

SECRET

4 Rhodesia

PRIME MINISTERRhodesia

(OD(79) 10 and OD(79) 11)

BACKGROUND

1. In OD(79) 11 the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary proposes a strategy and timetable to bring Rhodesia to legal independence by this autumn. It rests on Lord Harlech's advice (OD(79) 10) that we could not get any international acceptance for the internal settlement as it stands, but that we could hope to get a considerable measure of acceptance if Britain gave a lead to obtain changes to the constitution, followed by a conference of all parties and another election or some other test of acceptability. Lord Harlech is due to attend the meeting after an overnight flight from Johannesburg in order to report on his exploratory discussions with Bishop Muzorewa on 3-4 July. It is essential for the proposed strategy that Muzorewa should be able both to accept and bring about the changes in the Rhodesian constitution and power structure which the strategy requires.

2. You discussed the Foreign Secretary's general approach with him and Lord Harlech before the latter went to see the Bishop: and you also discussed it in briefing for your own talk with Mr Fraser. This brief therefore concentrates mainly on the procedural aspects and the next steps. The strategy is not assured of success (and even if successful may still be accompanied by some damage to British interests particularly in Nigeria) but it offers the best chance of success and of containing the damage. If it fails, eg because the Bishop cannot be brought to accept the necessary changes (Mr Ian Smith may in particular prove once more to be a stumbling block), we shall face the very difficult question of whether the probable non-renewal of sanctions in November should be accompanied or followed by granting legal independence to Rhodesia. There is however no need to face this issue now. As you said in Canberra we are proceeding via stepping stones and we shall have to judge as we go which ones are safe to step upon.

SECRET

HANDLING

3. It should not be necessary to go through Lord Harlech's report on his first round of consultations in Africa (OD(79) 10) in any detail. I suggest you open the meeting by thanking him for this report and say that the Committee will be interested to hear later the results of his subsequent exploratory discussions in Salisbury. You might then invite the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary to introduce his paper (OD(79) 11) on the strategy to be followed. Lord Harlech could then be asked to report on his discussions in Salisbury with Bishop Muzorewa, Mr David Smith (as a leader of moderate Rhodesia Front opinion) and Mr Ian Smith (over his readiness to step down from the political scene). You may then want to report on your own discussions with Mr Clark and more particularly Mr Fraser.

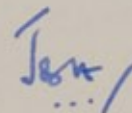
4. The course of the subsequent discussion will be affected by whether Lord Harlech has reported a readiness in Salisbury to concede that the internal settlement needs to be modified and that Britain needs to be seen to be taking the lead. In earlier talks with Sir A Duff and Mr Day both black and white Rhodesian leaders took the line that they had already done all that could be expected of them. Some of them may think that if they stand tight Britain and the United States will have to lift sanctions and that recognition will follow. But more recent contacts have suggested a readiness to try to follow if Britain gives a lead in suggesting the changes now necessary. The Rhodesian leaders should be aware that they do not have a strong hand. The internal settlement has not reduced the level of fighting, its crippling burden on the economy or the haemorrhage of white skills through emigration.

5. If however Lord Harlech reports that the Rhodesian leadership still resist the idea of significant changes in the internal settlement Lord Carrington might be asked what opportunities exist for pressure to be brought on Bishop Muzorewa during his visits to the United States and Britain. He could also be asked how the internal settlement constitution can be altered and on the extent of Rhodesia Front support or acquiescence that would be needed (the alternatives seem to be either support from 16 out of 28 white MPs to produce 78 votes in favour of change or prior agreement on an amended constitution that could be imposed by Britain).

SECRET

6. Although you and Lord Carrington have discussed the strategy earlier, this is the first OD discussion since Lord Harlech's first report. Furthermore you will need some discretion from your colleagues to take decisions in concert with the Foreign Secretary. It will therefore be important to ensure that they endorse the main points of the strategy. In particular, does the Committee accept that British recognition of the internal settlement as it stands would not bring international acceptance? Does it agree that we should try to gain that acceptance by a determined policy including the preliminary steps set out by Lord Carrington in paragraph 8 of OD(79) 11 and an announcement after the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting on the lines of his paragraph 6? Does it agree with the line Lord Carrington proposes to take in the House of Lords on 10 July? The discussion ought of course also to cover the degree of risk to our interests in black Africa (especially Nigeria and Zambia), the extent to which the Patriotic Front could expect support from black African states if they refused to take part in a wider settlement or even to attend a conference, and the probable course of the civil war which on almost any scenario must be likely to continue.

8. Subject to the discussion you will probably want to guide the Committee to endorse the strategy and timetable outlined in OD(79) 11 but note that further discussion of it will be necessary after the Bishop's visit to London and before the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting.


John Hunt

4 July 1979