

NOTE OF A MEETING BETWEEN THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE PRIME MINISTER OF AUSTRALIA HELD IN HORIZON HOUSE, LUSAKA, AT 1045 ON SATURDAY 4 AUGUST 1979

Present

The Prime Minister

Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary

Mr. C.A. Whitmore

The Rt. Hon. Malcolm Fraser

The Hon. Andrew Peacock

Mr. A.D. Campbell

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The Prime Minister said that there was likely to be pressure put on her at the meeting of the Commonwealth Heads of Government later that morning to go into more details about British plans for Rhodesia than she had done in her statement to the Lusaka Conference the previous day. To do so would make the task for the British Government at home much more difficult, for it would appear to the public that we had given in to African coercion. None the less, the fact was that the British Government had to move much much faster than was generally realised. It was essential that something had been achieved by the time of the Conservative Party Conference which would be held in early October. We had already done some work on the Rhodesian constitution, and we expected to have contacts with all the parties by the beginning of September. This was an indication of how rapidly we now had to move. She was, however, concerned that the Patriotic Front might step up its military action during the next few weeks in order to bring pressure to bear on the British Government.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary said that British public opinion was one problem. A second was to avoid arousing suspicions in Salisbury about the British Government's plans to a point where there was a refusal to contemplate the amendment of the constitution. So far, Bishop Muzorewa had managed to hold the line but the mistrust of the whites for what we were doing could easily be aroused.

Mr. Fraser said that when he and President Nyerere had met earlier that day, the President had said that he saw no problem about Bishop Muzorewa participating in the new elections which would be required following agreement on in the new constitution as the Prime Minister of Rhodesia. President Nyerere appeared anxious to marshal as many

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arguments as possible to persuade the Patriotic Front to participate in the process of trying to reach agreement upon a new constitution. At the same time he seemed to want to be able to maximise the isolation of the Patriotic Front if they refused to take part in the talks. President Nyerere was focussing on what would happen during the period between agreement upon the constitution and the holding of fresh elections and he seemed to visualise some form of transitional government. His main concern was that there should clearly be a manifestation of British authority during this transitional period, although he did not seem to rule out the possibility that this would have to be done using the fabric of the existing administration in Rhodesia.

The Prime Minister agreed that the Patriotic Front would be wrong-footed if they were invited to attend talks on the constitution and they refused to attend. As regards transitional arrangements, there was bound to be a gap between reaching agreement on the constitution and holding elections. We would have to discuss with the parties participating in the talks what arrangements should be made for the interim period. It was not for Britain to dictate now what should be done: it had to be remembered that Rhodesia had been self-governing since 1923.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary said that it was important that we did not get drawn into discussion about transitional arrangements now. If this happened, it would give those we wanted to participate in the talks on the constitution an excuse for not attending. We had to give complete priority now to trying to reach agreement upon the constitution. Once that had been achieved, it should not be so difficult to decide upon transitional arrangements. Indeed, if the area of discussion at the constitutional conference was to be extended now to include transitional arrangements, there might be a suspicion that Britain did not want to reach agreement.

Mr. Fraser said that he did not believe that President Nyerere would want to go into the details of the transitional arrangements. His only concern was likely to be that all should agree that it would be necessary for British authority, in some form, to be exercised during the interim period.

/The Prime Minister

The Prime Minister said that there was a very real risk that if attempts were made to pin us down on the transitional arrangements, the constitutional conference would fail and the opportunity to solve the Rhodesia problem would then be lost. The only winners would, in the long run, be the Soviet Union. One of the British Government's difficulties was that even now, despite her speech the previous day, some countries - and in particular Nigeria - believed that Britain was pursuing the course which had been advocated by Mr. Julian Amery. His argument was that Rhodesia had become illegal because the six principles had not been satisfied. But he maintained that all the principles had now been fulfilled, including the fifth. Lord Boyd and Lord Home had also taken the view that, as a result of the April elections, the fifth principle had been met. Mr. Amery argued that both morally and in fact the basis of illegality had disappeared and the necessary legal steps should now be taken to restore legality and to recognise Bishop Muzorewa's government. Given that the April elections had been based on one man, one vote, and had had a 65 per cent turn-out, there was undoubtedly considerable substance in the view that the fifth principle had been fulfilled and that to restore legality would be the honourable course to take. But the British Government had deliberately not made a judgement about whether the fifth principle had been satisfied because to take the view that it had been fulfilled on the basis of the April elections would not be enough to carry other countries with us, and for this reason the British Government was seeking another way forward. This required us to make constitutional proposals which dealt with the two problems of the blocking mechanism and the Public Service Commissions in the present Rhodesian constitution. There was in fact nothing in that constitution which prevented the Rhodesians from removing its defects. The votes of only six white members of the Rhodesian Parliament were needed to allow Bishop Muzorewa to make the necessary amendments, and it should not be difficult for him to gain such support.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary said that a new factor in the situation was that the Front Line Presidents now recognised that they had got too far out on a limb in their support for the Patriotic Front and they were now trying to distance themselves from Mr. Nkomo and Mr. Mugabe.

/Mr. Fraser

Mr. Fraser said that the Front Line Presidents had political problems of their own and it would be difficult for them to distance themselves from the Patriotic Front. They would need sound and convincing arguments which they could use to justify this course.

The Prime Minister said that Britain's critics were taking an internally inconsistent line. They said that the United Kingdom should give Rhodesia a new constitution. But at the same time they were trying to fetter the United Kingdom in the exercise of its responsibility by, for example, raising the question of the transitional arrangements. There was no need for them to attempt to establish Britain's responsibility by going into the transitional arrangements now. The responsibility was already ours, and they could not fetter it. But what they could do was to abort our exercise of it.

Mr. Fraser said that he agreed that the right approach was to concentrate on reaching agreement on the constitution and only thereafter to work out the transitional arrangements with all the parties. All President Nyerere was seeking to do was to establish that technically Britain was the constitutional authority in Rhodesia in the interim period between reaching agreement on the constitution and holding the elections. President Nyerere was also likely to want a reference to free and fair elections in the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting communique. There was also something to be said for mentioning sanctions and recognition in the communique: it might, for example, be desirable to say that at a certain point sanctions would be lifted and recognition given.

The Prime Minister said that if we had too much in the communique, we might well defeat the cause which we were desperate to see succeed. The communique should not describe future elections as free and fair, since many people already felt that the April elections deserved that description. Moreover, she could not agree with Mr. Fraser's proposal that the communique should contain a reference to sanctions and recognition in the terms he had suggested. To include a reference on those lines would enable the Patriotic Front to see that we never reached the point at which sanctions could be lifted and recognition given. We did not want a communique that would embarrass us in the negotiations on the constitution. Ideally, the communique should say only that efforts would be made to reach agreement on the constitution.

JWS.