October 16, 1969

Dear Friend:

As the enclosed memorandum points out, the Nixon Administration is about to provide de facto recognition to the white minority racist regime of Ian Smith in Rhodesia by keeping the U.S. Consulate functioning there. This appears to be the first major step by Nixon toward remodeling U.S. policy towards all of Southern Africa - a policy which will provide more direct political and economic support for racism and colonialism.

The Department of State recommended to the White House that the U.S. withdraw its Consulate from Rhodesia, following British precedent when Governor General Sir Humphrey Gibbs resigned in June after the white Rhodesian electorate voted to establish a Republic. But the White House, more sensitive to right-wing and business pressures, has decided to maintain its Consulate in Salisbury, Rhodesia. There are also indications that the U.S. will end sanctions on chrome imports from Rhodesia.

In his domestic policy, Nixon has already shown no concern for the black community; he is prepared now to wipe black Africa out of his sight, a realistic appraisal given Nixon's speech before the United Nations where there was no mention of Africa. Now is the time to let our voices be heard. We who see what's happening must speak out and work in many ways. We should respond to this immediate action by Nixon; we should also recognize the legitimacy of and support the African liberation movements struggling in Zimbabwe (Rhodesia), Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, Namibia (South West Africa) and South Africa.

If you are at all concerned about these developments, and in particular Nixon's policy supporting the white minority Smith regime, write or telegram now calling for the immediate removal of the U.S. Consulate, the strengthening of economic sanctions against Rhodesia, and no backsliding. Contact the President (the White House, Washington, D.C.); your Congressman and Senators; and key Senators including Senate Minority Leader Hugh Scott (R-Pa.); Senate Majority Leader Michael Mansfield (D-Mont); and member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Jacob Javits, (R-N.Y.)

Sincerely,

George M. Houser

P.S. We would appreciate copies of your correspondence. Thank you.
THE UNITED STATES CONSULATE IN RHODESIA SHOULD BE CLOSED

U.S. Mission Remains in Salisbury - Why?

In June Britain severed diplomatic relations with the break-away government of Rhodesia. It was assumed by both the British and some American State Department personnel that the United States would follow Britain's lead - a natural expectation given the imitative pattern of American policy towards Rhodesia in the past. But today the United States still maintains a six man Consulate in Salisbury. This despite the fact that foreign missions in Rhodesia were not accredited to the illegal regime of Prime Minister Ian Smith (which no government officially recognizes), but rather to the remnant legal authority of Britain as represented by the Queen's appointee, Sir Humphrey Gibbs. The underlying reasons for American deviation from British wishes, and the implications for this change in U.S. policy must be examined.

The British Pullout

On June 24, 1969, Sir Humphrey Gibbs, British 'Governor' of Rhodesia and the only formal link between Britain and the Smith government, submitted his formal resignation to the Queen with these parting comments,

"As there appears to be no chance of a negotiated settlement between Britain and Rhodesia in the foreseeable future there is no further useful purpose to be served by my remaining in office."

Thus the charade of British responsibility toward bringing about an end to the Smith status quo terminated. The final break, after three and a half years of diplomatic maneuvering, was the culmination of decisions made by the Rhodesian Front government to shore up its position through a referendum on a new apartheid constitution and a vote to alter the status of Rhodesia to that of a Republic. In spite of the total exclusion of the African majority from the diplomatic processes (i.e. Tiger and Fearless Talks), and therefore the enhanced possibility of compromise between settler and mother country Europeans, Smith, his hawks and allies decided to cut the cord with Britain. The referendum which the white Rhodesian minority supported not only moved towards entrenching apartheid, but endorsed becoming a Republic. The British response of formally pulling out and finally rejecting an unfulfilled responsibility followed logically.

The British Consular Mission and passport office closed down in Salisbury, and in London, famed Rhodesia House was shut. The British have kept the diplomatic door open for discussion with non-Smith forces inside Rhodesia, but in essence dropped out of any direct negotiating.

The U.S. Reaction - Nixon Backtracking

A New York Times release datelined Washington on June 24 implied that the Department of State planned to remove the U.S. Consular Mission from Salisbury, and reported an official's denunciation of the Rhodesian referendum as a "travesty of commonly accepted methods of asserting popular will." Earlier in June, Ambassador Yost at the United Nations again supported the British political line by calling the Smith government an "illegal white minority regime," while refraining from strong political or economic steps.
But as time passed, it became clear that the United States was planning to sit tight in Salisbury, even though according to the Washington Post, the State Department had submitted a clear recommendation to the White House asking that the Consulate be withdrawn. Justifications for remaining were that the U.S. did not have to move since Rhodesia had not yet declared herself a Republic, and that therefore the British authority (the Queen) was still recognized. In addition, it was explained that the Consul had to stay in order to protect the 1,000 or so American citizens resident in Rhodesia. And finally, the Executive under the firm hand of National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger begged for time as it was undertaking an entire policy review on Southern Africa. It became apparent that State Department decision makers had been circumscribed by more powerful officials.

The Nixon Constituency - The Reason for Staying

The new U.S. policy of de facto recognition of the Ian Smith regime, ironically the first "independent" American move on Rhodesia, appears to be the result of various pressures to which President Nixon and others are responsive. These influences go beyond the pro-Rhodesian "Friends of Rhodesia" types and the Southern bloc Congressmen to include the mining business establishment of Union Carbide and others who are eager to retain formal links with Rhodesia with an eye toward prying loose sanctions. In fact the growing certainty of the decision to stay in Rhodesia reflects the new toehold of mining and no doubt other business interests in the Nixon framework. On Rhodesian policy, the basic Nixon constituency of conservative politicos, homespun border and Midwestern Ian Smith admirers, and the corporate establishment come together.

The Chrome Argument

An integral part of the right-wing pressure on reversing U.S. policy in Rhodesia concerns the rising price of chrome ore imports. Before Smith's Unilateral Declaration of Independence (U.D.I.) on November 11, 1965, metallurgical quality chromite was imported in about equal quantities from Rhodesia and the Soviet Union. The chromite from the U.S.S.R. has always been a better ore (higher chrome content) and has always commanded a higher price. Since U.D.I., the U.S. has been buying more ore from the Soviet Union and at a higher price, as well as importing more from other chrome producers such as South Africa, Pakistan and Turkey. In the last few years, it must be remembered, the overall international mineral price index has risen, and most mineral imports have also become more expensive due to increased industrialization and widening demand outside the United States.

According to the right-wing, however, U.D.I. (i.e. Sanctions) is forcing the U.S. to pay more to the Russian "enemy." Meanwhile, Union Carbide Corporation with chrome mines in Rhodesia, cries that the higher prices make its ferro-chrome alloys more expensive and less competitive with ferro-chrome imports from Japan, etc. But the fact is that U.S. ferro-chrome was already poorly competitive before U.D.I. and that U.S. manufacturers were asking for import quotas at that time. The right-wing cum business arguments are geared to engender political polemics and raise the hackles of anti-Communism, while ignoring the economic reality and accepting the racism of the Smith regime.
U.S. Consulate in Rhodesia Should Be Closed

The Shift in U.S. Policy towards Southern Africa

The significance, therefore, of the continuation of an official American presence in Rhodesia is not the Consulate per se. Rather the decision indicates a new American flexibility on Southern Africa; to deviate from British appeals and thus break a pattern; to more blatantly defy the international community on the sanctions issue; to satisfy raw economic demands. Nixon's lack of responsiveness to the black community in America is simply being reaffirmed in his African policy.

Britain has apparently called on the United States again to show solidarity and get out of Rhodesia. Reports from London indicate that the U.S. Consul General in Rhodesia, Mr. W. Paul O'Neill, met with the British Under Secretary for Rhodesia in the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office en route to the United States. Michael Stewart, U.K. Foreign Minister also met with Secretary of State Rogers in New York on the same issue. But subsequently Consul O'Neill returned to Salisbury, and there are more and more indications that he will stay there!

Smith and other white Rhodesians are not only grateful, but elated. Because the U.S. did not follow British precedent, a number of other foreign missions have remained in Salisbury, including those of Denmark, West Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland (and of course Portugal and South Africa.) The Consulate issue in Rhodesia has become a wedge to alter the even superficial commitments by former administrations to oppose white supremacist Southern Africa. It was the Rhodesian example through the application of mandatory sanctions in support of the United Nations, in addition to the former stated policy of an American arms embargo against South Africa plus ad hoc decisions such as preventing U.S. Government vessels from landing in South Africa, which made up the sum and substance of an American policy deviating slightly from the wishes of white Southern Africa. And with the widening of the wedge, the stronger commitment to minority rule in Rhodesia and elsewhere, the more the United States aids those forces opposing the true liberation of Southern Africa.

Congressional Considerations

The whole question of diplomatic recognition by the U.S. Government must be placed in a new context after passage of the "sense of the Senate" Cranston (D-Calif.) Resolution. In essence the resolution says that diplomatic recognition should not be founded on approval or disapproval of a foreign country, but rather on whether or not it is in the national interest of the United States to offer recognition. Although primarily focused on the question of U.S. relations with the Far East, some conservatives have tended to use the resolution to support continued relations with Rhodesia. This sort of reasoning ignores, regardless of the intent of the Cranston Resolution, the fact that Rhodesia is not a de jure independent government but according to our own policy statements a British colony and an illegal regime; that the Smith government represents only 5% of the Rhodesian population; and that recognition in this case symbolizes a reaffirmation of racism by the U.S. Government.

Action Now

Demonstrations, letters, telegrams - evidence of public awareness on the
U.S. Consulate in Rhodesia Should Be Closed

Trend of the Nixon administration on Southern Africa must be clear. Therefore action on the Consulate issue is relevant. Call for the immediate removal of the U.S. Mission and the continuation of all economic sanctions against Rhodesia.

Write or Telegram Now:

1. The President
   The White House
   Washington, D.C.

2. Your Congressman and Senators.

3. Key Senators including:

   The Honorable Hugh Scott (R-Pa.)
   260 Old Senate Office Building
   Washington, D.C.

   The Honorable Michael J. Mansfield (D-Mont.)
   113 Old Senate Office Building
   Washington, D.C.

   The Honorable Jacob Javits (R-N.Y.)
   326 Old Senate Office Building
   Washington, D.C.

(Senate Minority Leader)

(Senate Majority Leader)

(member Senate Comm. on Foreign Relations).

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The American Committee on Africa, 164 Madison Avenue, New York, New York 10016

October, 1969