

AFRICA NEWS

A Weekly Digest of African Affairs

U.S./ZIMBABWE "WE'LL WAIT AND HOPE"

WASHINGTON [AN] Within the past few weeks, American policy-makers have been busy trying to determine what, if anything, the Carter administration should do about the increasingly violent Rhodesian situation. Most of the brain-storming has been the work of middle and lower level aides, since senior officials have been occupied with Iran, China, and the Middle East.

But Rhodesia, which has been a priority concern throughout the two-year tenure of this administration, can not help but draw high-level attention once again.

The review of policy options which has been taking place this month is far less formal than the study which was already in motion on Inaugural Day in 1977, known as PRM (Presidential Review Memorandum) 4. At that time, the new planners felt that they had a formula for peace in southern Africa which could succeed where outgoing Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's shuttle diplomacy had failed.

Instead, a negotiated change-over to majority rule in Rhodesia seems less possible in 1979 than it ever has before. And American officials see their options as increasingly limited.

In a series of interviews with AFRICA NEWS last week, officials repeatedly reflected the view that the U.S. can do almost nothing to influence the course of events there now.

"After the Camp David summit," recalls one State Department policy-level aide, "some people were calling for a 'Camp David' on Rhodesia. But the two situations are different. We have very little leverage over Smith and little influence with the Patriotic Front."

"We could lean on Smith," another official concedes, "but this would require some political preparation. It would cause considerable domestic political fall-out."

As a result, the administration seems almost certain to issue a "we'll wait and hope for the best" statement when the British government this week releases the report compiled by Cledwyn Hughes, who last month toured Southern Africa accompanied by the U.S. Ambassador to Zambia Stephen Low to determine whether the "all-parties conference" proposal has any chance of succeeding. The Hughes document is expected to conclude that while an all-parties meeting might be convened, after some diplomatic arm-twisting, it would not result in meaningful negotiations.

One American official who visited the region for consultations last month describes the attitude of the major parties in this way: "Mugabe and Nkomo [the Patriotic Front co-leaders] think victory is just around the corner, which is probably over-optimistic. Smith [the white leader] views his visit here as some sort of tacit recognition, which it isn't. But until this equilibrium is disturbed, there is no hope for negotiations."

While diplomacy is stalemated, the war is not. Along with mounting black and white casualties in Rhodesia are sure to come political problems for the administration.

Officials are already anticipating a challenge from conservative members of Congress, probably in the form of an attempt to lift sanctions. The two Senators most active last year in support of the Rhodesian government, Helms of North Carolina and Hayakawa of California, have been laying plans for new efforts soon after Congress opens late this month. In fact, Helms and Hayakawa both expect to increase their effectiveness by becoming members of the influential Foreign Relations Committee.

By contrast, the administration is hampered because no clear replacement has yet emerged for the defeated Senator Dick Clark, former chairman of the Foreign Relations subcommittee on Africa and leading advocate of the current Rhodesia policy, although George McGovern has shown an interest in the subcommittee post.

On the House side, Charles Diggs, another administration supporter, appears likely to lose the Africa subcommittee chairmanship as a result of his recent trial and conviction of charges of defrauding the government. Diggs' replacement will apparently not be a member of the Black Caucus, but third-term New York representative, Stephen Solarz, who was an active member of the subcommittee during the last Congress.

Some State Department officials are doubtful that McGovern will be helpful to their Rhodesia policy. Late last month, after a visit to Africa which included a Rhodesian stop-over, McGovern suggested that the U.S. should perhaps "disengage" from the Anglo-American diplomatic effort, which he said has been a "disengagement" from the Anglo-American diplomatic effort, which he said has been a "disengagement" from the Anglo-American diplomatic effort.

Other critics believe that the guerrillas' wide-ranging popular support is being ignored, and they argue that the very term "disengagement" misrepresents the issue, since U.S. influence on Rhodesian events goes far beyond diplomacy.

They suggest that applying pressure on Rhodesia's lifeline, South Africa—a step the administration is unwilling to take and McGovern overlooks—offers a concrete way to shorten the war.

Nevertheless, some kind of American pullback from an obviously unworkable policy—however it is termed—may well gain support in coming months within the administration, particularly in the White House. Since other foreign policy issues are sure to create serious domestic political problems, President Carter's advisors may seek to "cut the losses" by trying to pull back from at least one potentially explosive issue. And many State Department officials think that will be Rhodesia.

For foreign policy reasons, these officials believe, the President's National Security Advisor, Zbigniew Brzezinski, may also come out for detachment on the grounds that the U.S. can not afford to be associated with another "losing" policy.

Brzezinski's concerns were reported in apparently accurate detail by the Washington Post's Jim Hoagland, who quoted him saying to other policy-makers that Rhodesia will become a political disaster for President Carter "when white nuns being raped by black guerrillas wearing red stars on their armbands start appearing on nightly television."

That language elicits cringes from State Department planners who see an official retreat from the Anglo-American effort as disastrous for U.S. credibility in Africa and the rest of the developing world.

The influential Afrikaans language newspaper Die Transvaler last week charged that the "Rhodesian defense force itself exercises a form of terror in terms of martial law," and accused Rhodesian troops of burning the homes of those unfortunate to live in "a terrorist target area."

Though morale in the field is difficult to access, the accelerating

white flight from Rhodesia is undoubtedly a useful index of the war's turning tide. October's 1,600 and November's 1,800 white departures both set records but observers expect far greater emigration in the months to come. According to the Washington Post's David Ottoway, Rhodesia's Reserve Bank, is reportedly processing some 20,000 departure permit applications, and some analysts estimate that as many as 80,000 persons will flee the country by June of 1979, leaving the white population at less than 1,700,000.

Those whites who have stuck it out so far—estimates of the white population vary from 225,000 to 250,000—are not, however, as solidly behind the new biracial government and its new constitutional proposals as former Prime Minister Smith had hoped.

Political analysts believe that only a slight majority of voters will approve the new constitution when it's put to a whites-only referendum on January 30. The new constitution would guarantee whites veto power in the legislature and continued control over the civil service for 10 years. But some of Smith's constituents remain philosophically opposed to any black government, while others feel the concessions offered to blacks—such as universal suffrage and 72 out of 100 parliamentary seats—are insufficient to win the new regime international recognition and stop the guerrilla war.

Nevertheless, even if whites approve the new constitution, the Salisbury government will find it extremely difficult to hold the promised April 20 national elections.

Smith's three black partners-in-government, Bishop Muzorewa, Chief Chirau and the Rev. Ndabaningi Sithole, were originally promised elections leading to black rule by December of 1978. The deteriorating military situation, white resistance to the idea and political disarray within the interim government, however, forced postponement of that plan.

It is improbable that these conditions will improve by April. According to BBC reporter Justin Nyoka, who spent several months traveling with guerrillas of Robert Mugabe's ZANU, nationalist forces control 85% of the countryside.

Writing in Mozambique's Tempo magazine about his experiences with ZANU, Nyoka says the guerrillas have established farming cooperatives, schools and clinics in the zones under their control, often building on existing Rhodesian institutions such as abandoned schools.

At the same time the political stock of Executive Council members Muzorewa and Sithole has fallen. Both men have raised private armies that now stand accused of terrorizing Patriotic Front supporters. Some of Sithole's lieutenants, in fact, currently face trial for the murder of five Africans. And Muzorewa partisans are under suspicion for the assassination of party dissident Rev. Arthur Kanodereka.

ZIMBABWE THE BATTLEFIELD

[AN] Escalating guerrilla war is not only spreading Rhodesia's limited soldiery thinner but is hitting closer and closer to what were formerly considered impregnable white strongholds.

Farmers in the fertile eastern part of the country, along the border with Mozambique, were among the first affected by the fighting in the early years of the war. According to recent press reports, fewer and fewer of these planters remain in the area—a fact that damages the economy as much as the security situation.

But now mortar and rocket attacks on homes and industrial targets in the suburbs of the capital

of Salisbury are becoming regular events. And the fear of new guerrilla attacks such as the December 23 bombing of the main Salisbury fuel depot led authorities to place mid-December 24-hour curfew on Rhodesia's second-largest city, Bulawayo, and a dusk-to-dawn curfew on Salisbury itself.

The Christmas season saw some of the war's bloodiest fighting yet. Searching for urban-based guerrillas near the capital, police gunned down five African civilians in the African township of Mabyuku on December 18. Within the next week 51 persons lost their lives in the war, a list including 27 guerrillas, 2 Rhodesian soliders, one white farmer, and as many as 20 black civilians.

In the first week of January, 22 more persons were killed, according to a terse government communique. And on January 9, the Patriotic Front claimed to have killed 19 Rhodesian soldiers in a rocket and mortar attack on an army ammunition dump in northern Rhodesia.

While white Rhodesian leader Ian Smith admitted recently that his regime was no longer winning the war, he expressed confidence that the Rhodesian security forces could contain the guerrilla threat.

Militarily, the Rhodesian regime still looks to bolster its position with new weapons such as the "Huey"-type American-designed helicopters it recently managed to continue South African support as well as some help from a new program of black conscription—until now blacks in the Rhodesian army have been volunteers. But a full 80% of African conscripts are refusing to show up for the draft, and even long-time ally South Africa shows tentative signs of wavering in its support for the first time.

MILITARY RULE ENDS IN RWANDA

On December 18 Rwandans gave overwhelming approval to a new constitution replacing the one suspended after the July 1973 military coup. The current leadership ran unchallenged and General Juvenal Habyarimana, who headed the military government, was elected president.



SOUTH AFRICAN HEAVYWEIGHT BOXER KALLIE KNOETZE gives a thumbs-up signal after he learned he had won a temporary court injunction allowing him to fight Saturday in Miami Beach. Knoetze invited Diplomat Hotel Employee Mary Hanshaw (right) to help hold the boxing card with him for the picture. Knoetze knocked out Bill Sharkey in the 4th (Fourth round) January 13th. UPI PHOTO



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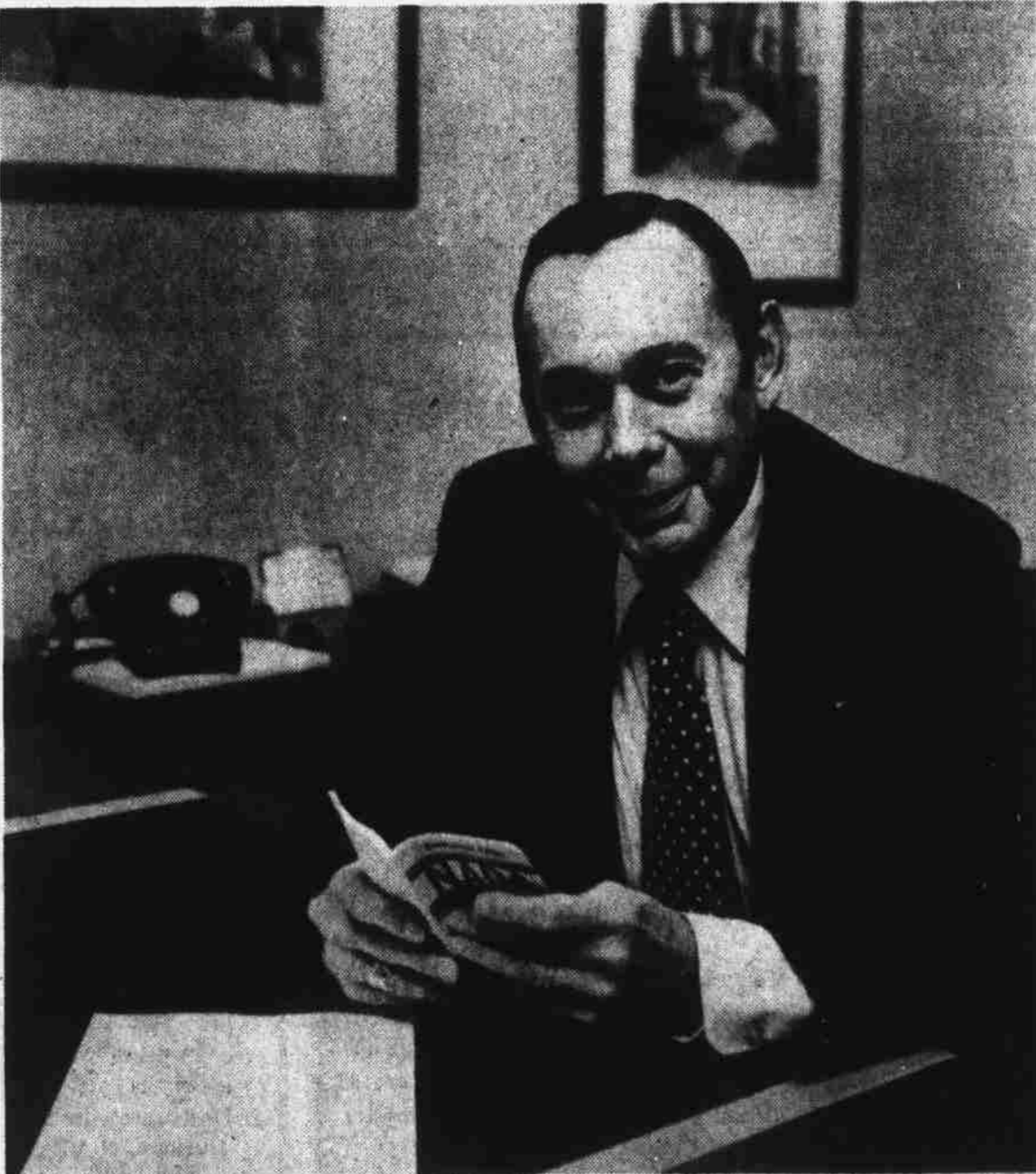
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