

American Committee on Africa
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QUESTIONS ABOUT RHODESIAN CHROME AND THE UNITED STATES VIOLATION OF U.N. SANCTIONS

QUESTION: What is the major issue in Rhodesia (Zimbabwe)* and how does the U.S. import of Rhodesian chrome relate to it?

ANSWER: The major issue is the right of the Zimbabwean people, the vast majority, to have full political and human rights in their own country. By allowing the import of chrome and other materials in open defiance of U.N. sanctions, the U.S. gives economic and political support to the Ian Smith regime and the continuance of minority rule.

QUESTION: Why is this trade with Rhodesia allowed, in defiance of the U.N. sanctions?

ANSWER: After months of lobbying last year by the Union Carbide Corporation and the Foote Mineral Company, which both own chrome ore mines in Rhodesia, Congress passed the Byrd amendment to the military procurement bill, allowing the import of any strategic material from a non-communist country. The Nixon Administration signed the bill and on January 24 issued a permit for the imports from Rhodesia, breaching the U.N. sanctions.

QUESTION: Have there been imports of chrome ore or other materials from Rhodesia yet?

ANSWER: Two ships loaded with chrome ore are on the way from Rhodesia, with more shipments, including chrome and other materials, to follow.

QUESTION: Can the shipments be stopped?

ANSWER: Already there have been protests by 300 Black students in Baton Rouge, Louisiana (where the first ship is supposed to dock) organized by the Committee of Blacks Against Oppression there. Longshoremen are being asked not to unload the chrome. Legal action to block the imports from Rhodesia is being investigated. A number of groups have met as a Coalition for Rhodesian Sanctions, coordinated by the Americans for Democratic Action, to work on actions to reinstate U.S. adherence to the U.N. sanctions.

* The majority African population (4,846,930 people or about 95% of the population, according to 1971 government figures) call their country Zimbabwe. Rhodesia (for Cecil Rhodes) is the name used by the British colonial settlers in the 19th century and by the white-minority (228,296 people, about 5% of the population) rulers today.

QUESTION: Is the chrome from Rhodesia really needed?

ANSWER: No. The Administration has sought legislation to allow the sale of 1.3 million tons of chrome from the strategic stockpile. The Office of Emergency Preparedness estimates that the chrome stockpile is now 2.2 million tons in excess of foreseeable needs. Also, the U.S. does not need to depend only on the Soviet Union for chrome, since there are other countries which can supply U.S. needs. Japan, for instance, is investing in enlarging chrome mining facilities in Turkey. 3

QUESTION: What is the impact in Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) of the U.S. breach of the U.N. sanctions?

ANSWER: The U.S. is breaking the sanctions just when the proposed settlement worked out between the minority Smith regime and Britain, which would put off indefinitely full majority rule by the Zimbabwean people, is being overwhelmingly rejected by the Zimbabweans. Bishop Muzorewa, Chairman of the African National Council, the broad Zimbabwean coalition which has successfully focused opposition to the settlement with the white-minority rulers, spoke at the United Nations Security Council on February 16 and called for the continuance and strengthening of the sanctions until Zimbabweans have full majority rule in their own land. Thus the U.S. sanctions breaking aids the maintenance of white-minority rule against the will of the Zimbabwean majority.

QUESTION: Don't the trade sanctions hurt the Zimbabwean people we want to help?

ANSWER: Bishop Muzorewa and other Zimbabwean leaders have stressed that like all people, Zimbabweans are ready to make sacrifices for their freedom. The U.N. sanctions fall heaviest on the white-controlled sectors of the economy, the sectors which depend on and profit from international trade, and which have backed white-minority rule. Zimbabweans can not be economically secure until they are politically secure, that is until there is majority rule in Zimbabwe.

QUESTION: Haven't the U.N. sanctions failed to force an end to minority rule?

ANSWER: The trade sanctions have been increasingly effective, despite violations. The transportation and agricultural sectors of the economy are plagued with breakdowns and equipment shortages, and the currency and capital shortage has been severe. It is this economic pressure that forced the Smith regime to negotiate the current settlement proposals with Britain.

QUESTION: Haven't other countries violated the U.N. sanctions?

ANSWER: The U.S. joins only South Africa and Portugal as the open violators of the sanctions. Japan, France, West Germany, and Italy have been accused of indirect trafficking with Rhodesia.

QUESTION: How does the breaking of the U.N. sanctions affect the U.S.?

ANSWER: For the small gain in profits for Union Carbide and Foote Mineral the U.S. has lost heavily. The U.N. General Assembly has voted to censure the U.S. for breaking the sanctions and the Security Council has voted 13 - 0 (the U.S. and Britain abstaining) to reaffirm the sanctions, calling on all countries to adhere to them. (3)

The sanctions violation deepens the belief of many Africans that the U.S. must be counted among the enemies of freedom and majority rule for Zimbabweans and the other peoples of southern Africa. The violation also means that the U.S. has broken its U.N. Charter treaty commitment, badly weakening the U.S. stand as a supporter of international rule by law and U.S. credibility in future international agreements.

QUESTION: What can be done to reinstate U.S. maintenance of the U.N. sanctions and to support majority rule for Zimbabwe?

ANSWER: Groups and individuals can:

- * Support local actions in your area protesting shipments from Rhodesia and calling for U.S. adherence to the U.S. sanctions;
- * Contact the White House, and your Senators and Congressman calling for action to repeal the Byrd amendment and reestablish U.S. support for the U.N. sanctions;
- * Keep in touch with ACOA for information on the situation and for background material on the struggle in Zimbabwe.