

CONFIDENTIAL

Rhodesia Subject file
Liberia - Tolbert Visit
June 79

RECORD OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE PRESIDENT
OF THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA AT NO 10 DOWNING STREET AT 12.15 PM ON
MONDAY, 10 DECEMBER 1979

Present:-

- | | |
|--------------------|-----------------------|
| The Prime Minister | President Tolbert |
| Lord Carrington | Mrs E Johnson-Sirleaf |
| Mr N Aspin CMG | Mr D Franklin Neal |
| Mr R Williams | Mr J McClain |
| Mr J Doubleday OBE | Mr T Siafa Sherman |
| Mr J R Johnson | HE Mr F A Dennis |
| Mr M Pattison | Mr S B Cole Jr |

The Prime Minister welcomed President Tolbert and expressed appreciation of his close interest in and messages about the Rhodesia Conference. Settlement was near and she hoped it might be reached quickly. President Tolbert said that he was grateful for the invitation to visit at such a significant juncture. He had talked to the Patriotic Front leaders that morning and was confident that the Rhodesia problem which was of great concern to Africa and to the world could be successfully resolved.

At the Prime Minister's request, Lord Carrington outlined the current position. It was essential to allay the suspicions on both sides which had led to the continuing cross-border infiltration and the retaliatory attacks at the weekend. He intended to provide a paper the next day which should reassure Patriotic Front fears. The conference had come so far that it could not be allowed to founder on the assembly of forces. The aims now were to have the cease-fire arrangements agreed and to send the Governor out. He hoped that President Tolbert would use his influence to convince the Patriotic Front leaders of the fairness of the British measures and of the need to reach a decision quickly.

President Tolbert congratulated the British Government on behalf of Liberia and of the OAU on their courage and resolve over Rhodesia. A Liberian proverb seemed appropriate: 'If you eat the rat you must be prepared to eat the tail'. He had been impressed by the determination of the Patriotic Front leaders to end the war. They were not opposed to assembling their forces or to the number of points, but they

/needed to be

needed to be reassured that the Rhodesia forces would be treated and monitored in the same way. Their fears about the reliability of the Rhodesian forces were shared by Presidents Nyerere and Shagari who had been in Monrovia last week. Lord Carrington said that these fears were exaggerated, but the arrangements had to be fair. The observers, the monitoring forces, the Governor and the world press would ensure this.

President Tolbert said that it took time to create the right psychological conditions but he would do what he could to help. He would speak to the Patriotic Front leaders again as soon as possible. Lord Carrington undertook to give the President a copy of his paper and advised waiting until he had read it before seeing the Patriotic Front leaders again. He stressed the need for the information on force numbers and for a reciprocal withdrawal to allay fears on both sides. The Conference had made great progress and could not be allowed to fail now. President Tolbert said that it would not fail.

President Tolbert spoke of the distress Africa felt at the Rhodesian raids and the problems in particular caused for Zambia. The Prime Minister said that Britain had tried to get mutual agreement on stopping cross-border infiltration and raids but the Patriotic Front spokesman had called for an intensification of the war. Lord Carrington pointed out that the raids would stop when the British Governor was in charge, and maize would flow to Zambia again. (Lord Carrington then left to fulfil another engagement).

The Prime Minister stressed that she had been instructed at the CHGM in Lusaka to act with urgency on Rhodesia. The conference had now lasted for 15 weeks. A most powerful Governor had been carefully chosen to build confidence in Salisbury. It would be most appropriate for final agreement to be reached during the President's visit. President Tolbert agreed that they must work to this end.

The Prime Minister asked about current issues facing the President as Chairman of the Organisation of African Unity. President Tolbert said that Western Sahara was important. The OAU had resolved that the Saharan people were entitled to self-determination. He had just held a meeting of

/the ad hoc

the ad hoc committee which had successfully broached consideration of the problem. Other preoccupations were the Ethiopia/Somalia and Benin/Gabon disputes and reconciliation in Chad. Peace had to be achieved in African trouble spots and then the OAU would devote attention to economic development. He hoped an economic meeting would be held in Lagos in April/May 1980. The Prime Minister wished him well in these endeavours.

The Prime Minister asked about the President's plans for Liberia. President Tolbert said that the emphasis was on an integrated development programme for the rural areas concentrating on schools, roads and agricultural projects. The standard of living of the masses would be improved. But world problems had made it difficult for Liberia to rely solely on its own resources, so it was necessary to look to friendly countries. He wanted particularly to expand the long-standing relationship with the United Kingdom by seeking co-operation in education, especially manpower training and technical knowhow. He handed over to the Prime Minister documents on:

'UK and Liberia: Technical and Economic Co-operation'; and
'Selected Priority Planned Public Investment Projects of Liberia's Socio-Economic Development 1980-84'.

The Prime Minister expressed her interest and undertook to study the documents. The meeting closed at 1300 hours.

11 December 1979.

CONFIDENTIAL