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PRIME MINISTER

Rhodesia
(OD(79)38)

BACKGROUND

The background to the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary's paper was fully discussed at Cabinet on 1st November. There was general support for both his strategy and his tactics. He was asked to provide a list of key Questions and Answers; these are in his present Annex B. The main purpose of the OD meeting on 5th November is to establish that OD members are fully aware of the difficulties which will be involved both with international opinion (e.g. because we are taking off sanctions on indirect trade) and with domestic opinion (e.g. because we are temporarily keeping on sanctions on direct trade); and are fully briefed on how to deal with likely lines of criticism of the Government in various public fora.

HANDLING

2. You will wish to ask the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the Lord Privy Seal to introduce the paper and to report on the latest state of the negotiations. You will yourself wish to report on the talks which you and they had with the Leader of the Opposition and the Shadow Foreign Secretary.

3. You could then ask if members of the Committee are satisfied with the answers to questions listed in Lord Carrington's Annex B; and whether they have any further such questions. Lord Carrington and Mr. Gilmour should be asked to supply any answers required.

4. The rest of the discussion could be grouped as follows:-

- (a) Parliament: The First Bill. The Chancellor of the Duchy should be asked to run through the timetable and say if he is content. The Lord Chancellor and others will no doubt wish to comment.

CONFIDENTIAL

- (b) Parliament: The Second Bill. Lord Carrington proposes to introduce this in the second half of November. It needs to have been passed before the earliest envisaged date for independence, i.e. mid-December. Parliamentary Counsel do not think it could in fact be drafted before early December, if as expected they only receive instructions from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in mid-November. Could the instructions be accelerated? And how long will the Government's business managers need to get the Bill through both Houses?
- (c) International Opinion. Assuming that we have to proceed without the Patriotic Front, what could be done -
- (i) to maximise support from our allies (particularly the Americans)?
 - (ii) to mitigate damage to our economic and other interests in Third World countries (especially Zambia and Nigeria)?
 - (iii) to contain the situation at the United Nations?
 - (iv) to inhibit support for the Patriotic Front from the Front Line States and from Communist countries?
- (d) British and Rhodesian Opinion
- (i) What will be the Opposition's line and how should it be countered?
 - (ii) Which aspects of our policy will most worry the Government's supporters?
 - (iii) What are the dangers of the Muzorewa Government losing majority support in Rhodesia?
 - (iv) What are the prospects for White Rhodesia opposition and/or emigration?
 - (v) Are new elections essential (or even possible) if there is no Patriotic Front participation and no cease-fire? Would a referendum be a better way of having a Test of Acceptability?
- (e) The Situation on the Ground. If there is no cease-fire, can Salisbury's security forces hold the position (i) until independence at the end of the year? (ii) thereafter?

CONFIDENTIAL

CONCLUSION

5. Subject to the discussion you may wish to guide the Committee to agree that, despite the difficulties, there is no acceptable alternative to proceeding as proposed in Lord Carrington's paper.

RA

(Robert Armstrong)

2nd November 1979