CHICAGO COALITION TO VANCE: "DENY SMITH VISA"

The Chicago Coalition on Southern Africa today called upon Secretary of State Cyrus Vance to refuse a visa to Ian Smith, Prime Minister of the unconstitutional regime in Rhodesia. Smith has been invited by the Church of Christian Liberty of Prospect Heights to attend a seminar in the Chicago area on July 29. (Text of the letter is enclosed.)

"Smith has accepted the invitation to come to Chicago, but his visit here is dependent upon the issuance of a visa by the U.S. State Department," stated Father Charles Dahm, Coalition spokesperson. Dahm's letter to Vance pointed out that Smith's regime represents the rule of a 5% white minority over the black peoples of Rhodesia.

"At this time a visit from Smith would signal hesitation on the part of the U.S. government to support majority rule for African nations," Dahm informed Vance. He added: "Surely the Carter Administration would not wish to appear inconsistent before the world regarding its commitment to self-government and human rights."

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"All circumstantial evidence indicates Smith's visit to be part and parcel with a move by the right-wing reactionary Senator Jesse Helms of North Carolina to remove all existing sanctions against Rhodesia," continued Dahm. Helms is currently sponsoring legislation (the Security Assistance Authorization Bill, S.3075) which would end sanctions against Rhodesia and repeal the Clark amendment. The Clark Amendment cut off funding for military and paramilitary operations in Angola.

Father Dahm stated, "We already have enough nazis to contend with without our government easing the importation of more." If Smith gets a visa and appears in Prospect Heights, Dahm promised massive demonstrations "protesting our government's complicity with this violent racist."

The Chicago Coalition on Southern Africa is preparing contingency plans in case the State Department does allow Smith to come to Chicago. Father Dahm said, "Right now we are alerting community, religious and labor organizations to the possibility of Smith's visit. Further, we are planning our logistics and will be contacting the mayor and police chief of Prospect Heights later today to get details settled for picketing and a route of march."
Dear Mr. Secretary:

We are writing you with a great sense of urgency. Ian Smith, Prime Minister of the unconstitutional and illegal white dominated regime in Rhodesia, has been invited to attend a seminar on July 29 at the Church of Christian Liberty of Prospect Heights here in the Chicago region. Mr. Smith and the other members of his executive council have accepted this invitation. Press reports indicate that Mr. Smith's appearance in Chicago will be dependent upon the granting of a visa by the State Department.

We strongly urge that you do not issue a visa to Ian Smith. Currently the United States does not recognize the Smith regime as a legitimate government because they have violated the fundamental constitutional mandate of the British Commonwealth. The approval of a visit by Mr. Smith will diminish the force of our sanctions against his regime. In fact, it is our understanding that up to this point Smith has never been granted a U.S. visa.

At this time a visit from Smith would signal hesitation on the part of the U.S. government to support majority rule for African nations. As is well known, Smith's regime represents the rule of a 5% white minority over the people of Zimbabwe. Changes in this racist minority system of rule require that the decent nations of the world continue to ostracize this illegitimate government. Even the minor concessions that Smith has made to include in his government some prominent blacks who favor the continuance of the white minority as the most powerful political force in Rhodesia was dependent upon international pressure. Surely the Carter Administration would not wish to appear inconsistent before the world regarding its commitment to self-government and human rights.
Embarrassment generated by a visit of Mr. Smith would not be limited to the international scene. We promise that if you issue a visa to Smith and he appears in Prospect Heights, there shall be major demonstrations protesting our government's complicity with this violent racist. We already have enough nazis to contend with in the Chicago area without the importation of more.

Sincerely yours,

Fr. Charles Dahm

Father Charles Dahm, O.P.

For the Chicago Coalition on Southern Africa