

CONFIDENTIAL

PRIME MINISTER

Rhodesia
(OD(79) 21 and 19)

BACKGROUND

The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary's main paper (OD(79) 21) carries forward the policy agreed in OD on 5th July. It reports on Bishop Muzorewa's Washington and London talks and seeks approval for detailed steps over the next few weeks, leading up to a constitutional conference in London in early September. As background Lord Carrington's other paper (OD(79) 19) considers the damage which our political and economic interests in Black Africa and elsewhere might suffer as a consequence of our Rhodesia policy.

2. Decisions reached on this item will affect both the line to be taken in the Debate on 25th July and also how the hand is to be played at the Lusaka Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHGM). Your CHGM briefing meeting on 25th July will concentrate on subjects other than Rhodesia.

3. The timetable envisaged by Lord Carrington (which does not take account of the Debate) is as follows:-

- (i) You make a statement on Rhodesia (Annex C, paragraphs 1-7) at the CHGM as part of your statement on Southern Africa (to issue as PMVT(79) A3).
- (ii) You announce at a later stage of the CHGM our intention to summon a constitutional conference in early September (final paragraph of Annex C).
- (iii) Very soon after the CHGM we issue invitations to all parties to attend a constitutional conference. We simultaneously publish the outline proposals for an independence constitution set out at Annex A.
- (iv) Also very soon after the CHGM confidential discussions start with Bishop Muzorewa and Rhodesian leaders over possible detailed changes in the Constitution and Public Service Commissions (on the lines of Annex B).

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- (v) Early in September we hold the constitutional conference, attended by the Rhodesian Government and the Patriotic Front (or by the former alone if the latter have refused), and present detailed proposals for change in the Constitution and Public Service Commissions in which we would hope to have it (confidentially) agreed that Bishop Muzorewa would acquiesce.

4. This timetable seems sensible, though it will have to be kept under review in the light of developments. It does not however take account of what you might say in the Debate on 25th July. You will not want to take a significantly different line in the House to what you say in Lusaka: yet you will not want to damage your own negotiating hand by revealing too much prematurely - in particular you will presumably not want to spell out to the House the likely steps after Lusaka

5. At OD on 5th July you were concerned that our tactics should not rule out the fall-back position, if all else fails, of ending sanctions and granting legal independence to Rhodesia on the basis that even the present constitution had satisfied the Six Principles. The tactics now proposed in OD(79) 21 do not seem to rule out this course. In so far as they involve talking about a new British-imposed constitution and admission that the existing constitution goes too far in entrenching the rights of the minority (paragraph 4 of the statement at Annex C), they would provide a handle (which would be there anyway) to the opponents of recognition. On the other hand, anything less would be likely to lead us into almost total international isolation, with damaging consequences at the top end of the scale considered by the paper on our interests at risk (OD(79) 19). There seems also to be a reasonable chance that Bishop Muzorewa, in the light of his Washington and London visits, will accept, and persuade the whites to acquiesce in, the changes set out in Annex B, in return for the prize of British recognition. If so we would have a face-saver which could enable many African states to avoid a break with Britain which would be liable to be at least as expensive for them as for us. The big question is whether it will be sufficient to avoid drastic Nigerian action against our interests.

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HANDLING

6. You will wish to ask the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary to introduce his two papers.

7. Discussion of the background paper on the threat to our interests should be kept to a minimum. The paper does not adequately set out the range within which the damage we suffer may vary. But the plain fact is that no one knows. The only important points for the meeting are:-

- (i) that some damage is probably unavoidable;
- (ii) that worst-case damage, if our present policy fails, is likely to be extremely severe.

8. In discussion of the policy paper, you will wish to probe into how likely it in fact is that Bishop Muzorewa and a sufficient number of the whites can be brought to acquiesce in constitutional change. How great is the danger of our precipitating a mass white exodus? And how likely is Bishop Muzorewa himself to survive his present local difficulties?

9. If the Committee accept the main lines of the paper you may wish to go through each of the stages proposed (as in paragraph 3 above). In particular does the Committee accept the draft at Annex C for the statement(s) to be made at Lusaka? Does it accept Annex B as a basis thereafter for confidential discussions with the Rhodesians? Does it accept Annex A for the proposals we should publish at the time that all parties are invited to the constitutional conference? Should a further statement also be made to reassure the white minority as tentatively suggested in Lord Carrington's paragraph 4(b)? Or would that merely enable the Patriotic Front to denounce the conference as a sham?

10. This is probably as far as the Committee can take the matter now. But events will not stand still (cf. Mr. Fraser's unhelpful letters to President Kaunda, Mr. Clark and Mr. Muldoon); and you and the Foreign Secretary will need reasonable flexibility from your colleagues to play the hand in Lusaka within the general framework of this policy.

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11. You may wish to remind the Committee that if this strategy is to work it will be essential for all parties to preserve confidentiality on the detail of the changes we seek (Annex B) and on the discussions in Rhodesia.

CONCLUSION

12. Subject to the course of the discussion you may wish to guide the Committee:-

- (a) to take note of the dangers of damage to our interests (OD(79) 19);
- (b) to endorse the strategy and timetable proposed by the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary (OD(79) 21);
- (c) to note that Lord Carrington will report back to his colleagues for a decision on the details of the proposals we should table at the constitutional conference, in the light of events between now and then;
- (d) to invite Lord Carrington to report the Committee's conclusions orally at Cabinet on 26th July.

John Hunt

20th July, 1979