Commissioner to oversee a six month transitional period, 3) all-parties negotiations to design the new country's government, and 4) creation of a U.N. Force to maintain peace in the six months prior to elections.

In proposing the March 3 Agreement Smith rejected those British-American proposals. Rather than six months to majority rule, he agreed to ten years; rather than surrendering, he admitted three black leaders into his government. In effect, Smith maintained the institutions which have prevented black participation in Rhodesia's government and economy for 14 years. Smith hoped the presence of Africans in his government would lend credibility to the minimal concessions he was making and would quiet international clamor for a transfer of power to the African majority.

Smith hoped to persuade the West to lift the economic sanctions which had been imposed in 1965 by the United Nations at Britain's request. Sanctions require a complete embargo on relations with Rhodesia: no trade, no transfer of money, no recognition of passports. The U.N. embargo was expected to force Smith to resign. But its effectiveness was undermined by the deliberate violations of five Western oil companies: Mobil, Caltex (Texaco), Royal Dutch Shell, BP and Total (French). Disguising their law-breaking through paper corporations, these five firms continue to supply Rhodesia with oil.

Despite these violations, sanctions combined with six years of armed resistance by the Patriotic Front have taken their toll. Smith was forced to look for a way to persuade the West to end sanctions. Bringing Africans into his government and allowing a limited increase in black representation in the legislature seemed to be his answer.
Conditions Under the Internal Settlement

The internal settlement has made conditions worse, not better, for the majority of Zimbabweans:

Political Repression: Nothing approaching political freedom exists in Zimbabwe today. All security legislation enacted by the Rhodesian Front regime since 1965 is still on the books, and the State of Emergency was renewed for another year in 1978. Around 500,000 Africans live in "protected villages," which even Ian Smith called "prisons" in September. Curfews, as long as 22 hours a day, are imposed in virtually all tribal trust lands; curfew-breakers are summarily shot. Since September 1978, martial law has been imposed on almost 75% of the population. New military courts will have the power to sentence alleged guerrillas, and those accused of helping them, to death. Every member of the army and police has the power to impose indefinite detention without trial.

Racial Discrimination: The promise of an end to racial segregation was one of the strongest arguments in support of the internal settlement. But steps in this direction have been slow and insignificant. While Smith was in the United States, the Executive Council announced that it was considering ending official segregation in white residential areas, schools and hospitals. But racial segregation will be replaced by a legalized multi-tiered system of "monetary discrimination," according to Rowan Cronje, white minister of health and education. In a country where white income is 11 times that of Africans, de facto segregation will rule.

Freedom of the Press: In October 1978, the transitional government closed the only remaining black-operated paper in Zimbabwe, the Zimbabwe Times. Journalists are forbidden to mention the Patriotic Front or its leaders, and censors routinely replace the word "guerrilla" with "terrorist." Journalists who don't follow the government line are silenced. Black reporters critical of the internal settlement have been arrested or have disappeared.

Detentions and Political Prisoners: In April and May more than 700 political detainees were released by the transitional government. But, according to testimony of the well-respected International Defense and Aid Fund for Southern Africa before the U.N. Commission on Human Rights in August: "New prisoners have replaced those freed . . . police harassment and arrested have intensified." Since then, an additional 700 people, mostly ZAPU supporters, have been detained. The release program never included at least 1,570 political prisoners convicted under the Law and Order (Maintenance) Act and other repressive legislation.

The War and its Atrocities: Since the signing of the internal settlement, the war has intensified and the army and police have continued their attacks on the people. In the Gutu Tribal Trust Land in May 1978, security forces fired on an unarmed crowd listening to a representative of the Patriotic Front. According to reliable church sources inside the country, as the crowd of about 150 lay face down on the ground, the regime's forces shot directly at them. At least 60 people died immediately. The government communiqué on the incident read simply: "In the resulting firefight 50 curfew-breakers were killed, and another 24 wounded."

The Rhodesian army has also continued its devastating attacks on Mozambique and Zambia, killing hundreds of Zimbabweans. In five major attacks since March 3rd, the Rhodesian military has killed and wounded mostly civilian refugees, claiming attacks on guerrillas. While Smith promised in Washington to go to an all-parties conference, he simultaneously launched the largest single cross-border operation of the war into Zambia.

Who's Who in Rhodesia

Groups Participating in the Internal Settlement:

ANC (African National Council-Sithole) Rev. Ndabaningi Sithole, President. Sithole was President of ZANU until 1974 when he was deposed. Sithole still calls his organization ANC (Sithole) and "ZANU" interchangeably.
ZUPO (Zimbabwe United People's Organization) Chief Jeremiah Chirau, President. Chirau, a traditional chief, has long participated in the Rhodesian Front government. ZUPO was formed in 1976.
Rhodesian Front Party, Ian Smith, leader. Has held power since 1964. Unilaterally declared independence from Britain in 1965, leading to imposition of U.N. sanctions.

Groups Opposed to the Internal Settlement:

ZAPU (Zimbabwe African People Union) Joshua Nkomo, President. Formed in 1961 after other opposition groups were banned. Engaged in peaceful protest which was harshly repressed, then turned to armed struggle. Carries out guerrilla activity from Zambia.
ZANU (Zimbabwe African National Union) Robert Mugabe, President. Created in 1963 after split within ZAPU. Carries out guerrilla activity from Mozambique. ZAPU and ZANU have united for negotiating purposes, forming the Patriotic Front.
Front-Line States. Five countries surrounding Zimbabwe involved in negotiations since 1976. Tanzania (President Julius Nyerere), Mozambique (President Samora Machel), Angola (President Agostinho Neto), Zambia (President Kenneth Kaunda) and Botswana (President Seretse Khama).
The White House and The Cold War

The White House, on the defensive due to its ineptness at Cold War politics in Africa, knuckled under to let Smith into the country. The Administration had hoped that its tough talk since the May ’78 Zaire crisis would create the image of a strong policy against Communism in Africa. But the Right wing built momentum on the issue and began to throttle the Administration with its own pronouncements.

The visa granted to Smith is only one recent example of the Carter Administration’s backsliding in the face of corporate and Right-wing pressure. The Administration’s mild response to Rhodesia’s raids into Mozambique and Zambia while Smith was still in Washington was a source of anger and frustration to many Africans. In addition, Carter had failed, as have previous administrations, to stop U.S. oil firms from supplying Rhodesia through their South African subsidiaries.

For the most part, liberals in Congress remained silent about the Smith visit. Africa Subcommittee Chairman Dick Clark (D-Iowa) kept a low profile, fearing red-baiting by his arch-conservative opponent, Roger Jepsen. Indeed, Clark’s ’78 election defeat is a serious loss of progressive Senate leadership on Africa policy.

Smith’s Impact

In his effort to have sanctions lifted, Smith took his argument to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. He said the Rhodesian regime would satisfy the Case-Javits requirements by agreeing to an all-parties conference with no preconditions and holding elections sometime in the future.

Smith’s decision was applauded by the Carter Administration. However, by agreeing to a conference without preconditions, the Administration has backed away from previous agreements with the Patriotic Front made under the original Anglo-American plan as the basis for conference discussion: (1) to disband the current Rhodesian military and police force, and (2) to hold elections before independence.

The Administration’s response to Smith’s visit confirmed suspicions that the U.S. is abandoning its professed neutrality and preference for democratic processes. In early September, U.S. and British negotiators proposed a new “Option B” which would eliminate elections before independence and designate one person as chairman of a transitional government. The new proposal appeared only weeks after a secret meeting (which Britain had encouraged with U.S. knowledge) between Ian Smith and Joshua Nkomo of ZAPU, without ZANU President Robert Mugabe. Taken together, these shifts in the western negotiating position threaten the unity of the Patriotic Front and Front-Line States and give new hope to Ian Smith.

We must be prepared in 1979 to challenge Right-wing moves in Congress to lift sanctions against Rhodesia, and to press the Administration to support a democratic solution in Zimbabwe. The Right has had the initiative on Zimbabwe for too long; those who support a progressive southern Africa policy must now seize it.

Stop Congress From Lifting Sanctions!

We know that the Right will prepare another attack on sanctions in 1979. We must take the initiative and raise our voices now!

Write your Senators and Congressmen. Tell them why the internal settlement is not an acceptable solution and does not merit the lifting of sanctions. Get their position on record now!

Spur the Administration to more positive action. Write President Carter and Secretary of State Vance. Tell them the internal settlement is not a solution and an all-parties conference with no preconditions is in violation of previous U.S.-Patriotic Front agreements. Urge them to stop sanctions violations by oil firms as this undermines the possibility of an all-parties solution and helps maintain the Smith regime.


Become part of an Action Network. Contact the Washington Office on Africa (110 Maryland Ave. NE, Washington, D.C. 20002) or the Coalition to join the Action Alert Network. Know when to mobilize for the coming Congressional battles.

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