

PRIME MINISTER'S SPEECH ON SOUTHERN AFRICA

FRIDAY, 3 AUGUST, 1979

LUSAKA

Southern Africa has seldom been far from the forefront of our consideration over the two years since heads of government last met in London. The problems of Southern Africa are of course not limited to Rhodesia.

We have had a helpful contribution from Mr. Clark on Namibia. Our fears and anxieties about Southern Africa itself are unfortunately likely to be with us for a long time.

But I imagine that it is on the question of Rhodesia that my colleagues will wish me to speak; and I therefore propose to confine my own intervention to that subject.

The problem of Rhodesia has hung over the Commonwealth for many years.

The present trouble began in 1965 when the then Rhodesian government made the illegal declaration of independence. This was followed by years in which the efforts of successive British governments to achieve a settlement based on the wishes of a majority of the people of Rhodesia were frustrated, years in which the political rights of the majority were denied. Then came the war which has brought great hardship and suffering both inside Rhodesia and in neighbouring countries.

What began as a struggle between the white minority and the black majority has more recently taken on a very different dimension.

*President
M. M. Nyame
has said*

There is now an African President, an African Prime Minister and an African majority in Parliament.

/There have been

There have been elections in which for the first time the African majority have been able to elect the leaders of the government. There are those who seem to believe that the world should simply go on treating Bishop Muzorewa as if he were Mr. Smith. But the change that has taken place in Rhodesia cannot be dismissed as of no consequence.

It is the British Government's view that we must use the opportunity created by the changes which have taken place in Rhodesia to see if we can now find the solution which has eluded us for so long, and to bring an end to the war.

We owe it to the people of Rhodesia to do all we can, all of us, to help all of them, to resolve their political differences peacefully rather than by force.

I simply do not believe that there is anything now dividing the people of Rhodesia which is worth the use of the bomb and the gun to kill and maim men, women and children by the thousand, or which can justify the misery of the hundreds of thousands in refugee camps.

In the changes that have now taken place we surely have the basis from which to try to develop a solution which will command general international acceptance.

We have already had extensive consultations.
As you know, on the British Government's behalf, Lord Harlech saw the Heads of Government of seven African states and also Mr. Mugabe and representatives of Mr. Nkomo.

Richard Luce saw the governments of a further five African countries. We have also been in touch with all our other Commonwealth friends as well as with our European Community partners and the United States. The consultations we have had so far have been of great value to the Government in helping to identify what the solution should be.

I should like to take this opportunity to thank personally all those Heads of Government here today who have helped us in this way.

/From our consultations

From our consultations certain common factors emerge clearly.

- ① The ~~most significant~~ ^{most significant}, I think, is the view that the constitution under which Bishop Muzorewa has come to power is defective in certain important respects.

I refer of course to the provisions which make it possible for the white minority to block, in the Parliament, constitutional changes that would be unwelcome to them.

This is a valid criticism - such a blocking mechanism has not appeared in any other independence constitution agreed to by the British Parliament. //

The principle that there should be some guaranteed representation for minority communities (during a certain minimum period following the transfer of power on independence) ^{as Prime Minister Muzorewa has reminded us.} is not new - and I think

we all recognise the importance to Rhodesia of encouraging the European minority to remain and to continue to play a useful part in the life of the community.

But that is a very different matter from enabling them to block all ~~progress~~ ^{change}.

- ② The other main criticism of the constitution relating to the composition and powers of the various service commissions is also valid. It is clearly wrong that the government should not have adequate control over ^{senior} senior appointments.

- ③ Those consulted also considered it essential that the search for a solution should involve the present external parties, so that their supporters outside the country might return home in peace and play their full part in political life.

/Finally,

④ ^{Lansky} ~~Finally~~, in considering the consultations we have had so far, I have been impressed by the general conviction that any solution of the Rhodesia problem must derive its authority from Britain as the responsible colonial power.

The international community has lost few opportunities to remind us that it is Britain's constitutional responsibility to bring Rhodesia to legal independence on a basis of justice and democracy fully comparable with the arrangements we have made for the independence of other countries.

We accept that responsibility and have every intention of discharging it honourably.

Mr. Chairman, as I mentioned earlier, the consultations we have had with our Commonwealth partners over the last two months, and indeed with many other governments, have been most helpful. We have looked forward to this meeting as an important stage in that process of consultation before we decide our policy and initiate what we all profoundly hope will be the final approach to a solution.

I look forward very much to hearing any further views of colleagues here; but you will have gathered that we think we can begin to see the form that an attempt at a solution ought to take.

/ Let me therefore

Let me therefore, before this debate continues, make certain points about the British position quite clear.

- (i) the British Government are wholly committed to genuine black majority rule in Rhodesia;
- (ii) we accept that it is our constitutional responsibility to grant legal independence on that basis and that only Britain can do it;
- (iii) we accept that our objective must be to establish that independence on the basis of a constitution comparable with the constitutions we have agreed with other countries;
- (iv) we are deeply conscious of the urgent need to bring peace to the people of Rhodesia and her neighbours; we will therefore present our proposals as quickly as possible to all the parties, and at the same time call on them to cease hostilities and move forward with us to a settlement.

Our aim is, as I stated it during our opening session, to bring Rhodesia to legal independence on a basis which the Commonwealth and the international community as a whole will find acceptable.

I believe that we now have a chance to achieve this, and we must take it.