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NOTE OF A MEETING WITH THE LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION HELD IN
THE PRIME MINISTER'S ROOM IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS AT 1130 ON
FRIDAY 2 NOVEMBER 1979

<u>Present:</u> Prime Minister	The Rt. Hon.
Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary	James Callaghan MP
Lord Privy Seal	The Rt. Hon.
Mr C.A. Whitmore	Peter Shore MP

Rhodesia

The Prime Minister said that what she had to say about Rhodesia would be on Privy Counsellor terms. She did not want Mr. Callaghan and Mr. Shore to be taken by surprise by the Parliamentary steps which the Government would need to take on Rhodesia the following week. Existing legislation did not enable the Government to take the action that would be necessary if the Lancaster House Conference reached a successful conclusion. The Government therefore proposed to introduce an interim Enabling Bill the following week under which they would be able, by Order, to promulgate the new constitution for Rhodesia, to appoint a Governor with executive and legislative powers and to hold elections on the basis of the new constitution. As regards sanctions, the moment the Governor took over, the rebellion would be finished, Rhodesia would become a British colony again and sanctions would fall. Section 2 of the Southern Rhodesia Act 1965 provided for sanctions on indirect trade with Rhodesia and this would lapse on 15 November. The Government did not propose to renew this section in view of the likelihood that Rhodesia would soon be granted legal independence. Sanctions on direct trade with Rhodesia, however, were provided for by other acts and the Enabling Bill would maintain these sanctions until legality was restored following the Governor's arrival. The Lord Privy Seal

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added that indirect trade was that undertaken by British firms operating outside the United Kingdom and not by firms operating from within the country. It might be suggested that firms that would normally wish to engage in direct trade would now, with the lapse of Section 2 of the 1965 Act, switch to indirect trade, but the Government thought that the interval between 15 November and the abolition of sanctions on direct trade would be so short as not to make this a worthwhile change. The Enabling Bill would not provide for the grant of independence itself and for this another Bill would be needed in due course.

The Prime Minister said that the Bill might be published on Monday of next week, with the Second Reading on Wednesday or Thursday. The Opposition might prefer Thursday, since she understood that Wednesday was a supply day. If Thursday was preferable, it might be possible for the Commons to take all stages of the Bill that day.

Mr. Callaghan said that he thought that the Opposition would be able to be helpful over an Enabling Bill for the purposes which the Prime Minister had described. He would prefer to have the Second Reading on Thursday of next week. There would be strong feeling amongst Opposition Members if the steel debate planned for Wednesday did not take place. Much was, however, contingent on what happened at the Conference between now and the middle of next week. If there was a breakdown, the Opposition would have to consider its position over support for the Enabling Bill. But his advice to the Government in the meantime was to negotiate up to the hilt. He thought that the Government had done very well in the negotiations so far. But he knew that Mr. Nkomo and Mr. Mugabe were concerned about their personal safety if they entered Rhodesia to fight an election: they would in effect be putting themselves into the hands of the present state apparatus of Rhodesia including the army and police against which the Patriotic Front had been fighting. Mr. Shore added that the Governor would not, in practice, be in control of the machinery of Government in Rhodesia. He would have paper powers and not real ones in this respect.

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/The Prime Minister

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The Prime Minister said that we had achieved as much agreement in the negotiations as we needed to launch Rhodesia into legal independence based on genuine majority rule and with a constitution which was comparable to those we had granted to former British colonies. The Lancaster House Conference had agreed upon the constitution and had accepted that there should be elections with British supervision. Having achieved this measure of progress, we could not now withhold independence. Mr. Callaghan commented that he did not think that the situation in Rhodesia could be compared with most former British colonies immediately before they had been granted independence. In the case of Rhodesia there was a strong military force based outside the country. It seemed to him that it was essential to have a ceasefire and to have agreement on how the ceasefire would operate if the elections were to be secure and free.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary said that the Government had approached the Lancaster House Conference in three stages. The first was to obtain agreement on the constitution, subject to the interim arrangements; and this had been achieved. Second, they had sought agreement on the interim arrangements, subject to agreement on a ceasefire. The Government was in the process of trying to bring this stage to a successful conclusion and we were about to table our detailed proposals for the pre-independence period. The third stage was to reach agreement on the ceasefire itself. It was essential to adopt this kind of sequential approach. It would be fatal to try to discuss all the issues simultaneously. He understood the concern of the leaders of the Patriotic Front for their personal safety, but there was no alternative but to make use of the existing Rhodesian security forces. There were no other forces to put in their place. But there would be teams of Commonwealth observers in the country during the period of the election. It should not, however, be forgotten that the negotiations at Lancaster House were being conducted not only with the Patriotic Front but also with Bishop Muzorewa's delegation and because of the bias which Mr. Ramphal was showing towards the Patriotic Front, they were finding it increasingly difficult to accept the notion of Commonwealth involvement.

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/Mr Callaghan

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Mr. Callaghan suggested that the Government might consider an Electoral Commission and making use of United Kingdom Returning Officers for the election in Rhodesia. He also thought that there would be advantage in bringing together General Walls and Mr. Mugabe. It would be helpful if, in the debate next Thursday, the Government could say something precise about how the ceasefire would operate and about how it intended to ensure that the elections were free and fair. These were the issues on which the House would focus. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary said General Walls and the Patriotic Front Military Commander were ready to discuss the ceasefire at the appropriate moment.

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