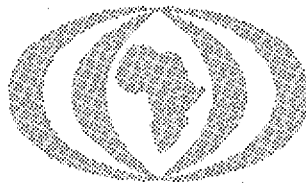


**THREE YEARS AS BRITISH
AMBASSADOR IN SOUTH AFRICA**

Sir David Scott

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Since 1976 Sir David Scott has been British Ambassador to South Africa.

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One of the questions I am constantly asked in South Africa is what changes I have noticed since I was first here in 1951. This is never a very easy question to answer. The changes have in fact not all been in the same direction. For example, you have to remember that when I was here before, the coloured community was still on the common voters' role. There is no doubt at all that their removal from it changed the political scene fundamentally. Having always up to the early 1950s identified themselves with the whites, the coloureds were compelled to re-examine their own identity; today many of them, particularly among the younger members of the community, have increasingly come to identify themselves with the blacks. The constitutional position of the coloured and Indian community is once again under review, and we all look forward to seeing what finally emerges.

Another change is the fact that in the South African general election in 1953 there were two alternative parties, either capable of forming a Government. This is no longer the position today.

But of course there have been many other changes too. One is that, in purely economic terms, the prosperity of the non-white communities in South Africa has greatly increased. The spread of secondary and technical education, both in schools and on the job, has led to an enormous increase in spending power in the hands of the non-whites. To take a simple materialistic example, the proportion of blacks who own cars today is obviously enormously higher than it was 25 years ago. For the investor, one of South Africa's greatest assets is the fact that there is an enormous reservoir of relatively untapped demand for consumer goods from the non-white population. The faster this can be developed, the faster the economy will expand. Even a single element - the electrification of Soweto - will of itself produce a very substantial demand for consumer durables: for electric cookers, mains record players, television sets and the rest. A Conservative Prime Minister in Britain once talked of the need to ensure the spread of "capital-owning democracy". To the extent that true democracy as we know it is largely based on a capitalist system, this is one of the best possible reasons for giving capitalism a chance to work at all income levels. If the poor - or the non-whites - do not receive a fair deal under capitalism, or a chance to accumulate a little capital of their own, it is not surprising if they turn to radical alternatives. A steadily increasing wages bill may present problems for management, but it is an essential step in this process of establishing a capitalist-conscious community. If only for this reason the introduction of the EEC Code of Conduct for the subsidiaries of British and other European firms makes good sense.

And it now seems likely that there are even more important changes in the offing. The last few days have seen the publication of the Wiehahn and Riekert Commission Reports. These are of particular interest to the United Kingdom, both politically, because of our concern with the EEC Code of Conduct, and economically because of our large financial and trading interests in South Africa. Both reports deserve careful study and you will not expect me to comment on them in detail at this stage. But let me say immediately that my Government warmly welcome any measures taken to remove discrimination in the labour and employment fields. It is clear that the Riekert Report has pointed the way to a major tidying up and modernisation of the complex legislation relating to the use of manpower in this country. Although no major changes in the structure of the system seem to be envisaged, we welcome the evidence of an intention to make its administration more flexible and humane. All sections of the community should benefit from this dismantling of outmoded and restrictive legislation.

While the Riekert Commission was concerned primarily with the broad economic and social environment, the Wiehahn Report deals with the needs and aspirations of the individual worker. Here again I welcome the recommendations to give better

opportunities for training and advancement and the end of the legal determination of job reservation and discrimination at the work-place. In both cases the Government have made it clear that progress will have to be gradual and that detailed arrangements will largely have to be dealt with by negotiation at plant level, but individual firms will at least no longer be able to shelter behind the law. I recognise that practical qualifications also surround the Wiehahn Commission's recommendations for the rights of the individual in industrial relations, but we have always attached great importance to progress towards full freedom of association. This is only the beginning of a new road, but a new road I believe it is.

In between our postings to South Africa, my wife and I served in the early 1960s in Salisbury and in the late 1960s in Uganda. I think it is fair to say that both of these postings gave us greater insight into the workings of African minds, both white and black. Curiously enough, both Sir Roy Welensky, then the Prime Minister of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, and Milton Obote, the President of Uganda, had one idea in common: they both hoped by economic means to secure the unity of their countries and the progressive elimination of sectional and tribal influences. Both of them saw the creation of larger economic units as the way forward to stability. Unhappily, neither of them was successful in his aim: I believe Sir Roy Welensky under-estimated the demand for political independence by both black and white, in the constituent countries of the Federation; President Obote greatly under-estimated the power of tribal influences to undermine his slogan of "Build a Nation".

History may prove that the aims of both were unattainable, but my own inclination is to believe that they were each in his different way ahead of his time.

Diplomats as Communicators

But that is enough of the past. I suppose that, as I have said elsewhere, the main job here - is to try to keep open lines of communication between countries and governments. This is not always easy, particularly when the governments concerned have very different views on some of the problems facing them. In South Africa a British Ambassador has both special advantages and special disadvantages. His advantages are that he is serving in a country which has a wide background of shared history and tradition; a common language, similar or related institutions and a tradition of free debate both in Parliament and in the press. His disadvantages derive from the fact that Britain was both a colonial power and also at one time or another in conflict - indeed at war - with more than one section of the South African community; and that Britain was largely responsible for shaping Southern Africa as it now exists. The result of this is that we can conveniently be blamed for almost anything that goes wrong: from the status of Walvis Bay to the fact that Lesotho, Zululand and Transkei did not all achieve the same sort of independence.

A British Ambassador also sometimes suffers from the fact that South Africa is far better informed about what is happening in Britain than she is about events in any other part of the world. London has more South African press correspondents than any other capital, and the British Press is extensively quoted in your newspapers.

Unfortunately, it is mostly the bad news which is reported. Our industrial problems are only too well advertised, mainly by ourselves. But it is not so well known, for instance, that Britain has one of the most efficient and highly capitalised agricultural industries in the world: 2½% of the population now produce well over

half the total food consumed by 55 million people. In our small and fairly crowded island we produced in 1977 agricultural products valued at over 11 billion rand - almost exactly three times the corresponding value of food produced in the whole of South Africa in the year 1977-78. This is, incidentally, one of the reasons why we are contributing so disproportionately to the Common Agricultural Policy of the EEC: we are in fact subsidising the relatively inefficient agricultural industries of Continental Europe to produce expensive mountains of butter and lakes of wine which no-one wants to buy.

South West Africa/Namibia

But communication is not the whole of an Ambassador's job. In the past three years I have spent a great deal of time on two major international questions: first the approach to independence of South West Africa/Namibia, and secondly the attempts to settle the Rhodesian problem.

Namibia has not for us been a bilateral matter. South West Africa was never a British colony. True, we have some commercial interests there, and a small resident community. But our concern on the independence issue stems from our position as a leading member of the international community and especially from our position as a Permanent Member of the United Nations Security Council.

Only a few days before I arrived in South Africa in 1976 a new chapter opened on South West Africa with the passage of Security Council Resolution 385. This laid down the principle, which was broadly accepted by your Government and has been the basis of all the subsequent negotiations, that the people of the territory as a whole should be given the opportunity to determine their own future through free elections under UN supervision.

But a year later, and in spite of a number of further exchanges, there was little sign of progress towards this objective. The international community had made it clear that the essentially ethnic path to independence mapped out by the Turnhalle Constitutional Conference would not satisfy the terms of Resolution 385. If some alternative could not be found it seemed likely that tough measures against South Africa would be called for in the Security Council. Already the British Labour Government had used the veto no fewer than four times to give South Africa more time to work out a solution.

A further effort was therefore mounted just over two years ago, shortly after President Carter's Administration had taken office. The three Permanent Western Members of the Security Council (the United States, Britain and France) joined with the two other Western members of the Security Council (the Federal Republic of Germany and Canada) in a new approach to the South African Government. In an effort to ensure that real progress was made the Five offered their services as intermediaries.

This offer led to an elaborate, and perhaps unique, exercise in diplomacy. The Western Five set up a "Contact Group" consisting of senior members of their diplomatic Missions to the United Nations. This Contact Group has since acted as a clearing house, as well as a negotiating body, responsible for the direction of the Five's activities on Namibia. It has been matched by a similar contact group consisting of the Ambassadors of the Five in Cape Town and Pretoria. The New York Group started by paying a series of visits to Africa to discuss the issues with the parties principally concerned. They visited South Africa four times for this purpose in 1977 and also had discussions with SWAPO and the Front Line States. Although

much useful progress was made, the Contact Group failed to find a formula on which all parties could agree.

The Five therefore changed their strategy and decided to work out what they considered would be an equitable solution and then to try to persuade all concerned to accept it. This resulted in April 1978 in the publication of the Western Proposal. Later that month the South African Government announced their unconditional acceptance. This was a major step forward. Unfortunately, the Kassinga raid, which followed almost immediately afterwards, set back the negotiations with SWAPO, but they too eventually signified their acceptance in July. The Front Line States and the internal parties in South West Africa also agreed. All seemed set for the implementation of the proposal.

Unfortunately, this hope was not realised. What happened next is recent history. There was disagreement over the size and composition of the military components of UNTAG, over Walvis Bay and over the South African Government's decision, unwelcome to the West, to hold internal elections in South West Africa. The Security Council in Resolution 435 formally declared those elections null and void, and the Five Western Foreign Ministers themselves visited Pretoria in November last year in an attempt to get the negotiations back on the rails. They failed to persuade the South African Government not to go ahead with the election, but they secured agreement that, after the election, the South African Government would try to persuade the newly elected Constituent Assembly to accept the need for elections under the UN Plan.

At the beginning of this year it seemed therefore that the way was at last clear to go ahead. But two new and more serious problems then arose over the arrangements to be made for the monitoring of SWAPO bases in neighbouring countries and on the practical question of what should be done over those SWAPO armed personnel who happened to be in South West Africa on the date of the ceasefire. These problems are still not resolved. Suffice it to say that the Five have never accepted the accusations of bad faith which have been levelled at us. The job of an honest broker is always an invidious one - but we have been honestly and anxiously trying to find a way, fair to all, through these difficulties. At the moment I cannot regard the prospects as particularly rosy.

Nevertheless there is now a new card in the pack. That is the arrival on the scene of a new British Foreign Secretary. Every now and again the appearance of a new personality may enable a particular deadlock to be broken, not because the fundamental aims are very different but because new ideas and a new style may provide the necessary lubrication to get things moving again. Already I sense that new initiatives are in the wind: one can only pray that they may stimulate new and more flexible attitudes in others.

A great deal turns on the outcome, not only for the people of South West Africa who have waited so long for their independence, but also for future relationships in the whole of Southern Africa. The way is still just open for a solution which would lead to international recognition and which we believe to be fair to all concerned. If this opportunity is not seized it may not easily recur.

Rhodesia

The other main problem has, of course, been Rhodesia, and its disastrous decision in choosing the dead end of UDI. I shall not now go into the long and tragic history of failed initiatives over the past 20 years. No-one who has been closely

involved, as I have over much of that time, can regard the present situation with complete confidence.

Although there are undoubted parallels between Rhodesia and Namibia there are also important differences, in terms both of the historical context and of the current situation in the two countries. But for Britain the main difference is that Rhodesia remains in international law a British colony. Britain cannot therefore avoid some responsibility for bringing it to internationally-recognised independence with a majority Government.

Rhodesia is an emotional issue in the United Kingdom as well as here. While many people in Britain scarcely know where Namibia is, Rhodesia remains a significant, if not a major, issue in British domestic politics. Many Britons feel a close affinity with the whites, while others feel an equally strong sense of responsibility towards what they regard as our historic obligations towards the blacks. But successive British Governments of both parties have been consistently committed to the policy of no independence before majority rule. The disagreement comes in their interpretation of what is necessary to achieve it.

Because of our special responsibility for Rhodesia we negotiated largely on our own for many years, though your Government was also closely consulted. But since 1976 a new feature of our initiative has been the association of the United States Government with it. This can be traced back to March 1976 when Mr Callaghan put forward new terms for a settlement. At that time a lot was going on in Southern Africa: it was the time of the Angolan war; in Rhodesia, the talks between Mr Smith and Mr Nkomo under Mr Vorster's chairmanship, on the Victoria Falls Bridge, had recently collapsed. Mozambique had closed its border with Rhodesia and the stage was set for an intensification of the guerilla war.

Mr Callaghan proposed two stages to independence: firstly, the acceptance by the Salisbury regime of majority rule and of elections within 18 to 24 months; and secondly, negotiations to take place about the constitution of the eventual independent state itself.

These terms were the basis of the shuttle diplomacy that Dr Kissinger undertook in Africa that year, culminating in his meetings with Mr Vorster and Mr Smith in Pretoria in September 1976. The Kissinger meetings were a turning point, even though they were not the end of the story. On 24 September Mr Smith, who not so long before had said that Rhodesia would never in a thousand years accept majority rule, made his historic announcement doing just that.

What he said then made it clear why we had been so anxious for the Americans to join us in the search for a settlement. Referring to his meetings with Dr Kissinger and Mr Vorster, Mr Smith said:

"At these meetings the position of Rhodesia in relation to the rest of South Africa and indeed the Western nations was discussed in great detail. It was made abundantly clear to me and to my colleagues who accompanied me that, as long as the present circumstances in Rhodesia prevailed, we could expect no help or support of any kind from the free world. On the contrary, the pressures on us from the free world would continue to mount."

That is to say that the direct participation by the United States of America, as the leader of the free world, was paramount in finally bringing home to Mr Smith

that the only way in which he could hope to see a secure future for his country was under black majority rule. In accepting majority rule Mr. Smith drew particular attention to the inclusion in the proposals of provisions for the lifting of sanctions and a cessation of all acts of war. We accepted this. But in order to achieve it we and the Americans had to find a framework which would also be acceptable to the United Nations - and this meant involving all the parties concerned.

Unfortunately, the first attempt to achieve this - the Geneva Conference - was a disaster. But it was followed by the Anglo-American plan which proposed the establishment of a neutral interim administration leading up to elections, and included specific safeguards to protect white interests. This plan is now under review, but I would nevertheless like to remind you of two essential elements in it. The first absolute prerequisite was to end the fighting. It has always seemed that this would be difficult to achieve unless the external parties could in some way be involved in the final settlement. No British or American Government would in any circumstances be prepared to underwrite a continuing civil war on the lines of Vietnam.

The second element was the need to create conditions in which whites could be given the confidence to remain in Rhodesia to contribute their skills to the running of the country. For this purpose you will remember that the Anglo-American plan included a very substantial sum of money (about \$1.5 billion) - the so-called Zimbabwe Development Fund - designed partly to help in the re-establishment of African agriculture. It was also intended to provide a safety-net for those whites who tried to stay, but who for one reason or another found that they could not do so. It was not designed to encourage whites to leave.

The importance we have attached to including the Patriotic Front in the negotiations is often misunderstood here. It does NOT mean that any British Government has been prepared to support the Patriotic Front above the other parties. We have never accepted their unsupported claim that they represent a majority of the people, nor have we accepted their demand to have predominance in any interim administration leading to elections. In order to stop the war, however, it was vital that we should persuade those who were doing the fighting to come in from the cold. And let us not forget that the new Rhodesia/Zimbabwe Government, if it is to have any chance of surviving, must somehow achieve peace with its neighbours to the North and East as well as with its big neighbour to the South.

Now the elections have taken place, and Bishop Muzorewa and the United African National Congress have won a resounding majority. This will mean a black Government coming into power in the course of the present month. Isn't this all we wanted?

The only answer I can give is that the crucial test of the new government will remain whether it can stop the war, and whether it can persuade the whites to stay. If it does manage to stop the war on its own, and good luck to it, the Patriotic Front will have become irrelevant. But if it does not, and I am not too optimistic, the whites will continue to leave the country, and the need to get the two sides together will be as important as ever. Whether sanctions can be called off before the war stops is a difficult political issue which will have to be settled in London, Washington and New York.

Perhaps I could end on a more domestic note. Some of you may have noticed references in the South African press last October to an article in the London Times - that was in the good old days - which reported that I had set up a committee within my Offices in Johannesburg, Pretoria, Cape Town and Durban to work out a possible programme of

educational assistance to Black South Africans. For a number of years the British Council have helped both black and white South Africans with bursaries and scholarships to the United Kingdom, and have helped blacks, particularly in the homelands, with teaching aids, English text books and in other ways. But we wanted to expand this.

Although we do not recognise the so-called independent homelands, we do recognise the needs of their black populations and of all other black South Africans, particularly those blacks living in white urban areas. All urgently need improved educational opportunities to prepare them to play their full part in the future development of Southern Africa. To the outsider, the disparity in educational opportunity between white and black is both obvious and disturbing, but as a realist I appreciate that it could not with the best will in the world be closed overnight.

I am therefore delighted to be able to announce tonight that funds have now been allocated by my Government to finance an expanded programme of aid for blacks in South Africa. Although the details have yet to be worked out I have already informed the Minister of Co-operation and Development of this decision, and have had preliminary discussions with some of the non-white Universities, who are themselves desperately concerned to improve the standard of English language comprehension, particularly among their new entrants. Although this programme will not concentrate exclusively on English language teaching, I believe that this is the field in which our help is particularly relevant and where we can make the quickest and most effective impact. Our prime aim is to seek out, in consultation with the agencies already involved, needs which are at present inadequately met, or not met at all, and to help both with teaching assistance and by providing equipment and teaching aids. Such help could range from support for adult literacy and teacher training programmes to scholarships for technical and specialised training in Britain. Outside the field of formal academic education I hope we can also help with managerial and vocational training for qualified candidates either here in South Africa or in Britain. And we shall also give some assistance to smaller-scale projects of a self-help character. Already I have undertaken to provide some heaters for the Save the Children Fund creche in Soweto and some office equipment and desks to two schools in the Benoni area.

The resources available for this new programme are necessarily limited and we cannot hope to do more than scratch the surface of a massive need. None the less it is a start and it would be my hope - although this is something which I must now bequeath to my successor - that we shall be able to build something more upon it. I also hope that our modest contribution will serve as an encouragement to others, both within South Africa and outside, to step up their existing efforts to improve the education, the skills and the economic status of the underprivileged in South African society.

It is worth adding that this programme was approved by a Labour Government, but falls to be implemented by a Conservative one. To adapt a well-known British saying, "the Government is dead, long live the Government".

Talk of the homelands brings me to my final point. I have, of course, been intensely interested in the recently declared aim of your Government to establish a constellation of like-minded states in Southern Africa, having, as I understand it, some kind of defensive association.

Whether or not to join such an association is of course a matter for the

Governments concerned to decide. But as a diplomat I shall be expected to report to my new Government on the background and implications of such an association. I am sure that the ultimate objective is to establish a group of stable states - preferably independent and internationally recognised - having normal and friendly relations with their neighbours. We ourselves are of course a partner in similar regional organisations in Europe. Such an association, if it could be formed, would have a constructive role to play in the peaceful development of Southern Africa and would, I am sure, be welcomed by all those who desire peace in this part of the world.

But there is a much less attractive alternative: an association in which some of the key members are not internationally recognised, and in which war has become a way of life. Such an association would be a drain on South African resources and would be a continuing embarrassment, and indeed a danger, to your friends in the outside world who want to continue to trade with you and to buy your products. That is why as British Ambassador I have devoted so much time and effort to trying to help find peaceful solutions to the problems of Southern Africa. As Mr Vorster said, the alternative is too ghastly to contemplate.