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PRIME MINISTER

Rhodesia

The Rhodesian elections which ended on 21st April pose the urgent question of how we should react to them and to the new Rhodesian Government which will be formed at the end of May under Bishop Muzorewa. Indeed much international attention will focus on the first indication which the new British Government gives of its intentions and this will need to be carefully considered. You will of course wish to obtain the early advice of the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and to discuss the matter with him and other senior colleagues: but here are my preliminary views.

2. There is now a new situation in Rhodesia. The main question is how best to take advantage of it in order to bring Rhodesia as rapidly as possible to independence without leaving behind a situation which would only be exploited by anti-Western elements.

3. The elections. You will wish to consider reports from Lord Boyd and from other non-official observers. Most comment so far indicates that the elections were well conducted. A number of criticisms have been made (under pressure to vote, plural voting, under-age voting, under-estimates of the total number of voters and so on). But the fact remains that a very large number of Africans did turn out happily to vote and the Patriotic Front, despite their previous threats, were unable to stop them doing so.

4. The problem, however, is that the election, and the establishment of a black government, are not of themselves going to bring the war to an end, nor to bring international recognition of the new government. On the contrary, the initial reaction of the African governments most immediately concerned is violently negative and the rest of Africa and the Third World are likely to follow this lead. Whatever we may say, our own friends and allies will not be easily persuaded to take a strong line against this tide. And of course the Security Council resolution of 30th April (on which we, the Americans and French abstained but did not veto) condemned the elections as null and void and called for continued non-recognition and sanctions.

*Not to be  
given to  
the  
other  
due to...*

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5. A lot of this reaction is of course emotional and the result of fixed attitudes, but it will not go quickly away and we cannot afford to disregard it without having regard to our other interests. There is moreover some substance in the contention that the election was held under conditions of martial law and with ZANU and ZAPU banned. It is also fair comment that the constitution, which was approved by a referendum of Whites only, contains a number of clauses which leave room for serious doubt as to whether real power will be exercised by representatives of the black majority.

?  
No

Tell me  
one of the  
countries  
is there  
which has  
one person  
one vote for  
4 different  
political parties  
no!

6. I think you will need therefore to handle the matter in a way which will be acceptable to those parts of the Conservative Party who would like to see early recognition and a lifting of sanctions, but which will at the same time avoid:-

- (i) very severe reactions in Black Africa (where we have increasingly large economic interests) - and from other Commonwealth governments; condemnation at the United Nations and a call for mandatory sanctions;
- (ii) the blame being laid at our door for disruption of plans for The Queen's State Visit to Lusaka and for the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting immediately thereafter (1st-8th August);
- (iii) danger of increased Soviet exploitation of black African nationalist frustration and of Zambia's acceptance of Cuban and Soviet aid and influence (despite Kaunda's reluctance and Zambia's recent heavy dependence on the southern route through Rhodesia and South Africa for its copper exports);
- (iv) the end of hopes for a negotiated independence for Namibia on the lines supported by the Five Powers (United States, United Kingdom, Germany, France and Canada) and by the United Nations (because SWAPO and the Front Line States would not co-operate and South Africa might feel free to proceed with an alternative internal settlement).

They will see the  
line with Zambia  
will still  
with the  
Rhodesia  
no!

They will do  
the disruption!

How much  
do we give  
to Zambia?

who have  
forever been  
their opponents

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*Agreed, but tel - here we  
no doubt, what's interest to do  
The only question is  
how to work out*

Precipitate action could risk all these without achieving the main objective. But that is an argument for playing the hand carefully rather than inaction.

7. A further important point is the close involvement of the Americans in a joint United Kingdom-United States Rhodesian policy hitherto. Once a new Rhodesian government is installed President Carter is required by the 'Case/Javits' amendment to decide whether it was chosen by free elections. The United States Administration will be anxious for early consultations on the line the British Government intends to pursue. Present indications are that they will acknowledge the progress made and the possibility of building on it but will not at this stage wish to recognise the new government. They will, however, face strong Congressional pressures to lift sanctions.

8. My own view is that we should seek to build on the undoubted advance which the Rhodesian elections represent. But the line between missing this opportunity on the one hand and causing great damage to our wider interests on the other (without necessarily gaining our aim of a stable democratic future for Rhodesia) is very narrow. It will need great care to find and tread it successfully. The first steps, after you have discussed the matter with the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and other senior colleagues, may be to make early contact with the new Rhodesian Government (and with the South Africans): to consult with the Americans and other allies: and to consider how best to play the cards we have in order to achieve adequate international support for the new regime and real progress towards ending the war. At home this would mean a cautious welcome to recent developments: an impression of being willing to seize the opportunity now present: but an avoidance of commitments until these consultations (particularly with the Americans) have taken place.

*( you we need care  
but a little longer  
in discussion )*

*JH*  
John Hunt

4th May 1979

*To  
Mr.*