

Smith, New York Times, Pave Way For War In Africa

The likelihood of an imminent international confrontation over Rhodesia was greatly increased this week, after Rhodesian Prime Minister Ian Smith indicated that he is not willing to cooperate with British peace initiatives in the region and that he is gearing his country for war against alleged Communist aggression. The claim of Communist aggression was repeated in an article by *New York Times* columnist Anthony Lewis, despite an article in *Pravda* yesterday essentially urging the British government to take more responsibility in Rhodesia to avoid a war.

In South Africa, Prime Minister B.J. Vorster told his countrymen that an isolated South Africa faces a "Communist onslaught," and later informed the British chairman of the Geneva Conference on Rhodesia, Ivor Richard, that he is not inclined to cooperate with the British initiatives for peace any more than Smith is.

In a meeting Jan. 2 with Richard, Smith confirmed his previous summary rejection of the British proposals for surmounting the impasse at the Geneva conference: the appointment of a British Governor-General and neutral or Commonwealth control over the contested Law and Order and Defense Ministries. "Smith's blunt rejection of British involvement in an interim government" commented the South African weekly *Financial Mail* this week, "scuttles what is probably the only device capable of reconciling the protagonists."

"In the view of the (Rhodesian) government's critics," reports the *New York Times* today, "Smith never intended, even under the Kissinger plan, to hand over to a black government." Correspondent Jon Burns also reports that Ivor Richard's "chances of getting a settlement are almost nil." Columnist Anthony Lewis expanded on these war predictions in an Op Ed, also in

today's *Times*, commenting: "The next and fateful step in escalation of the guerrilla war would be the entry of the Cubans,...Such a scenario would deeply engage U.S. interests...the installation of a revolutionary government by force of Communist arms would alarm many Americans and put at risk Carter's hopes for arms control and other agreements with the Soviet Union."

The Soviet Union, however, published an article in yesterday's *Pravda* supporting the British initiatives around Rhodesia, pointing out approvingly that the African front line states are pressuring the British into taking more and more responsibility for the Rhodesian situation, and supporting continued negotiations provided a certain amount of military pressure is kept on the Smith regime.

Leaders of the five front line states, four of whom have now met with Mr. Richard, are expected to increase this pressure on the British after a summit meeting scheduled for this weekend in Lusaka, Zambia to discuss a joint position on the extent of British participation in the interim government. Indicating the attitude the front-liners want the British to take, the *Zambian Daily Mail* said Jan. 4: "...as long as (Britain) links a solution to the Zimbabwean problem to its acceptance by Smith and the Rhodesia Front, there cannot be and will not be able to be a settlement by negotiation or constitutional ways."

In a statement indicating certain understanding of the incoming Carter Administration's motives for pushing a confrontation in southern Africa, Zambian Foreign Minister Siteke Mwale added a warning to the West to eschew any temptation to defend Smith's government from a so-called Communist onslaught: "This is a dangerous game...because it will, inevitably, result in a nuclear confrontation between East and West."