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DEFENCE AND OVERSEA POLICY COMMITTEE

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~~RHODESIA~~ : LORD HARLECH'S REPORT

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Note by the Secretary of State  
for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs

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1. I am circulating for the information of the Committee the attached copy of David Harlech's report on his consultations in Africa.

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

2 July 1979

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## RHODESIA : MOVING TOWARDS A SETTLEMENT

1. The purpose of the mission to Africa which I undertook from 11 to 22 June was to begin a process of consultation with African and other governments in order to promote the Government's stated objective for Rhodesia - a return to legality in conditions of the widest possible international recognition, and a de-escalation of the war.

2. In the course of this first round of visits, my task was to consult the "Front Line" Presidents (ie those of Tanzania, Zambia, Botswana, Mozambique and Angola), the Nigerian government and President Banda of Malawi in an attempt to establish :-

- (a) to what extent they were prepared to accept that fundamental political change has taken place in Rhodesia, and
- (b) what prospect there was of their supporting or at least acquiescing in a settlement of the Rhodesian question which is based on that political change or on some further development of it.

I also met leaders of the external Rhodesian nationalist parties (ZAFU and ZANU) in order to hear their own views on recent developments in Rhodesia and to gauge the prospects for their joining in some wider agreement which would take those developments as its starting point. A summary of my telegraphic reports on these meetings is annexed.

3. In explaining the government's objective and my mission to those I met, I generally sought to make the following points :-

- (a) Successive British governments, including the present government, have been committed to bringing Rhodesia to legal independence on the  
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- basis of the six principles.
- (b) Political change has taken place in Rhodesia on lines which in the Government's view can be argued to satisfy to a very large extent those principles. It is not alone in welcoming this change (I cited the views of President Carter and President Moi as instances of this). But it is also aware that the change has been criticised as not going far enough.
- (c) The government has genuinely not made up its mind about the next steps to be taken towards achieving its objective and wishes to consult other governments before deciding. There is thus no question of merely "playing for time", until, say, after the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting.
- (d) The British and American governments take a similar view of what has happened in Rhodesia and we agree with them that Bishop Muzorewa's government should not be recognised or sanctions lifted at this time.
4. My aim then was to try to initiate as soon as possible a discussion of the ways by which the Government might move towards its objective. At no point did I suggest that the Government was itself trying to establish further conditions which Rhodesia would have to satisfy before independence could be granted. My concern was rather to try to draw out from those I met a statement of what might have to be done, even as a mere matter of form, to carry them with us in pursuing the Government's objective.
5. It was obvious that not one of the governments whose leaders I met would give us even tacit support if we granted Rhodesia independence on the basis of the status quo. There was a unanimous view that, whatever the content of an eventual /settlement

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settlement, in form it must be seen to be British and not merely the legalisation after the event of a solution which Britain, the colonial power, has played no part in working out. Going on from there, however, the course of my discussions showed that there were two broad areas of concern to almost everyone I met :-

- (a) the present constitution and power structure of Zimbabwe Rhodesia, and
- (b) the need for some further step which would either bring about a wider agreement among the parties or settle in some other satisfactory way their conflicting claims to have the support of the people.

#### The Constitution

6. Under this heading I am including everything which relates to the status quo in Rhodesia. There are several features of this about which almost everyone I met expressed serious misgivings once we had embarked on a discussion of the options which seemed to be open to HMG.
7. In the first place, it is clear to me that there can be little hope of gaining wider acceptance of a Rhodesian government which includes Mr Ian Smith. He is universally distrusted and regarded as a symbol of white domination. It is true that some regard his personal position as less important than what they see as the disproportionate powers given to whites as a group under the new constitution (which I discuss later). Others (like President Nyerere) would be prepared in theory to see him play a role if he were elected as part of what they would regard ~~as part of what they would regard~~ as a genuine democratic process. But so long as he remains in office on present terms even the most moderate African states will maintain a reserved attitude to Bishop Muzorewa, and the Patriotic Front
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will have a major propaganda advantage. It seems essential to the Government's objective that he should first leave government, and, if possible, political life as a whole, for good.

8. Everyone I spoke to also expressed concern about certain features of the constitution itself. I do not believe we should encounter serious opposition in the Commonwealth to the idea of at least temporary special representation for the whites in Parliament or even in Government. There are many precedents for this in other constitutions which we have granted at independence. What does encounter strong resistance is the power given to the whites at present to block constitutional changes on their own.

9. There is also much concern about the need to affirm government control over the armed forces and the police, and about the powers of the white-dominated commissions controlling senior appointments in the armed forces, police, judiciary and civil service. The Government's hand would in my view be strengthened if we could secure some modification of these provisions of the constitution. Alternatively, or in addition, the Rhodesians might modify or balance their effect by some extra-constitutional commitment to an effective policy of Africanisation.

#### Acceptability

10. It was repeatedly put to me that the new constitution had never been submitted to a test of its acceptability to the black electorate and that the election could not be interpreted as such a test. If we ourselves, or some other impartial authority, were to carry out such a test of the constitution, preferably amended in the respects which have attracted most criticism and presented as a British proposal, this would carry much weight. Such a test would in present conditions probably have to take the form of a properly conducted referendum or  
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election on the basis of an electoral roll if it were to carry conviction. A commission of enquiry would probably not be enough, despite the precedent of the Pearce Commission which is regarded as having been impartial. However if it had reached an opposite conclusion I expect it would have had a very different reputation.

11. This question is, however, almost inextricably linked with that of a possible wider agreement between Bishop Muzorewa and the external parties. As President Myerere pointed out to me, we have not found tests of acceptability a necessary preliminary to independence in the case of other colonies where a constitution has been drafted at a conference of all the parties concerned and with their general approval. There is probably not the slightest chance that a meeting of all the Rhodesian parties now would produce agreement on an independence constitution - though if it did, that would clearly eliminate the need for a separate test of acceptability and we could go straight for an election on the basis of the new constitution as the preliminary to independence. But to convene such a conference might be a necessary step towards proposing a constitution acceptable to us and the Salisbury parties, while at the same time exposing the intransigence of the Patriotic Front. A subsequent test of acceptability might be desirable in that case in order to weaken Front Line support for the Patriotic Front still further and to demonstrate that Bishop Muzorewa was adopting a reasonable attitude. But it must be at least doubtful whether a test of acceptability would carry conviction unless we had gone through the preliminary of a conference (or at any rate an attempt to convene a conference). African governments are great believers in precedent. A positive test of acceptability would in any case still have to be followed by new elections in which either all parties took part, or those who did not could be seen to have excluded themselves on unreasonable grounds.

12. My consultations during this round suggested that

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any idea of establishing a Commonwealth or African "contact group" to explore the possibility of agreement between the two sides would arouse little enthusiasm. It would suggest a parallel with Namibia which most would find unacceptable, and would be criticised as an attempt to evade our duty as the colonial power. I have also found it difficult to imagine a composition for such a "contact group" which would be acceptable to all parties and at the same time even remotely sensible.

13. Nor did I find much interest in the concept of a temporary return to legal dependent status as a preliminary to legal independence ( I prefer "return to legal dependent status" to "return to legality" because Rhodesia would also, in a sense, "return to legality" if we granted legal independence). We should not dismiss this idea ourselves if it seems at a later stage to offer a way of lifting sanctions without more extensive damage to our interests. But we cannot expect it to seem more relevant to others until we have advanced much closer towards a means of achieving our overall objective. If we do decide to adopt this device, it will clearly have to be on fairly stringent conditions. We could not, for example, afford to contemplate a situation in which a legally recognised dependent government in Rhodesia was carrying out attacks on Mozambican or Zambian territory for which we would be held responsible.

#### Conclusion

14. In the broadest terms my conclusion is that we need not despair of an internationally acceptable solution which would take as its de facto starting point the present settlement in Rhodesia. But :-

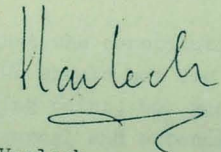
- (a) Such a solution would have to be recognisably British, not Rhodesian, in its terms;
- (b) It would have to include some amendment of the status quo, including the departure of Mr Smith and elimination of the white veto in parliament; and
- (c)

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- (c) There would have to be some means of neutralising the claims of the Patriotic Front through an attempted negotiation, a test of acceptability, a new election or some combination of two or three of these devices.

15. At an early stage I think it would be useful if I could discuss my findings so far with the Americans and also explore the present areas of difficulty with Bishop Muzorewa and, possible, the South Africans. But before doing so, I would need to know at least in broad outline how we now intended to proceed. It could also be that at some time in the future I should have further consultations with at least some of the Front Line Presidents, but much will depend on how things go at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in August.



25 June 1979

Harlech

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LORD HARLECH'S MISSION

1. President Seretse Khama argued that the UK should take decisive action soon to exploit weaknesses in the present positions of both Bishop Muzorewa and the Patriotic Front. The latter would not take part in any negotiation initiated by Muzorewa. A British initiative would confirm our good intentions and expose intransigence by one side or the other. Negotiations might initially be conducted through a Western or Commonwealth contact group. Bishop Muzorewa could help by removing the special privileges of whites and their powers of veto over constitutional amendments. If constitutional changes were achieved with British authority and approved by the people, and fair elections held, Botswana would accept the outcome. A test of acceptability could be conducted under UN or purely British auspices.
2. President Kaunda considered that the constitutional position was the central issue. We should not use the existing Constitution as the starting point, but should put new constitutional proposals to the internal and external parties. He did not rule out a Commonwealth contact group.
3. President Nyerere said that there had been an advance in Rhodesia, but it had not gone far enough. There was not genuine majority rule. But discussion now had to be on the basis of the internal constitution. There could be some special protection for minorities, but they should not have the power of veto. The improvement of the Constitution was more important than the removal of Ian Smith. But an improved Constitution and a test of acceptability would not be sufficient. There should be fresh elections. The Patriotic Front might negotiate on the basis of constitutional proposals put forward by the UK.
4. President Banda said that the elections had produced a

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more hopeful situation, but recognition by the UK on the basis of the internal settlement would attract little support. The first priority was the removal of Smith and the second the amendment of the Constitution: the whites had too many reserved seats and too extensive veto powers. We should put forward our own proposals and not accept terms from Muzorewa.

5. The Mozambican Foreign Minister argued that the Rhodesian elections were null and void. The UK had to decide whether it wanted a confrontation or conciliation with the Patriotic Front. A clear statement of position by the UK and the US would be necessary to bring the Patriotic Front to talks. The UK should either reassert its authority in Rhodesia or support the war of liberation. There should be no question of acting as an intermediary between the two sides.

6. President Neto expressed appreciation of our consultations. He agreed that Bishop Muzorewa was an important factor; but he was a prisoner of the Rhodesian system. The solution was new elections, in which all parties could participate. But they could not be held under the control of the existing security forces.

7. Mr Mugabe and the ZANU delegation argued that for an effective transfer of power, the illegal regime should be dismantled and its forces replaced by the Patriotic Front. The British Government could not act as a referee between Muzorewa and the Patriotic Front, or work on the basis of the present Constitution. We should put forward our own proposals. Agreement must be reached on the independence constitution before discussion of a ceasefire and transitional arrangements. Muzorewa's following would not be significant if he competed in an election with the Patriotic Front.

8. The ZAPU delegation in Lusaka argued that the elections had not resulted in a real transfer of power. New elections should be held, under conditions acceptable to the Patriotic Front.

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9. The Nigerian Government expressed the same concern as others that a return to legality should come on a basis which derived its authority from Britain and was comparable with the process of decolonisation elsewhere in Africa. General Yar'Adua suggested that it would be helpful in the context of the OAU meetings and CHOGM for HMG to make a statement clarifying its intentions and confirming that no decision had been taken to legalise Rhodesian independence on the basis of the status quo.

Rhodesia Department  
25 June 1979

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