



Meet The Press

America's Press Conference of the Air

Rhodesians Worldwide

Guests:

IAN SMITH

Prime Minister of Rhodesia

NDABANINGI SITHOLE

Member, Rhodesian Executive Council

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LES PAYNE, *Newsday*
ANTHONY LEWIS, *The New York Times*

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MEET THE PRESS

MR. HARTZ: Our guests today on MEET THE PRESS are the Prime Minister of Rhodesia, Ian Smith, and the Reverend Ndabaningi Sithole, who sits, along with Mr. Smith, with two other leaders on Rhodesia's transitional Executive Council. They arrived in this country only yesterday to seek support for the so-called internal settlement in Rhodesia. That settlement would seek to exclude the outside guerrilla leaders, who are supported by neighboring African countries.

We will have the first questions now from Bill Monroe of NBC News.

MR. MONROE: Mr. Prime Minister, many people believe that your 12-year policy of white supremacy against British and American advice set the stage for the guerrilla leaders, Nkomo and Mugabe. Now that they have perhaps 25,000 men under arms, the support of every black African country, why should the United States join you in what would appear to be an unrealistic venture in excluding them from a settlement?

MR. SMITH: The first point I should like to make is that we have no wish to exclude them from the settlement. They have been invited to participate from the moment we started the meeting which produced the third of the March agreement, and they have been invited on a number of occasions subsequently to join us on very generous terms, the same as those which apply to the other members. I think the door is open, I want to make that clear. We have never closed the door.

The other main point I would like to make is that we are now introducing a constitution into Rhodesia, which is in keeping with what American and British governments have been pushing us to do for a number of years. In fact, it is similar to the agreement which we accepted, which was known as the Anglo-American Agreement, just over two years ago, now, at the meeting in Pretoria. The gentleman who was responsible for selling that agreement to us was one very well known to Americans, Dr. Henry Kissinger. That was the first time we accepted the principle of adult suffrage, one-man, one-vote, and that was what we were being pushed to accept for many years. In return we were told that sanctions would be lifted, terrorism would stop, and we would be accepted back into the Free World.

That is exactly what we are now doing. In fact, we have gone a little further than the Anglo-American agreement. So this is why we believe the American government should back us, be-

cause—what more do they want us to do? We have accepted our part of the bargain; we now expect the British and the American governments to fulfill their parts of the bargain.

MR. MONROE: Mr. Sithole, following up on what Mr. Smith said, the American and British governments have asked the Rhodesian government to agree to sit in on a conference of negotiating with Mugabe and Nkomo. To this point your government has not agreed to do that. Will you agree to do it?

MR. SITHOLE: As far as we are concerned, we keep an open mind, but we must be satisfied that before we attend any conference whatsoever, we should know what this conference is all about.

For instance, the widely-conversed all-party conference, as far as we are concerned, is suspect in that the main preoccupation of that conference is merely to resolve the leadership problem of an independent Zimbabwe.

In our own agreement of March 3rd, we have a method of resolving that problem. The leadership problem cannot be resolved externally, but rather internally.

We would like to attend whatever conference there may be, but which must be constructive, rather than attend a conference which is principally aimed at the destroying of our March 3rd agreement, which for the first time gives us majority rule, one-man, one-vote, a general election based on that principle, and independence on a specific date.

(Announcements)

MR. KILPATRICK: Mr. Prime Minister, at a press conference last Monday, Senator Hayakawa of California, your principal host in the United States, recalled that, as he said, over the past 15 years you have had policies that in his view were "incredibly racist."

Now, he said Ian Smith seems to have changed his mind, but there are some people who don't believe Ian Smith has changed his mind. He was inviting you to the United States, he said, so you could look at the American people face to face, explain yourself and let them make their own determination on whether you are really sincere.

Mr. Prime Minister, have you really, truly changed your mind?

MR. SMITH: The first point I would like to make to you is, I believe it is incorrect to say that previously I was a racist or that my policies were racist. I have always believed in certain standards for the qualification for the franchise, yes, a kind of "meritocracy," if you wish, as opposed to pure democracy, but we have never had racialism as a basis of our policies in our country.

We have in the main had voters' roles, which were open to black as well as white. I think my opponents have misrepresented

the situation. However, having made that point, I have changed my mind dramatically, and this goes back to the meeting I referred to earlier a few years ago in Pretoria when Dr. Kissinger, working on behalf of the American and British governments and also I believe the other governments of the Free World, made it clear to us that we would have to change and accept adult suffrage, one-man, one-vote, if we wished to continue to be part of the Free World. And we made this dramatic, traumatic change. It was genuine.

Once I made up my mind, I committed myself to it, and at this moment I am doing my very best to bring that in, to usher it into Rhodesia, and I find that the American and the British governments seem to be holding us back from bringing in majority rule on the democratic pattern.

MR. KILPATRICK: Mr. Prime Minister, under your pending constitution, your independence day would be December 31st of this year. Is there any realistic prospect of meeting that deadline?

MR. SMITH: Yes, although I am the first to admit that there are tremendous technical, mechanical problems in arriving at that particular date.

However, it was made in all sincerity. We are exerting ourselves to try to achieve the date, but I cannot give a guarantee that the mechanics will work accordingly, and if they don't, of course, the Executive Council will have to reconsider the position.

MR. PAYNE: Mr. Smith, in the agreement which has come to be known as the internal settlement, the 100-seat Parliament would have 28 seats reserved exclusively for whites. Twenty-two of these 28 will be elected exclusively by white voters. During the negotiation you argued that white officials elected by Africans would not and could not represent white aspirations.

Could you explain to the American people how it is possible in a country that is 96 percent African, for 28 percent of the people who are white only to be elected by whites?

MR. SMITH: There is a very good reason for this, and I am pleased to say that we convinced the black leaders with whom we were talking of the justification for our case.

You see, one must realize that up to the present date the parliament—rather, the government—has been exclusively in the control of the white man. Rightly or wrongly, this has been the position because of the merit qualification. Now we are changing to black majority rule. The black people share with us in our wish that we should try to keep the white man in Rhodesia, so that he will continue to participate with his skills and his know-how and his knowledge and the capital and, as far as these ingredients are concerned, they come mainly from the white sector.

Our black leaders have seen so much of Africa around us where majority rule has brought bankruptcy, a breakdown of law and order, and conditions which mean that the country may be independent in name, but not in fact. Therefore they joined us, that over a temporary transitional period—and I would remind you it is confined to this—of ten years or two parliaments, we should include these conditions to give confidence to the white man so he will continue to live and contribute toward the well-being of the country.

MR. PAYNE: Reverend Sithole, I have read the transcript of those negotiations, and you argued rather eloquently against such a scheme. In fact, you said that the white officials should be elected on a common role. Have you changed your mind?

REV. SITHOLE: No, I haven't changed, but I have gone along with the present arrangement that we shall have the 28 white seats. The whole idea of giving the whites 28 seats was really to come to a happy compromise which would eventually lead to a peaceful solution. In other words, we had to buy our independence with 28 white seats.

MR. PAYNE: Is that too high a price?

REV. SITHOLE: We felt that that was not too high a price to pay.

MR. LEWIS: Mr. Smith, you said a moment ago that you never had a racist policy, but in fact you did put in detention the black political leaders of the country, including, if I remember correctly, Mr. Sithole, for a period of perhaps ten years. The schools are segregated in Rhodesia, and blacks are forbidden by law from owning, I think, most of the best farmland in the country. So I want to ask you again whether, against that background, you don't have to make some concessions, realistic ones, as was suggested by Mr. Monroe, to the guerrillas who have been in a sense the political expression of the blacks?

REV. SITHOLE: It is a fact that the land of the country was divided equally between the two main races. This is something which has been in our history ever since we have had a country, in fact, to the days before we had an elected government. So it was something that we inherited.

I would just like to correct you on one point though. Last year this government introduced an amendment which threw open all of the white agricultural land to people of all races, so they are now open to the black people, and this was roughly 43 percent of the land of the country. Forty-three percent was set aside for the black people, so we have already made that concession, and we are still in the process of removing what little is left of racial discrimination.

MR. LEWIS: Coming back to the point of dealing realistically,

regardless of the past, looking to the future, with the guerrillas, you recently, in August, made a secret visit to Mr. Nkomo and reportedly asked him to come back and be the head of a new interim government.

If you are so committed to the process of your own internal solution, why did you do that?

REV. SITHOLE: I did not do that. Let us first of all correct the record. This was a request that was made to me by Mr. Nkomo. I told him that it was a decision that I could not make; it was a decision that would have to be made by all four members of the Executive Council.

Moreover, I challenged him as to whether his partner, Mr. Mugabe, would accept him as the leader. He assured me that he was, and in fact he was going to lay on a meeting a week later with Mr. Mugabe, but, as you all know, we are still waiting for that meeting.

MR. LEWIS: If you could have gotten Mr. Nkomo to come and join you in Salisbury without Mr. Mugabe, wouldn't you have been happy about that?

REV. SITHOLE: Yes.

MR. KILPATRICK: Following up on that, if I may, Mr. Sithole, the guerrilla forces headed by Mr. Mugabe and Mr. Nkomo are reported in this country to be quite strong. Is it realistically possible for the factions in Rhodesia that you represent, or Bishop Muzorewa represents or Chief Chirau, can you ever get together with the Mugabe and Nkomo factions in a peaceful, orderly government?

REV. SITHOLE: At the moment one has to be quite frank about this matter. Mugabe and Mr. Nkomo represent a different philosophy altogether. They say they want all power handed over to them or to their party, but we say no power should be handed over to any particular political party or to any particular political leader, but that power should be handed over to the people, so that the people themselves through the exercise of a one man, one vote may choose leaders of their own choice. Therefore at the moment, insofar as that ideology goes, one cannot see how the two factions can come together, but I feel that as more and more political realities are created in our country, there is a chance that we should come together.

MR. KILPATRICK: But the Mugabe and Nkomo factions have refused to come in on any basis of free elections, have they not?

REV. SITHOLE: They have indeed, so we are carrying on with the implementation of our agreement of March 3rd.

MR. MONROE: Mr. Prime Minister, you indicated a moment ago in talking to Mr. Lewis that Joshua Nkomo has agreed to

set up, after you had a private meeting with him a few weeks ago, one week later he was to set up a meeting with Mr. Mugabe. You had agreed, I gather, to attend such a meeting with Nkomo and Mugabe.

MR. SMITH: That is correct.

MR. MONROE: Why did the meeting not take place?

MR. SMITH: I gather that there were problems with Mr. Mugabe, and according to our information these were caused by President Nyerere. He was the one who opposed a further meeting.

MR. MONROE: What did you expect to achieve at the meeting that you were anticipating with Mugabe and Nkomo?

MR. SMITH: Basically my request was that the door was open to these two to return and to participate. I impressed upon them that I thought it was a very generous offer or, rather, on Nkomo at the time, that we would go out of our way to bring them in on exactly the same basis as those who were already participating, and this seemed to fall on rather fertile ground at the meeting that I had with Nkomo.

What we were going to try to ascertain was whether Mugabe would go along with that. I had my doubts. Mr. Nkomo seemed to be confident.

MR. MONROE: Why did you expect them to accept your terms when they feel they are winning the war and have some reason to feel that with whites, for example, leaving Rhodesia?

MR. SMITH: I don't believe that they are winning the war, and I believe that they are beginning to realize this themselves. For that reason we were getting some sense out of them.

It is also very difficult for them particularly to continue to enjoy the support of a man like President Kaunda, under their terms and conditions, which are that they should be imposed as the new government and the new leaders, because President Kaunda has so often said that the people of Rhodesia themselves should make the choice. This is what we have offered them, and for some reason or other they will not accept a decision through the ballot box.

I say for some reason or other. It is because they know that they will lose out under those circumstances, and therefore they wish to be imposed as the next government.

MR. LEWIS: Mr. Sithole, when the present interim government took over in March, you took the view that you could contribute to that—you personally, I think, along with others—bringing the guerrilla fighters back into the situation in Rhodesia, laying down their arms and joining you.

As I understand it from virtually all reports there that has

not happened to any great extent, and I wonder whether you can offer any hope of that happening and, for example, of holding the election that your plan calls for, when a great deal of the countryside is now in control of the guerrillas, effectively.

REV. SITHOLE: I would like to make this point quite clear, that insofar as the Rhodesian arms struggle goes, I was one of the very few who was instrumental in the beginning of that armed struggle. I have a large number of guerrillas both in Mozambique and inside the country who are still very loyal to me. I am glad to say I am in constant touch with them. They accept the agreement. They also accept the transitional government.

The only reason why we started the armed struggle in Zimbabwe was that we wanted majority rule, one man one vote, and independence for Zimbabwe. Having now got that through the March 3rd agreement, they feel satisfied that there is no reason to go on with the war. But they are not as sure as they would like to be if this agreement is sincere.

Most of them really are sitting on the fence waiting for the general election. Once there is a general election, U.D.I. will be reversed, and an African majority government will be established. It is then that they will come out positively in the open and go along with everybody else.

But I would like to assure you that the guerrillas within our country are only too happy if this agreement could be implemented to its logical conclusion.

MR. HARTZ: We have three minutes.

MR. LEWIS: But that, Mr. Sithole, conflicts, as I say, with a lot of the very bloody and unhappy reports we get from the field in Rhodesia of very serious fighting, and I want to ask you this: If, in fact, it becomes difficult—as Mr. Smith has generously conceded, there are difficulties—to hold an election because of the military situation, in the last analysis would you, would your whole group, do you think, be willing to accept a return to British rule as a last gesture?

I think Mr. Smith has talked about that perhaps in some meetings, and as a last chance to put the thing back together in a peaceful way.

REV. SITHOLE: No, as far as we are concerned, we are quite aware that as our agreement appears to work the external forces which are hostile to us also intensify their activities against us.

MR. HARTZ: We have two minutes.

MR. PAYNE: As a follow-up on that, Mr. Prime Minister, Bishop Muzorewa and Rev. Sithole assured you during the discussions that they could control and influence 90 percent of the

guerrillas to throw down their arms once the agreement was signed. Additionally, we hear now that they are representing 80 percent of the Africans in Rhodesia.

My question is, if in fact they control the guerrillas, if in fact they now have the popularity of 80 percent of the Africans, in the first instance, they should be able to stop the war, which they have not; and in the second instance, they could deny the friendly sea, which is so vital for these guerrillas to operate.

My question to you is, are you disappointed that they have not delivered on their promise; were you surprised, and is it not certain now that the internal settlement is pretty well dead with your turn to Nkomo?

MR. SMITH: Yes, I am disappointed. No, it is not certain the internal settlement is dead. We have got to try to correct the situation, and this is why we are here.

The main reason for the failure of the cease fire is the fact that the American and the British governments are supporting the patriotic front, the Marxist terrorists, instead of supporting the internal settlement by peaceful people to try to bring Rhodesia into the western camp, and there is no doubt, I want to promise you, that if we got the support which we should get because of previous commitments—I believe the terrorism would have collapsed by now.

MR. PAYNE: But aren't the majority of the Africans supporting the guerrillas?

MR. SMITH: No. The majority of them have very little chance, when guerrillas are running around sticking guns into their backs, to give a clear and unintimidated decision. That is the problem.

MR. HARTZ: I am sorry to interrupt, but our time is up. Thank you, Mr. Prime Minister, Rev. Sithole, for being with us today on MEET THE PRESS.

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