



‘There is a Chigwell in Rhodesia’: Immigration, Identity and the Monday Club’s response to the UDI

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When Harold Macmillan opened the 1960s with his famous address to the South African parliament in Cape Town, the wind of change which he heralded was sweeping not just the African continent, but Britain itself. The years that followed saw Macmillan’s Conservative Party riven by disagreements not only over colonial policy, but also with regard to the steady flow into Britain of millions of people of colour; developments which prompted the foundation of right-wing pressure groups within the Party such as the Monday Club.¹ It is this confluence of change that this article will examine. Specifically, I argue that the Conservative Party’s reaction to Rhodesia’s Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) was informed by home front anxieties such as mass immigration.

The existing scholarship tends to be preoccupied with how events in the British colonial world – including decolonisation and the UDI – influenced domestic British society. Bill Schwarz and Wendy Webster, for example, have both examined the process of the colonial frontier ‘coming home’ to Britain and altering the country’s identity. Schwarz argues that decolonisation and the mass immigration that resulted led to the re-racialisation of Britain through the language of colonial warfare. His contention is that this social change empowered hostility towards new arrivals by transposing the sense of white victimhood felt in settler communities facing indigenous violence to the streets of Britain, where whites apprehended a similar threat from the migrant population.² Webster draws on Schwarz’s work with a particular focus on representations of colonial conflict and immigration as violations of British ‘domestic boundaries’, analysing the gendered elements of national identity.³

This article, however, will attempt to draw a novel two-way causality, by examining the way in which mass immigration itself influenced how right-wingers within the

¹ Oxford, Bodleian Library, Conservative Party Archive (Hereafter CPA), CCO 3/6/16, *Policy and Aims of the Monday Club* (London: The Monday Club, 1961);

N.B. My access to each of the sources from the archives at the Bodleian Library would not have been possible without the assistance of my friend Sebastian Rees, whose help in collating and providing me with digital copies of these sources was invaluable.

² Bill Schwarz, “‘The only white man in there’: the re-racialisation of England, 1956-1968”, *Race and Class* 38, no. 1 (1996), 71-74.

³ Wendy Webster, “‘There’ll Always Be an England’: Representations of Colonial Wars and Immigration, 1948-1968”, *Journal of British Studies* 40, no. 4 (2001): 575. DOI: 10.1086/386267.

Conservative Party approached debates over decolonisation, by altering their understanding of British identity. Anxieties regarding British – rather than Rhodesian – identity are what ultimately informed the Tory Right’s response to the UDI.

There are three areas in which the immigration issue altered traditional conceptions of ‘Britishness’, and which this article will assess in explaining how groups such as the Monday Club reacted to the UDI. Firstly, immigration came to be seen as an explanation for British decline, while white Rhodesia was represented as a contrasting final vestige of British greatness, worthy of preservation. Secondly, immigration recalibrated understandings of what defined ‘Britishness.’ Though race had always played a role in gatekeeping British identity, the supposedly colour-blind façade that had been promoted by liberal imperialists within the Conservative Party (which emphasised adherence to certain *values*, not race, as the essential feature of a Britain) collapsed under the weight of mass immigration. Finally, immigration encouraged a discourse of racial and political betrayal within the Conservative Party that also came to infect the dialogue on the perilous situation in Rhodesia.

That crisis was sparked on 11 November 1965, when the white minority government of Ian Smith announced that Rhodesia was splitting from British rule. This declaration broke a festering political impasse: while the British government had for years insisted that Rhodesia could not have independence until it practiced majority rule, Smith steadfastly refused to transfer power to black Rhodesians, whose political rights were already strictly limited.⁴

The response to the declaration outside of Rhodesia was overwhelmingly negative. Harold Wilson spoke for the vast majority of British politicians when he described the UDI as treasonous and illegal; over the next fifteen years, those same politicians voted repeatedly to punish the Smith regime with sanctions.⁵ The international community was similarly incensed, with the UN Security Council going so far as to authorise a British invasion to depose the regime (a licence that Wilson did not act upon).⁶ Within Rhodesia, black nationalists launched a guerrilla campaign that developed into the Bush War.⁷ From this point until the 1980 Lancaster House ceasefire which led to the formation of modern Zimbabwe, most of Britain, and the world, was united against Ian Smith and his UDI.

Not the Monday Club. In the months after the declaration, several club members toured Rhodesia, reporting their positive findings at a public meeting in Westminster in early 1966.⁸ Before launching into a panegyric on the virtues of the Smith regime, John Biggs-Davison –

⁴ Zdenek Červenka, ‘Rhodesia Five Years After the Unilateral Declaration of Independence’, *Law and Politics in Africa, Asia and Latin America* 4, no. 1 (1971): 9-16. <www.jstor.org/stable/43111290>

⁵ Červenka, ‘Five Years After the UDI’, 9;

Mark Stuart, ‘A Party in Three Pieces: The Conservative Split over Rhodesian Oil Sanctions, 1965’, *Contemporary British History* 16, no. 1 (2002): 51-54. DOI: 10.1080/713999439.

⁶ Mark Stuart, “A Party in Three Pieces: The Conservative Split over Rhodesian Oil Sanctions, 1965,” *Contemporary British History* 16, no. 1 (2002): 51-54. DOI: 10.1080/713999439.

⁷ Peter A. Kiss, “Rhodesia, 1962–1980: Tactical Success, Operational, Strategic, and Political Failure,” in *Winning Wars amongst the People: Case Studies in Asymmetric Conflict*, 51-81 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2014). DOI: 10.2307/j.ctt1d9nkf0.11.

⁸ CPA, PUB 117/18, Lord Salisbury et al., *Rhodesia: A Minority View* (London: The Monday Club), 1966.

the M.P. for Chigwell, in Essex – began by observing that ‘there are three Chigwells in the British Commonwealth’.⁹ He continued:

There is the Chigwell which I have the great honour to represent. There is a Chigwell in Australia. And there is a Chigwell in Rhodesia. It is not quite so big, the one in Rhodesia, as the one in Essex, but the people there are of the same stuff, and... [they] are people I am proud to salute as fellow-subjects.¹⁰

Biggs-Davison’s reflection on the shared nomenclature of the constituency that he represented, and his reference to his ‘fellow subjects’, demonstrated that the nature of British identity was an essential element in the Right’s assessment of the Rhodesian crisis. The nature of ‘Britishness’ was a multifaceted question, and Chigwells the world over – etymological representatives of the dispersed but fraternal British world – were relevant considerations. It is therefore impossible to understand the political response to the UDI without examining the changing nature of the British metropole itself, and so our consideration of mass immigration is an essential one.

'Britain at its Best'

In considering the first link between immigration, identity and the Rhodesian crisis, it is important to note that the Right’s sympathy for the Smith regime reflected a rose-tinted perspective. This extended throughout the decade following the UDI, even as internal rebellion intensified and Rhodesia became ever more isolated within the international community. At the Monday Club gathering in early 1966, the speakers articulated a decidedly positive view of the country’s circumstances. Despite the adverse impact of the British sanctions, one leading club figure, M.P. Julian Amery, described a stable and self-sufficient economy to the audience, lauding Rhodesia for its apparent ‘racial harmony’, and characterising this situation as ‘the achievement of three generations of British settlers’.¹¹

This sanguine outlook on the conditions in the country became typical of the Conservative Party’s right-wing in the years that followed. One Monday Club pamphlet, published in the late 1960s, demanded a settlement with the Smith regime, noting that ‘despite the economic war being waged against her’ Rhodesia was a ‘bastion of peace and order’, with strong employment prospects for all citizens and an education system exhibiting ‘remarkable’ progress.¹² In 1972, M.P. Harold Soref – a frequent visitor to Rhodesia in the years following the UDI – privately told his colleagues on the Conservative Parliamentary Foreign Affairs Committee that the country’s economy was ‘buoyant’, and his praise continued at subsequent

⁹ CPA, PUB 117/18, Lord Salisbury et al., *Rhodesia: A Minority View* (London: The Monday Club), 1966, 4.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹² *Rhodesia: 'Settle Now'*.

public events, where he claimed that Rhodesia had “prospered” against the odds.¹³ His comments to a 1976 meeting, organised by the Anglo-Rhodesian Society, are particularly illuminating.

Rhodesia represents Britain in its halcyon days: patriotic, self-reliant, self-supporting, with law and order and a healthy society. Rhodesia is as Britain was at its best. It is now criticised because it is a successful anachronism.¹⁴

Support for the Smith regime, then, can be understood as an expression of nostalgia – not necessarily for imperialism itself, but rather for a romanticised ideal of a metropolitan Britain unburdened by immigrants from the extremities of the empire. Bill Schwarz utilises Soref’s remarks to advance his contention that the debate on Rhodesia was defined by ‘antagonistic conceptions’ of Britishness; contrasting metropolitan progressives like Harold Wilson with the traditional idyll that Rhodesia and Ian Smith had come to represent.¹⁵ Schwarz’s contribution on competing versions of Britishness is a valuable one, but Conservative optimism about the Smith regime cannot be singularly understood as the embrace of a man who had become an avatar for resistance against Harold Wilson.

If contemporary Rhodesia existed as an extension of a mythologised ‘lost’ Britain – in opposition to Wilson’s modern Britain – then we should ask why, exactly, the Right believed these ‘halcyon days’ had ended. Importantly, though one could answer that this perspective existed within a broader sentimentality for empire – this is what historians such as Daniel McNeil suggest when they argue that the end of empire was perceived as the end of British greatness – Soref’s lament is more specific than that.¹⁶ Rather than mourning Britain’s lost overseas territories, or its declining influence in international affairs, his argument referred to particular *domestic* metrics of nationhood that the country was, apparently, failing to meet. In understanding why the Right perceived Rhodesia so positively – and Britain so negatively in comparison – the issue of immigration is instructive.

On each of the metrics mentioned, the influx of people arriving from Britain’s former colonies was characterised as a factor in the country’s internal failure. Firstly, the supposed economic strength that Rhodesia was praised for stood in contrast with the economic insecurity of the United Kingdom. Drawing that very comparison, Soref contended that his country was

¹³ ‘Soref Brothers and the escalating invoices’, *Sunday Times*, 4 February 1973, accessed via Gale Primary Sources;

CPA, CRD 3/10/1/3, ‘Minutes of a meeting on Rhodesia on 11 April 1972’, Conservative Parliamentary Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs Committee, 1972;

CPA, PUB 117/39, Julian Amery et al., *Rhodesia and the threat to the West* (London: The Monday Club, 1976), 13.

¹⁴ Amery et al., *The threat to the West*, 13.

¹⁵ Schwarz, “‘The only white man in there’,” 71-72.

¹⁶ McNeil, Daniel. “‘The rivers of Zimbabwe will run red with blood’: Enoch Powell and the Post-Imperial Nostalgia of the Monday Club’. *Journal of Southern African Studies* 37, no. 4 (2011): 731-745. DOI: 10.1080/03057070.2011.613691.

overrun with ‘parasites.’ There was no need to specify to whom he was referring – his constant diatribes on the propensity for immigrants to ‘automatically become beneficiaries of the welfare state’ made his implication abundantly clear.¹⁷ Monday Club pamphlets struck a similar note, and a favourite technique of the authors was to catalogue how much immigrant cost taxpayers in each area of government spending.¹⁸

Lamentations over Britain’s lost greatness were not confined to the economic sphere. Julian Amery and his friends lauded Rhodesia for its apparent racial harmony while newspaper editorials and Monday Club publications attacked immigration as a threat to British pluralism. Tories such as Patrick Wall generously interpreted heavy police activity in Rhodesia as an indication that black Africans in that country would respect Ian Smith’s ‘firm but fair’ approach.¹⁹ In Britain, race riots and police crackdowns were cast as definitive evidence that immigration was pushing the country towards the brink.²⁰ Allusions to the fall of Rome appeared in opinion pieces condemning immigration several years before Enoch Powell would famously declare that he was reminded of ‘the Roman’ who saw ‘the River Tiber foaming with much blood’.²¹

Finally, though Soref was convinced that Rhodesia was a safe and healthy society, he and his Monday Club colleagues were much less generous in their assessment of their own country. Approving dispatches from Rhodesia in the years immediately following the UDI spoke of ‘nothing but calm’, merrily relaying that racial coexistence was accompanied by a ‘spirit of adventure’.²² In comparison, the Tory Right’s view of British security was pessimistic to the point of alarmism, and Soref’s complaint that the country was now an ‘overtaxed and under-protected land’ was grounded in his opposition to immigration. He condemned many new arrivals Britain as undesirables, speculating that their number included terrorists and Marxists. They made up the ‘alternative society of agitators’ that would become the primary antagonists of the stories he revisited time and again in speeches, articles and political publications.²³ Monday Club memoranda argued that immigration was corrupting Britain’s

¹⁷ Amery et al., *The threat to the West*, 13;

Harold Soref, ‘Opening the door to more immigrants’, *The Daily Telegraph*, 27 April 1972, accessed via Gale Primary Sources;

‘Recruits for the Conservative Right: the new MPs who sympathise with Enoch Powell’, *The Sunday Times*, 21 June 1970, accessed via Gale Primary Sources.

¹⁸ CPA, PUB 117/24, George K. Young, *Who Goes Home? Immigration and Repatriation* (London: The Monday Club, 1969), 13-18.

¹⁹ Lord Salisbury et al., *Rhodesia: A Minority View*, 17.

²⁰ Maurice Edelman, ‘Should we let them keep pouring in?’ *Daily Mail*, 2 September 1958, accessed via Gale Primary Sources.

²¹ W.F. Deedes, ‘Britain’s Ever-Open Door,’ *The Daily Telegraph*, 16 February 1961, accessed via Gale Primary Sources;

Enoch Powell, ‘Rivers of Blood’ (speech, Birmingham, 20 April 1968), *The Telegraph*, <www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/3643823/Enoch-Powells-Rivers-of-Blood-speech.html>

²² C.S. Jameson, ‘Below the Equator’, *The Illustrated London News*, 10 June 1967, accessed via Gale Primary Sources.

²³ Amery et al., *The threat to the West*, 13;

CPA, PUB 117/37, Sam Swerling, *Some Uncivil Liberties* (London: The Monday Club, 1972), 3;

Harold Soref, ‘Refuge in Britain for revolutionaries’, *The Daily Telegraph*, 3 November 1973, accessed via Gale Primary Sources;

housing, education, health and justice systems, while simultaneously parroting Rhodesian government propaganda which boasted of a 'land of opportunity' with strong job prospects, plentiful housing and successful education and healthcare systems.²⁴

Evidently, Conservative optimism about Ian Smith's Rhodesia existed – at least in part – as a comparison to the negativity regarding the direction of British society, a pessimism that was significantly influenced by mass immigration. Their view of Rhodesia – as a racially harmonious, self-sustaining, economically secure and healthy society – was a disputable one, but it nevertheless provides two critical insights in understanding the response to the UDI.

First, in a general sense, we can see that there is more to the otherwise straightforward claim, presented by historians including Mark Stuart, that sympathy for the Smith regime was about assisting Britain's 'kith and kin'.²⁵ The Monday Club and Smith's other tacit supporters did not just see themselves in the white men who ruled Rhodesia – they saw their past, too. Sorel, Amery and the rest believed that Britain had been fundamentally altered by the surge in new arrivals that followed the Second World War and decolonisation. Nostalgic for the country that they had 'lost', white Rhodesia was rendered as a final outpost of traditional British nationhood: a relic that merited preservation.

Secondly, and more specifically, Rhodesia's supposed prosperity affirmed the conviction of many on the Right that sanctions against the Smith regime were not only futile, but actively damaging to Britain. At each stage, Monday Club members' praise for Rhodesia's circumstances was accompanied by the refrain that its success was in spite of British attempts to undermine it. In addition, the Right's belief in Rhodesian durability was only amplified by their visions of a Britain in decay. Minutes of the meetings of the Conservative Foreign Affairs Committee in 1969 reveal an anxiety among M.P.s, including Monday Club member Stephen Hastings, that persisting with sanctions would deprive the United Kingdom of the economic and strategic benefits of maintain its influence in Southern Africa. Sir Ian Orr-Ewing, contemplating how the Tories might manage the situation if they won the approaching general election, conceded that 'we would have to say that the economic position was so desperate that we could no longer turn down trade for ideological reasons'.²⁶

Fears over immigration recalibrated Tory perceptions of the situation. Ian Smith's apparently flourishing Rhodesia, so redolent of Britain's greatest days, would not be toppled by a campaign of economic isolation; more to the point, a Britain enfeebled by immigration could not afford to sustain sanctions. By fostering fears of British weakness, the issue of mass

Thomson Prentice, 'Tory flees over wall in student attack', *Daily Mail*, 11 May 1974, accessed via Gale Primary Sources;

“‘Deport the agitators’,’ *The Observer*, 23 August 1970, accessed via ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Guardian and The Observer.

²⁴ CPA, PUB 117/10, *A Monday Club Memorandum on Immigration Into the UK* (London: The Monday Club, 1965);

AAAM, MSS. AAM 1211 (General correspondence concerning Zimbabwe), *Rhodesia: Land of Opportunity*, (Salisbury: Rhodesia Ministry of Information, Immigration, and Tourism, 1971).

²⁵ Stuart, 'A Party in Three Pieces', 77.

²⁶ CPA, CRD 3/10/1/2, 'Minutes of a meeting on Rhodesia on 14 May 1969', Conservative Parliamentary Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs Committee, 1969.

immigration therefore motivated both the Right's admiration for Ian Smith's Rhodesia and their distaste for the sanctions campaign.

'Millions of Black and Brown Englishmen'

Having examined the way in which support for white Rhodesia was motivated by nostalgia for a Britain 'untainted' by mass immigration, the next aspect of the Right's understanding of British identity that should be interrogated relates to evolving definitions of 'Britishness.' The arrival of millions of immigrants in Britain encouraged among the Monday Club and its allies a resistance to the increasingly common depictions of British identity as grounded in values rather than in race. Racism, social Darwinism and whitewashing undoubtedly played an integral role in gatekeeping British identity throughout the history of the empire.²⁷ Nonetheless, the Second World War and its aftermath had reinforced the necessity of maintaining strong ties between the United Kingdom and the colonies that fought alongside it. Discourses of anti-racism became more prevalent as Britain reckoned with the twilight of empire, and government efforts to ameliorate perceptions of the country's approach to race increased.²⁸

In a 1948 letter to fellow Labour M.P. James Murray, for instance, then-Prime Minister Clement Attlee dismissed the backbencher's concerns about the arrival of Jamaican immigrants on the *Empire Windrush* by noting that the United Kingdom had obligations to 'British subjects... of whatever race or colour'.²⁹ This view accorded with a common justification for colonial control which rested on the premise that British identity – since it was driven by values, not by race – was not exclusive to those of a particular skin colour, but could be exported to the world. A 1948 feature in *The Economist* encapsulated this liberal imperialist perspective while reflecting on Indian independence. With self-congratulatory zeal, the magazine argued that Britain's greatest legacy on the subcontinent would not be found in its material or technological contributions, but in the ideas that had been impressed upon the Indian people. Individual liberty, the common law, Westminster democracy and a strong work ethic were presented as integral British principles, each of which had supposedly permeated the Indian consciousness and transformed the country's governance and social organisation.³⁰

The post-war years involved an attempt to reframe the meaning of 'Britishness' – and indeed the very purpose of imperialism – by emphasising values rather than race. To the extent that this more noble conception of British identity was a façade for baser racist motivations, mass immigration cracked the veneer. As historians such as Schwarz have noted, the collision

²⁷ W. K. Hancock, *Australia* (London: Ernest Benn, 1930), 56-57;

Paul B. Rich, *Race and Empire in British Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

²⁸ Sonya O. Rose, 'Race, empire and British wartime national identity, 1939-45', *Historical Research* 74, no. 184 (2001): 220-237. DOI: 10.1111/1468-2281.00125;

Kennetta Hammond Perry, "'Race Riots' and the Mystique of British Anti-Racism', in *London Is the Place for Me*, 89-125 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

²⁹ National Archives, HO 213/715, Clement Attlee, 'Letter from Prime Minister Attlee to an MP about immigration to the UK, 5 July 1948'.

³⁰ "The Heritage," *The Economist*, 17 January 1948, accessed via Gale Primary Sources.

of white Britons with immigrants from the colonies 're-racialised' Britain. While his approach pays particular attention to the influence of the colonial frontier on perceptions of Britain's new multiracial society, this 're-racialisation' can be specifically read as further contributing to the construction of an 'otherness' about non-white people, and it is worth considering the consequences of this not just within Britain (as Schwarz does), but beyond it, such as in Rhodesia.

The most jarring example of this trend was the 1964 general election campaign in the constituency of Smethwick (in suburban Birmingham) where an unknown Conservative, Peter Griffiths, defeated Patrick Gordon Walker, then a member of the Labour Party shadow cabinet. Though the explicitly racist parts of the campaign attracted the most attention – posters appeared throughout the electorate bearing the slogan 'If you want a n****r neighbour, vote Liberal or Labour' – the subtler elements (though they were only subtle in a relative sense) are most relevant to our consideration.³¹ Racial discourse in Smethwick created a distinct impression of difference and incompatibility about the area's non-white residents, with letters to the *Smethwick Telephone* complaining of 'animal' behaviour, of aberrant immigrants whose condemnable conduct ranged from spitting in the streets to violent criminal offences.³² This local weekly paper was a crucial vector for anti-immigrant sentiment prior to and during the campaign; *The Times* reported that throughout 1963 the *Telephone* dedicated over 1,650 inches of column space to articles on the matter.³³

Griffiths himself (along with his campaign manager, Charles Dickens, a political operative of little note but for his famous name) readily fanned the flames, repeatedly returning to the theme that these new arrivals were *different*, and unable to be integrated in their new country.³⁴ In the lead up to the election, the two men publicly referred to the largely Indian migrant population in distinctly alienating terms: they were 'our foreign friends', 'exotic persons... unused to our ways', 'people with filthy habits', and simply 'non-British'.³⁵ The wider political response to the events in Smethwick also reflected a preoccupation with 'values' as a component of 'Britishness,' with Harold Wilson labelling the result a 'disgrace to British democracy'.³⁶

In subsequent years, however, Griffiths' anti-immigrant stance was affirmed by many on the Right. Enoch Powell's infamous 'Rivers of Blood' speech provocatively embraced similar themes. The language of 'otherness' buttressed criticism of supporters of integration, who were disingenuously ridiculed for believing that 'West Indian voodoo and Nigerian

³¹ 'Vile – It's All in Black and White', *The Times*, 13 October 1964, accessed via Gale Primary Sources.

³² 'Immigrants main election issue at Smethwick', *The Times*, 9 March 1964, accessed via Gale Primary Sources.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Mirrorpix, *Peter Griffiths, pictured before a special meeting of the Divisional Executive Committee of the Smethwick Conservative Association*, (Getty Images, 1964), <www.gettyimages.com.au/detail/news-photo/peter-griffiths-conservative-mp-for-smethwick-second-from-news-photo/873980384>

³⁵ Nicholas Tomalin, 'Smethwick: when spades are not quite spades', *The Sunday Times*, 18 October 1964, accessed via Gale Primary Sources.

³⁶ 'Smethwick a Disgrace, Says Wilson', *The Daily Telegraph*, 16 October 1964, accessed via Gale Primary Sources.

fetichism [sic] differ only in minor detail from the Western heritage'.³⁷ In 1968, *Sunday Telegraph* columnist Peregrine Worsthorne, whose views often mirrored those of the Monday Club, opined that the 'inverted myth of imperial mission' was a fallacy:

Once upon a time Britain believed that it had created in its own image all over the world millions of black and brown Englishmen, different from ourselves only in the colour of their skin... the reality is painfully different... the Africans and Asians who want to come here are not black and brown Englishmen. They are as alien to us, as immigrants, as we were to them, as imperial administrators.³⁸

Worsthorne's comments merit close consideration because they crystallise a nascent sentiment among the Conservative Right during the 1960s, one which argued that it was naïve to understand imperialism as a project in disseminating British ideals. More to the point, they believed that the domestic implications of that belief – that effective assimilation of immigrants into British society was a real possibility – were misguided and dangerous. Monday Club literature parodied the idea of integration as 'disintegration', contending that the customs of various migrant communities could not 'be reconciled with our laws and standards'.³⁹ Though mass immigration may not have been the singular cause for the underlying prejudice that informed these opinions, it undoubtedly exacerbated them, empowering right-wingers to overtly dispute the liberal notion defining 'Britishness' by ideals and values which could transcend race. This development had significant implications for the debate on Rhodesia.

The relevance of changing conceptions of 'Britishness' is firstly evident in the Right's reaction to the stance of the Wilson Government on Rhodesian independence. Wilson, emphasising the importance of 'unimpeded progress' towards majority rule and the ending of racial discrimination in Rhodesia, offered 'five principles' (later six) that would need to be satisfied before the country would have its independence recognised.⁴⁰ Predictably, Monday Club paraphernalia described these principles as 'foolish', revealing a conviction that British values were antithetical to those of black Rhodesians, and that a transfer of power from the white government would threaten those values.⁴¹

In disputing the first, most fundamental principle – that majority rule was a prerequisite for independence – one club publication echoed Worsthorne's argument by noting that imperialism had failed to instil British values in indigenous colonial populations. The 'disastrous consequences' of majority rule elsewhere in Africa supposedly included 'the

³⁷ Young, *Who Goes Home?* 28.

³⁸ Peregrine Worsthorne, 'Race: Who Should Be Ashamed?' *The Sunday Telegraph*, 3 March 1968, accessed via Gale Primary Sources.

³⁹ Young, *Who Goes Home?* 20.

⁴⁰ 'United Kingdom: Proposals for Settlement of Rhodesia Problem', *International Legal Materials* 6, no. 1 (1967): 134-40. <www.jstor.org/stable/20690181>

⁴¹ CPA, PUB 117/25, Tim Keigwin, *Rhodesia - Those Foolish "Five Principles"* (London: The Monday Club, c. 1970).

oppression of minorities ... civil strife ... [a] collapse of standards'⁴² and a sequence of democracies crumbling into 'one-party dictatorships'.⁴³ A 1965 club study applied this sentiment to the circumstances of Zanzibar, commenting that by allowing for the island colony's independence, the British government 'left a Westminster-style constitution in the hands of people who had not been educated to appreciate it and for whom it was unsuited.'⁴⁴ The people of both Rhodesia and Zanzibar, the argument seemed to go, were not 'black and brown Englishmen.'

The nature of 'Britishness' also influenced the Monday Club's responses to the fourth and fifth principles. The group's rebuttal of the fourth principle of ending racial discrimination (which the author at least acknowledged 'sound[ed] fine') took exception to the idea that this might undermine Rhodesia's segregationist Land Apportionment Act. In another parallel to the view of immigrants in the United Kingdom, the club suggested that 'the last thing [black Rhodesians] want is "integration"'.⁴⁵ In considering the fifth principle – that the fulfilment of independence should be acceptable to 'the people of Rhodesia as a whole' – the pamphlet highlighted the remoteness of 'African Democracy' from Westminster government, describing the process of the Indaba, where tribal chiefs would meet to communicate their people's views and debate a resolution.⁴⁶ The Right therefore dismissed Wilson's prescriptions for Rhodesian independence as folly because those demands seemed to rely on the same flawed presumption that had justified mass immigration: that British values could be applied to, and embraced by, non-Britons.

More broadly, this view is significant in explaining Tory fears that black majority rule would be calamitous for the country, a stance which helped rationalise their sympathy for the Smith regime. While Julian Amery lauded the 'European achievement' of 'law and order' in parts of Southern Africa, in the same speech he lamented the contrasting 'anarchy and chaos' in postcolonial Mozambique.⁴⁷ Stephen Hastings, speaking at the same event, mirrored this sentiment and gravely warned that, but for the Smith regime, the pattern could be repeated in Rhodesia.⁴⁸ This sense of foreboding was evident within that country, too: in private correspondence, the former Prime Minister of the Central African Federation, Roy Welensky, expressed his fears for Rhodesia's future by commenting that 'Africa is a pitiful shambles... democracy, except where there are whites, has proved a complete failure'.⁴⁹

This dichotomy of order and chaos between states governed by whites and black

⁴² The sudden concern with the oppression of minorities in this instance is another curious example of the cognitive dissonance evident in the logic of the Right. It nevertheless demonstrates the same general point: that in both the immigration debate and discussion of the Rhodesian crisis, white people were the only ones who right-wingers trusted to uphold and comply with British values such as pluralism.

⁴³ Keigwin, *Those Foolish "Five Principles"*, 1.

⁴⁴ CPA, PUB 117/11, D.G. Stewart-Smith, *The Role of Subversion in Foreign Affairs* (London: The Monday Club, 1965), 42.

⁴⁵ Keigwin, *Those Foolish "Five Principles"*, 2.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Amery et al., *The threat to the West*, 4-5.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁴⁹ Oxford, Bodleian Library, Papers of the Rt. Hon. Sir Roy Welensky, MSS. Welensky 732/4/77, Roy Welensky, Letter to V.J. Betts, 29 March 1966.

Africans is distinctly similar to the rhetoric around immigration in Britain, a society that many on the Right depicted as previously peaceful until it was disrupted by the arrival of masses of people from the colonies. It is what justified the Monday Club's explicit endorsement of white paternalism in Rhodesia, which they argued was necessary in order to keep 'power in responsible hands' until the vague moment, at some undefined point in the future, when the non-white population could be trusted to govern.⁵⁰ This support for the segregation and disempowerment of black Rhodesians even has parallels in unlikely elements of the debate in Smethwick, where a 1965 survey of the electorate found a clear majority of residents believed that 'immigrant children should be taught in separate classes until they were as good as other children'.⁵¹ Black Rhodesians, the Right argued, could not yet be trusted with political power, and supporting the white minority government was imperative in the meantime.

Though there is nothing unique about the claim that racism was a factor in some Conservatives' tacit support for the Smith regime, the particular role of immigration in emboldening criticism of demands for majority government in Rhodesia is undoubtedly a worthwhile avenue for historical consideration. As we have seen, the negative reaction to new arrivals in Britain prompted a re-examination of the still-nascent notion that 'Britishness' was founded in universal values. If the 'black and brown' people arriving in Britain as immigrants could not be trusted to integrate effectively, the Monday Club asked, then how could black people in Rhodesia be trusted to run their own country?

'When are we going to have majority rule in *this* country?'

The final element of British identity that we will consider in linking domestic race relations with the response to the Rhodesian crisis concerns the discourse of betrayal. It is worth noting that the Tory Right's disagreement with government policy was often articulated through the language of treachery. This was evident in the response to Harold Wilson's 1968 announcement that Britain would be withdrawing troops from its bases in the Persian Gulf and Southeast Asia, thereby abandoning its military commitments 'East of Suez'.⁵² The Monday Club immediately organised a protest rally in London, purchasing a half-page advertisement in *The Daily Telegraph* where it denounced the policy – in enormous, all-capitalised, bold font – as 'The Great Betrayal' and accused Wilson of abdicating British responsibilities in Asia.⁵³ Familiar figures on the Right, including Patrick Wall and John Biggs-Davison, condemned the decision in similar terms in subsequent speeches they gave and pamphlets that they authored.⁵⁴

Specifically, the response to Wilson's decision can be linked with the feelings of those on the Right about the British political establishment's approach towards Rhodesia in the years

⁵⁰ Keigwin, *Those Foolish "Five Principles"*, 1.

⁵¹ "'Coloured Boss" rejected in Smethwick', *The Times*, 18 June 1965, accessed via Gale Primary Sources.

⁵² 'Mr Wilson adamant on cuts', *The Times*, 9 February 1968, accessed via Gale Primary Sources.

⁵³ The Monday Club, 'The Great Betrayal', Advertisement, *The Daily Telegraph*, 5 February 1968, accessed via Gale Primary Sources.

⁵⁴ 'Tory MPs Urge Britain to Stay East of Suez', *The Daily Telegraph*, 4 November 1969, accessed via Gale Primary Sources.

prior to the UDI. Just as right-wingers, at the start of the nineteen-sixties, had pointed to the series of assurances provided to white leaders of the Central African Federation (of which Southern Rhodesia had been a member), so too did commentators at the end of the decade highlight tours of the Middle East undertaken by Labour Government ministers as late as December 1967, offering security guarantees to various Emirs who were now faced with ‘gross betrayal’ just two months later.⁵⁵ The withdrawal East of Suez was thus characterised in much the same manner as that earlier issue, framed as a political betrayal defined by broken promises.

The Right’s response to immigration and the government’s opposition to the UDI, however, centred on treachery with particularly inflammatory connotations – that of *racial* betrayal. Accusations of racial disloyalty peppered the speeches, letters and publications of Conservative Party right-wingers as they described Britain’s approach to both the Rhodesian crisis and to mass immigration. When the Right criticised mainstream British condemnation of the UDI, the instances where they paid lip service to Rhodesians ‘of all races’ were overwhelmed by the many references to ‘kith and kin’, the familial meaning of which carried obvious racial inferences.⁵⁶

Speaking at the Monday Club’s 1966 forum on Rhodesia, politicians such as Patrick Wall specifically referred to the ‘Europeans... [who] spring from British stock’ as the victims of the Wilson government’s apparent abandonment of Rhodesia.⁵⁷ Stephen Hastings viciously attacked Wilson as a ‘would-be Napoleon’ who had attempted to ‘bully and coerce a small nation of his own countrymen’.⁵⁸ So disloyal to the British people had Wilson been, he was stripped of his very ‘Britishness’ and insultingly compared to a reviled French dictator.

The symmetry with the Right’s views on mainstream immigration policy is an obvious one, and its criticisms of the issue were conveyed with synonymous phrases. One audience member at this Monday Club gathering made the link between right-wing views on immigration and Rhodesia explicit, responding to a discussion about the problems with a black majority government there by asking ‘When are we going to have majority rule in *this* country?’⁵⁹ The betrayal that club supporters felt regarding the Wilson Government’s abandonment of their ‘kith and kin’ in Africa was mirrored in their own feelings of victimisation by the arrival of non-white former colonials.

Indeed, the association between these two topics extended from the Monday Club rank and file up to its leaders. One club pamphlet, *Who Goes Home?*, authored by George K. Young, cast the Macmillan and Douglas-Home governments as engaged in a cowardly acquiescence to ‘non-European invasion.’⁶⁰ Young, a former MI6 deputy, was an influential figure in the group’s history, whose unsuccessful 1973 campaign for the chairmanship demonstrated the Monday Club’s steady drift further right. He challenged the incumbent, Jonathon Guinness, on

⁵⁵ Frank Giles, ‘Britain’s Twilight in the Gulf’, *The Sunday Times*, 15 December 1968, accessed via Gale Primary Sources.

⁵⁶ Lord Salisbury et al., *Rhodesia: A Minority View*, 4.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁶⁰ Young, *Who Goes Home?* 9.

the basis that this immigration views were insufficiently hard-line – even though Guinness' own election to the chair twelve months earlier had been widely regarded as a victory for the club's right-wing.⁶¹

In *Who Goes Home?* Young contended that the immigration policies that allowed for the unregulated influx of new arrivals constituted 'treachery to our own kind'.⁶² He derisively compared Clement Davies' reaction to the passage of the restrictive Commonwealth Immigrants Act in 1962 – the Liberal Party leader had openly wept in the House of Commons – with Davies' apparent disinterest in the announcement that same day that '60,000 British children had lost their teeth' from poor dental treatment, a situation which 'left the liberal conscience unmoved'.⁶³ A conviction that white Britons had been gravely betrayed by the political establishment (comprising both Conservative and Labour governments throughout the nineteen-sixties) was thus a central component of the Right's views of both Rhodesia and mass immigration.

As well as being linked by a sense of racial betrayal, the Monday Club's positions on immigration and Rhodesia were also united by a perception of ideological betrayal by the Conservative Party leadership. Young, for instance, accused Douglas-Home's Foreign Secretary Rab Butler of being captured by what he termed the 'liberal neurosis'.⁶⁴ Administrators and politicians in the Foreign and Commonwealth Relations Offices, so the argument went, had acceded to 'Afro-Asian nationalism ... bowing to the wind of change ... [and] embracing the United Nations [as] a fact we have to live with' – and the Conservative leadership had unquestioningly gone along for the ride.⁶⁵ Specifically, the party's Right believed that moderate Tories had dispensed with their ideological traditions in favour of pragmatism.

Young argued that those who espoused liberal views on immigration did so not out of principle, but ambition. He claimed that civil servants and party bureaucrats were, in fact, acting in the self-serving pursuit of diplomatic posts 'being created almost monthly' in former British colonies.⁶⁶ This apparent trend was bitterly characterised as entirely consistent with the 'mood of surrender and cynicism encouraged by the party leadership'.⁶⁷ The rift that the immigration debate exposed within the party encouraged hostility in both directions. In the early nineteen-seventies, other Tory pressure groups – along with Prime Minister Edward Heath himself – publicly rebuked the Monday Club's support for immigrant repatriation, interventions which further inflamed the sense of resentment among those on the Right who

⁶¹ 'Exit the reluctant hero', *The Economist*, 5 May 1973, accessed via Gale Primary Sources; John Groser, 'Right wing victory in Monday Club poll', *The Times*, 6 June 1972, accessed via Gale Primary Sources.

⁶² Young, *Who Goes Home?* 13.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁶⁴ Young, *Who Goes Home?* 8-11.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

felt betrayed by their own party.⁶⁸ For the Right, the Conservative Party leadership's reluctance to impose restrictions on immigration reflected an abdication of moral responsibility, the craven embrace of mainstream opinion in order to retain power.

Of course, this view encouraged similar claims concerning Rhodesia. One club publication, published a few years prior to the UDI, pondered the Macmillan Government's hasty push towards majority rule in Africa by asking the remarkably unsubtle leading question: 'principle or expediency?'⁶⁹ Within a paragraph of that query, the essay provided the kind of self-assured answer that could have been lifted directly from a pamphlet on immigration policy: the party's approach in Africa demonstrated an 'obsessive desire to present a "progressive image" at home and abroad' that had led to the 'hasty abandonment of British responsibilities' on the continent.⁷⁰ The sense of betrayal inflamed by acquiescence to immigration and opposition to the Smith regime was self-reinforcing, and the argument that 'Britishness' was under siege – along with Conservatism – was encouraged by the arrival of immigrants and readily applied to policy on the UDI. British leaders who right-wingers argued should have been fighting for the rights of white Britons at home and their Rhodesian counterparts abroad, had instead betrayed them both.

Conclusion

It is clear, given the preoccupation with identity among Monday Club members and other right-wingers, that understanding their conception of Britain and its inhabitants is essential in explaining their response to the UDI and the developments that followed. At each level, evolving views of race in the United Kingdom were of significant relevance. Mass immigration coloured the Right's perception of their own country, fomenting nostalgia for an idealised 'lost' Britain that was projected onto white Rhodesia. Not only did this sentimentality promote sympathy for the Smith regime as a last bastion of what Britain once represented; it justified opposition to the Wilson government's sanctions policies.

Furthermore, the deterioration of race relations in the United Kingdom during the nineteen-sixties – of which the election campaign in Smethwick was a dispiriting example – empowered the Right to reject those who would describe 'Britishness' as a set of principles, rather than defining it by ethnic and cultural associations. In turn, this served to rationalise the Monday Club's fear that black majority rule for Rhodesia would mean a surrender of British ideals in that country, resulting in a collapse into chaos. Lastly, the Tory right-wing embraced the discourse of racial betrayal and treachery to explain Britain's supposed capitulation to non-white immigration, fostering the same attitude to the apparent abandonment of their 'kith and kin' in Rhodesia.

⁶⁸ 'Ministers urged to quit Monday Club', *The Times*, 3 April 1973, accessed via Gale Primary Sources; Richard Evans, 'PM rebukes Monday Club', *Financial Times*, 21 September 1972, accessed via Gale Primary Sources.

⁶⁹ CPA, CCO 3/6/16 (Monday Club), *Wind of Change or Whirlwind?* (London: The Monday Club, 1961).

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

As such, considering mass immigration is crucial in gaining a full insight into why exactly the Monday Club and its allies on the Right supported Ian Smith, and how that support was justified. The ideas that they turned to, and the language that they used, are all familiar: anxieties about race, identity and betrayal have all continued to inform right-wing dissension within the Conservative Party on a variety of issues in the decades since the UDI. In addition, the Monday Club's importance in these debates effectively demonstrated the capacity of the right-wing fringes of the party to play an outsize role in its politics, a pattern that has been repeated throughout the Conservative Party's recent history.

During the 1960s and 1970s, the Right regarded Britain as a country under siege, buffeted by a wind of change that was carried by immigrants at home and was strengthened by racial tumult in imperial outposts such as Rhodesia. In both contexts, it was a wind they chose to sail against, as they clung to a traditional conception of British identity and decried as traitors those who held a different view of 'Britishness'.

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