

# Those Bothersome Rho-dents: Lyndon B. Johnson and the thorny issue of the Rhodesian Information Office

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## Abstract

My article explores the response of the Johnson Administration to the establishment of the Rhodesian Information Office (RIO) in Washington DC in the aftermath of the Rhodesian Unilateral Declaration of Independence. The stance adopted by Johnson toward the RIO is illustrative of the viewpoint of the White House toward the broader issues of achieving majority rule and racial equality in Rhodesia and indeed the wider Southern African region. As clearly demonstrated by its policies toward the RIO, the White House adopted a measured approach of condemning Rhodesia and white minority rule in Africa and engaged in limited actions to demonstrate US opposition. Johnson, however, was not prepared to countenance more extreme measures that could threaten US geopolitical and domestic interests.

Keywords: Lyndon B. Johnson, US foreign policy, Rhodesia, cold war geopolitics, race relations

On February 4, 1966, Henry J. C. Hooper, a former member of the Office of the Minister of Southern Rhodesian Affairs at the British Embassy, filed registration for the Rhodesian Information Office (RIO) with the Department of Justice. The RIO almost immediately began to disseminate information, indeed often slanted propaganda, in favor of the white minority regime in Salisbury. The office became a key focal point of the Rhodesia Lobby on Capitol Hill, provided “information” on business prospects in Rhodesia and facilitated the recruitment of American mercenaries to fight in the Rhodesian military.<sup>1</sup>

The establishment of a Rhodesian quasi embassy in the heart of Washington DC angered domestic civil rights groups and outraged black African nations. The very existence of the RIO, and the Rhodesian personnel who staffed it, would develop into a major issue for

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<sup>1</sup> Lyndon Baines Johnson Library (hereafter LBJL), NSF, Box 97, “Rhodesia, Vol. 2 (3 of 3),” Rhodesia/Zambia Situation Report No.18 January 28 to February 11 1966; LBJL, NSF, Box 97, “Rhodesia, Vol. 2 (3 of 3),” Rhodesia/Zambia Situation Report No.19 February 12-14 1966; LBJL, NSF, Files of Edward K. Hamilton, Memo to Komer from Haynes, February 24, 1966; LBJL, NSF, Box 97, “Rhodesia, Vol. 2 (3 of 3),” Memo to Redman from Haynes, April 8, 1966; LBJL, NSF, Box 97, “Rhodesia, Vol. 2 (3 of 3),” Rhodesia/Zambia Situation Report No.27 February 26 to March 1 1966; Horne, *From the Barrel of a Gun*, 45; Lake, *The “Tar Baby” Option*, 104.

the administration of Lyndon B. Johnson. Hooper and his colleagues swiftly became known as the “bothersome Rhodesian residents” or “Rho-dents”. In terms of actions, however, while the administration issued a public statement in which it was made clear that the registration of the office in no way implied U.S. approval or recognition of the Rhodesian Government, the White House refused to take the stronger measures of closing down the RIO or deporting the Rhodesians who worked there.<sup>2</sup>

An analysis of the response of the White House to the establishment of this quasi embassy of an unrecognized nation state is demonstrative of the actions of the LBJ Administration towards the broader issues of achieving majority rule and racial equality in Rhodesia. As clearly symbolized by its policies towards the RIO, the White House adopted a measured approach of condemning Rhodesia and white minority rule in Africa and engaged in limited actions to demonstrate U.S. opposition. Johnson, however, was not prepared to countenance more extreme measures that could threaten U.S. interests or inflame domestic politics and racial tensions.

## **Historiography**

While the question of Rhodesia has been considered in the broader literature of U.S. foreign relations, there is a comparative paucity of research regarding direct bilateral relations with Salisbury especially in terms of examining policy through the lens of the specific presidential administrations. Rhodesia is typically included as part of a wider history of policy decision-making.

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<sup>2</sup> LBJL, NSF, Box 97, “Rhodesia, Vol. 2 (3 of 3),” Rhodesia/Zambia Situation Report No.19 February 12-14 1966; Foreign Relations of the United States (hereafter FRUS), 1964-1968, Vol. XXIV, Memo from Komer to President Johnson, Washington, February 17, 1966; LBJL, NSF, Box 97, “Rhodesia, Vol. 2 (3 of 3),” Rhodesia/Zambia Situation Report No.22 February 17, 1966; LBJL, NSF, Files of Edward K. Hamilton, Box 3, Memo to Komer from Haynes, February 24, 1966; LBJL, WHCF, Box 4, TA2 Boycotts-Embargoes, EXTA1, Letter to President Johnson from Charles Kindle, February 24, 1966; LBJL, NSF, Box 97, “Rhodesia, Vol. 2 (3 of 3),” Rhodesia/Zambia Situation Report No.26 February 25, 1966; LBJL, NSF, Box 97, “Rhodesia, Vol. 2 (3 of 3),” Memo to Hayes Redman from Rick Haynes, April 8, 1966.

Furthermore, the literature that does examine bilateral relations with Salisbury is frequently too expansive to offer an in-depth analysis of the rationale behind each individual president's approach to the Rhodesian crisis. Andrew DeRoche's book offered an overview of U.S. relations with Rhodesia/Zimbabwe between 1953 and 1998 but did not exclusively focus on the era of the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) and the inherent challenge that the rebellion posed for the individual presidential administrations both domestically and internationally.<sup>3</sup>

Gerald Horne has explored the friction between racial equality and anti-communism in shaping presidential decision making. His book, however, primarily examined the political and business support that Rhodesia received from the United States as well as the presence of American mercenaries fighting in the Rhodesian military. Carl Peter Watts provides an insightful analysis of the global responses to UDI. His book, though, was predominantly an international history that covers the British, Commonwealth, and UN reactions as well as the U.S. approach in the immediate aftermath of the rebellion.<sup>4</sup>

A further weakness in the existing scholarship is that much of the literature seeks to examine the Rhodesian issue primarily through the use of a specific lens. A good deal of the literature has either been defined by race-centric narratives or Cold War binaries. While the use of race or geopolitics as the primary categories of historical analysis can be illuminating, especially when such variables impacted other dynamics shaping policy, nevertheless, the use of such a restrictive lens not only colors the interpretation of the source base but also tends to discount or marginalize other determinants that influenced decision making.

In the case of race, Horne stated that his objective was to demonstrate the role of the United States in supporting the racist Smith regime and hindering the advent of majority rule while Lake clearly operated from the premise that the White House was erroneous in its

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<sup>3</sup> DeRoche, *Black White and Chrome*.

<sup>4</sup> Horne, *From the Barrel of a Gun*; Watts, *Rhodesia's Unilateral Declaration of Independence*.

policy of greater “communication” with the racist regimes of white Africa. Thomas Borstelmann and DeRoche also highlight the importance of race relations and although they integrate other determinants into their analysis, the issue of race remains the dominant theme of their narratives.<sup>5</sup>

The Cold War has also been posited as the dominating factor shaping U.S. policy towards Salisbury. Odd Arne Westad offers an excellent account of the ideological and strategic rationale for U.S. involvement in Southern Africa but nevertheless placed other determining factors within the framework of the broader Cold War. The work of Elizabeth Schmidt also primarily focused on the Cold War narrative offering only a brief analysis of the impact of other important dynamics. Nancy Mitchell provides a discerning account of both Ford and especially Carter’s approach towards Rhodesia. Her book offers an insightful portrait of Jimmy Carter himself, as well as examining the broader makeup and functioning of his administration. It is, nevertheless, primarily a Cold War history that acknowledges but downplays the role of other influences.<sup>6</sup>

An alternative approach is to use the establishment of the RIO and the subsequent response of the White House to explore the broader posture adopted by the Johnson Administration towards the issues of UDI and the white minority rule in Rhodesia. The position taken by the White House clearly reveals consternation, indeed a distinct irritation, with Salisbury, leading to criticism and the implementation of limited measures against the UDI state. The example of the RIO also exposes, however, an unwillingness on the part of the administration to engage in more tangible actions due to the potential diplomatic and domestic ramifications.

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<sup>5</sup> Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line*; DeRoche, *Black, White and Chrome*; Horne, *From the Barrel of a Gun*; Lauren, *Power and Prejudice*.

<sup>6</sup> Mitchell, *Jimmy Carter in Africa*; Schmidt, *Foreign Intervention in Africa*; Westad, *The Global Cold War*.

## Background

On November 11, 1965, the Rhodesian Government formally signed the UDI from the United Kingdom. It was the first unilateral break by a British colony since the U.S. Declaration of Independence nearly two centuries earlier in 1776. In his statement immediately following the declaration, Rhodesian Prime Minister Ian Douglas Smith asserted that “in the lives of most nations there comes a moment when a stand has to be made for principle, whatever the consequences. This moment has come to Rhodesia... We have struck a blow for the preservation of justice, civilisation and Christianity, and in the spirit of this belief we have this day assumed our sovereign independence.”<sup>7</sup>

A number of factors led to the Rhodesian decision to defy London and the world community by seizing its independence. The majority of white Rhodesians considered decolonization and majority rule in Africa as an erroneous policy symbolic of the decay of the once proud British Empire. A traditional Rhodesian assertion was that their white population, who had so heroically expanded the empire, held a “seemingly thankless sentinel duty” to remind their more metropolitan cousins of their past glories and inspire them to future greatness. On a pragmatic note, the fact that many newly emergent African states descended into one party dictatorships or spiralled into vicious bloodletting and ethnic conflict further hardened the resolve of the white community to stand their ground against the tide of Black Nationalism.<sup>8</sup>

The populist Rhodesian Front (RF) government was also vehemently anti-communist and both publicly and privately held to a “Manichean world view” in which the stirrings of African resistance within their country stemmed from communist subversion as opposed to genuine political grievances. In the view of white Rhodesia, communism was insidiously

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<sup>7</sup> The National Archives, London (hereafter TNA), PREM, 13/545, From Salisbury to Commonwealth Relations Office, No.1707, November 11, 1965; TNA, PREM 13/545, From Salisbury to Commonwealth Relations Office, No.1708, November 11, 1965; Watts, *Rhodesia's Unilateral Declaration of Independence*, 39.

<sup>8</sup> Lowry “The impact of anti-communism on white Rhodesian political culture,” 90; Smith, *Bitter Harvest*, 107-108.

spreading throughout Africa and London was doing little to prevent it. It therefore became incumbent on the Rhodesians themselves to become the first “nation in the last two decades to have the determination and fortitude to say ‘so far and no further.’”<sup>9</sup>

It is also clear, however, that UDI represented the determination of the white community to retain their power and privilege in an “independent” Rhodesia. The Rhodesians having built a economically viable modern nation, benefited, for the most part, from a privileged existence paying little tax and enjoying a high quality of life. Indeed, in 1965, the capital, Salisbury, boasted more swimming pools than any American city of a comparable size. It was also increasingly obvious that the white Rhodesians had no intention of giving it away. Ian Smith himself privately stated that “The white man is the master of Rhodesia... He has built it and intends to keep it.”<sup>10</sup>

The Rhodesian decision met with global criticism and hostility. The British Government passed a series of increasingly stringent trade sanctions against Salisbury while the United Nations condemned UDI and called on all states to refuse to recognize or render any assistance to the illegal regime. In December 1966, following a breakdown of talks between London and Salisbury, the UN Security Council (UNSC) imposed selective mandatory economic sanctions, seventeen months later, in May 1968, the UNSC unanimously adopted comprehensive sanctions against Rhodesia.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> TNA, PREM, 13/545, From Salisbury to Commonwealth Relations Office, No.1708, November 11, 1965; Lowry “The impact of anti-communism on white Rhodesian political culture,” 97-101.

<sup>10</sup> Time Magazine, Vol 86 No.19, November 5, 1965 40-48; Good, *The International Politics of the Rhodesian Rebellion*, 4.

<sup>11</sup> TNA, PREM, 13/545, Speech of Prime Minister Harold Wilson to the House of Commons, November 11, 1965; TNA, PREM, 13/545, Text of a Broadcast by the Prime Minister Harold Wilson, November 11, 1965; TNA, PREM 13/1113, From UK Mission to the UN to Foreign Office, November 11, 1965; TNA, PREM 13/545, Southern Rhodesia Act 1965, November 16, 1965; TNA, PREM 13/545, Orders in Council made by Privy Council, November 16, 1965; LBJL, NSF, Box 97, ‘Rhodesia, Vol. 1 (3 of 3), Memo to Ball from Hughes, UDI Developments and Reactions, November 16, 1965; FRUS, 1964–1968, Vol. XXIV, Africa, Telephone Conversation between Bundy and Ball, November 13, 1965; TNA, PREM 13/1143, From Foreign Office to All Her Majesty’s Representatives and from Commonwealth Relations Office to British High Commissions, December 1, 1965; LBJL, NSF, Box 97, ‘Rhodesia, Vol. 2 (1 of 3),’ Resolution Adopted by the Security Council, Question of Southern Rhodesia, December 16, 1966, as attachment to letter to President Johnson from Rostow, December 31, 1968; LBJL, NSF, Box 97, ‘Rhodesia, Vol. 2 (1 of 3),’ United Nations

## President Lyndon B. Johnson

On November 11, 1965, the day of UDI, President Johnson and his senior advisers were gathered at his ranch near Austin, known as the Texas White House. The immediate reaction of the White House to UDI was one of criticism and condemnation. In a press statement, Secretary of State Dean Rusk, declared unequivocally that the White House deplored UDI and the United States would not recognize the rebel regime. For the remainder of the Johnson era, the White House remained privately and publicly critical of continued white minority rule in Rhodesia and sought to undermine the pariah regime through financial pressure and trade embargoes.<sup>12</sup>

The White House approach to UDI was shaped by both ideological and pragmatic considerations. Johnson held a deep moral interest in ending white supremacy whether it existed in the Mississippi delta or in a distant African country. On March 15, 1965, in a speech to a joint session of Congress entitled the “American Promise”, LBJ stated unequivocally that if America proved incapable of the task of achieving equal rights for African-Americans then “we will have failed as a people and a nation.” This was not simply rhetoric for public consumption. Soon after taking office Johnson privately stated to a White House staffer that “I’m going to be the best friend the Negro ever had”. This commitment to racial equality was not merely domestic in scope. In a less than subtle gesture, LBJ dispatched a copy of the “American Promise” to South African Prime Minister Hendrik F. Verwoerd the so called architect of apartheid.<sup>13</sup>

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Security Council Resolution 253, as attachment to letter to President Johnson from Rostow, December 31, 1968; Good, *UDI*, 65 and 69.

<sup>12</sup> LBJL, DSAH, Vol. 1, Box 4, Chapter 10, Sections C, D and E; LBJL, NSF, Box 97, “Rhodesia, Vol. 2 (1 of 3),” Executive Order relating to trade and other transactions involving Southern Rhodesia, January 5, 1967, as attachment to letter to President Johnson from Rostow, December 31, 1968; LBJL, NSF, Box 97, “Rhodesia, Vol. 2 (1 of 3),” Executive Order 11419, July 29, 1968, as attachment to letter to President Johnson from Rostow, December 31, 1968; Lake, *The “Tar Baby” Option*, 80-81; Watts, *Rhodesia’s Unilateral Declaration of Independence*, 174.

<sup>13</sup> LBJL, NSF, Box 77, “Africa-Letters from the President to African Leaders, “The American Promise,”” Letter to Dr. Verwoerd, May 8, 1965; LBJL, NSF, Box 1, Files of Ulric Haynes, “Chrono (1 of 3),” Backgrounder: The President’s concern for Africa; DeRoche, *Black, White and Chrome*, 8 and 98.

The Oval Office recognized that London no longer possessed the economic or military power to end UDI. Johnson, as an avowed advocate of the “special relationship” with Britain, felt it was in the interests of the United States to support the United Kingdom in ending the rebellion. Nevertheless, Johnson along with many of his key advisers including Secretary of State Rusk viewed the Rhodesian issue as primarily a British responsibility. While Washington would work with London in its attempts to end UDI the Johnson Administration was not prepared to take radical steps that could damage U.S. interests whether globally or domestically.<sup>14</sup>

LBJ was also guided by the need to protect interests in the newly independent African states. As noted by Assistant Secretary of State for Africa, G. Mennen Williams, not only did Africa’s huge land mass and air space have great strategic importance but African nations possessed a large free world percentage of certain minerals critical to American interests. Africa also offered lucrative markets for export and Washington had both a strategic and humanitarian interest in promoting democracy and encouraging economic and social improvements.<sup>15</sup>

The White House was further concerned with the growth of communist interest in Africa. The early Sixties had witnessed a startling increase in communist economic and military aid to the newly independent black nations as well as funds, covert arms shipments and guerrilla training to the liberation movements fighting white minority rule. In the view of Johnson, the White Redoubt in southern Africa provided an opportunity for increased communist meddling and exploitation. Moreover, the longer the white regimes retained

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<sup>14</sup> LBJL, NSF, Box 97, “Rhodesia, Vol. 2 (3 of 3),” Memo to Rostow from Haynes, Balance Sheet: Rhodesian Crisis, April 22, 1966; LBJL, NSF, Box 2, NSC Meetings File, “Vol. 4 Tab 49 Southern Rhodesia”, Summary Notes of 567th NSC Meeting January 25, 1967; FRUS, 1964-1968, Vol. XXIV, Africa, Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in the United Kingdom, Washington, October 22, 1965; FRUS, 1964-1968, Vol. XXIV, Africa, Memo of Conversation, Washington, September 20, 1965; Lake, *The “Tar Baby” Option*, 63 and 76.

<sup>15</sup> LBJL, NSF, Box 76, “Africa General, Vol. 2 (3 of 4),” Memo to Ambassadors and certain Principal Officers from Mennen Williams, May 10, 1965; LBJL, NSF, Box 76, “Africa General, Vol. 3,” Confidential, Strengthened Africa Program.



political control the greater the potential Soviet sway over the leadership of the liberation groups.<sup>16</sup>

By 1965, the newly independent African nations also represented an increasingly powerful voting bloc in the UN General Assembly. Indeed, five years earlier, the number of postcolonial Afro-Asian member states meant that it become impossible for the United States and its Western allies to muster enough votes to form the two thirds majority needed for resolutions without African or Asian assistance. The black African states further sought to mobilize the power and resources of the UN to achieve their own objectives and high on the agenda was the ending of white minority rule in Southern Africa.<sup>17</sup>

The White House was well aware that the extent of U.S. strategic and economic influence in black Africa, as well as in terms of garnering support for U.S. diplomatic goals at the UN, was intrinsically linked to the stance or perceived stance that Washington took on the vexed question of dismantling white minority rule in southern Africa. The Johnson Administration, however, was also cognizant of the need to avoid actions which would damage relations with the white controlled states south of the Zambezi.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> LBJL, NSF, Box 76, "Africa General, Vol. 1 (2 of 3)," CIA Memo: Comments on UP1-25 of 22 Jan 64, January 22, 1964; LBJL, NSF, Box 76, "Africa General, Vol. 1 (2 of 3)," Memo to the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense and the Director of Central Intelligence from Bundy, February 13, 1964; LBJL, NSF, Box 76, "Africa General, Vol. 2 (2 of 4)," CIA Special Memo No.15-64, Communist Potentialities in Tropical Africa, December 1, 1964; LBJL, NSF, Box 76, "Africa General, Vol. 2 (3 of 4)," CIA Special Report, Communist World's Economic Relations with Africa, April 16, 1965; LBJL, NSF, Box 8, National Intelligence Estimates File, "60/70, Africa", 60/70-65: Problems and Prospects in Sub-Saharan Africa, April 22, 1965; LBJL, NSF, Box 76, "Africa General, Vol. 2 (3 of 4)," CIA Memo, Chinese Communist Activities in Africa, April 30, 1965; LBJL, NSF, Box 76, "Africa General, Vol. 2 (4 of 4)," Memo to President Johnson from Komer, June 16, 1965; LBJL, NSF, Box 76, "Africa General, Vol. 1 (3 of 3)," Memo to the Secretary of State from Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State, An Outline Guide to Communist Activities in Africa.

<sup>17</sup> LBJL, NSF, Box 76, "Africa General, Vol. 1 (1 of 3)," From Department of State to all African Diplomatic and Consular Posts, Brussels, Geneva, Lisbon, London, Moscow, Paris, and United States Mission to the United Nations, April 1, 1964; Sluga, "The Transformation of International Institutions" in Ferguson et al. *The Shock of the Global*, 224-225; Watts, *Rhodesia's Unilateral Declaration of Independence*, 186.

<sup>18</sup> LBJL, DSAH, Vol. 1, Box 4, Chapter 10 (The United Nations) Sections A and B (1 of 2); LBJL, NSF, Box 76, "Africa General, Vol. 2 (3 of 4)," Memo to Ambassadors and certain Principal Officers from Assistant Secretary of State, G. Mennen Williams, May 10, 1965; LBJL, NSF, Box 76, "Africa General, Vol. 3," Memo for the President from Robert W. Komer, November 23, 1965.

During the LBJ era, the United States retained close strategic and economic ties with both Portugal and South Africa. Both Lisbon and Pretoria were vehemently anti-communist and the United States benefited from close military ties with both nations. Portugal was a key NATO ally while South Africa monitored Soviet activities in the south Atlantic as well as providing facilities for both U.S. aircraft and naval vessels. The apartheid state also hosted an important NASA tracking station at Hartebeesthoek, near Johannesburg.<sup>19</sup>

Washington also possessed substantial economic ties with South Africa and the Portuguese Territories. In terms of direct assets, U.S. companies invested approximately \$650 million in South Africa along with a further \$10-20 million in South West Africa which was controlled by Pretoria. Portuguese Africa was also a major recipient of U.S. capital, the Mozambican economy alone possessed \$25 million of U.S. investments. South Africa was also a major supplier of minerals, including chromium and uranium, which were vital components of a number of U.S. industries including nuclear power generation, chemical manufacturing and the space program.<sup>20</sup>

The Rhodesian UDI also occurred at a key point in U.S. political history. By the mid 1960s the domestic conservative movement was transitioning from a primarily Sunbelt social movement into a national political driving force. In 1964, only one year before the Rhodesian UDI, Barry Goldwater, a U.S. Senator from Arizona and an uncompromising conservative triumphed in the Republican presidential primaries. Despite his defeat in the national election his victory in the primaries was indicative of the increasing power of social conservatism. Indeed, Goldwater's book entitled *The Conscience of a Conservative*, which offered an explanation of conservative theory, became a national bestseller.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Richard M. Nixon Library (hereafter RNL), Box H-144, NSC Institutional ("H") Files, NSSM - 39 2 of 3 (1 of 2), Response to National Security Study Memorandum 39: Southern Africa. August 15 1969; Lake, *The "Tar Baby" Option*, 62.

<sup>20</sup> NL, Box H-144, NSC Institutional ("H") Files, NSSM - 39 2 of 3 (1 of 2), Response to National Security Study Memorandum 39: Southern Africa. August 15 1969; Lake, *The "Tar Baby" Option*, 62.

<sup>21</sup> Goldwater, *The Conscience of a Conservative*; Perlstein, *Before the Storm*, ix-x.

Domestically, Rhodesia enjoyed considerable support among the American public, notably white Americans, and on Capitol Hill especially among conservatives. Johnson feared that any radical steps taken against Salisbury which led to an intensification of the racial conflict in southern Africa could stimulate greater domestic support for the increasingly influential conservative movement. The White House also had grave concerns that an escalation of the situation in Rhodesia could further inflame political and social ethnic tensions in the United States itself in the aftermath of the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts and thus wished to avoid actions that would lead to a violent split along racial lines in Southern Africa.<sup>22</sup>

In the case of Rhodesia, therefore, the White House strove to tread a delicate line between these competing dynamics. Johnson clearly wished to make a statement of opposition to UDI and support for the cause of majority rule both on moral grounds but also to maintain U.S. interests in black ruled Africa. The administration, however, wished to avoid an overt clash with de facto Cold War allies, Portugal and South Africa, over their support for Rhodesia due to the adverse implications on the U.S. geopolitical and economic agendas. Domestically, Johnson also sought to avert steps that could stimulate the burgeoning conservative movement and aggravate the still volatile field of U.S. race relations. .<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> LBJL, NSF, Box 76, "Africa General, Vol. 2 (2 of 4)," Memo Bundy from Komer, January 6, 1965; LBJL, NSF, Box 76, "Africa General, Vol. 2 (2 of 4)," Memo to the Secretary of State from Bundy, January 7, 1965; LBJL, NSF, Box 76, "Africa General, Vol. 2 (2 of 4)," Memo to Komer from Haynes, March 25, 1965, LBJL, WHCF, Box 65, Gen CO 250 Rhodesia, Letter to President Johnson from Margaret L. Clarkin et al. December 30, 1965; LBJL, NSF, Box 97, "Rhodesia, Vol. 2 (3 of 3)," Rhodesia/Zambia Situation Report No.27 February 26 to March 1, 1966; LBJL, NSF, Box 97, "Rhodesia, Vol. 2 (3 of 3)," Rhodesia/Zambia Situation Report No.28 March 2, 1966; LBJL, WHCF, Box 65, Gen CO 250 Rhodesia, Letter to President Johnson from Congressman Durwood G. Hall, January 5, 1967; LBJL, WHCF, Box 65, Gen CO 250 Rhodesia, Letter to President Johnson from Congressman H.R. Gross, January 5, 1967; LBJL, WHCF, Box 65, Gen CO 250 Rhodesia, Letter to President Johnson from Bruce L. Odou, January 9, 1967; LBJL, WHCF, Box 65, Gen CO 250 Rhodesia, Letter to President Johnson from Spencer McCallie, January 9, 1967; LBJL, WHCF, Box 65, Gen CO 250 Rhodesia, Letter to President Johnson from Wesley Bolin, March 1, 1967; LBJL, WHCF, Box 65, Gen CO 250 Rhodesia, Letter to President Johnson from F.O. Goldbeck; LBJL, NSF, Box 77, "Africa General, Vol. 5 (2 of 3)," Memo to President Johnson from Hamilton, August 16, 1967; LBJL, NSF, Box 77, "Africa General, Vol. 5 (2 of 3)," Memo to President Johnson from Senator Moss et al, American Policy on Africa, August 24, 1967; Lake, *The "Tar Baby" Option*, 116; Horne, *From the Barrel of a Gun*, 15 and 84.

<sup>23</sup> LBJL, NSF, Box 76, "Africa General, Vol. 2 (2 of 4)," Memo to Bundy from Komer, January 6, 1965; LBJL, NSF, Box 76, "Africa General, Vol. 2 (2 of 4)," Memo to the Secretary of State from Bundy, January 7, 1965;

The response of the Johnson Administration to UDI, therefore, was defined by a form of cautious hostility. The White House clearly adopted a dual strategy, on the one hand, public opposition towards Salisbury combined with limited actions in order to demonstrate concern and preserve interests in independent Africa. On the other hand, avoidance of any strong measures or the subversion of such actions that could derail relations with Lisbon and Pretoria or threaten Johnson's domestic objectives.

The reaction of the Johnson presidency to the establishment of the RIO in Washington during the winter of 1966 was demonstrative of this approach. Furthermore, the case of the RIO set a precedent for how the administration would respond to future developments and issues regarding the problem of the Rhodesian UDI.

### **The Rho-dents**

Prior to November 11, 1965, Salisbury had been diplomatically represented in the United States by the Office of the Minister of Southern Rhodesian Affairs at the British Embassy in Washington. The Rhodesians who staffed the office, including Senior Counselor Kenneth Towsey and Henry J. C. Hooper, were fully accredited members of British Embassy staff holding diplomatic passports and full privileges. Nevertheless, on October 18, the Southern Rhodesian Minister Alfred Bentley held a press conference in which he stated that he expected to be asked to leave the United States following the announcement of a UDI.<sup>24</sup>

Following UDI, the Rhodesians on the British Embassy staff became "out of status" for immigration purposes and lost their diplomatic privileges. Former Minister Bentley and

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LBJL, NSF, Box 76, "Africa General, Vol. 2 (2 of 4)," Memo to Komer from Haynes, March 25, 1965; LBJL, NSF, Box 97, "Rhodesia, Vol. 1 (3 of 3)," Department of State Research Memo to Ball from Hughes, UDI Developments and Reactions, November 16, 1965; LBJL, NSF, Box 3, Files of Edward K. Hamilton, Memo to President Johnson from Komer, December 6, 1965; FRUS Vol. XXIV, Africa, Notes of the 567th Meeting of the NSC, January 25, 1967; Horne, *From the Barrel of a Gun*, 15.

<sup>24</sup> LBJL, NSF, Box 3, Files of Edward K. Hamilton, Memo of Conversation, October 12, 1965; LBJL, NSF, Box 1, "Chrono (2 of 3)", Files of Ulric Haynes, Memo to President Johnson from Komer, October 18, 1965; LBJL, NSF, Box 3, Files of Edward K. Hamilton, Memo to Komer from Haynes, February 24, 1966; LBJL, NSF, Box 97, "Rhodesia, Vol. 2 (3 of 3)," Memo to Redman from Haynes, April 8, 1966; Lake, *The "Tar Baby" Option*, 104-105.

Counselor Towsey were further informed by the Rhodesian Affairs representative at the State Department, Edward W. Mulcahy, that there would be no special arrangements to maintain minimum contact between the U.S. and Rhodesian Governments' as the current administration in Salisbury was not recognized by Washington. Towsey and Hooper, however, remained in the United States.<sup>25</sup>

On February 4, Hooper filed registration for the RIO with the Department of Justice under the Foreign Agents Registration Act. Hooper himself was named as an agent of the "Department of External Affairs, Ministry of Information, Government of Rhodesia". Former Counselor Towsey also became a member of the newly established RIO. The RIO was located at the same address as the former Office of Southern Rhodesian Affairs, 2852 McGill Terrace NW in Washington DC. The Rhodesians, despite having had their diplomatic privileges withdrawn continued to carry their British diplomatic passports.<sup>26</sup>

The founding of the RIO represented part of a broader Rhodesian quasi-diplomacy effort that had begun even before the UDI. Salisbury was well-aware that its unique legal status prevented the institution of formal diplomatic relations with other nations and therefore sought to establish unofficial missions to maintain contact with host governments. In addition to the United States, Rhodesia had missions or representatives in a number of nations including Britain, Portugal, South Africa and West Germany. The purpose of these missions was to disseminate information favorable to Salisbury, facilitate trade and it was hoped would represent the first step towards de jure diplomatic recognition. Indeed, in 1972 the Rhodesian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Jack Howman observed that "Since Independence the Ministry

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<sup>25</sup> LBJL, NSF, Box 97, "Rhodesia, Vol. 1 (1 of 3)," From Secretary of State to Consulate Salisbury, November 13, 1965; LBJL, NSF, Box 97, "Rhodesia, Vol. 2 (3 of 3)," Memo to Redman from Haynes, April 8, 1966; LBJL, NSF, Box 97, "Rhodesia, Vol. 1 (1 of 3)," From Consulate Salisbury to Secretary of State, January 11, 1966; Lake, *The "Tar Baby" Option*, 104-105.

<sup>26</sup> LBJL, NSF, Box 97, "Rhodesia, Vol. 2 (3 of 3)," Rhodesia/Zambia Situation Report No.18 January 28 to February 11, 1966; LBJL, NSF, Box 97, "Rhodesia, Vol. 2 (3 of 3)," Rhodesia/Zambia Situation Report No.19 February 12-14, 1966; LBJL, NSF, Box 3, Files of Edward K. Hamilton, Memo to Komer from Haynes, February 24, 1966; Lake, *The "Tar Baby" Option*, 104.

of Foreign Affairs, whilst, inhibited, has nevertheless successfully carried out most of its functions in an unorthodox manner.”<sup>27</sup>

In the case of the RIO, the mission immediately began to issue propaganda in favor of Salisbury, notably *Rhodesian Commentary*, which commented positively on developments in Salisbury and underlined the business, immigration and investment opportunities in Rhodesia. The issues of *Rhodesian Commentary* established a pattern of emphasizing the global support for Rhodesia at the grassroots level, noting the opportunities for investors and trading partners, particularly in the tobacco industry, promoting the growing tourist industry and encouraging Americans to immigrate to Rhodesia.<sup>28</sup>

The RIO also clearly strived to align the actions of the white Rhodesians within the framework of the transitioning conservative movement within the United States. The conservative movement was characterized by a belief in “traditional” American social values, limited government and a vehement anti-communism. Importantly, while many conservatives opposed the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts and sought to limit the pace of racial change, at the national level such figures shifted away from the previously embraced overtly racist language and policies.<sup>29</sup>

Instead, conservative figures adopted more coded or nuanced rhetoric and strategies, such as states’ rights or anti-communism. Such tactics allowed racist and segregationist

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<sup>27</sup> Cory Library, Rhodes University (hereafter CL), RZP, Box 2/005/ (A), Cabinet Memoranda 1965 176-225, Memo from the Minister of Commerce and Industry, External Trade Representation: Paris and Lisbon, July 31, 1965; CL, RZP, Box 2006 A, Cabinet Memoranda 1966 109-224, Letter to Rhodesian Cabinet from Accredited Diplomatic Representative in South Africa, April 26, 1966; CL, RZP, Box 2/007 A, Cabinet Memoranda 1967 1-68, Memo from the Minister of External Affairs, British Residual Mission in Salisbury and Rhodesia House in London, March 13, 1967; CL, RZP, Box 2/010 (A), Cabinet Memoranda 1972 1-50, Memo from the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Rhodesian Representation in other countries, February 4, 1972.

<sup>28</sup> LBJL, NSF, Box 97, “Rhodesia, Vol. 2 (3 of 3),” Memo to Redman from Haynes, April 8, 1966; LBJL, NSF, Box 97, “Rhodesia, Vol. 2 (3 of 3),” Rhodesia/Zambia Situation Report No.27 February 26 to March 1 1966; University of Pretoria Library (hereafter UPL) Afrikaner Collection, Rhodesian Information Office, Washington DC, Rhodesian Commentary, Vol. 1, No. 5, March 21, 1966; UPL, Afrikaner Collection, Rhodesian Information Office, Washington DC, Rhodesian Commentary, Vol. 1. No. 6, April 4, 1966; UPL, Afrikaner Collection, Rhodesian Information Office, Washington DC, Rhodesian Commentary, Vol. 4, No. 20, October 1970; Lake, *The “Tar Baby” Option*, 104 and 168-169.

<sup>29</sup> Bogus, *Buckley*; Carlson, *George C. Wallace and the Politics of Powerlessness*; Crespino, *Strom Thurmond’s America*.

politicians such as Strom Thurmond to send veiled messages of support to voters with racist leanings but at the same time avoiding accusations of outright racism which by the 1960s was increasingly damaging to their political prospects. Both *Rhodesian Commentary* and *Rhodesian Viewpoint*, a second periodical published by the RIO which focused on positive American commentary towards Salisbury, avoided overtly racist language or inferences and sought to portray Rhodesia as a harmonious multi-racial nation that needed time to evolve and remedy the imbalances within its society.<sup>30</sup>

Salisbury was also aware of the importance of the ideological battle between Washington and Moscow to many conservative Americans. The RIO, therefore also sought to depict Rhodesia as a bedrock of Western civilization in Africa that had taken a moral stance against the spread of global communism. Interestingly, given the later importance of the issue of gaining access to “free world” Rhodesian chrome to conservative figures such as Strom Thurmond, as early as April, 1966, *Rhodesian Commentary* observed that sanctions on Rhodesia would lead to a concerning U.S. dependency on Soviet chrome. This suggests that potentially the RIO not only sought to embrace the changing political landscape but also actively participated in and helped to shape aspects of the developing conservative global outlook.<sup>31</sup>

The Rhodesian Government, however, was cognizant of the danger of being associated with individuals or groups to the political right of the new conservative movement. From the

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<sup>30</sup> UPL, Afrikaner Collection, Rhodesian Information Office, Washington DC, Rhodesian Commentary, Vol. 1, No. 5, March 21, 1966; UPL, Afrikaner Collection, Rhodesian Information Office, Washington DC, Rhodesian Commentary, Vol. 1. No. 6, April 4, 1966; UPL, Afrikaner Collection, Rhodesian Information Office, Washington DC, Rhodesian Commentary, Vol. 4, No. 20, October 1970; Carnegie Mellon University Digital Library (hereafter CMDL), H. John Heinz III Collection, Legislative Assistants' Files -- 1970-1991 (1977-1991), Rhodesian Information Office, Washington DC, Rhodesian Viewpoint, June 1978; Bogus, *Buckley*; Carlson, *George C. Wallace and the Politics of Powerlessness*; Crespino, *Strom Thurmond's America*.

<sup>31</sup> UPL, Afrikaner Collection, Rhodesian Information Office, Washington DC, Rhodesian Commentary, Vol. 1, No. 5, March 21, 1966; UPL, Afrikaner Collection, Rhodesian Information Office, Washington DC, Rhodesian Commentary, Vol. 1. No. 6, April 4, 1966; RNL, WHCF, Box 63, CO 135 South Africa, Republic of (1969–70), Paper to Henry A. Kissinger from Dean Acheson, U.S. Policies Toward Southern Africa Require Change, April 30, 1969; RNL, WHCF, Box 63, CO 124 Rhodesia 5/1/70–8/31/70, Letter to Clark Mollenoff from Senator James O. Eastland (D-Mississippi), March 19, 1970; RNL, NSC Country Files, Box 743 Rhodesia Vol. 2, (1970–1974), Letter to the President from Senator Strom Thurmond, April 15, 1970; UPL, Afrikaner Collection, Rhodesian Information Office, Washington DC, Rhodesian Commentary, Vol. 4, No. 20, October 1970.

time of its establishment the RIO began to attract support from groupings on the extreme right of the political sphere including Dixiecrats, the John Birch Society and the Liberty Lobby. National Security Council (NSC) staffer Ulric Haynes commented that the RIO enjoyed the backing of a “most vocal and unsavory bunch of right-wing reactionary types”. Indeed, during the presidential campaign of 1968, pro-Rhodesian Americans were urged to support the candidacy of the American Independent Party candidate and southern segregationist George Wallace who was portrayed as a friend to Salisbury.<sup>32</sup>

While the white minority government in Salisbury shared a similar ideological outlook to the Dixiecrats and other pro-segregationist American movements the Rhodesians who staffed the information office in Washington sought to downplay the support Rhodesia received from such groupings. Indeed, Hooper himself told U.S. officials that he was dismayed by attempts of overt racists to associate themselves with the RIO. It is important to note the rationale of Hooper in opposing such associations. In a letter on February 28, 1966 to Under Secretary of State Thomas C. Mann, Hooper asserted that Salisbury could not win the propaganda war with London if the American public viewed Rhodesia in the same light as domestic racist political organizations.<sup>33</sup>

The primary concern of the White House to the establishment of the RIO was that acceptance of its presence in Washington could be interpreted as a form of diplomatic recognition of the illegal white minority regime. On February 12, 1966, the Department of State issued a public statement regarding the establishment of the RIO. It was made clear that the registration of the office with the Department of Justice in no way implied U.S. approval of the activities of the agent, political faction or regime that it represented. The statement also

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<sup>32</sup> LBJL, NSF, Box 97, “Rhodesia, Vol. 2 (3 of 3),” Memo to Redman from Haynes, April 8, 1966; LBJL, NSF, Box 97, “Rhodesia, Vol. 2 (3 of 3),” Rhodesia/Zambia Situation Report No.27 February 26 to March 1 1966; Horne, *From the Barrel of a Gun*, 45 and 102.

<sup>33</sup> LBJL, NSF, Box 97, “Rhodesia, Vol. 2 (3 of 3),” Rhodesia/Zambia Situation Report No.27 February 26 to March 1 1966.



reiterated U.S. non-recognition of the Rhodesian Government and the acknowledgement of Britain as the sovereign power.<sup>34</sup>

The U.S. statement, though, did little to appease the outraged reaction of the black African nations. Ghana condemned the opening of the RIO while Zambia presented an official protest to the U.S. Embassy in Lusaka criticizing what it saw as the lack of any “definite statement against the propaganda center opened on behalf of the rebel regime” and hoped it did not become a step towards de facto recognition. African ambassadors in Washington also met at the residence of Zambian Ambassador Soko to consider the issue of the RIO.<sup>35</sup>

The Johnson Administration sought to calm tensions with the African states. Officials were instructed to use the statement of February 12 as the basis of their replies to any protests and reiterate that the registration of the RIO with the Justice Department did not signify U.S. approval and that Washington did not recognize the regime in Salisbury. On February 22, Assistant Secretary of State Williams met with the African ambassadors to explain the situation and clarify the position of the United States as laid out by the earlier public statement.<sup>36</sup>

The founding of the RIO also excited considerable interest from media outlets and angered domestic civil rights groups. On February 17, the picketing of the office by an albeit small group of African-Americans received coverage in both the press and on television. Interviews with the protestors and Hooper were published in newspapers and shown on news networks. Civil rights organizations stridently condemned the U.S. Government for

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<sup>34</sup> LBJL, NSF, Box 97, “Rhodesia, Vol. 2 (3 of 3),” Rhodesia/Zambia Situation Report No.19 February 12-14, 1966.

<sup>35</sup> FRUS, 1964-1968, Vol. XXIV, Africa, Memo from Komer to President Johnson, Washington, February 17, 1966; LBJL, NSF, Box 97, “Rhodesia, Vol. 2 (3 of 3),” Rhodesia/Zambia Situation Report No.22 February 17, 1966; LBJL, NSF, Box 97, “Rhodesia, Vol. 2 (3 of 3),” Rhodesia/Zambia Situation Report No.26 February 25, 1966.

<sup>36</sup> LBJL, NSF, Box 97, “Rhodesia, Vol. 2 (3 of 3),” Rhodesia/Zambia Situation Report No.21 February 16, 1966; LBJL, NSF, Box 97, “Rhodesia, Vol. 2 (3 of 3),” Memo for President Johnson from Komer, February 17, 1966; LBJL, NSF, Box 97, “Rhodesia, Vol. 2 (3 of 3),” Rhodesia/Zambia Situation Report No.35 March 11, 1966.

permitting the formation of the RIO. In one letter to Johnson, Charles Kindle, Chairman of Foreign Affairs for the United Negro Protest Committee, stated that by “allowing the Rhodesian rebels to establish an information center in Washington, D.C., the United States is indirectly encouraging the dissemination of false news about racial superiority.”<sup>37</sup>

In the White House, however, while the administration was aggravated by the appearance of the quasi Rhodesian embassy, opinions differed greatly over the best approach to adopt to the RIO and the Rhodesians who staffed it. U.S. Ambassador to the UN Arthur Goldberg, Assistant Secretary of State Joseph Sisco and Legal Adviser to the State Department Leonard Meeker all advocated immediate deportation of the Rhodesians. Sisco and Meeker argued that this would not only serve to hinder the effectiveness of the RIO but more importantly send a strong psychological message to Salisbury and the global community. This position was also shared by Haynes who vigorously urged for the deportation of the “bothersome Rhodesian residents” .<sup>38</sup>

A number of senior figures, however, contested such a move. Under Secretary of State Mann argued that the United States should not take such action as the registered agents of other non-recognized regimes including Communist China and Cuba were allowed to remain and establish similar offices. Assistant Secretary of State G. Mennen Williams, typically a vociferous critic of Rhodesia, also opposed deportation on the grounds that it could lead the Rhodesian Government to force the closure of the U.S. Consulate in Salisbury which provided information on the ground and support for Americans in Rhodesia.<sup>39</sup>

Indeed, the question of Rhodesian diplomatic retaliation for the removal of the “Rho-dents” presented a problematic issue for the Johnson Administration. In a telegram

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<sup>37</sup> LBJL, NSF, Box 97, “Rhodesia, Vol. 2 (3 of 3),” Rhodesia/Zambia Situation Report No.22 February 17, 1966; LBJL, WHCF, Box 4, TA2 Boycotts-Embargoes, EXTA1, Letter to President Johnson from Charles Kindle, February 24, 1966; LBJL, NSF, Box 97, “Rhodesia, Vol. 2 (3 of 3),” Memo to Redman from Haynes, April 8, 1966.

<sup>38</sup> LBJL, NSF, Box 3, Files of Edward K. Hamilton, Memo to Komer from Haynes, February 24, 1966.

<sup>39</sup> LBJL, NSF, Box 3, Files of Edward K. Hamilton, Memo to Komer from Haynes, February 24, 1966.

from the U.S. Consulate in Salisbury, the Consul General warned Secretary of State Rusk that if the Rhodesians were deported then he had been informed by “reliable sources” that the Rhodesian Government would either close down the U.S. Consulate or expel members of the consular staff. It is important to note that either action would have constituted a form of de facto recognition, according Salisbury a diplomatic authority that the White House was unwilling to grant.<sup>40</sup>

Furthermore, the alignment of the RIO with the emerging domestic conservative movement meant that any actions taken against RIO would lead to significant domestic criticism of the White House among conservatives both on Capital Hill and across the country. Indeed, Johnson was well aware that Rhodesia enjoyed strong support among influential conservative southern Democrats such as Senator James Eastland of Mississippi as well as Republicans. The loss of support among conservative Democrats in Congress would be particularly problematic threatening the wider legislative agenda of the Johnson Administration. The White House further feared that an overtly hostile response to the RIO, and by extension Rhodesia itself, could potentially inflame the ire of white segregationists, especially in the Deep South, leading to increased obstructionism and violence against the implementation of the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts.<sup>41</sup>

In a measured compromise, typifying Johnson’s approach towards Rhodesia, the White House decided that Under Secretary Mann would send a letter to Hooper informing him that the RIO would be permitted to continue to operate provided it did not portray itself as representing the Government of Rhodesia but instead a foreign principal or group. Hooper

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<sup>40</sup> LBJL, NSF, Country Files, Box 97, “Rhodesia, Vol. 1 (1 of 3),” From Consulate Salisbury to Secretary of State, January 11, 1966; LBJL, NSF, Files of Edward K. Hamilton, Box 3, Memo to Komer from Haynes, February 24, 1966.

<sup>41</sup> LBJL, WHCF, Box 65, CO 250 Rhodesia, Letter to President Johnson from E. Ralph Jones, House of Delegates, Commonwealth of Virginia, December 20, 1965; LBJL, WHCF, Box 65, CO 250 Rhodesia, Letter to President Johnson from Margaret L. Clarkin et al. December 30, 1965; LBJL, NSF, Box 97, “Rhodesia, Vol. 2 (3 of 3),” Rhodesia/Zambia Situation Report No.21, February 16, 1966; LBJL, NSF, Box 97, “Rhodesia, Vol. 2 (3 of 3),” Rhodesia/Zambia Situation Report No.23, February 18 1966; LBJL, NSF, Box 97, “Rhodesia, Vol. 2 (3 of 3),” Rhodesia/Zambia Situation Report No.29, March 3, 1966; LBJL, DSAH, Vol.1, Box 2, Chapter 5 (Africa); Horne, *From the Barrel of a Gun*, 15.

was reminded, though, that he and his colleagues had no official capacity or legal immigration status in the United States.<sup>42</sup>

While the letter represented a “weak approach”, as termed by Haynes, it nevertheless outraged Rhodesian supporters in the United States who associated the written warning with a potential closure of the information office. California State Senator John G. Schmitz urged Johnson to reconsider any actions against the Rhodesians while noted advocate of the Smith regime, Robert L. Wyckoff, the President of the Friends of Rhodesia in Orange County, California, informed the president that “People out here are mighty mad” to hear about the harassment of the RIO.<sup>43</sup>

On February 28, Hooper replied to the Under Secretary stating that “it has not been my intention to lay claim to any official capacity in the United States, and my action in filing a registration statement in terms of the Foreign Agents Registration Act was taken on the supposition that no such capacity was in present circumstances available to me.” The warning letter from Under Secretary Mann represented the only action taken by the White House in the immediate aftermath of the founding of the RIO. The office continued to operate freely and on December 27, 1967, Kenneth Towsey, who had been promoted to run the RIO, was granted permanent resident status by the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS).<sup>44</sup>

On May 29, 1968 the UNSC passed Resolution 253, a comprehensive trade embargo against Salisbury which prohibited virtually all financial transactions between member states and Rhodesia. It further included a requirement that all states prevent the entry of persons

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<sup>42</sup> LBJL, NSF, Box 3, Files of Edward K. Hamilton, Memo to Komer from Haynes, February 24, 1966; LBJL, NSF, Box 97, “Rhodesia, Vol. 2 (3 of 3),” Rhodesia/Zambia Situation Report No.27 February 26 to March 1, 1966; Lake, *The “Tar Baby” Option*, 104-105.

<sup>43</sup> LBJL, NSF, Files of Edward K. Hamilton, Box 3, Memo to Komer from Haynes, February 24, 1966; LBJL, WHCF, Box 65, CO 250 Rhodesia, Letter to President Johnson from John G. Schmitz, March 3, 1966; LBJL, WHCF, Box 65, CO 250 Rhodesia, Letter to President Johnson from Robert L. Wyckoff, March 3, 1966.

<sup>44</sup> LBJL, NSF, Box 97, “Rhodesia, Vol. 2 (3 of 3),” Rhodesia/Zambia Situation Report No.27 February 26 to March 1, 1966; Lake, *The “Tar Baby” Option*, 104-105.

ordinarily resident in Rhodesia as well as those who had encouraged or will encourage actions of the Smith government. The United States which had worked closely with London regarding the drafting of the resolution hoped that the measures would facilitate the removal of the nettlesome RIO.<sup>45</sup>

In July, Johnson issued Executive Order 11419 which implemented the provisions of the UNSC resolution. In theory, the UNSC resolution and subsequent executive order, as was intended, should have ended the ability of the RIO to function, due to the further financial restrictions placed on Salisbury, and allowed the expulsion of the troublesome Rhodesians. Indeed the Department of the Treasury froze the U.S. bank accounts held by the RIO as the incoming payments from Switzerland violated the UNSC resolution.<sup>46</sup>

In practice, the actions failed to achieve the closure of the RIO and highlighted the weakness of Johnson's policy of measured hostility towards Salisbury. The RIO, managed to circumvent the funding regulations by the use of a mechanism whereby the office withdrew its finances from U.S. bank accounts which were funded by groups who transmitted money to Rhodesia for charitable purposes and were subsequently refunded by Salisbury in Rhodesian dollars.<sup>47</sup>

In terms of expediting the deportation of the Rhodesians who staffed the RIO, the UNSC resolution and subsequent executive order also had little effect. Towsey was allowed to remain a legal permanent resident and although Hooper's application for a permanent

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<sup>45</sup> LBJL, NSF, Box 97, "Rhodesia, Vol. 2 (1 of 3)," United Nations Security Council Resolution 253 adopted at its 1428th meeting on May 29, 1968, as attachment to letter to President Johnson from Rostow, December 31, 1968; LBJL, DSAH, Vol. 1, Box 2, Chapter 5 (Africa); LBJL, DSAH, Vol. 1, Box 4, Chapter 10 (The United Nations).

<sup>46</sup> LBJL, NSF, Box 97, "Rhodesia, Vol. 2 (1 of 3)," Executive Order 11419, July 29, 1968, as attachment to letter to President Johnson from Rostow, December 31, 1968; LBJL, NSF, Box 97, "Rhodesia, Vol. 2 (1 of 3)," CIA Intelligence Memo, Rhodesia: A Third Round of Sanctions, June, 1968; Lake, *The Tar Baby Option*, 108.

<sup>47</sup> LBJL, NSF, Box 97, "Rhodesia, Vol. 2 (1 of 3)," Executive Order 11419, July 29, 1968, as attachment to letter to President Johnson from Rostow, December 31, 1968; LBJL, NSF, Box 97, "Rhodesia, Vol. 2 (1 of 3)," CIA Intelligence Memo, Rhodesia: A Third Round of Sanctions, June, 1968; Lake, *The Tar Baby Option*, 108.

residency was denied by INS due to a request from the State Department, he remained “an applicant for adjustment of status to permanent resident” and he did not face deportation.<sup>48</sup>

Overall, the approach adopted by the White House towards the establishment and continued presence of the RIO, is symbolic of Johnson’s broader policy towards Rhodesia and his administration’s efforts to end the existence of the pariah regime. As revealed by its actions against the RIO, the Johnson Administration offered official condemnation and engaged in limited actions to demonstrate U.S. opposition but was not prepared to consider stronger measures due to concern over wider diplomatic and domestic repercussions. Furthermore, arguably the actions against the RIO set a precedent for how Johnson would handle the question of Rhodesia for the remainder of his time in the Oval Office.

### **LBJ and Rhodesia: A Pattern of Cautious Hostility**

The approach of the White House towards the broader question of Rhodesia was characterized by a pattern reminiscent of his actions against the RIO. In mid December 1965, as part of the British plan for a “quick kill” to bring a rapid end to the Rhodesian rebellion through tightening diplomatic and economic pressures, Washington agreed to advise U.S. citizens and enterprises to comply with an oil embargo imposed by London on the UDI state. On December 30, in response to Smith’s retaliatory decision to prevent oil imports into neighboring Zambia, the State Department announced U.S. participation in an emergency airlift to alleviate Zambian oil shortages and expedite copper exports.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Lake, *The “Tar Baby” Option*, 106-108.

<sup>49</sup> LBJL, NSF, Box 97, “Rhodesia, Vol. 1 (2 of 3),” From Telecommunications Operations Division to Diplomatic Posts and Consulates’ Salisbury, Elisabethville, Lourenco Marques, Luanda and U.S. Mission to UN; TNA, PREM 13/564, U.S. Announcement on Oil Embargo, December 17, 1965; LBJL, NSF, Box 97, “Rhodesia, Vol. 2 (3 of 3),” Rhodesia/Zambia Situation Report No.27 February 26 to March 1, 1966; LBJL, NSF, Box 97, “Rhodesia, Vol. 1 (2 of 3),” CIA Special Memo No. 30-65, Possible UK military intervention in Southern Rhodesia, December 21, 1965; LBJL, NSF, Box 97, “Rhodesia, Vol. 1 (2 of 3),” From Embassy London to Secretary of State, January 5, 1966; LBJL, NSF, Box 97, “Rhodesia, Vol. 1 (2 of 3),” Memo for Bundy from Haynes, Situation Report: Rhodesian Crisis, January 6, 1966; LBJL, DSAH, Vol. 1, Box 2, Chapter 5; LBJL, DSAH, Vol. 1, Box 4, Chapter 10; Good, *UDI*, 106-107; Lake, *“The Tar Baby” Option*, 89-90.

The British concept of the “quick kill”, however, failed as Portugal and especially South Africa conspicuously violated sanctions by shipping large volumes of oil to Salisbury alleviating the pressure on the embattled Rhodesian regime. Despite grave concerns over the breaches of the embargo, the White House took little action. U.S. representatives in Portugal and South Africa simply warned their host governments by expressing concerns over the circumvention of the embargo. Washington supported a UNSC resolution allowing the UK to use force to prevent oil reaching the Mozambican port of Beira. The resolution, however, made no mention of the alternative port of Lourenco Marques which would have interfered with South African oil imports and thus led to a potential economic or military confrontation with Pretoria. As a result, South Africa continued to allow oil to flow across its northern border allowing the survival of the Smith government.<sup>50</sup>

The cautious approach of the Johnson Administration towards the Rhodesian issue is further demonstrated by its position on the imposition of UN sanctions towards Salisbury. In December 1966, following the collapse of British talks with the Rhodesian regime over a potential return to legality and constitutional agreement leading to majority rule, the White House supported UNSC Resolution 232. The British sponsored resolution declared Rhodesia a threat to international peace and security and passed selective mandatory sanctions on Salisbury including military equipment and oil as well as Rhodesian export commodities, notably chrome. The provisions of the UN resolution were subsequently enacted into U.S. law through the White House issuance of Executive Order 11322. It is noteworthy, however, that domestic implementation of the resolution did not affect the operations of foreign

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<sup>50</sup> LBJL, NSF, Box 97, “Rhodesia, Vol. 2 (1 of 3),” To Secretary of State from Consulate Salisbury, February 11, 1966; LBJL, NSF, Box 97, “Rhodesia, Vol. 2 (3 of 3),” Rhodesia/Zambia Situation Report No.30 March 4, 1966; LBJL, NSF, Box 97, “Rhodesia, Vol. 2 (3 of 3),” Rhodesia/Zambia Situation Report No.34 March 11, 1966; LBJL, NSF, Box 97, “Rhodesia, Vol. 2 (3 of 3),” Rhodesia/Zambia Situation Report No.37 March 15, 1966; TNA, PREM 13/1113, United Nations Security Council Resolution 221, April 9, 1966; CL, RZP, Box 2006 A, Cabinet Memoranda 1966 109-224, Letter to Rhodesian Cabinet from Accredited Diplomatic Representative in South Africa, April 26, 1966; LBJL, NSF, Box 60, “Department of State Vol. 4 (1 of 2),” CIA Intelligence Memorandum: Effect of UK Sanctions on the economies of Rhodesia and Zambia, April 1966; Lake, *The “Tar Baby” Option*, 39.

subsidiaries owned or controlled by their nationals. The embargo, therefore, did not extend to U.S. oil subsidiaries in the Portuguese Territories or South Africa.<sup>51</sup>

The UN resolution as feared by many black African nations, proved to be a weak and inadequate action. South Africa and Portugal continued to trade openly with Rhodesia while many other nations surreptitiously violated the embargo. In Rhodesia itself, the increased international pressure merely hardened the resolve of the white population and rallied support around Ian Smith. Indeed, the CIA warned the White House that the sanctions would prove ineffectual at achieving the goals of bringing down the Smith government or ending the rebellion. The White House, though wished to pursue a delicate balancing act of demonstrating hostility towards Salisbury while avoiding negative domestic political uproar among conservatives or an overt confrontation with Lisbon and Pretoria.<sup>52</sup>

On May 29, 1968, the UNSC unanimously adopted Resolution 253 against Rhodesia. The action was in response to the hanging of three black African inmates in Salisbury Central Prison for politically related killings. The UN action, which Washington had both supported and had assisted in the drafting, included a comprehensive mandatory trade embargo on Rhodesia and tightened financial and transportation restrictions. The resolution also contained two non-mandatory provisions, that member states cut off communications and

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<sup>51</sup> LBJL, NSF, Box 97, "Rhodesia, Vol. 2 (2 of 3)," CIA Intelligence Memo, The Rhodesian Problem after the failure of the Smith-Wilson Talks, December 9, 1966; FRUS, 1964-1968, Vol. XXIV, Africa, Memo from the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs to the Ambassador at Large, Washington, December 13, 1966; LBJL, NSF, Box 97, "Rhodesia, Vol. 2 (1 of 3)," Resolution adopted by the Security Council, Question of Southern Rhodesia, December 16, 1966, as attachment to letter to President Johnson from Rostow, December 31, 1968; LBJL, WHCF, Box 11, Federation of Rhodesia-Nyasaland, White House Executive Order 11322, January 5, 1967; LBJL, PHF, Box 40, International Countries: Rhodesia, Rhodesian Transaction Regulations, March 11, 1967.

<sup>52</sup> LBJL, NSF, Box 97, "Rhodesia, Vol. 2 (2 of 3)," CIA Intelligence Memo, The Rhodesian Problem after the failure of the Smith-Wilson Talks, December 9, 1966; FRUS, 1964-1968, Vol. XXIV, Africa, Memo from the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs to the Ambassador at Large, Washington, December 13, 1966; LBJL, WHCF, Box 11 (1 of 2), CIA Intelligence Memo, Rhodesia and Zambia: From Voluntary to Mandatory Sanctions, January 1967; CL, RZP, Box 2/007 A, Cabinet Memoranda 1967 193-235, Note from Cabinet Secretary, Portugal/Rhodesia Joint Trade and Economic Liaison Committee, December 12, 1967; Good, UDI, 207-218.



withdraw consular and trade representation. In July, Johnson applied the UNSC resolution to domestic U.S. law through the issuance of Executive Order 11419.<sup>53</sup>

In theory, the UNSC action and subsequent executive order represented a strong stance taken by the White House against Rhodesia. In reality, however, the United States had strongly lobbied against the imposition of more radical measures including the use of force or enforcement actions against Lisbon or Pretoria for any continued violation of sanctions. As with the case of the UN sanctions in 1966, the Johnson Administration sought to avert a damaging trade war with Rhodesia's de facto allies and held grave concerns about the enforcement of such measures which the White House feared could lead to a military conflict with either Lisbon or Pretoria. In terms of the non-mandatory measures, Johnson decided to maintain communication links to Rhodesia and retain the U.S. Consulate in Salisbury. The response of the Johnson Administration to the Salisbury hangings typified the approach of measured hostility that had characterized White House policy towards Salisbury since the establishment of the RIO in early 1966.<sup>54</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The case of the RIO allows us to grasp and better understand the approach adopted by the Johnson Administration towards the broader issue of the Rhodesian UDI. The White House viewed with consternation the formation of a quasi embassy of the pariah white

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<sup>53</sup> CL, RZP, Box 2/007 A, Cabinet Memoranda 1-68, Memo from the Minister of Justice, Persons under sentence of death: Exercise of prerogative of mercy, as attachment to note from Cabinet Secretary, February 11, 1967; LBJL, NSF, Box 97, "Rhodesia, Vol. 2 (1 of 3)," United Nations Security Council Resolution 253, as attachment to letter to President Johnson from Rostow, December 31, 1968; LBJL, NSF, Box 97, "Rhodesia, Vol. 2 (1 of 3)," Memo for Rostow from Read, Status Report on Southern Rhodesia, April 7, 1968; LBJL, NSF, Box 97, "Rhodesia, Vol. 2 (1 of 3)," Executive Order 11419, July 29, 1968, as attachment to letter to President Johnson from Rostow, December 31, 1968.

<sup>54</sup> FRUS, 1964-1968, Vol. XXIV, Africa, Information Memo from the Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs to Secretary of State, March 8, 1968; FRUS, 1964-1968, Vol. XXIV, Africa, Paper Prepared in the Department of State, May 9, 1968; FRUS, 1964-1968, Vol. XXIV, Africa, Memo from the Under Secretary of State to President Johnson, May 28, 1968; LBJL, NSF, Box 2, Files of Walt W. Rostow, "Meetings with the President, May-June 1968 (2 of 5)," Memo for President Johnson from Rostow, May 29, 1968; FRUS, 1964-1968, Vol. XXIV, Africa, Action Memo from the Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs and the Deputy Assistant Secretary for African Affairs to Secretary of State, June 10, 1968; LBJL, NSF, Box 97, "Rhodesia, Vol. 2 (1 of 3)," CIA Intelligence Memo, Rhodesia: A Third Round of Sanctions, June, 1968; LBJL, DSAH, Vol. 1, Box 4, Chapter 10.

minority regime in heart of Washington DC. Johnson not only opposed white supremacy on ideological grounds but was also well aware that the existence of the office would lead to outrage among the newly independent black African nations and called into question the American claim to be a supporter of black liberation. The continued presence of the RIO would therefore serve as a stumbling block to the geopolitical goals of maintaining trade with and access to the vast mineral resources of Africa in addition to preventing the spread of communist influence on the continent.

The White House, however, was also aware that a closure of the RIO and deportation of the “Rho-dents” who staffed it could lead to retaliatory action from Salisbury towards the U.S. Consulate or members of the consular staff. U.S. acceptance of such Rhodesian measures would have represented de facto diplomatic recognition of the illegal regime. Domestically, Johnson was cognizant of the divisions, primarily along racial lines, among the U.S. public on the question of Rhodesia and the alignment of Salisbury with the increasingly influential conservative movement. The administration further feared the repercussions of taking an overly hostile approach to the RIO, and by extension Salisbury, on the still volatile arena of U.S. race relations in the mid 1960s.

The approach of measured hostility, characterized by official condemnation and limited steps taken against the RIO while avoiding more extreme actions, reflected the Johnson Administration’s wider outlook on Rhodesia and white minority rule in Africa. Johnson opposed Salisbury on ideological grounds and viewed Rhodesia as an irritant in U.S. relations with black Africa as well as encouraging communist meddling in the region. The Johnson Administration, was further aware that taking a publicly hostile stance towards Rhodesia would protect U.S. geopolitical and economic interests in the independent African states and would domestically demonstrate support for racial equality.

The White House, however, also recognized that the avoidance of harsh measures against Salisbury would allow the continuance of close strategic and economic ties with the other members of the White Redoubt and avoid a domestic backlash among conservative Americans. The White House, therefore, denounced UDI and imposed sanctions on the rebel regime but as with the RIO refused to countenance stronger actions due to the perceived adverse geostrategic and domestic consequences.

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