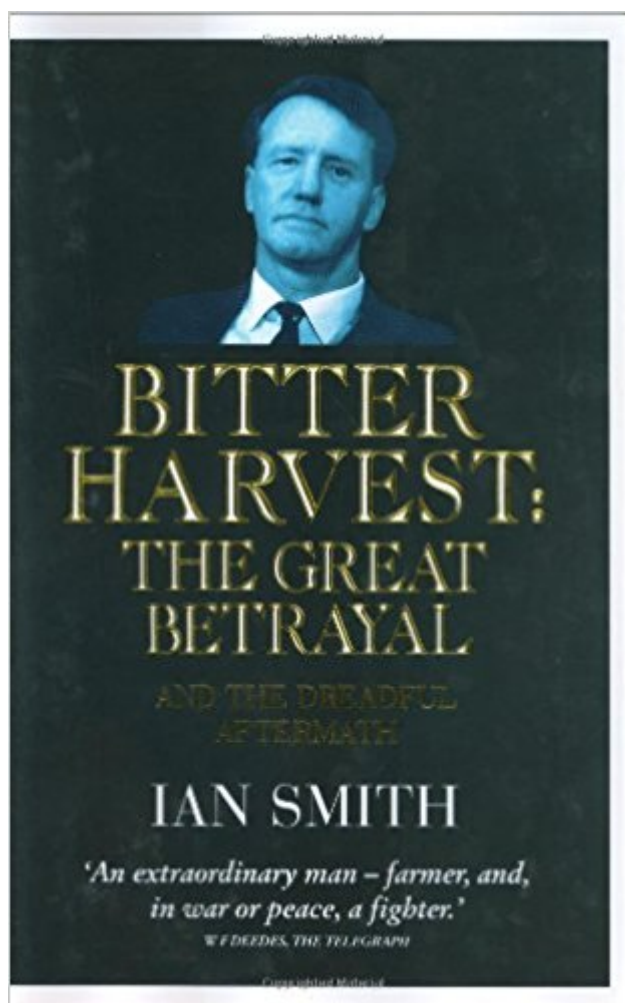


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Bitter Harvest: The Great Betrayal And The Dreadful Aftermath



Synopsis

This book is the autobiography of Ian Smith, the last Prime Minister of Rhodesia. After discussing his early life, Smith tells how he sought to keep Rhodesia on a path to full democracy during the West's decolonization of Africa.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Bitter Harvest: The Great Betrayal and the Dreadful Aftermath is a somewhat dry but first-hand account of the last Prime Minister of Rhodesia in his struggle against black-rule. Smith doesn't write that much about the bush war, only a politician's praise of his gallant troops, instead he focuses on the relationship between Rhodesia and Great Britain. Rhodesia was one of the British Empire's small but respectable colonies that was being settled by pioneer immigrants from Britain until the political situation closed off the flow. Rhodesia fielded large (for its size) formations to support the Mother Country in both World Wars, indeed Ian Smith was a fighter pilot in Italy in a Rhodesian RAF Squadron. Rhodesians made two decisions that possibly contributed to their disastrous insurgency. First, they rejected "Dominion" status in the late 1940s, and they rejected joining the Afrikaans/British run nation of South Africa. They were content as a colony. As a colony, their fate was thus directed by an exhausted imperial power that wanted to liquidate its empire. British rule left one African country after another with the now undeniable dismal results. Seeing this the Rhodesians declared independence "unilaterally" under white rule. The British vowed not to recognize Rhodesian independence without majority rule first. This set the stage for the war where the Rhodesians resist until their inevitable abandonment by all allies. Rhodesians have been

criticized by being unable to provide a clear, intellectual, and moral justification for their status, and this book emphasizes the lack thereof. The Unilateral Declaration of Independence, or "UDI" is a stilted document that attempts to match Thomas Jefferson's mighty call for American Freedom but falls far short. The Rhodesian military was not charged to provide an intellectual defense of the political situation, Ian Smith was. Smith also felt betrayed in that his calls for support along the common lines of kith and kin and reminders of Rhodesian past support for the British Empire in her mighty struggles in the first years of the 20th Century fell on deaf ears. This of course, is high naiveté. Most human relationships are based on amoral perceptions of interests, and this fact is multiplied in the relationships between nations. Smith also didn't realize that Western Civilization's political elite, especially British political elite, was embarking on a policy package that was wholly designed to destroy, damage, and dispossess the white working class. This policy continues to be fanatically pursued, although its flaws grow more apparent by the day. Rhodesia was the epitome of a white-working class society-with no moral call, and fashionable opinion aligned against him, Rhodesia was doomed.

This is a different kind of Rhodesia book. Instead of harrowing and exciting stories from the Rhodesian Bush War that readers might be accustomed to, it tells the story of the internal and international political situation Rhodesia found itself in, beginning with the dissolution of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, to Mugabe's election and beyond. Be warned: this is not light reading. The subject matter is almost 100% pure politics. The print is small and each page is packed with text. The book held my interest, however. The late Ian Smith wrote in a flowing, easy to read manner, and his recollections of the facts are mixed with his personal observations and feelings, giving the reader an idea of the kind of person he was. Ian Smith describes in an almost blow-by-blow fashion the meetings and behind-the-scenes political wrangling that went on as Rhodesia tried to gain its independence, then tried to prevent a takeover of the government by Communist-backed insurgent groups. He also describes the various agreements that Rhodesia was party to, and how well he feels they were (or were not) adhered to by all sides. One thing to note is that he claims more than once that Rhodesia was taking the gradual path to complete equality and majority government, but that external pressures forced his hand before the country was ready. I can't speak to the truthfulness of the content, so I won't even try. It's probably a pretty fair bet that people try to make themselves look as good as they can when writing their memoirs. I'm not fool enough to think that everything that he wrote is the absolute truth, but nor do I think that everything he wrote was a lie. Given the situation that Zimbabwe finds itself in today it's obvious that Mugabe

isn't remotely the great and benevolent leader he makes himself out to be ("dictator" comes to mind). Certainly this lends credence to the argument that the handover to a majority government wasn't performed as carefully as it should have been. Ian Smith's government inherited a situation that they did not create. Whether they worked to correct the problem or exacerbate it is a question that is still debated today. This book adds something to that debate, and anyone interested in Rhodesia or the post-colonial history of Africa would probably get something out of it.

Well written account by a man whose leadership and moral uprightness will someday hopefully be widely acknowledged. The tragedy that Zimbabwe became under Mugabe is the greatest proof of the validity of Smith's fears and warnings. What might have been, but for the self-righteous political correctness of the left. Rhodesia was the proverbial canary on the coal mine -- a foretaste of what awaits the rapidly disintegrating West.

Good. One guys story.

Truely the greatest betrayal of a nation by the Western Democratic countries under the influence of the Organisation of African Unity. This book besides being a great read, depicts the struggle of a nation coming to grips with a change in British foreign policy. This change strikes the beginning of the end of a democratic and economically prosperous country. The sad reality of this book is that all of the Rhodesian peoples worst fears have today come true. Ian Smith lays the facts straight. A true leader, and a hard to find honest politician struggling against innumerable odds to keep Rhodesia alive. Unfortunately in the end it was not to be and the now Zimbabwe is a single party dictatorship with horrendous human rights violations, collapsed economy, and a starving people. If you have any interest in the politics of Southern Africa during the end of British colonialism, this book is for you.

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