

October 20, 1979

**Meeting between South African Prime Minister
Botha and a Zimbabwe/Rhodesian Delegation led by
Deputy Prime Minister**

Citation:

"Meeting between South African Prime Minister Botha and a Zimbabwe/Rhodesian Delegation led by Deputy Prime Minister", October 20, 1979, Wilson Center Digital Archive, South African Archives, Department of Foreign Affairs, BTS 1/156/3. Included in "Southern Africa in the Cold War, Post-1974," edited by Sue Onslow and Anna-Mart Van Wyk. <https://digitalarchive.umd.edu/document/118551>

Summary:

Discussion of potential South African aid to Zimbabwe/Rhodesia to finance the fight against Marxists, in addition to the need by Z/R to have the sanctions currently levied against them lifted.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from Leon Levy Foundation

Original Language:

English

Contents:

Transcript - English

SADFA BTS 1/156/3

Top Secret

Meeting held at Libertas on Saturday 20 October 1979 at 1400 hours between the Hon Prime Minister and a Zimbabwe/Rhodesian delegation led by the Hon the Deputy Prime Minister

Present

South Africa

The Prime Minister, PW Botha

Min FA, RF Botha

Chief of the Defence Force, General M Malan

General van Deventer, NSC

Mr P R Killen, Foreign Affairs

Mr V R Steward, Foreign Affairs

Z/R

Dept PM, Dr the Hon S C Mundawarara

Min of Finance, Hon David Smith

Commander in Chief, General Walls

Secretary for Finance, Mr David Young

Dr Mundawarara extended

Dr Mundawarara extended greeting from his PM, whom he was representing... Thanked SA for all assistance which had been given and which was still being given by SA to ZR. It was much appreciated.

The struggle was by no means all over. On the contrary, the most difficult time of all lay immediately ahead. Z/R had been fighting the Marxists with weapons. The time might be breaking when the Marxists would have to be fought through the ballot box as well. It was essential to beat them and for this purpose he was not inhibited from asking assistance.

The terrorists had recently commenced massive infiltration into the villages, aimed at influencing the elections their way. Whether they (the terrorists) were to decide to participate or to decide against participation, the infiltrators would serve their purpose. The Z/R's biggest asset in this kind of warfare is the auxiliary force. There are presently 9800. Another 16,000 (making about 26,000) are required.

PM Muzorewa specifically requested that this matter be brought to SA's attention.

..

PM: thanked Dr Mundawarara.... noted that SA's assistance was appreciated...

If the Z/R delegation was satisfied with the developments in London, it was not for SA to query the progress. What was, however, vital for SA was know that if SA rendered assistance, that assistance would help to attain the objectives to which both parties subscribed.

He had to take SA along with him, and this he could only do by convincing the people that the support given would contribute to preserving stability in Southern Africa. The vast development needs of South Africa had a competing claim on SA's resources.

Dr Mundawarara:

Up to the present time the London talks were proceeding on course. He could not say what might happen in the next few weeks,

David Smith

There was a time in the life of every individual when he had to stand up and be counted, and he had had to make his choices in London, putting his political career at risk. There had been two fundamental motivations for his decision;

- i. the best interests of his own country as he saw them
- ii. the greater horizons opening in regard to the vision of southern African complex.

In regard to the latter aspect, it was the Observatory meeting that had opened his eyes to the possibilities. He had however, two conditions

- i. the lifting of sanctions
- ii. international recognition.

... if PM Muzorewa returned empty-handed from London there was no doubt in his mind there would be massive white emigration from Z/R. The problem was uncertainty... the time had come to act decisively.... Any future constitution would undoubtedly be worse. They had to get the best possible deal now....

There was complete mistrust on both sides to the extent they were not prepared to say precisely what their problems were. They had, however, managed to keep going through informal contacts. Not all discussions had been conducted with the full delegation but with different groups.

He had no doubt about their ability, with SA assistance, to put his government back into power. But there would have to be a quick snap election. .. The fact that the PF wanted the election in two years was sufficient to persuade him against waiting.

His priorities were to fight the war and defeat Marxism. Others might have different priorities, but he had coordinated this attitude with Prime Minister Muzorewa, who agreed with his priorities. With or without SA support, they would have to continue fighting the war. But they required finance on a large scale. They were short of \$100m in balancing their previous budget alone. The "crunch" could be expected within a month. The previous discussions with SA had focussed on an amount of \$300m and had resulted in SA promising to make available \$200 m which, however, left a balance of \$100 m outstanding. They needed the \$100 m before they could even begin to talk of implementing a second phase. Then they had a further requirement of \$70m for an extra 16000 auxiliaries. The PM was emphatic on the need for a total of 26,000 auxiliaries (SFA's). He himself saw merit in the PM's idea.

There was a need for more men on the ground. One must "meet bushmen with bushmen".

PM Muzorewa had been humiliated into having to accept a second election in the interest in the southern African vision and of getting the British out of the system. The risks were worth taking. Now was the best chance because thirty-nine

Commonwealth Countries, the EEC and the USA have supported Mrs Thatcher's plan, on the basis of acceptance of the Lusaka Declaration. With sanctions removed and international recognition they could fight the war, on the understanding they could be getting the necessary equipment elsewhere.

Although they needed \$170m the economy was still strong. They could service the \$100m although they did not feel they should be called upon to service the \$70m as it was viewed as being for southern Africa.

In his opinion, Minister RF Botha's visit to London had been a great breakthrough. The timing of the visit was perfect and the Minister had never been more effective. It was now the twelfth hour. The Civil Service and security forces were solidly behind his concept.

He and Young were returning to Salisbury later in the day and then to London on Tuesday next. General Walls was returning to Salisbury the next day. He and Young could come back later to discuss details either on Tuesday or later on the way back to London. But they needed something quite categorical in the next few days...

General Walls

The political decision had been taken in London. From the security point of view an opportunity had now arrived which could not be missed. There was a way ahead with risk but the risk was worth taking. In his view it was worth taking. There was no viable alternative because of the economic situation and white uncertainties. Historically, he and his colleagues did not trust the British. However, there was now a better basis of trust than before and the British had asked the Z/Rs to trust them this time. They had been friendly and constructed. In fact they had put their trust in Z/Rs, even put themselves in the hands of the Z/Rs; certainly in Bishop Muzorewa's hands. This had been indicated in many ways. They had stated clearly that they wanted Z/R to be an anti-Marxist state with a moderate, Bishop Muzorewa, in charge and the Patriotic Front out. In fact they wanted to be in collusion with the Z/Rs in maintaining security.

He felt that there was an opportunity now and that they must go for it as soon as possible.

The British would like SA to continue its help to Z/R and even to increase it.

PM

Asked the auxiliaries planned could be trained in the time available.

General Walls

Replied that 6000 could be recruit within two weeks. When their training commenced, recruiting of another 6000 could begin, so that training of the two intakes could overlap. The training period, based on the present auxiliaries, was four weeks, so that 12000 could be trained within 10 weeks. However it was possible that the process could be speeded up...

PM

Although his FM had returned from London only the same morning, he had already reported to him on developments in London which he, the PM found most interesting. He had no objection in principle to helping the Z/Rs again. He would go out of his way

to convince the Cabinet accordingly. However, there were certain points that he had to stress:

Firstly, he was perturbed about the possible situation that might arise if PM Muzorewa were to be isolated from the security forces. SA needed to have access and to be in co-ordinated communication with both of them.

Secondly, he would have to take his country with him. To do so he would have to make out a strong case for increased support. He would have to consult the other parties. He would therefore need the facts from the Z/Rs, in detailed discussions.

Thirdly, it was vital that sanctions be lifted. If sanctions were lifted ZR could start rebuilding and redevelopment. This was essential for the evolution of the southern African concept, as the two strong countries in the region were SA and ZR. Without the participation of ZR, SA would have to carry the full burden on her own shoulders. International recognition could however wait.

Finally he was not prepared to be "dropped" as we had been dropped by the Americans in Angola.

General Walls

The lifting of sanctions will be the first step. If ZR is not happy with the Muzorewa-Security Forces relationship, the British will accept their objections. A "slide over" of control was envisaged and the British Governor would not intervene in the day to day management of security operations. He had received a secret protocol in regard to military cooperation, but this information should be regarded as highly sensitive. A return to legitimacy was an essential pre-requisite to the lifting of sanctions for there to be any advantage to Rhodesia. This would ensure international support, without which the lifting of sanctions would be meaningless.

PM

We would not be so worried if we knew that the British would not "chase us out" of ZR and shift the blame on to us in the United Nations, as happened in regard to Angola. We needed assurances.

Dr Mundawarara

At this stage we must accept their assurances.

Mr Smith

Believed that the British Government were sincere for the first time. They were obliged to go through with their policy for otherwise the British public would turn against them. The British say that they cannot disclose all their plans to all the members of the Z/R delegation and vice versa. They had extracted many concessions from the British in private talks, for example the reinstatement of the 10 tribal chiefs in the Senate, which meant that the Chiefs, with the headmen below them and their supporters, were now "with" Bishop Muzorewa. If the British were to come out openly, however, it would rebound against them.