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## ESTABLISHING THE CENTRALITY OF RACE: RELATIONS BETWEEN THE US AND THE RHODESIAN FEDERATION, 1953-1963

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USA

### Abstract

*Using previously unavailable documents from the National Archives of the USA, this article throws new light on relations between the USA and the White-dominated Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland in the 1950s. It looks at evolving state policy and the influence of various state officials in this evolution. This article also considers relations between Black Americans and nationalist leaders from Africa, and the influence Black Americans were able to exert on formal US policy. The article argues that relations between the Federation and the United States established precedents regarding the centrality of race in international relations.*

ON 27 JULY 1953, the British Parliament established the Rhodesian Federation, consisting of the colony of Southern Rhodesia and the protectorates Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland. After a rocky ten-years, the British dissolved the Federation on 17 December 1963.<sup>1</sup> Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland soon became the independent nations of Zambia and Malawi, respectively. Southern Rhodesia, on the other hand, faced a prolonged struggle and would not become the independent state of Zimbabwe until 1980.

Many books and articles have been written about the role of the US in the transition from Southern Rhodesia to Zimbabwe.<sup>2</sup> However, very few published studies examine US relations with Southern Rhodesia and its neighbours during the Federation years. Thomas Noer's groundbreaking work is the standard extant treatment.<sup>3</sup> While Noer provided a solid

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<sup>1</sup> For the story of the Federation see Harry Franklin, *Unholy Wedlock: The Failure of the Central African Federation* (London, George Allen, 1963).

<sup>2</sup> For the early 1970s see Anthony Lake, *The 'Tar Baby' Option. American Policy Toward Southern Rhodesia* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1976); for Kissinger's involvement in 1976 see Walter Isaacson, *Kissinger: A Biography* (New York, Simon and Schuster, 1992); for the Carter Administration see Bartlett C. Jones, *Flawed Triumphs: Andy Young at the United Nations* (Lanham, University Press of America, 1996); Stephen Low, 'The Zimbabwe settlement, 1976-1979', in Saadia Touval and I. William Zartman, (eds.) *International Mediation in Theory and Practice* (Boulder, Westview, 1985), 91-105.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas J. Noer, *Cold War and Black Liberation: The United States and White Rule in Africa, 1948-1968* (Columbia, University of Missouri Press, 1985).

overview with insightful analysis, he was unable to utilize many archival collections that were not yet open to scholars. Using these previously unavailable documents from the US National Archives, the Eisenhower Library, and the Kennedy Library, this article adds powerful new details to the story.<sup>4</sup>

Relations between the US and the Federation included many remarkable incidents, and the topic is interesting for its own sake. Perhaps more importantly, though, examining these relations tells us much about important general historical issues. First, because US/Federation dealings revolved to a great extent around strategic metals, this article adds another case study to a growing body of literature on the role of strategic concerns in US foreign policy.<sup>5</sup> Second, this article illuminates the increasing efforts by US government officials to facilitate majority rule in Southern Rhodesia. In many respects, diplomats like G. Mennen Williams set the precedent in the early 1960s for later actions by Henry Kissinger, Andrew Young, and Cyrus Vance.

Third, and most importantly, US relations with the Federation tell us a great deal about the complex part played by race in the drama of international relations.<sup>6</sup> Leading Blacks from the Rhodesian Federation helped and learned from Blacks in the US, and vice versa. African Americans pressured the US government to work for racial justice in southern Africa.<sup>7</sup> Partly as a result of these activities, US policymakers increasingly weighed racial issues in their decisions regarding the Federation in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Thus, US relations with the Federation initiated a process of interplay between American and African struggles against racism. Interactions between the Federation and the United States provided some early examples of progressive international race relations, which set the stage for later triumphs.

<sup>4</sup> This article is based on two chapters of the author's Ph.D dissertation, 'Strategic Minerals and Multiracial Democracies: US Relations with Zimbabwe, 1953-1980,' (University of Colorado, 1997), 473 pages.

<sup>5</sup> For example, see Thomas Borstelmann, *Apartheid's Reluctant Uncle: The United States and Southern Africa in the Early Cold War* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1993).

<sup>6</sup> The best study of race and foreign relations in general is Paul Gordon Lauren, *Power and Prejudice: The Politics and Diplomacy of Racial Discrimination* (Boulder, Westview Press, 2nd Edition, 1996). For a broad look at the influence of race on US foreign policy see Michael Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1987). Lauren accurately describes US relations with Zimbabwe in the late 1970s, but says little on the formative period during the Federation era. Hunt's otherwise excellent book surprisingly missed the importance of Zimbabwe in the story of race and foreign relations.

<sup>7</sup> For an insightful study of African Americans influence on foreign policy see Brenda Gayle Plummer, *Rising Wind: Black Americans and U.S. Foreign Affairs, 1935-1960* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1996). While Plummer's work is generally very sound, it does not treat US/Federation relations in any depth.

## EISENHOWER'S FIRST TERM: 1953-57

Between 1953 and 1957, the United States's economic interest in the Federation became substantial. In 1953 the Export-Import Bank of Washington lent Northern Rhodesia \$22.4 million for a hydroelectric project, and the World Bank lent \$14 million for railroad construction. In 1956 the World Bank lent the Federation \$80 million to build the Kariba Dam, which also would be used for hydropower.<sup>8</sup> All of these loans financed operations directly linked to Federation copper and chrome mines. Mining concerns partially owned by the American Metal Company and Union Carbide virtually dominated the political-economy of the Federation.<sup>9</sup> During Eisenhower's first term, the combination of substantial loans and private investment meant that America's economic stake in Southern and Northern Rhodesia was large. What did the United States receive in return?

Not surprisingly, the major returns were tremendous shipments of copper and chrome. For example, in 1954 Southern Rhodesia exported over 260,000 tons of chrome to America, which amounted to nearly double what US mines produced. Northern Rhodesia supplied over 60,000 tons of copper to America in 1954.<sup>10</sup> Both copper and chrome were being stockpiled as a Cold War precaution. Airplane production required large amounts of copper wire and submarines required stainless steel made from chrome. So, the United States wanted to stockpile these metals, both for American use and to keep them from the Soviets.

However, race relations in the Federation put a brake on American pursuit of the strategic minerals there. Just over seven million Blacks inhabited the Federation states of Southern Rhodesia, Northern Rhodesia, and Nyasaland in the 1950s. A White population of about 200 000, mostly living in Southern Rhodesia, controlled the economy, politics and legal system of the Federation.<sup>11</sup> Black African nationalists striving for independence in Ghana and other countries made the issue of race relations within the Federation more crucial. Nonetheless, US officials paid relatively little attention to the issue of race during Eisenhower's first term.

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<sup>8</sup> Loans discussed in Daniel Volman's 1991 UCLA dissertation, 'United States Foreign Policy and the Decolonization of British Central Africa (Zimbabwe, Zambia, and Malawi), 1945-1965', 90-91.

<sup>9</sup> For a discussion of initial US investment in Rhodesian copper and chrome during the 1920s see Mira Wilkin, *The Maturing of Multinational Enterprise: American Business Abroad From 1914 to 1970* (Cambridge, Harvard, 1974), 110-113 and 167-173.

<sup>10</sup> Bureau of Mines, *Minerals Yearbook 1954 Vol. 1* (Washington, Government Printing Office, 2nd Edition, 1958), 304, 313, 381, 399.

<sup>11</sup> In 1955, Southern Rhodesia included 2.4 million Blacks and 165 000 Whites. Northern Rhodesia claimed 2.08 million Blacks and 65 000 Whites. Nyasaland featured 2.55 million Blacks and 6 000 Whites. Figures from A. J. Wills, *An Introduction to the History of Central Africa: Zambia, Malawi, and Zimbabwe* (New York, Oxford, 4th edition, 1985), Appendix vii.

In 1953 the US Consul General in Southern Rhodesia, John Hoover, rated minerals as America's number one interest in Rhodesia. He listed race relations fourth.<sup>12</sup> A. Philip Randolph, an important African-American civil rights activist, at the time an opponent of colonialism, argued that Washington's priorities should be different. When the British proposed the Federation in 1953, Randolph felt that the United States should oppose the plan. He wrote to Eisenhower that the Federation scheme should 'be postponed and referred to the Trusteeship Council of the United Nations for study and appraisal, since it is bitterly and practically universally opposed by African chiefs'.<sup>13</sup> Randolph desired that race be the key factor in relations with Rhodesia, but Eisenhower was relatively unconcerned with the views of Blacks in Africa or America during his first term. The White House delegated Randolph's letter to a low-level State Department official.<sup>14</sup>

#### EISENHOWER'S SECOND TERM: 1957-61

The economic component of relations with the Rhodesian Federation remained significant during Eisenhower's second term. The World Bank loaned the Federation \$19 million for railroad improvements in 1958. Furthermore, the importation of large amounts of strategic metals continued. For example, in 1959 Southern Rhodesia shipped over 450,000 tons of chromite to the US. American industry used more Southern Rhodesian chrome than from any other source.<sup>15</sup>

By 1957 economic growth in the Federation, boosted by new dams and improved railroads, impressed important American officials. In August the US Consul General in Southern Rhodesia, Loyd Steere, advised the State Department to open full diplomatic relations with the Federation. He reasoned that America could thereby influence racial policies more strongly.<sup>16</sup> In an October reply, mid-level officials at the State Department praised the Federation's economy: 'In recent years its rate of economic

<sup>12</sup> Despatch from John Hoover in Salisbury to the State Department, May 8, 1953, in Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1952-1954 Vol. XI* (Washington, United States Government Printing Office, 1983), 318-323. Hoover ranked the Federation's potential as a safety valve for Europe's surplus population, second, and the potential contribution of the Federation's military forces in defending the free world, third.

<sup>13</sup> Letter from A. Philip Randolph to Eisenhower, June 17, 1953, State Department Decimal File, 770.00/6-1753, National Archives II, College Park, MD (hereafter NA2).

<sup>14</sup> Volman, 'United States Foreign Policy and the Decolonization of British Central Africa', 147-150.

<sup>15</sup> Bureau of Mines, *Minerals Yearbook 1960 Vol. 1* (Washington, Government Printing Office, 1961), 341 and 348.

<sup>16</sup> Loyd Steere despatch to Washington, August 1, 1957, State Department Decimal File, 601.0045c/8-157, NA2.

development has been unsurpassed by any other country in the world.<sup>17</sup> While it is unclear whether the State Department realized it, the Federation's economic growth primarily benefited the White minority.<sup>18</sup> In any case, when weighing economic factors, State favoured full diplomatic relations.

On the other side of the coin, State Department officials believed that racial problems discouraged full recognition. In order for the Federation to succeed, the White government had to win the loyalty of the Black population. But American diplomats acknowledged that to the contrary, Black resistance and opposition were increasing as time passed. As of 1957, Federation Blacks were not allowed in hotels or restaurants, and were not trusted to drink European beer. In that year Southern Rhodesian Blacks founded their branch of the African National Congress, joining the branches in Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland in criticizing the Federation.<sup>19</sup> Nationalists such as Joshua Nkomo and Harry Nkumbula 'all regarded it (Federation) as a failure because, in their opinions, it had increased racial discrimination'.<sup>20</sup> State bureaucrats dealing with Africa felt that such Black resistance discouraged full recognition of the Federation. Their view of race relations in the Federation, in any case, was clear.

The officially professed policy of the Federation Government is one of 'racial partnership', but its implementation to date has apparently been inadequate to counter the opposition of the African nationalists. The white minority electorate which has a virtual monopoly of political power, does not appear to be willing in the near future to endorse any political concessions which would be apt to placate the African inhabitants.<sup>21</sup>

The State Department carefully weighed whether full diplomatic recognition, which would entail establishing an embassy in Salisbury (Harare), would help or hinder race relations within the Federation. The Department decided that it would not be appropriate for the US to be the first country to recognize the Federation. As it turned out, no other Western power would initiate full recognition. In State Department's opinion, US

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<sup>17</sup> Instruction from State to Salisbury. Bonn, Paris, Lisbon, London, 15 October 1957, State Department Decimal File, 601.0045c/10-1557, NA2. The cable was drafted by J. P. Nagoski of African Affairs and approved by C. Vaughan Ferguson.

<sup>18</sup> See Robert Rotberg, *The Rise of Nationalism in Central Africa: The Making of Malawi and Zambia, 1873-1964* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1965), 257.

<sup>19</sup> For a description of the formation and spread of the Southern Rhodesian ANC by a founding member, see Nathan M. Shamuyarira, *Crisis in Rhodesia* (New York, Transatlantic, 1966), 45-56.

<sup>20</sup> Eshmael Mlambo, *Rhodesia: The Struggle for a Birthright* (London, Hurst, 1972), 116-7, 119.

<sup>21</sup> State to Salisbury, *et al.* 15 October 1957, State Department Decimal File, 601.0045c/10-1557, NA2.

primacy in recognition 'might be construed as a gratuitous endorsement of the racial status quo in the Federation . . .'.<sup>22</sup>

The Department contended that the Federation was unpopular with African nationalists. Furthermore, they did not want to endorse the Federation's unsuccessful policy of 'racial partnership', so they decided not to establish full diplomatic relations in 1957. This decision revealed that race relations in Africa affected US foreign policy.

Simultaneously, domestic civil rights possibly influenced their thinking, as an integration crisis raged in Little Rock, Arkansas. On 4 September 1957, Arkansas Governor, Orval Faubus, commanded the National Guard to prevent nine Blacks from entering previously all-White Central High School. President Eisenhower reluctantly ordered in Federal troops on September 24. By nightfall a thousand soldiers arrived in Little Rock to allow the Black students to enter school.<sup>23</sup> Reports from Asia and Africa criticizing the resistance to integration in Little Rock reached Eisenhower, making it clear that segregation in the South hurt the foreign reputation of the US.<sup>24</sup>

Policy towards Africa in general became a slightly higher priority for the Eisenhower Administration in its second term. During March 1957, Vice President Richard Nixon visited several African countries. African-American E. Frederick Morrow, Eisenhower's administrative officer for special projects, accompanied Nixon.<sup>25</sup> At Ghana's independence celebration, Nixon was outshined by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the young civil rights leader.<sup>26</sup> Returning to Washington on March 21, the Vice President submitted a report stressing the importance of Africa in the struggle against the Soviet Union.<sup>27</sup> In August 1958 the government formed a separate Bureau for African Affairs within the State Department — previously Africa had been included in the Bureau for Near Eastern Affairs. Nixon had been instrumental in the formation of the African Bureau, convincing Congress that it was necessary as Africa became more of a Cold War battleground.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> Taylor Branch, *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years, 1945-63* (New York, Simon and Schuster, 1988), 222-224.

<sup>24</sup> Noer, *Cold War and Black Liberation*, 50-52.

<sup>25</sup> For Morrow's view of the Africa trip see E. Frederick Morrow, *Black Man in the White House: A Diary of the Eisenhower Years By the Administrative Officer for Special Projects. The White House, 1955-1961* (New York, Coward-McCann, 1963), 125-154.

<sup>26</sup> Later in 1957 Nixon met with King at the White House. See Robert F. Burk, *The Eisenhower Administration and Black Civil Rights* (Knoxville, University of Tennessee Press, 1984).

<sup>27</sup> See Nixon's 69 page 'Report to the President on the Vice President's Visit to Africa', White House Central File, Confidential Files, Box 100, 'VP's Africa Trip', Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, KS (hereafter DDE).

<sup>28</sup> Noer, *Cold War and Black Liberation*, 49.

Beyond authorizing a separate bureau at State, however, Congress showed very little interest in Africa in the late 1950s. Representative Charles Diggs urged his fellow African-Americans to take an interest in the struggles of African nationalists, and decried US policymakers for only viewing Africa in terms of the Cold War.<sup>29</sup> Diggs got virtually no response. Congresswoman Frances Bolton, who had visited the Federation in 1955, was the only other interested member of the House.<sup>30</sup> She met informally with the first Assistant Secretary of State for Africa, Joseph Satterthwaite, on 28 February 1959. She invited him to the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Africa's meeting, which was scheduled for March 5.<sup>31</sup>

At that meeting, Satterthwaite demonstrated his poor understanding of the situation in the Federation. In discussing its racial policy of partnership, Satterthwaite remarked that 'quite a bit of progress had been made along these lines'. Nationalists in the Federation clearly disagreed. Indeed, during February, protests in Nyasaland against the Federation had resulted in a state of emergency being declared. On 25 February the African National Congress was banned throughout the Federation. Nationalist leaders Hastings Banda and Kenneth Kaunda had been imprisoned in Southern Rhodesia. Satterthwaite mentioned these events briefly, but did not characterize them as particularly serious.<sup>32</sup>

The State Department refrained from criticizing the Federation's use of excessive force to quell the disturbances in Nyasaland. George Houser and the American Committee on Africa, to the contrary, denounced the racial discrimination in the Federation and called for its dissolution.<sup>33</sup> In a letter to Federation Prime Minister Roy Welensky, Houser protested the state of emergency and banning of the ANC. In reply, Welensky argued that any progress in the Federation was due to Europeans, and that all the nationalists were thugs.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Charles C. Diggs, Jr., 'The role of the American Negro in American-African relations', in Adelaide Hill and Martin Kilson, (eds.), *Aprupos of Africa: Sentiments of Negro American Leaders on Africa from the 1800s to the 1950s* (London, Frank Cass, 1969), 382-385.

<sup>30</sup> U.S. Congress House, Committee on Foreign Affairs, *Report of the Special Study Mission to Africa, South and East of the Sahara, by Honorable Frances P. Bolton* (Washington, United States Government Printing Office, 1956), 132.

<sup>31</sup> J. C. Satterthwaite, Memorandum of conversation with Frances Bolton, 28 February 1959, 770.00/2-2859, State Department Decimal File, NA2.

<sup>32</sup> Statement of Joseph Satterthwaite, 5 March 1959, *Hearings Before the Subcommittee on Africa of the Committee on Foreign Affairs House of Representatives* (Washington, US Government Printing Office, 1959). The Nyasaland disturbances described in Mlambo, *Rhodesia*, 127.

<sup>33</sup> American Committee on Africa, 'Statement on Crisis in Central African Federation', 9 March 1959, Folder 10, Box 124, Martin Luther King, Jr. Papers, Martin Luther King, Jr. Library, Atlanta, GA.

<sup>34</sup> George Houser, *No One Can Stop The Rain: Glimpses of Africa's Liberation Struggle* (New York, Pilgrim Press, 1989), 102.



A few months later, during a dinner speech, Welensky manifested his view that the nationalists did not have any worthy grievances. Instead of considering some type of reform as a response to the riots, he pondered forming a riot squad. 'Perhaps the most cogent lesson we learned from the disturbances in Nyasaland is the need for adequate policing of the right sort . . .'<sup>35</sup> Welensky's reactions to the Blacks' struggle for social and political equality closely resembled those by Arkansas governor Orval Faubus.

The strategies of segregationists in southern Africa in 1959 certainly resembled those of segregationists in the southern United States. Martin Luther King commented on this resemblance more than once during that summer. In June he wrote to the editors of *Dissent* magazine in Southern Rhodesia: 'Although we are separated by many miles we are closer together in a mutual struggle for freedom and human brotherhood.'<sup>36</sup> During a July dinner for Kenyan Tom Mboya in Atlanta, King explained to Mboya that 'there is no basic difference between colonialism and segregation . . . our struggles are not only similar; they are in a real sense one'.<sup>37</sup>

Such similarities between race relations in the Federation and the US became clear to Joshua Nkomo in 1959. Nkomo, leader of the Southern Rhodesian ANC, fortunately was outside of the country during the February crackdown. Rather than return to be jailed, he decided to visit the US in hopes of rallying some support for the ANC cause. About this time he first caught the eye of the State Department in Washington, and as a result State officials requested the US consul general in Salisbury to cable Nkomo's biographical information. Consul general Joseph Palmer responded with a brief memo detailing Nkomo's life.<sup>38</sup>

Nkomo travelled across the US in 1959, speaking about the struggle for independence in Africa. During a fall stop at a New York college, he mentioned casually that he enjoyed apples and rock music. A group of students who overheard him rushed out and bought him a bag of apples and a record album. Such kindness greatly pleased Nkomo, and the support of such individuals and the ACOA demonstrated that African nationalism had friends in the US. On the other hand, Nkomo also experienced what he referred to as one of the 'pinpricks' of US racism when a barbershop in Manhattan denied him service because of his colour.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Roy Welensky speech at Ndola dinner, 20 June 1959, enclosed in Joseph Palmer airmail to State, 24 August 1959, 745c.5/8-2459, State Department Decimal File, NA2.

<sup>36</sup> Stephen B. Oates, *Let the Trumpet Sound: The Life of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (New York, Harper and Row, 1982), 114.

<sup>37</sup> David J. Garrow, *Bearing the Cross. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference* (New York, Vintage, 1986), 118.

<sup>38</sup> Airmail, Salisbury to State, 20 March 1959, 745c.521/3-2059, State Decimal File, NA2.

<sup>39</sup> Houser, *No One Can Stop the Rain*, 104-5.

Abel Muzorewa was learning the same lessons in 1959. While studying religion in Missouri, a restaurant in St Louis refused to serve him. Yet, Martin Luther King's battle against segregation inspired Muzorewa.<sup>40</sup> In 1959 Ndabaningi Sithole published his book *African Nationalism*. While studying in the United States the American civil rights movement impressed Sithole, and he cited King's view on non-violence in *African Nationalism*.<sup>41</sup> Nkomo, Muzorewa, and Sithole understood that while some US citizens held racist views similar to the leaders of the Federation, many others such as King would be helpful.

The role that the US government would play in the struggle for independence and freedom in southern Africa, however, was not clear. On 7 September 1959, the American-owned Royal Cinema in Salisbury staged a benefit for the Red Cross. The extravaganza excluded all Black Africans. The fact that a 'Whites only' event occurred at an American movie theatre infuriated Clarence Randall, the chairman of Eisenhower's Council on Foreign Economic Policy. Randall remarked that the incident 'greatly damaged the image which Africans have of our country'.<sup>42</sup>

According to Joseph Palmer, the American Consul-General in Salisbury, the really important point was not the isolated event of the Red Cross benefit at the Royal Cinema. Rather, the more serious problem existed in the ongoing exclusion of non-Whites from several American-owned theatres in Salisbury. In December of 1959, Palmer pointed the finger of blame at American movie mogul Spyros Skouras, the president of 20th Century Fox. Skouras controlled the Royal Cinema and other theatres in Salisbury. The theatres were operated by the African Consolidated Theatres group, but widely recognized as American-owned. Skouras claimed that local government policy in Salisbury necessitated the exclusion of non-Whites. In fact, if the theatres simply provided separate restrooms for non-Whites, then the laws of Salisbury would allow multiracial audiences. Palmer concluded that Skouras himself was responsible for the policy, and hoped that the State Department could convince him to correct the situation. Palmer also made the following observation.

Incidentally, 'The Ten Commandments' is to be shown to European-only audiences at the Royal Cinema beginning next week. I think we can be confident that this will give rise to some wry comments by African Christians who will note a gap between their own understanding of those

<sup>40</sup> Abel Muzorewa, *Rise Up and Walk: An Autobiography* (London, Evans Brothers, 1978), 48-49.

<sup>41</sup> Ndabaningi Sithole, *African Nationalism* (London, Oxford University Press, 1959). For the King quotation, see page 54.

<sup>42</sup> Clarence B. Randall to Eric Johnston, 19 October 1959, Box 1, 10/59, Chronological File, The Council on Foreign Economic Policy, Records, DDE. Johnston was president of the Motion Picture Association of America. The opening is detailed in *The New York Times*, 9/23/1959, 5.

rules of behavior and their interpretation by an American-controlled company.<sup>43</sup>

Palmer clearly objected to Skouras's ongoing policy of banning Blacks from his theatres in Rhodesia. Palmer explained the situation to Assistant Secretary Satterthwaite. He replied:

Because of the public identification of African Consolidated as an 'American' firm, I certainly agree that its policy is most unfortunate . . . However, as the issue has been pointed out to Mr. Skouras . . . I frankly doubt whether there is much more we can properly do at this juncture.

Satterthwaite decided that since Skouras had already been advised of the situation, nothing more could be done. He felt that his hands were tied, and emphasized that 'the US Government has no control over the American parent firm'.<sup>44</sup>

The parent firm in this case, 20th Century Fox, conducted business in a manner that several American officials considered injurious to the reputation of the United States. The US government lacked the power to control the policies of 20th Century Fox, and this inability exemplified the potential dangers of private investment in foreign countries. The events surrounding the theatres, moreover, illuminate the complicated role of race in relations between the United States and the Federation during the final year of the Eisenhower Administration. An American-owned company excluded Blacks in Southern Rhodesia, harming America's reputation, but the US government refrained from any action stronger than a verbal warning. Similar racial discrimination existed in the southern United States, and the Eisenhower Administration also refrained from any extended or massive intervention in those events.

While the State Department discussed the proper course of action regarding the Southern Rhodesian theatres, students initiated a grassroots sit-in movement against segregation in the South. Young Americans such as John Lewis and James Bevel formed the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), ushering in a new era of direct confrontation.<sup>45</sup> On 1 February 1960 Joseph McNeill initiated a sit-in at a cafeteria in North Carolina. This sparked active involvement by SNCC in a sit-in campaign that quickly spread to Richmond, Nashville, Chattanooga, and other cities. By year's end some 50 000 Blacks participated in the effort, forcing the integration of 126 southern cities.

<sup>43</sup> Joseph Palmer to Joseph Satterthwaite, 8 December 1959, Box 1, Africa No. 2, Randall Series, Subject Subseries, The Council on Foreign Economic Policy, Chairman, DDE.

<sup>44</sup> Joseph Satterthwaite to Joseph Palmer, 20 January 1960, Box 1, Africa No. 2, Randall Series, Subject Subseries, The Council on Foreign Economic Policy, Chairman, DDE.

<sup>45</sup> The sit-ins are described in Taylor Branch, *Parting the Waters*, 272-311.

When violence flared in Jacksonville, pleas for Federal help went unheeded. King and A. Philip Randolph urged Eisenhower to provide Federal protection against brutal police repression of the direct action campaigns in 1960, and also joined in calling for a stronger stand against racial injustice in southern Africa. They co-chaired the American Committee on Africa's Freedom Day, which featured speeches by Federation nationalists Hastings Banda and Kenneth Kaunda.<sup>46</sup> The struggles in the southern US and southern Africa shared more than a platform at Freedom Day, however.

In July 1960 the Federation nationalists launched their own direct confrontation against White resistance. The National Democratic Party (NDP), which replaced the banned African National Congress on 1 January 1960, had organized numerous demonstrations against the Federation throughout the spring. On 19 July, Southern Rhodesian Prime Minister Edgar Whitehead ordered the arrest of three NDP leaders. This was the first of many blunders by Whitehead, about whom Palmer opined: 'Edgar is almost blind and deaf and . . . he has practically no contact with Africans.'<sup>47</sup> Whitehead's repressive tactics mirrored those of southern US governors like Faubus, and similarly caused far more problems than they solved.<sup>48</sup> Whitehead over-estimated the security threat posed by the NDP, and by arresting three leaders triggered widespread violence in Southern Rhodesia.<sup>49</sup>

After the arrests on 19 July, 700 000 Africans gathered in the township of Highfield and marched eight miles into Salisbury to confront Whitehead the next day. Whitehead refused to talk to the demonstrators and called in a battalion of troops to control the crowd which had swollen to 40 000. Police waded into the crowd to break up the assembly, with jeeps speeding among the pedestrians and planes buzzing overhead. A riot erupted, and three Africans suffered gunshot wounds. A similar scenario unfolded the following weekend in Bulawayo, Southern Rhodesia's second-largest city, leaving eleven Africans dead. Whitehead's tactics of arresting NDP leaders and sending in troops against unarmed civilians reaped a tragic harvest —

<sup>46</sup> George Houser, *No One Can Stop the Rain*, 108.

<sup>47</sup> Joseph Palmer to State, 27 July 1960, 745c.00/7-2760, State Decimal File, NA2.

<sup>48</sup> Ultimately, however, the brutal repression may well have enabled the civil rights movement to be successful. It can be argued, along these lines, that the tactics of Whitehead and his successor Ian Smith ultimately sparked enough resistance to result in an independent Black-ruled Zimbabwe. For a discussion of the role of Faubus and others, see Michael J. Klarman, 'How *Brown* changed race relations: The backlash thesis', *The Journal of American History* (June 1994), 81-118.

<sup>49</sup> Joseph Palmer, US Consul General, downplayed the threat posed by the NDP. Palmer considered beer halls to be a greater threat to the security of the Federation than the NDP. See Palmer to State, 23 July 1960, 745c.00/7-2360; Palmer to State, 1 July 1960, 745c.00/7-160, State Decimal File, NA2.

the first Africans killed by government forces in Southern Rhodesia since 1896.<sup>50</sup>

The July riots added to the conviction of African nationalists that the Federation must go. Joshua Nkomo explained that the NDP did not recognize Whitehead's government and advocated immediate independence for the three states of Nyasaland, Northern Rhodesia, and Southern Rhodesia.<sup>51</sup> In the US, Satterthwaite discussed the riots with British officials. While the Assistant Secretary may have attributed more seriousness to these events than he had the earlier Nyasaland riots, he still hoped that reform could hold the Federation together.<sup>52</sup> Nathan Shamuyarira, another leading Southern Rhodesian nationalist, explained to a State official that Federation Blacks would not be satisfied until they had political equality and independence.<sup>53</sup> If this rising nationalism prompted a crisis in the near future, the US response would be directed by John F. Kennedy, who defeated Richard Nixon in the presidential election of 1960.

#### KENNEDY AND THE FEDERATION

After his victory in November 1960, Kennedy's first appointment was G. Mennen Williams as Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs.<sup>54</sup> Among the biggest challenges for Williams as chief of the African Bureau would be dealing with the Rhodesian Federation. As the Kennedy Administration took the reins, the looming breakup of the Federation necessitated choosing between aspirations of the Whites led by Welensky, and those of Black nationalists like Nkomo and Robert Mugabe. Over the next few years, Williams pushed hard for the US to support the goals of the leading Blacks.

The economic component of relations between the United States and the Federation reflected an attitude of caution taken by the Kennedy Administration. Since the Federation was expected to disintegrate, with possible widespread violence, the US government refrained from any large loans or grants. Chrome persisted as an important element of relations, however, for both sides. Between 1961 and 1963, the US imported

<sup>50</sup> Nathan Shamuyarira, *Crisis in Rhodesia*, 63-64.

<sup>51</sup> Stephen Gebelt, Second Secretary US Embassy in Accra to State, 19 August 1960, 745c.00/8-1960, State Decimal File, NA2.

<sup>52</sup> Memorandum of conversation between Joseph Satterthwaite and Harry Jeffreys, British Minister for Federation Affairs, 19 August 1960, 745c.00/8-1960, State Decimal File, NA2.

<sup>53</sup> Memorandum of September conversations between F.T. McNamara of the State African Bureau and Nathan Shamuyarira, Southern Rhodesian editor, 19 October 1960, 745c.00/10-1960, State Decimal Files, NA2.

<sup>54</sup> Noer, *Cold War and Black Liberation*, 62-63.

chrome from Southern Rhodesia in large quantities.<sup>55</sup> While the valuable minerals, cheap labour, and impressive new power source at Kariba meant that the Federation was still very attractive from a purely economic standpoint, political realities dissuaded foreign investment.

### 1961: POLITICAL REALITIES

While the Federation ranked very low on President Kennedy's personal foreign policy agenda, any little signal he sent indicating a US policy shift had serious impact on the attitudes of the people there. On May 2 Kennedy received Dr. Hastings Banda, the leader of Blacks in Nyasaland, at the White House. Banda opened the conversation by briefly outlining the progress towards independence being made in Nyasaland. After a short talk, the President introduced Banda to the members of the cabinet who were meeting next door. He concluded the meeting by promising his continued personal interest in the developments in Nyasaland, and his understanding of its 'needs for assistance in education and other fields'.<sup>56</sup>

Banda returned to Nyasaland glowing from his encounter with the president and expecting help from the US after independence. His interview with Kennedy infuriated White Southern Rhodesians, however. Welensky complained that US interest in Black Africans would contribute to the undermining of the position of White Africans like himself. Tellingly, Welensky had never met with Banda or other Black nationalist leaders.<sup>57</sup> Banda's trip fueled the fires of discontent among Southern Rhodesian Whites in general, who complained in their newspapers and conversations about US support for revolution and self-determination.<sup>58</sup>

If any government could coerce the White leaders of the Federation to grant political equality for Blacks it was Great Britain, since the territories that made up the Federation were British colonies. In early 1961, British and Federation officials debated constitutional reform for Northern Rhodesia. Welensky manoeuvred the British into approving a constitution that would make little difference in the status quo. When it was revealed in June, Northern Rhodesian nationalist Kenneth Kaunda was bitterly disappointed.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>55</sup> See Volman, 'United States Foreign Policy and the Decolonization of British Central Africa', 171.

<sup>56</sup> Memorandum of conversation between the President and Dr. Hastings K. Banda, 2 May 1961, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963 Vol. XXI Africa* (Washington, United States Government Printing Office, 1995), 508-509.

<sup>57</sup> Nathan Shamuyarira, 'The coming showdown in Central Africa', *Foreign Affairs* (Jan., 1961), XXIX, (ii), 293.

<sup>58</sup> John K. Emmerson, American Consul General in Salisbury, air pouch to the State Department, 31 May 1961, 745c.00/5-3161, State Decimal File, NA2.

<sup>59</sup> Kenneth D. Kaunda, *Zambia Shall Be Free: An Autobiography* (New York, Frederick A. Praeger, 1963), 155-58.

The Northern Rhodesian masses erupted in riots during early August. Crowds of angry Blacks blew up bridges and burned public buildings. Ongoing outbursts prompted the dispatch of a Federal army battalion and two platoons of the Police Mobile Unit. During 12 separate incidents in August the security forces fired on the crowds, killing 20 Blacks.<sup>60</sup> In hopes of getting John Kennedy to lean on the British, Kaunda cabled the White House on 22 August:

Killing of Africans and total uprooting of villages . . . by so-called security forces of Northern Rhodesia continues. Implore you in the name of God and humanity intervene by raising this matter at UN emergency session and also directly with (British PM) Macmillan.<sup>61</sup>

Kaunda received a sympathetic but non-committal reply from Dean Rusk on 15 September.

Meanwhile, Williams arrived in Northern Rhodesia for a visit. He had achieved notoriety in February by declaring that 'Africa is for the Africans', and the statement raised quite a rumpus. President Kennedy defended Williams and joked about the remark publicly, but privately expressed concern that it could upset European allies.<sup>62</sup> There was no doubt, however, that William's remark upset Federation Whites. At the airport just before his departure on 28 August, Stuart Finlay-Bissett walked up to Williams and punched him on the nose. Finlay-Bissett, a 58 year old businessman from Southern Rhodesia, openly advocated White supremacy.<sup>63</sup> He quite obviously did not think that 'Africa was for the Africans.'<sup>64</sup> In the Federation during the fall of 1961, events again illustrated the link between race relations in the US and Southern Rhodesia. In an October ruling the Supreme Court of Southern Rhodesia opened all public swimming pools to members of any race. The decision was based on the US Supreme Court's 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* case, which had prohibited segregation in US schools. Yet, alleviation of social discrimination in public places did not satisfy Southern Rhodesian nationalists.<sup>65</sup> Joshua Nkomo explained:

<sup>60</sup> *Northern Rhodesia 1961: Colonial Office, Report on Northern Rhodesia for the Year 1961* (London, Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1962), 5.

<sup>61</sup> Kuanda to the President, the White House, Washington, 22 August 1961, 'CO 250 Rhodesia', Box 68, White House Central File, John F. Kennedy Library, Boston, MA (hereafter JFK).

<sup>62</sup> Reaction to William's speech described in Noer, *Cold War and Black Liberation*, 69. Also see G. Mennen Williams, *Africa for the Africans* (Grand Rapids, Eerdman, 1969), 159-160.

<sup>63</sup> Salisbury to Secretary of State, 29 August 1961, 'Rhodesia and Nyasaland', Box 123b, President's Office File, Countries, JFK.

<sup>64</sup> The local authorities prosecuted him on an assault charge and fined him approximately \$140. See 'Sock-on-Jaw site visited', *Baltimore Sun*, 18 February 1963, in 'Feb. 1963 Trip — G. Mennen Williams', Box 24, Trips File, 1961-66, Records of G. Mennen Williams; Salisbury to Secretary of State, 12 September 1961, 745c.00/9-1261, Decimal File, NA2.

<sup>65</sup> Consul General, Salisbury, to State, 7 November 1961, 745c.00/11-761, State Decimal File, NA2.

'We don't want to swim in your swimming pools. We want to swim with you in parliament.'<sup>66</sup>

Nkomo's desire for Blacks to 'swim' with Whites in parliament underlined parallels between Southern Rhodesia and the southern US. In much of Mississippi, Alabama, and Georgia virtually no Blacks dared to vote, so civil rights activists focused on registering Black voters.<sup>67</sup> The widespread racial discrimination in the US not only paralleled the situation in the Federation, it directly hindered relations between the two. According to the chief US diplomat in Southern Rhodesia, Black Africans generally respected America. But he added that 'Alabama does not help.'<sup>68</sup>

In early December, Welensky banned Nkomo's National Democratic Party (NDP). About a week later, Nkomo announced the formation of the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU). ZAPU was led by the same people as the banned NDP, and sought the same goals. A US diplomat observed that ZAPU carried on the 'NDP attitude of cautious friendship with US, of frustrated disappointment with UK, of uncompromising opposition to a constitution which gives Africans only 15 of 65 assembly seats.'<sup>69</sup>

### 1962: RISING NATIONALISM

In 1962 Nyasaland neared independence under Black majority rule, with Northern Rhodesia not too far behind. The State Department realized that Southern Rhodesia presented the most serious situation in the Federation. Indeed, as it became more and more clear in 1962 that the Federation would dissolve, State zeroed in on the future of Southern Rhodesia.<sup>70</sup> Two questions dominated the discussion:

- 1) Should the new Southern Rhodesian constitution proposed by the British in 1961 be implemented?
- 2) Should the UN investigate Southern Rhodesian domestic policies and rule on whether it deserved 'self-governing' status?

In February 1962 Joshua Nkomo came to New York, and made his feelings on these questions absolutely clear. As for the proposed new constitution, Nkomo adamantly opposed it.<sup>71</sup> Regarding the possible UN

<sup>66</sup> Shamuyarira, *Crisis in Rhodesia*, 77.

<sup>67</sup> For a detailed narrative of US civil rights events during 1961 see Branch, *Parting the Waters*, 379-561.

<sup>68</sup> John Emmerson to State, 31 May 1961, 745c.00/5-3161, State Decimal File, NA2.

<sup>69</sup> John Emmerson to State, 18 December 1961, 745c.00/12-1861, Decimal File, NA2.

<sup>70</sup> 'Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland'. Memorandum for Mr. McGeorge Bundy, National Security Adviser, from Walter Collopy, State Department, 7 May 1962, 'Rhodesia General 2/62-7/62', Box 155a, NSF, JFK.

<sup>71</sup> Adlai Stevenson to the State Department, 23 February 1962, 745c.00/2-2362, Decimal File, NA2.



investigation of Southern Rhodesia's status, Nkomo believed it imperative. The British admitted Southern Rhodesia was not independent but contended that it was 'self-governing', an argument Nkomo found absurd. He wanted the UN to investigate and fully expected a ruling against Southern Rhodesian self-government.<sup>72</sup>

While in New York, Nkomo dined at the home of Jonathan Bingham, the American representative for colonial matters at the UN. He and Bingham's family talked about the scenario in Southern Rhodesia. Bingham's daughter asked: 'Surely you are going to vote for Mr. Nkomo, aren't you, Daddy?' Bingham responded: 'I'd vote for him if the vote were mine, but unfortunately my vote belongs to the United States.'<sup>73</sup> In fact, the US did vote against the resolution calling for a UN investigation. Despite US opposition, however, the resolution passed the UN General Assembly.<sup>74</sup>

According to Robert Mugabe, ZAPU's young Publicity Secretary, the vote demonstrated how various countries felt about ZAPU's struggle, and he pointed out that the Soviet Union had voted in their favour.<sup>75</sup> Williams hoped to rectify the negative image of the US held by nationalists like Mugabe. As Williams prepared for another African trip, President Kennedy asked him for a brief summary of events in Southern Rhodesia. Williams told his subordinates to prepare the summary, instructing them that: 'I have in mind that we should encourage the British to retain some strategy so as to give Southern Rhodesian Nationalists hope for a better constitution ...'<sup>76</sup>

There is no question that an acceptable settlement of the dispute over the Southern Rhodesian constitution, especially regarding the political role of Blacks, was very high on William's agenda in the summer of 1962. His priority list of the top 20 African issues placed Southern Rhodesia third, after the Congo and Algeria.<sup>77</sup> He believed that it was necessary for the US government to pressure the British into replacing the proposed constitution with a more progressive one. He also suggested US mediation as a potential facilitating role.

<sup>72</sup> Joshua Nkomo, *Nkomo: The Story of My Life* (London, Methuen, 1984), 99.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

<sup>74</sup> The 23 February vote was 57 to 21. See *FRUS 1961-1963* Vol. XXI, 515n.

<sup>75</sup> Memo of conversation with Robert Mugabe, American Consul General, Salisbury, to State, 18 April 1962, 845c.062/4-1862, Decimal File, NA2.

<sup>76</sup> Memorandum, 'Angola and Rhodesia', Williams to Fredericks, 16 April 1962, 745c.00/4-1662, Decimal File, NA2.

<sup>77</sup> See the final draft of the 'AF Priority List for August-September, 1962', 21 August 1962, and two previous drafts, in 'Priority African Issues', Box 29, Miscellaneous Files, 1961-66, Records of G. Mennen Williams, NA2.

From the options proposed by Williams, the Kennedy Administration chose only to provide small amounts of development funding to the Federation, and not to pressure the British.<sup>78</sup> For the most part, the US government accepted the British assessment that the best course was to hope for Southern Rhodesian Prime Minister Edgar Whitehead's reelection.<sup>79</sup> American policy in the fall of 1962 was mildly critical of the British, but basically supportive of their decision to wait for the elections.<sup>80</sup>

Leading American Blacks, however, hoped Kennedy would act forcefully for justice in Southern Rhodesia. He had recently deployed Federal troops to the University of Mississippi to quell the rioting against the admission of Ole Miss's first Black student, James Meredith.<sup>81</sup> Kennedy's armed intervention in Mississippi, partly on behalf of racial justice, suggested to Black Americans that he might take strong action towards southern Africa. In November, the American Negro Leadership Conference on Africa (ANLCA) convened for three days at Columbia University. The group, founded a few months before, was led by Whitney Young of the Urban League, Roy Wilkins of the NAACP, and Martin Luther King.<sup>82</sup>

The ANLCA espoused a US policy towards the Federation which would contribute to universal suffrage in the three territories, and a new government and new constitution for Southern Rhodesia.<sup>83</sup> King and several other ANLCA leaders met with Kennedy in December. They requested him to increase diplomatic pressure in order to end colonial rule throughout Africa. The meeting lasted three hours and encouraged King, but did not transform policy towards the Federation.<sup>84</sup>

By the time King and Kennedy met, events in Southern Rhodesia had rendered talk of constitutional reform obsolete. Between August and December of 1962, the narrow neck of common ground joining the positions of Nkomo and Whitehead vanished into a sea of violent resistance and reactionary racism. In August and September, it became evident that ZAPU's leadership had reached two key decisions: First, they would wage

<sup>78</sup> George Ball, Memorandum for the President. 'Your September 30 Luncheon with Lord Home: Southern Rhodesia', 29 September 1962, 745c.00/9-2962, Decimal File, NA2.

<sup>79</sup> MemCon, 30 September 1962, President Kennedy and Foreign Secretary Home, *et al.*, 745c.00/9-3062, Decimal File, NA2.

<sup>80</sup> State to AmConGen Salisbury, 19 September 1962, 745c.00/8-3162, Decimal File, NA2.

<sup>81</sup> The showdown at Ole Miss is described in Carl Brauer, *John F. Kennedy and the Second Reconstruction* (New York: Columbia University, 1977), 191-197.

<sup>82</sup> For a discussion of the formation and ultimate shortcomings of the ANLCA, see George Houser, *No One Can Stop the Rain*, 266. For the list of participants at this conference see ANLCA, 'Resolutions', Arden House, Campus of Columbia University, Harriman, New York, November 23, 24, 25, 1962, Folder 9, Box 125, Martin Luther King Papers, Martin Luther King Library, Atlanta, GA.

<sup>83</sup> ANLCA, 'Resolutions', Folder 9, Box 125, MLK Papers, MLK Library.

<sup>84</sup> Taylor Branch, *Parting the Waters*, 684.

an armed struggle; and second, they would send cadres abroad for revolutionary training. In September, a series of bomb attacks blasted government buildings across Southern Rhodesia.<sup>85</sup>

Simultaneously, the first ZAPU cadres trained in the Soviet Union rejoined the liberation force.<sup>86</sup> Events in Southern Rhodesia during the fall of 1962 could conceivably have been interpreted by US officials as a Soviet-inspired communist revolt, hostile to the West. Such an interpretation would have fit nicely with the US view of events in the Congo, Vietnam, Cuba, and elsewhere. British diplomats in Washington, moreover, advocated this view to Williams. He disagreed, though, and explained that the US government considered the drive for self-determination in Southern Rhodesia 'an indigenous movement'. Williams understood that the Soviets would try to capitalize on the movement, but they had not instigated it.<sup>87</sup>

In the December elections, right-wing candidate Winston Field replaced Whitehead as Southern Rhodesia's prime minister. Field belonged to the reactionary Rhodesian Front, and his victory dismayed the African Bureau. They characterized Southern Rhodesia as a 'drastically changed situation', and with the rise of the Rhodesian Front and the beginning of armed revolt late in 1962, it was drastically changed indeed.<sup>88</sup>

### 1963: THE END OF FEDERATION

In February Williams visited Africa for the fifth time in two years. Upon returning to Washington he manifested his view on the Federation:

Southern Rhodesia is (the) new African time bomb. If Nationalist aspirations do not get some hope and if Nationalists are not brought into constitutional dialogue instead of belligerent hostility, there will be major flare-up.<sup>89</sup>

President Kennedy certainly did not consider Southern Rhodesia to be as high a priority as Williams did; however, he was interested in developments there. He requested an update, and in turn received a situation report for his weekend reading for mid-April. The report emphasized: 'We are going to hear more of this, and more noisily, in the future.'<sup>90</sup>

<sup>85</sup> AmConsul, Salisbury to State, 14 September 1962, 745c.00/9-1462, Decimal File, NA2.

<sup>86</sup> Daniel Kempton, *Soviet Strategy Toward Southern Africa: The National Liberation Movement Connection* (New York, Praeger, 1989), 100.

<sup>87</sup> MemCon, G. Mennen Williams and O. B. Bennet of the British Embassy, 12 September 1962, 745c.00/9-1262, Decimal File, NA2.

<sup>88</sup> State to Salisbury, 18 December 1962, 'Rhodesia, General 12/62', Box 155a, NSF, JFK.

<sup>89</sup> Memorandum, Williams to Rusk, 'Major Conclusions of Williams Africa Trip', 25 February 1963, 'Feb. 1963 Trip', Box 24, Trips File, 1961-1966, NA2.

<sup>90</sup> Memo, Carl Kaysen to Kennedy, 11 April 1963, 'Rhodesia General 1/63-9/63', Box 155a, NSF Countries, JFK.

The main argument of the report was that Southern Rhodesian Whites desired independence from the British no later than it was granted to Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia. If the British denied them independence, they might very well declare it unilaterally. Southern Rhodesia would simmer ominously no matter what, but a unilateral declaration of independence (UDI) would exacerbate the situation.<sup>91</sup> High-level members of the US government were well aware of the approaching crisis in Southern Rhodesia. Williams wanted them to put greater pressure on the British to achieve a settlement acceptable to the Blacks, but this option was not chosen. Instead, the US government basically sat back and let the British handle Southern Rhodesia.

Williams continued working to promote a more active role by the US. He explained his view on Southern Rhodesia to Sithole, who wanted the US to lean on the British. While Williams probably sympathized, he could be no more reassuring than to hope all sides in the dispute would continue a dialogue.<sup>92</sup> Sithole's request that the US put leverage on the British was echoed by Robert Mugabe. Back in January, Mugabe had explained that in order to avert war in Southern Rhodesia, the US should convince the British to mandate equal political rights for Blacks there.<sup>93</sup>

In July British diplomats publicly announced the final decision to disband the Federation, again raising questions about the status of Southern Rhodesia.<sup>94</sup> Would it be allowed independence in the near future, like Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia? Independence under the new constitution and the leadership of the Rhodesian Front would mean that 250 000 Whites exercised political and economic domination over about 4 million Blacks. While leading Southern Rhodesian Blacks all opposed the constitution, they disagreed increasingly on how best to fight it.

Through the summer of 1963, the struggle for control of the nationalist movement became more pronounced. The State Department felt it was important enough to brief McGeorge Bundy on it, suggesting the president might want to know before he talked with Julius Nyerere in July.<sup>95</sup> On

<sup>91</sup> 'Situation Report on Southern Rhodesia', attached to a memo from State for McGeorge Bundy, 6 April 1963, 'Rhodesia General 1/63-9/63', Box 155a, NSF Countries, JFK Library. Handwritten on the memo to Bundy is the note: '(Taken from Pres. weekend reading, 4/11/63'.

<sup>92</sup> Williams to Sithole, 16 April 1963, *FRUS, 1961-1963*, Vol. XXI, 530-32.

<sup>93</sup> Geren to State, 11 January 1963, 745c.00/1-1163, Decimal File, NA2. The airgram was entitled 'Mugabe Sees Violence Ahead in SR'.

<sup>94</sup> Great Britain announced that the Federation would cease to exist as of 1 January 1964. Colin Legum, (ed.), *Zambia: Independence and Beyond. The Speeches of Kenneth Kaunda* (London, Thomas Nelson, 1966), 49.

<sup>95</sup> Brief, 'Struggle for Leadership in the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) of Southern Rhodesia', attached to a memo from William Brubeck to McGeorge Bundy, 15 July 1963, 'Rhodesia General. 1/63-9/63', Box 155a, NSF Countries, JFK.

August 8, a group led by Sithole and Mugabe formed the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU). Sithole took the reins as ZANU's first president, and Mugabe was named secretary-general. The official split sparked a horrible spree of violence across Southern Rhodesia.<sup>96</sup> Internationally, the split created concern. American supporters of the nationalists decided to maintain contact with both groups, but sadly realized that this development would weaken the movement.<sup>97</sup>

The groundwork for the protracted struggle in Southern Rhodesia was laid during the last few months of the Kennedy Administration. ZANU initiated its contacts with the Chinese, which would produce training and weapons for the long fight against the Salisbury regime. What remained of Nkomo's ZAPU established ties with the Soviets, and set up headquarters in Northern Rhodesia. The Southern Rhodesian government established its own intelligence agency, the Central Intelligence Organization, and began cracking down on the liberation movement.<sup>98</sup>

Southern Rhodesia made its way onto President Kennedy's foreign relations docket one last time, on October 8. For about a half hour that morning at the White House, Kennedy discussed the Southern Rhodesian situation with Welensky.<sup>99</sup> Kennedy did not directly bring up the subject of a UDI.<sup>100</sup> He did, however, ask Welensky a series of questions about the possible sequence of events in Southern Rhodesia. He asked what specific steps could lead to a settlement, and Welensky explained that only new constitutional proposals by the British could do it. Kennedy wondered what would happen if no such settlement transpired, alluding to a possible UDI. Welensky insisted that the British must bring about a settlement, and that not finding a solution was 'unthinkable'.<sup>101</sup>

<sup>96</sup> Joshua Nkomo, *Nkomo*, 117; David Martin and Phyllis Johnson, *The Struggle for Zimbabwe*, 70-71; Christopher Nyangoni and Gideon Nyandoro (eds.), *Zimbabwe Independence Movements: Select Documents* (New York, Harper and Row, 1979), 57-64.

<sup>97</sup> George Houser, *No One Can Stop the Rain*, 225-227.

<sup>98</sup> First contacts between ZANU and China discussed in Martin and Johnson, *The Struggle for Zimbabwe*, 11; ZAPU's Soviet connection in Daniel Kempton, *Soviet Strategy*, 100; CIO formation in Henrick Ellert, 'The Rhodesian security and intelligence community 1960-1980', in Ngwabi Bhebe and Terrence Ranger (eds.), *Soldiers in Zimbabwe's Liberation War* (London, James Currey, 1995), 87-103.

<sup>99</sup> The decision to receive Welensky at the White House had been a difficult one. It was agreed that Kennedy would see him, but it would be made clear that Kennedy had not invited Welensky to the US. Furthermore, it would be balanced by visits from Black African leaders, and the meeting would receive 'the minimum possible publicity'. See memo from Carl Kaysen to William Brubeck, 27 March 1963, 'Rhodesia General, 1/63-9/63', Box 155a, NSF Countries, JFK.

<sup>100</sup> Briefing papers encouraged Kennedy to express the US government's disapproval of a UDI. Memo from State to McGeorge Bundy, 4 October 1963; Memo from William Brubeck for President Kennedy, 'Meeting with Sir Roy Welensky', 7 October 1963, 'Rhodesia General 10/63', Box 155a, NSF Countries, JFK.

<sup>101</sup> MemCon, President Kennedy and Roy Welensky, 8 October 1963, *FRUS, 1961-1963*, Vol. XXI, 536-538.

This meeting with Welensky showed Kennedy at his best. He demonstrated an impressive knowledge of events in Southern Rhodesia, and Africa in general. Welensky later praised the President as 'very friendly and very, very knowledgeable on our affairs'. Welensky suggested that Kennedy's insight was just one more reason why a solution could be negotiated in Southern Rhodesia.<sup>102</sup>

Welensky's attitude indicated that potential existed for the US to facilitate a British-designed settlement in Southern Rhodesia. Kennedy's ability to deal realistically with White leaders like Welensky, coupled with his excellent relationship with Black leaders like Banda, added up to a great prospect for US influence in negotiating a settlement in Southern Rhodesia. Had Kennedy been president until 1965, with his Administration's relatively high priority on Africa and his contacts with White and Black leaders, events in Southern Rhodesia might have turned out differently. Of course, Lyndon Johnson became president shortly after Kennedy's talk with Welensky, and he would be challenged by Ian Smith and his UDI.

### CONCLUSIONS

Kennedy may have taken a much more active role regarding Southern Rhodesia's UDI than Lyndon Johnson did, but we will never know for sure. There are many things that we definitely can learn from US relations with the Federation, however. First, strategic metals like chrome were central throughout the ten-year period. Second, and most important, race relations increased in significance. A number of individuals with progressive views on race, who would play key roles in later events, first came onto the scene during the Federation period. Also, tactics that contributed to the triumphs in Zimbabwe and South Africa in the 1980s and 1990s were developed.

Several individuals got their feet wet in international race relations by participating in interactions between the Federation and the US. On the African side, the notables included Kenneth Kaunda, Hastings Banda, Abel Muzorewa, Ndabaningi Sithole, Joshua Nkomo, and Robert Mugabe. All of these men were positively influenced or encouraged by Americans in one way or another. On the American side, major figures who emerged during the Federation era and played major roles later on were: George Houser, Charles Diggs, and Jonathan Bingham. While Martin Luther King did not live to see Zimbabwe's independence, his assistant Andrew Young carried on his vision in the late 1970s.

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<sup>102</sup> Welensky's 24 October speech to the Salisbury Rotary Club described in Geren to State, 25 October 1963. 'Rhodesia General, 10/63', Box 155a, NSF Countries, JFK.

At least as important as the emergence of key individuals were the tactics that first got applied to US/Federation relations. The State Department officials who fought recognition of the Federation in 1957 and criticized the segregated theatres in 1959 set a precedent for progressive action by State officials that continued through the 1980s. Efforts for racial justice by Assistant Secretary Williams in the early 1960s were later mirrored by Secretary of State Henry Kissinger in 1976, and President Jimmy Carter in 1977 and 1979. The respect and kindness that Bingham and Houser showed to Nkomo during the Federation years were duplicated by Young and Carter in their relations with Mugabe, Nkomo, and Nyerere in the 1970s. Finally, the lobbying tactics of the American Negro Leadership Council on Africa were replicated, and improved upon, by TransAfrica in the 1970s and 1980s.

In these and other ways, US relations with the Rhodesian Federation established precedents regarding the centrality of race in international relations. The individuals and tactics that first emerged in debates over the Federation during the period 1953 to 1963 would play major parts in the victories for racial justice that occurred in the US in 1965, in Zimbabwe in 1980, and in South Africa in 1994.