

RECORD OF A MEETING BETWEEN THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS AND LEADERS OF THE PATRIOTIC FRONT ON FRIDAY, 14 DECEMBER AT THE FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

Those Present:

The Rt Hon The Lord Carrington
 Sir Ian Gilmour
 Mr G G H Walden
 Mr R W Renwick

Mr Joshua Nkomo
 Mr Robert Mugabe
 Mr Chambati

1. Lord Carrington said that since we were at the end of the Conference, it was time to look at what had been achieved. We now had genuine majority rule. The Patriotic Front had made concessions, eg over the 20 white seats; but the whites had too. During the transitional period, it would be a British Governor, and not the Bishop, who would rule the country, in an attempt to get really fair elections. He had known Lord Soames all his life. He was a fair-minded man, with great personality and presence. He hoped that the position on the ceasefire, which he had outlined three days ago, was satisfactory. It had been a serious attempt to allay the PF's fears about reciprocal withdrawal. He recognised that the outcome was not ideal for the PF, for Salisbury, or for us. Nobody should forget that we too had our problems. We were responsible for making the agreement work. But it could not work if the PF and Salisbury did not help us.

2. He knew that there were also fears about personal security, and he understood these. It was our job to ensure personal security, and he would personally make this clear to the Governor. The PF leaders could also bring some of the people protecting them in London to Rhodesia if they wished. On the assembly areas, he wished to make it clear that, if the PF forces assembled with their arms in numbers which posed difficulty in relation to the number and capacity of the assembly places allocated to PF forces, the Governor would have to make the necessary dispositions. We were now at the point of final agreement, and we must all decide whether or not to accept. We should not allow the killing to go on. He had noted incidentally that the Salisbury people were still talking of "terrorists". Now that the Governor was there he would ensure that this stopped. With the Governor's presence, an irreversible process had begun. We were worried by the prospect of further delay. The PF must make a decision one way or the other. He was therefore calling a meeting at Lancaster House tomorrow morning. They had all had 14 difficult weeks of negotiation. But we had come a long way. He had not expected to get so far when the negotiations had begun. There was only one final small jump to be taken. But there was a risk that, if it were not taken, everything could be lost. More people would then be killed.

3. The UK had shown great courage. The cowardly way out would have been to say on 3 May that there had already been elections, the five principles had been satisfied, and that Rhodesia could be given independence, even though the war might have continued and the

South Africans might have been drawn in. The position he had taken up had not been very popular in his own party. We had shown our courage in accepting responsibility for what happened in the interim period. If it went badly, everyone would turn against us, even our own friends.

4. Mr Nkomo asked whether we had already drawn up the list of election results? That seemed to be our manner of proceeding. Mr Mugabe said he hoped that Lord Carrington was aware of the PF's objections to our proposals on the disposition of the forces, and of the PF's own suggestions. Our positioning of the forces would not work, and was not acceptable. It would put the PF in an invidious position, in which the military balance would be tipped against them. The PF would have to defend itself in the last analysis, if the rebels attacked them again. Monitors would be no help; nor would the British, who were powerless. Why were the PF being moved from their operational areas to remote areas on the periphery of the country? They were being pushed away from the urban and industrial heartland of the country, leaving the field open to Rhodesian forces and Muzorewa's auxiliaries, who were already deployed amongst the people.

5. Mr Mugabe asked why we did not move Salisbury away from their operational areas. We had clearly agreed with Salisbury to concentrate the PF forces in 15 places. This was a non-starter. We clearly wanted to give maximum advantage to Muzorewa, and maximum disadvantage to the PF. Lord Carrington said that a ceasefire was to everyone's advantage. Mr Nkomo said that the PF completely accepted the principle of a ceasefire, and the idea of assembly. If the PF could not initial agreement tomorrow, they would explain the reasons to the world. They simply would not be placed where we and the Rhodesians wanted to put them. They had been told that they themselves had asked to be on the periphery of the country. He wanted to make it clear that this was not so.

6. Mr Renwick explained that our military reconnaissance teams had been concerned to achieve an effective separation of the forces. In choosing the places in question, they had taken account of the PF's operational areas and their concern not to be encircled. We were talking about an election campaign, and not a military one. The whole point was to enable the PF leaders to go to Salisbury and fight elections. Mr Nkomo said that the PF forces were being sent to forest areas and game reserves. Lord Carrington stressed that the PF's military commanders would be in Salisbury. Mr Mugabe said that the places we proposed suggested a surrender by the PF. Mr Mugabe asked why we did not say openly that we wanted the PF suppressed. Lord Carrington said that it would be misleading if he were to suggest that we could alter our proposals. Mr Mugabe said that this was because we had fixed things with Salisbury.

7. Mr Renwick said that both sides had difficulties. The Rhodesians were not keen on the PF being installed in Salisbury. Mr Mugabe said that we should monitor the PF in their bases, as with the Rhodesians. Lord Carrington said that the negotiations were over.

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There was nothing more to be said. We were at the end of the road. Mr Mugabe said that the PF were not at the end of their road. Lord Carrington said that the PF could do what they wished, but they must decide whether or not to initial the agreement tomorrow. There was no point in delay, and nothing more to be said.

8. Mr Mugabe said that he would never put his fighters in danger. Our Governor would be in charge of the Salisbury forces, and there would be war. Lord Carrington insisted that our proposals were fair. Mr Renwick said that the PF were not being asked to retreat, but to concentrate. In return they would get political advancement. Mr Nkomo said that he did not wish to be lectured about politics. The Lord Privy Seal stressed that the PF would be involved in a political campaign. Lord Carrington said he did not understand the PF's position, which seemed to assume that hostilities would erupt before or after the elections.

9. Mr Nkomo appealed to Lord Carrington not to call a meeting tomorrow. Lord Carrington said that if the PF did not come, that would amount to a rejection of the agreement. They should note that our proposals were considered fair, in New York and elsewhere. The PF should think deeply before rejecting them. The Lord Privy Seal said that rejection would be a tragedy. Mr Mugabe said that Lord Carrington had proceeded unfairly throughout the conference, and particularly by sending a Governor to Salisbury before agreement was reached. Lord Carrington said he was deeply disappointed with the PF's reply, which could lead to tragic consequences.

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