

The careless speculations and plain inaccuracies in Ernest Lefever's article, "U.S. Folly on Rhodesia" (March 20), deserve a reply. Mr. Lefever attacks the U.S. policy of "malicious neutrality" in Rhodesia and argues for Congress to send observers to the election in Rhodesia next month. He advocates full American support for the Rhodesian government.

The Senate Resolution to send observers to Rhodesia is a serious foreign policy issue. Before outlining my own position, I wish to address some of the inaccuracies in Mr. Lefever's article.

He describes the December election in Namibia as a "model" exercise and suggests that the April election in Rhodesia will approach that same level of perfection. The Namibia election in December was, in fact, marred by the withdrawal of three major political parties which objected to an election without U.N. supervision. The two parties taking part in the election received overt economic support from South Africa. There were widespread reports of voter coercion, not by the SWAPO guerillas, but by the South African administration in Namibia. Voters were threatened with denial of work permits, withholding of travel permits, and refusal of medical care if they failed to cast their ballots. This was hardly a model election.

On Rhodesia, Mr. Lefever again does not have his facts straight. The election is not open to all political parties, as he contends. The internal wings of the two guerilla groups have been banned from political activity for years with only a brief hiatus last summer. The Rhodesian regime has a long history of banning any black political party with nationalist aspirations. Well before these groups turned to warfare, the white Rhodesian

governemnt imprisoned their leaders. The current leaders of the two guerilla groups, Mr. Joshua Nkomo and Mr. Robert Mugabe, both served ten year prison sentences.

Mr. Lefever contends that most Rhodesians will be able to vote safely in the upcoming election. This remarkable assertion is contradicted by a host of factors. Private armies attached to Mr. Smith's black colleagues roam the countryside engaging in "political education". Ninety percent of Rhodesia is under martial law, and guerilla forces move freely over most of the country. Vehicles must travel with an armed convoy as an escort. Salisbury, the capital city, is vulnerable to mortar attack - the airport was a recent target, and a major oil depot was destroyed. Casualties in this war run as high as 3,000 per month, most of them black civilians. This is not a low level guerilla harrassment campaign, as Mr. Lefever contends, but a violent, lethal conflict of frightening proportions. Rhodesians will not vote "safely" in this war-torn country. The observer team, which Congress may send, will not "observe" safely.

The factual errors in Mr. Lefever's account are certainly misleading, but his speculations are for more careless and inaccurate. His hope for a "democratic, multi-party government" in Rhodesia is a case in point. The government has attempted to attract black support for the constitution and the forthcoming election, but the guerilla forces steadily gain ground at Mr. Smith's expense. Whites are fleeing the country at record rates. Blacks called up for military service refuse to report for duty in the Rhodesian Army. The guerilla find support and sanctuary over much of the country. Mr. Smith himself has admitted that his government is losing the war.

Mr. Lefever, ~~like many cold warriors before him~~, underestimates the strength and stamina of black nationalism. All over Africa, white rule has fallen to guerilla movements fueled by nationalism. In Rhodesia, Mr. Lefever would have us line up behind Ian Smith and his colleagues just as we did before the Portuguese in Angola and Mozambique. If we do as he suggests, the results in Rhodesia will be consistent with our past experience. By backing white interests, we will ^{repudiate our commitment to majority rule + racial equality} alienate black African states, do great harm to our standing in the Third World, and most importantly, set the stage for Soviet and Cuban intervention.

Mr. Lefever's anti-Communist credentials are impeccable. He clearly wishes to oppose Soviet and Cuban expansion in Africa. But his methods are tragically wrong-headed and misguided. If the United States supports the Smith regime as he so strongly urges, neighboring states will have little reason to reject offers of largescale Cuban assistance. The guerilla movements will embrace the Soviets completely. The Rhodesian government will renew its efforts to win this war. The South Africans will be encouraged to step up support for the Rhodesian regime. The war will intensify. Many thousands of lives will be lost. The outcome will probably be what every analyst now predicts - ultimate defeat for the Rhodesian government if the war continues.

I look forward to a time when my country will adopt a realistic policy toward the Third World. We must understand that black people in Rhodesia feel as deeply about their nation as we do ours. We must accept their right to chart their own course toward nationhood and development. We are no longer capable nor entitled to manipulate the Third World to conform

to our own image. It is not ours to win or to lose.

The instinct of the Cold Warrior is to intervene, to choose sides, to back "pro West" factions in Third World conflicts.

This cold war mentality has guided our foreign policy in the Third World to one disaster after another. In Rhodesia, we are faced with a critical choice. We can intervene on the side of white interests, or we can remain neutral in this conflict. Intervention will prolong the war and give the Soviets every advantage. Neutrality will retain our credibility in the Third World, contain the conflict, and leave the door open for a negotiated solution under U.N. auspices.

Mr. Lefever speaks of U.S. folly in Rhodesia. Folly is what he proposes, not what he attempts to condemn.