

Ian Gow

PRIME MINISTER

Ian Smith

1. The Anglo-Rhodesian Society Reception for the Bishop, Ian Smith, etc. followed its predictable course.
2. Afterwards, Reggie Paget gave a dinner in a private room at Bucks, at which the following were present:
Ian Smith
Robert Salisbury
Michael St Aldwyn
Peregrine Worsthorne
David Lardner-Burke
Colin Mitchell
Julian Amery
Tom Lawler (Secretary of the Anglo-Rhodesian Society)
Ian Gow
3. For the first part of the dinner, the conversation was general, but later Smith did most of the talking.
4. The principal points that he made were as follows:
 - (a) There was about to be a serious famine in Zambia. The only realistic source of famine relief for Zambia was from Rhodesia. This was a powerful factor in influencing Kaunda towards a policy of lifting sanctions.
 - (b) Kaunda had told Smith that both he and Machel were in favour of lifting sanctions. When pressed about this, Smith said that this assurance by Kaunda was given as long ago as 1976, but not since!
 - (c) The South Africans would continue to support the existing government in Rhodesia even if the Constitutional Conference failed. This was an important factor in Smith's attitude.
 - (d) Smith has no respect whatever for the Bishop's skill as a politician.
 - (e) Smith said that he was not expecting HMG to give any assistance, of any kind, to Rhodesia. He said that Rhodesia had now fulfilled all the six principals (he referred to Alan Boyd's Report) and said that that being the case Britain should at least adopt a policy of neutrality towards Rhodesian government rather than continue with sanctions, which had the effect of assisting the terrorists.

....continued

- (f) He said that the "Amnesty" policy for terrorists of the Rhodesian government had failed, because the terrorists in the bush were anxious to be on the winning side. As long as the world continues to impose sanctions, the terrorists believed that the West (and others) were really on the side of the terrorists, and that therefore they would win. Smith argued that if sanctions were removed, that would have a powerful influence on "the man in the bush" who would then be likely to switch sides because they thought that the Bishop would win.
5. Afterwards, Ian Smith came back to 120 Pavilion Road, and we had half an hour's talk a deux. I should mention here that I had met Smith twice before in Salisbury, once in January 1966 (two months after UDI) and once in July 1977.
 6. Smith made it clear that his attitude to the London Conference was governed by one overriding consideration: how best to maintain the confidence of the Europeans, whose continued presence in Rhodesia was essential if a prosperous free enterprise economy was to be maintained. I reminded Smith that for the past three years there had been an exodus of Europeans at the rate of 1,000 a month and that this exodus showed no sign of diminishing, and was taking place from an ever-shrinking European base. I also said that those who were now leaving were the relatively stout-hearted, in that they had stuck it out for longer than many others. I said that he must understand, beyond all doubt, that HMG would require that the constitution be changed so that the Commissions would be consultative only, and that the blocking mechanism should be removed. I said that the prize of recognition and lifting of sanctions could be achieved after those changes were made.
 7. I said that the lifting of sanctions and the prospect of a de-escalation of war would be more likely to reassure European opinion than the maintenance of the Commissions in their existing form and the preservation of the blocking mechanism.
 8. Smith replied that that was a matter of judgement, but that he held the view that the maintenance of standards and the prevention of corruption required the continuation of the Commissions in their existing form.
 9. He made a similar comment about the blocking mechanism.
 10. Nevertheless, when he left, I was, on the whole, of the opinion that Smith would be prepared to compromise.

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(Second note)

1. There are two points which I would like to add to my earlier note, of today's date:-
 - (a) Smith said that he thought that Sithole had done or was in the process of doing a private deal with Mugabe.
 - (b) Very much to my surprise, Smith said that he did not see fresh elections as a stumbling block. Although the position of the Bishop and of the U.A.N.C. within Rhodesia had weakened, he still thought that the Bishop would win an election, although with substantial support going to Mugabe.
2. Charlie Douglas-Home lunched with me today. He is personally intensely loyal to you, but uneasy about our Rhodesia policy.

IAN GOW

19.9.79



Gow 9/10

Government Chief Whip
12 Downing Street, London SW1

8th October 1979.

Dear Mr Gow

Before he left for Blackpool the Chief Whip asked me to draw your attention to the fact that your name appears on the writing paper of the Anglo-Rhodesian Society as a member of the Council. I enclose a copy of a recent letter.

Yours

Jelby

Ian Gow Esq., MP.