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Original filed on
Germany June 79
PM's meetings with
Chancellor Schmidt
Germany.

Excerpt from

RECORD OF A DISCUSSION BETWEEN THE PRIME MINISTER AND CHANCELLOR HELMUT SCHMIDT AT THE CHANCELLERY IN BONNIE

ON 31 OCTOBER 1979 AT 1530

PRESENT

The Prime Minister

The Federal Chancellor

Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary

Herr Genscher

Mr. M. O'D. B. Alexander

Dr. von der Gablenz

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Rhodesia

The Prime Minister said that the Rhodesia talks in London had reached a critical stage. Agreement had been reached on a Constitution and on the installation of the Governor. It would be ridiculous and absurd if the talks were to break down on the problems of the interim period. It would mean that those responsible for the break-down are not genuinely interested in democracy. Britain intended to go ahead with the internal elections. If the Patriotic Front decided not to participate that would be their decision and theirs alone. That the talks had got as far as they had was due largely to the superb way the talks had been handled by the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary. Chancellor Schmidt said that he shared the Prime Minister's admiration for the way Lord Carrington had handled the negotiation.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary said that there was a feeling abroad that HMG only needed to negotiate with the Patriotic Front. The Chancellor said that he recognised that Britain was dealing with three parties or even, if one included Mr. Smith, with four. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary said that Bishop Muzorewa had been given no credit for accepting a British Governor with executive powers or for accepting that the Governor would in fact run the country while the Bishop was fighting the election. For a man who had recently won the support of 64 per cent of the electorate to make these concessions, and to agree to submit himself to another election, was remarkable. The Patriotic Front had themselves made concessions on the Constitution. They would now have to trust Britain over the appointment of the Governor and the handling of the interim period. The Chancellor agreed.

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Rhodesia

The Prime Minister said that she had had a long talk with Premier Hua about Rhodesia but she had found it difficult to get him to understand the basic concept of our approach to the problem. He had told her that the Front Line States would not accept Bishop Muzorewa as the leader of an independent Rhodesia. China had of course an interest in a Patriotic Front victory in Rhodesia, even though Mr. Nkomo was receiving Soviet help. She had told him that the battle was no longer one between black and white but between black and black. Our objective now was to see that the Rhodesian people could make a choice in free and fair elections, and if the Patriotic Front lost, they must accept the verdict of the ballot box and stop fighting. The concept of the ballot box was a difficult one to get over to Premier Hua, but she would return to this subject with him in their further talks the following day. She would also point out to him again that a stable Rhodesia would be a check on the expansionism of the Soviet Union in Southern Africa. If Rhodesia drifted into chaos, it would make the eventual loss of South Africa that much more likely, and this in turn would weaken the West as a whole since they relied on South Africa for certain vital raw materials.

Chancellor Schmidt said that the fundamentals of the British approach to Rhodesia appeared to him to be clear and simple and he would have expected Premier Hua to understand them. He had told him when he was in Bonn that he thought that the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary was handling the Lancaster House negotiations extremely well. He would, however, be grateful for the Prime Minister's assessment of the chances of bringing the talks to a successful conclusion.

/ The Prime Minister

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The Prime Minister said that successive British Governments had stipulated that six conditions should be fulfilled before Rhodesia could be restored to legality and given independence. The Rhodesian election of last April had returned a black majority Government with a 64 per cent turnout, and there were many people in the United Kingdom who thought that Bishop Muzorewa's Government had met all six conditions. There were, on the other hand, those who argued that there was some doubt about whether the fifth principle, which was that any settlement should be acceptable to the people of Rhodesia as a whole, had been adequately satisfied. It was also argued that the constitution on which his Government had been elected was deficient in two respects. It would have been possible to ask him to put right these two defects and then to recognise his Government as a legal and independent one. If the British Government had followed this course, however, we should almost certainly have not gained the support of the international community and this would not have been helpful to Rhodesia. We had therefore decided to take the route which we were now following, and our main purpose at the Lusaka Conference had been to carry other countries along with us. As a result of the Lancaster House negotiations so far we had obtained the agreement of the participants to a constitution which not only got rid of ^{the} two deficiencies in the existing Rhodesian constitution but was also comparable to the constitutions which we had granted in the past to former British colonies. We were now trying to negotiate the pre-independence arrangements, and this was the most difficult stage so far. The British Government were proposing that a British governor should be installed in Rhodesia during the transitional period in whom legislative and executive authority would be vested. It was envisaged that Bishop Muzorewa and his Ministers would devote themselves to contesting the elections. The present security forces would be answerable to the governor. Although we were expecting there to be a ceasefire, we wanted to keep the pre-independence period to no longer than two months.

/ The longer it lasted

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The longer it lasted the more likely it was that guerrilla activity would increase and if events took a serious turn, the Governor would be helpless. There was no intention to support him with British troops. It would be for him to supervise the elections, thus fulfilling the undertaking which the British Government had given at Lusaka, and to ensure that they were free and fair. Bishop Muzorewa was prepared to go along with these pre-independence arrangements. Given the nature of the election which he had won in April, this was a big step for him to take and few people realised how far he was prepared to come. But it was by no means certain that the Patriotic Front would also agree to the British Government's transitional proposals. They were arguing that the pre-independence period should be longer than two months: they claimed that they needed more time to establish themselves inside Rhodesia. Britain could not accept this, since the Patriotic Front had been active for a long time and Mr. Nkomo and Mr. Mugabe were as well known in Rhodesia as Bishop Muzorewa.

Chancellor Schmidt said that President Kaunda had asked him to try and persuade the Prime Minister to lengthen the transitional period and to remove the army and police commanders during the pre-independence stage. He was simply reporting this approach from President Kaunda and was not offering any comment on it, though it did seem to him that Britain needed to carry with her the Front Line Presidents as well as those actually participating in the talks at Lancaster House. He also wondered whether the Prime Minister felt that she was getting enough support from the United States, Canada, France and the Federal Republic.

The Prime Minister reiterated the importance of keeping the transitional period as short as possible. The guerrillas were not a disciplined force in the way the Rhodesian Army was and they might cause trouble at any time. The British Government was

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confident that the Army Commander, with whom we were in direct touch, would serve the Governor loyally once he was installed. She agreed on the importance of carrying the Front Line Presidents with us. We had succeeded in doing this in Lusaka, but both President Kaunda and President Nyerere were now worried that if the Patriotic Front lost the election, they would still have the guerrilla forces based in their territories. On the other hand, they should see that it was in their own interests to have a stable, independent Rhodesia. Zambia in particular, which already relied for vital supplies on the railway that ran through Rhodesia and which was heavily dependent on South Africa for foodstuffs, would benefit. But if Rhodesia was to remain a stable and prosperous society, it was imperative to retain the confidence of the white population there in the future of the country. All Britain could do was to restore Rhodesia to legality, at which point the sanctions would fall away, and to see that free and fair elections were held on the basis of the Constitution already agreed at Lancaster House. Once we had done that, the future of Rhodesia was in the hands of its own people. We were now within an ace of this goal and we were in particular need of our friends' support. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary had been very pleased with the response he had had from our European partners at Ashford Castle, and Mr. Vance was supporting us, though there were other members of the United States administration who were less helpful, even though Rhodesia was already, under its existing Constitution, a far more democratic state than many other African countries.

