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The Great Betrayal: The Memoirs Of Ian Douglas Smith



Synopsis

Ian Smith, former president of Rhodesia, spares few of his opponents as he gives a forthright account of one of Africa's most controversial political careers. Smith details his boyhood in Southern Rhodesia, his enlistment into the Royal Air Force and his active service during World War II. After the war, he joined the United Federal Party and initiated moves with various British Governments under Macmillan and Douglas-Home. This resulted in the Unilateral Declaration of Independence, and then Britain led the world in adopting sanctions against Rhodesia. He also tells how the British Government's poor handling of the Rhodesian situation led to unrest in the area which Henry Kissinger tried unsuccessfully to quell. Eventually the first majority elections were held, the results of which Margaret Thatcher refused to recognise, leading to the Marxist-orientated rule of President Mugabe. This autobiography deals with many political events that have been conveniently glossed over. It presents a fascinating portrait of one of the 20th century's most distinguished political figures.

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Customer Reviews

Smith, the white prime minister of Rhodesia who engineered the country's unilateral independence from Britain in 1965 and led resistance to the black majority until Zimbabwe was born of post-civil war negotiations in 1979, has written an unrepentant, heavily detailed account of his leadership. He proceeds from the posture that the black majority, significantly rooted in traditional culture, should be "gradually" brought up to "standards of Western civilization." He condemns outside countries that

"arrogant[ly]" applied sanctions against Rhodesia and associates black opposition more with communism than nationalism. He claims that "our black people" had the best education, health, housing, services, etc. in Africa, not acknowledging the gap between white and black Rhodesia. He refers to black "terrorists" while downplaying the cruelties of Rhodesia's armed forces. Yet Smith makes some points. He offers inside details of negotiation, including pressure from South Africa. His title refers to the hypocrisy of the British Commonwealth, which imposed sanctions on Rhodesia while many of its other members were one-party states. And he reminds us that Zimbabwe's black-run Mugabe government has steadily flouted democracy. Photos not seen by PW. Copyright 1997 Cahners Business Information, Inc.

Totally readable, very believable. Good history of how the UK Governments of the time looked after their own interests and did not honour their word

Anyone interested in decolonization should read this.

I read this book in a library edition. Wow, I was woefully ignorant of Rhodesian politics and the truly magnificent man, war hero, and political philosopher named Ian Smith. Based on what I had read in the news media in the USA during the 1970s, I formed so many false opinions and images of the Rhodesia-Zimbabwe debacle. What a sad, shameful story. Smith proved to be correct in the end. An imperfect democratic republic became an evil dictatorship by the 1980s and remains so. The behavior of the U.N., Britain and the Commonwealth was disgraceful during the long crisis following the Rhodesian UDI in 1965 (the first UDI from Britain since America in 1776!). Smith's book is a superb story of modern African, humanity's deadly obsession with race, left-and-right political hubris, the demise of both empire and Britain's moral authority, a look at the natural desire to follow one's own national star--and all with a very bittersweet ending.

This is an interesting bio from Ian Smith. He proves himself to be a man of high character--pragmatic, courageous, reliable, and a bit prosaic. He was a man who believed firmly in colonialism and in bringing the benefits of Western Civilization to primitive societies such as the ones in Africa. Unfortunately, Britain and whites in general had started to lose faith in the superiority of their civilization and pulled out of their colonial project, leaving white Rhodesians stranded to fight their own battle to save their country with those other "rogue" states, South Africa and Portugal. The British politicians favored communist terrorists over their own kinsmen. Ian Smith was a middle of the

road conservative and really did not support racist policies in government, although he was a race realist regarding the abilities of native Africans. He believed in a policy of gradually giving blacks majority rule once they had been sufficiently prepared for a government system created by whites. That would require high rate of literacy that blacks did not have. African blacks' IQ has been estimated to around 70 by Richard Lynn. A lot of them did not even know what a constitution was. Even this policy would require faith in being able to educate blacks enough to be able to rule responsibly. As bad as white government can be; black majority rule is worse. Giving blacks majority rule in a democratic system will still make any country go into decline. It is not solely the Western system that makes for good government, but it is the intelligence and character of the best white people that makes for good government, if you can elect them. Once Mugabe and his cronies took the seats of power, they started using their power for their own selfish ends. Smith shows well how communists operate with their deceit, violence, and oppression. Smith did have high praise for African's tribal system of government, which he thought was better in some ways to the Western system. The British politicians were not much better. It seems whites use their higher intelligence merely to manipulate weaker parties in a lot of cases. Intelligence has to be wedded with high character for good statesmanship. I think Africa would have been better off with a white minority colonial government than it is with the black communists. Colonialism does require that if the natives violently resist, they must be put down or it will not be safe for whites to live there. Rhodesia had too few whites to be able to establish a white colony there, especially after Britain turned against them. Rhodesia was not an apartheid state like South Africa and they allowed anyone of any race to vote. Smith complained about the declining moral standards of the commonwealth saying that they allowed communist dictatorships with human rights violations to join an organization that is supposed to uphold the principles of democracy, decency, and fairness. British politicians were more worried about offending communist "allies" than letting Rhodesia become an independent country and lifting sanctions against them. Ian Smith loved his country and stayed there until his death and after it turned into the horrid Mugabe's Zimbabwe. There is no greater sadness than when a man loses his own country. It worries me that the U.S. may go the way of Rhodesia because the same thinking and forces are weighed against it, just as it is against all countries of the West. The outposts of the West have fallen, how long until the disease reaches the heart? The content of the book is dense with small type that stretches all over the page, making it a long read. Smith covers all his negotiations with the British. It can be a little boring at times. A politician has to have a lot of patience with endless talk that often goes nowhere and often leads to reversals and defeats. To Smith's detractors, I will say that you have to believe Smith's side of the story to think

highly of him. I have not read any critical books about him and I am not expert on this part of the world.

This book gives the other side to the Rhodesia conflict namely that of former Rhodesian Prime Minister Ian Smith who is probably one of the most unfairly despised individuals in the world. Far from being an uncouth racist as much of the world's press would classify him as, Smith shows himself to have been a model statesmen and ardent patriot to his beloved Rhodesia. Clearly the book reads like a Greek tragedy in which tiny Rhodesia is betrayed by its mother country (Britain) and even its friends (South Africa) in its long struggle against terrorist organizations in which it racked up an impressive military record. For all interested in that little country that once was, this is a definite necessary read. After finishing the tome, one can see why Ian Smith so richly deserved the praise he received from his fellow Rhodesians and anti-communist well-wishers around the world. God bless you, Ian Smith, for your valiant fight.

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