

ON April 7, 1966, the CIA headquarters in the United States received a cable from an agent in Rhodesia: "Request traces of L Ron Hubbard, US citizen recently arrived." The reply confirmed that headquarters files contained no derogatory information about the subject, but a memo was attached giving excerpts from press reports. It concluded:

"Individuals who have been connected with the organisations headed by Hubbard or who have had contact with him and the organisations, have indicated that Hubbard is a 'crackpot' and of 'doubtful mental background'."

Hubbard had chosen Rhodesia, where the prime minister, Ian Smith, had recently signed a Unilateral Declaration of Independence in defiance of the British government, as a country which would provide a "safe environment" for Scientology.

There were two reasons for his choice. First, he thought he could create a favourable climate by helping to solve the UDI crisis and, second, he believed he had been Cecil Rhodes in a previous life. He told an aide that he hoped to be able to recover gold and diamonds he was convinced Rhodes had buried somewhere in Rhodesia.

The "crackpot" bought a large house with a swimming pool in the exclusive Alexander Park suburb of Salisbury and opened negotiations to acquire the Bumi Hills Hotel on Lake Kariba. His plan was to use the hotel as a base from which to spread the influence of Scientology. He believed the Lake Kariba site would attract well-heeled followers who wanted to be instructed in the highest levels of Scientology and were willing to pay about \$1,000 for the privilege.

Nothing of this was revealed to the people of Rhodesia, to whom he represented himself as a "millionaire financier" interested in pumping money into the crippled economy of the country and stimulating the tourist industry. In an interview with the Rhodesia Sunday Mail, he was careful to distance himself from what the newspaper called "the controversial Scientology movement". It had never really been pushed in Rhodesia, he said, adding: "I am still an officer of the corporation that administers the movement but it is very largely autonomous now."

In early May Hubbard produced,



The Rhodesian prime minister, Ian Smith, and his wife: Hubbard sought their support

## RHODESIAN TAKEOVER BID

uninvited, a "tentative constitution" for Rhodesia which he felt would satisfy the demands of the blacks while at the same time maintaining white supremacy. It embodied the principle of one man one vote for a lower house, while real power was vested in an upper house elected by qualified citizens with a good standard of English, knowledge of the constitution and financial standing verified by a bank.

Hubbard was apparently convinced that Rhodesia's black population would welcome his ideas, even though it was obvious that the qualifications required to cast a vote for the upper house would exclude most blacks.

With his inimitable talent for adopting the most appropriate vernacular, Hubbard's proposals were written in suitably constitutional prose, beginning: "Before God and Man we pledge ourselves, the Government of Rhodesia and each of our officers and men of authority in the Government to this the Constitution of our country..."

Copies were despatched to Ian Smith and to the Scientologists' base at Saint Hill Manor in England with instructions to forward the document to the British prime minister, Harold Wilson, when Hubbard gave the word.

He tried to ingratiate himself with the leading political figures in Rhodesia, but with little success. In June, he arranged for one of the Saint Hill staff, John McMaster, to visit him from Johannesburg, where he was teaching a clearing course. "He cabled me and asked me to bring all the clearing course students to Salisbury to take part in a film he wanted to make," said McMaster. "I was also to be sure to bring with me two bottles of pink champagne, which was not available in Rhodesia."

"I had no idea why he wanted it but I knew it was important because I was met by one of Hubbard's assistants at Salisbury airport and the first thing she said to me was, 'Have you brought the champagne?'"

"It turned out he wanted to give it to Mrs Smith as a present in order to try and get in with the prime minister. Next morning his chauffeur drove him round to Government House and he swaggered up to the front door with a bottle under each arm thinking he was going to take Mrs Smith by storm. But they wouldn't let him past the front door and he came back very upset, really disgruntled."

Hubbard's high profile as the millionaire financier who boasted that

he could solve the UDI crisis won him few friends among Rhodesia's conservative white society. He often spoke of his willingness to help the government, saying that he had been trained in economics and government at Princeton, and seemed surprised that his services were not welcomed.

On television, in newspaper interviews and in all his public pronouncements, Hubbard professed support for Ian Smith's government, although in private he thought Smith was a "nasty bit of work" who was incapable of leadership. Similarly he publicly espoused sympathy for the plight of the black majorities of both Rhodesia and South Africa, while privately admitting contempt for them. Blacks were so stupid, he told John McMaster, that they did not give a reading on an E-meter.

At the beginning of July Hubbard was invited to address the Rotary Club in Bulawayo. He delivered a rambling, hectoring speech telling the assembled businessmen how they should run their country, their businesses and their lives, and when it was reported in the local newspaper it appeared to be faintly anti-Rhodesian.

A couple of days later, Hubbard received a letter from the Department of Immigration telling him that his applications for an extension to his alien's temporary residence permit had been unsuccessful: "This means that you will be required to leave Rhodesia on or before July 18, 1966."

Hubbard was stunned. Up to that moment he had believed himself to be not just a prominent personality in Rhodesia, but a popular one. He asked friends in the Rhodesian Front party to make representations on his behalf to the prime minister, but to no avail.

"Smith ranted and raved at them," he reported later, "told them I had been deported from Australia, was wanted in every country in the world, that my business associates had been complaining about me and that I must go."

The Rhodesian government refused to make any comment on the expulsion order, but Hubbard had few doubts about who was behind it—it was obviously a communist plot to get him out of the country because he was the man most likely to resolve the UDI crisis.