

African prime minister John Vorster's luxury train provided the setting for constitutional talks held between the Rhodesian leader Ian Smith and the African National Council. Not everyone lost on the day show—several tourists had the train to have their pictures taken in front of the coach.

(Dave Simms Photo)

Mirages and U.S. aircraft built under license in South Africa "wouldn't do a good job" on Zambia or Mazambique, from where he expected an attack to come.

He said Rhodesia's worst enemies were those who imposed the embargo. However, he "realized" that Canada's role in the ban was the work of "do-gooders like the churches" and that they had the support of most Canadians.

He pointed to a tractor working in a field as we passed and told me, "now that's probably a (Canadian-made) Massey Ferguson that's been brought in from South Africa."

Canada, while condemning South Africa's apartheid policies in the United Nations and purporting to support the blockade against Rhodesia, still extends its lowest tariffs—British Preference—to South Africa.

By DAVE SIMMS

(Simms worked with Canadian Crossroads International in Lesotho this summer and later hitch-hiked in Rhodesia and South Africa.)

One federal external affairs official told University of New Brunswick students last month that this was made necessary by the fact that "sometimes financial realities must take precedence over moral considerations."

The popular white opposition to any change was evident in conversation among whites who watched the "constitutional" talks between Rhodesian prime minister Ian Smith and the African National Council—who represent some of the country's blacks—on the Victoria Falls railway bridge between Rhodesia and Zambia. The talks—held in South African prime minister John Vorster's luxury train—fell through, not to the surprise of anyone.

"Smith has prepared a draft and he'll bring it to the black boys," one white observer explained to me. "They'll say no and that'll be that."

The talks collapsed despite the efforts of Vorster and Zambian prime minister Kenneth Kuanda to reconcile Smith and the ANC. Smith accused the council of not responding to his initiatives and the ANC said his unwillingness to admit outlawed ANC leaders into the country indicated his willingness to negotiate seriously.

Not everyone lost on the \$1,500-a-day venture. Vorster and Kuanda's efforts were regarded in some circles as window-dressing efforts to establish their images in the world's eyes as peace makers, in much the same manner as Vorster's attacks on Smith over the last year for his racist policies. Some people returned home happy with the talks. Several individuals had the chance to pose for pictures in front of the train while it was displayed at the Victoria Falls Station.

I mentioned that the coach in which the talks were held seemed rather vulnerable to snipers since it was the only white car in the train. A South African tourist replied

"oh yes, I guess so, but then they'll have to contend with the South African army—and they really fight."

Repeatedly, it was made obvious that many whites would rather fight than switch. Communication and "dialogue" between whites and blacks at the non-governmental level seemed virtually non-existent. The difference in their mentalities is reflected in the ease with which whites call the guerrillas terrorists while the blacks refer to them as freedom fighters.

The unyielding attitude has prompted more and more rumors of impending escalation of guerrilla warfare. Several thousand black elementary school students—whose absence from classes must by law be reported by the principals to the government—disappeared during an August break. There is speculation they have gone north to train as guerrillas for the increased fighting expected to begin at

the end of the rainy season which began in October.

Those Rhodesian whites who expect open confrontation or an attack from outside the country to be fended off with logistic support from South Africa will probably be disappointed, however. A Swedish missionary from a black farm school near Bulawayo predicted little peace for Rhodesia and little chance of a short field confrontation.

"I doubt there's anything that constitutional talks can accomplish at this time," he said. "The guerrillas will continue to attack in the northeast and begin again here (at Victoria Falls) until they push the whites into the cities and isolate them for attacks at night."

"It's very sad, but the slow, drawn-out struggle that took place in Vietnam is probably going to happen all over again in Rhodesia," he predicted.



Black Rhodesians followed the newspapers closely during the August constitutional talks between prime minister Ian Smith and the African National Council. The talks fell through and made the prospect of an internal, drawn-out war more eminent to some observers.

(Dave Simms Photo)

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