

A09544

PRIME MINISTER

Rhodesia
(OD(79) 3)

HANDLING

In his memorandum the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary outlines a proposed course of action designed to achieve the objective stated in paragraph 1 with the minimum damage to our wider interests, and suggests a line to take in Parliament. You may wish to ask Lord Carrington to introduce the subject. In the subsequent discussion I suggest that the following points should be covered.

2. The Rhodesian elections Lord Boyd's report is likely to provide a basis on which the Government can pursue the course of action Lord Carrington recommends. There will of course be reports by other international observers, some of which will be less favourable, and these will be used to support opposition to recognition both in Parliament and in the United Nations. This points to the advantage of early publication of the Boyd report. If the Committee agree in principle, the timing might be settled between Lord Carrington and yourself when the report is available.

3. Timing of recognition Lord Carrington argues the case for moving slowly. Presumably the Government will in any case need time to determine that all the Six Principles (Annex B to the memorandum) have been met and this will be one of the tasks for the proposed "senior figure" (paragraph 9). But is it possible that delay might weaken the confidence of Bishop Muzorewa's supporters and encourage the Patriotic Front, especially if there is no sign of the war ending and the guerillas continue to operate widely inside Rhodesia? The Australian observer considered that the morale of the Patriotic Front is low; we know that the presence and activities of Mr Nkomo's men are often a source of embarrassment to the Zambian Government. Must we assume that a cautious move towards early recognition would not be welcomed, even if this was not openly admitted? These points almost certainly do not outweigh the adverse effects of precipitate action (see Annex A). But they may make it possible - and desirable - to move faster and more boldly than is at present proposed.

4. Discussions with Mr Vance Given the very close co-operation between the previous Government and the United States Administration over the handling of the Rhodesian problem (on the basis of the Anglo-American proposals) during the past two years, it will be vital to establish how far and how fast the Americans are prepared to switch their attitude into line with the Government's policy. Although they discouraged Congressional observers from following the elections, a new approach may not be unwelcome. President Carter may in any case come under pressure for recognition through the Case-Javits Amendment (though you will see from the full text - attached - that not only "free elections" but also "willingness to negotiate at an all-parties conference" is required).

5. All-Parties Conference Any initiative for an all-parties conference would presumably have now to come from the new government in Salisbury. The main purpose would be to persuade the Patriotic Front leaders to participate in the political settlement. But since Mr Nkomo at least, and possibly also Mr Mugabe, would be seen by Bishop Muzorewa as a threat to his position, it seems unlikely that the latter would take such an initiative, especially as it would almost certainly have to be followed by further elections under international supervision. But a move of this kind might lead to a cease-fire and help to reconcile the other African Governments to recognition of the Salisbury government. Are contacts with Mr Nkomo and Mr Mugabe envisaged or not? If yes, what line is it proposed to take with them?

6. The CHOGM and Sanctions Time is short if we are to achieve a general move to international recognition in time to secure the withdrawal of the United Nations sanctions resolution before our Order in Council expires in November. Although it would be preferable to avoid any firm United Kingdom commitment to recognition until after the CHOGM, it may not prove practicable to hold the position until then. In any case we shall be pressed hard at the Conference and, if we are to avoid a breakdown, we shall surely need to have carried the process of softening-up the other Commonwealth Governments a good way by then.

7. Next steps You may wish to ask the Committee whether they agree with the objective and course of action proposed in paragraph 8, and invite Lord Carrington to explain what sort of programme he has in mind. As regards the practical steps in paragraphs 9 and 10, you may wish to invite comments. If they are generally accepted, Lord Carrington might be asked who he suggests should be the "senior figure" referred to in paragraph 9.

8. Debate in Parliament The line suggested in paragraph 11 is consistent with the policy proposals. Do the Committee agree with it? An additional point on which the Government are likely to be asked for their views is the Rhodesian constitution. The Opposition will argue that it is framed so as to ensure the maintenance of white control of all essential aspects of Government and that there has been no genuine transfer to the Black majority. Is Lord Carrington satisfied that this charge can be convincingly answered?

CONCLUSIONS

9. Subject to comments made in discussion, especially on the above points, the Committee might be asked to approve the general policy line proposed by the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary in paragraph 3 of his memorandum; the course of action outlined in paragraphs 8, 9 and 10; and the line to take in Parliament suggested in paragraph 11. You may wish to invite Lord Carrington to report to his colleagues on the outcome of his discussions with Mr Vance.

M.H.
PP

JOHN HUNT

11 May 1979