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Brief Report No. 23

## BRITISH POLICY TOWARDS SOUTHERN AFRICA:

### LORD CARRINGTON'S UNITED NATIONS SPEECH

On 25 September, 1979, the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Lord Carrington, spoke in the General Debate on world affairs at the current session of the U.N. General Assembly. In his introduction he welcomed the admission of Saint Lucia, a former British territory, as the 152nd member of the U.N. and he referred to Britain's record of decolonisation. He then indicated that, after the "dismantling of the British Empire", two new institutions had become very important for Britain: the European Community and the Commonwealth. He said that the latter was sometimes referred to as "a talking shop". He continued: "If you are looking for an example of how valuable a talking shop can be, you need go no further than the Commonwealth meeting in Lusaka two months ago. Talk there led first to greater understanding between the countries concerned and then to action to try to solve the problems of Rhodesia."

### Zimbabwe Rhodesia

Lord Carrington maintained that, during the fourteen years of the Rhodesian dispute, Britain had not abandoned its responsibilities, and the approach of the present British Government was based on "a determination to fulfil our responsibility towards the people of Rhodesia". When his Government had come to power in May 1979, it had been confronted with a new situation. "The reality of change for the better had been symbolised in the elections which had taken place in April this year on the basis of one man and one vote. These elections have had many critics. But the plain fact is that they have led to the emergence of a Parliament and an Administration, most of whose members belong to the majority community, and which is led by a member of that community. This represented a substantial step forward towards the abandonment by the white community of their privileged position. My Government was determined to build on that important step forward, so as to make a further effort to bring Rhodesia to legal independence in a context of wide international recognition and acceptance."

However, as the Patriotic Front did not participate in the April elections, the war continued, and the constitution under which the elections took place "was marred by certain deficiencies". The elections could not be dismissed, but there was a need for action to exploit the opportunity which had been created to achieve an internationally acceptable settlement, and put an end to the war.

In proceeding to build a "solid foundation for negotiation", the British Government engaged in an extensive series of consultations with all the parties concerned with the conflict, in order to identify the elements for a solution, and in this regard Lord Carrington mentioned the leaders of the Commonwealth, of the Frontline States, of the Patriotic Front and of the Salisbury parties. The views of "other friends and allies" were also taken into account. Two conclusions emerged from these consultations : Firstly, a general recognition of the extent of changes in Rhodesia, despite the shortcomings of the constitution; and, secondly, the unanimous conviction that there should be a further attempt to involve all the parties to the conflict in trying to find a solution, and that any solution should emanate from Britain as the responsible power.

The next stage was the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Lusaka (Aug.), where the foundation of the present approach was laid. The British proposals for a settlement were discussed and endorsed "by a very important cross-section of the world community, including three of the Frontline states". Lord Carrington said that "the essence of the Lusaka agreement on Rhodesia was the acceptance by the Commonwealth of the British Government's constitutional responsibility to grant legal independence to Rhodesia on the basis of genuine majority rule".<sup>+</sup>

In the subsequent negotiations with the Salisbury parties and the Patriotic Front, the British had been guided by the principles defined at Lusaka, with the first task being to seek agreement on an independence constitution comparable with the constitutions on which Britain had granted independence to other former British dependent territories. The special historical circumstances of Rhodesia made such a task very difficult, and compromise on both sides was essential. Lord Carrington said that Britain had already secured from the Salisbury parties agreement in principle to proposals on the constitution, and he felt that this was "a bold decision

<sup>+</sup>Note: This agreement, drafted by the leaders of 6 Commonwealth States (Britain, Tanzania, Zambia, Nigeria, Australia and Jamaica) and then endorsed by all 41 members, included provisions for Britain to draft a constitution (to replace the internal settlement constitution); to convene a conference which the Muzorewa Government and the Patriotic Front would attend as equal parties; to obtain a cease-fire and arrange for its monitoring; to supervise new elections; and then to grant legal independence, with the support of all Commonwealth countries.

by Bishop Muzorewa's delegation". Significant progress on certain points had also been made in discussions with the leaders of the Patriotic Front.

Lord Carrington maintained that "a heavy responsibility will lie on any who fail to respond to this opportunity to achieve for the people of Rhodesia a settlement which will bring international acceptance and an end to the war". Very difficult negotiations still lay ahead, and he did not underestimate the difficulties still to be overcome, but he hoped that it would not be too long before the British Government and Parliament would be able to grant legal independence to Rhodesia on the basis of genuine majority rule, and that an independent Zimbabwe would then be welcomed to the General Assembly as a full member of the U.N.

#### Namibia

In a fairly brief reference to the Namibian dispute, Lord Carrington commented that Namibia was "another territory where we must try to find an internationally acceptable solution through free and fair elections and not through bloodshed". He said that the Western Five, in close co-operation with the U.N. Secretary General, were continuing with the search for a solution to enable UNTAG to arrive in Namibia, and discussions were now concentrated on detailed arrangements, to be worked out with the parties concerned, for a demilitarised zone. "The idea of such a zone was proposed by the late President Neto, whose death we all deeply mourn. Our aim is to achieve early and complete agreement so that a date can be fixed for a ceasefire and the beginning of the transition to independence. Given goodwill and flexibility on the part of all concerned this goal should not be beyond our reach."

#### South Africa

The following brief but significant paragraph dealt with South Africa:

"Namibia and Zimbabwe Rhodesia are the immediate issues in Southern Africa. But in the longer term it is on South Africa that the stability of this troubled region will depend. We share the international community's distaste of apartheid. It is neither just nor is it workable. But will threats and isolation bring about the changes we all wish to see? We in the British Government doubt it. We believe that the better course is to accept that the Republic's plural society gives rise to unprecedented problems and to offer our help to the leaders of all races to work together to find just solutions. In this way we can all contribute towards peaceful change in South Africa. Otherwise the future promises only violence and misery for all the people of South Africa, whatever their race."

#### Other World Issues

Lord Carrington's address to the General Assembly also dealt with the

Middle East (welcoming the process begun at Camp David and also advocating recognition of "the legitimate political rights of the Palestinians"), Indo-China ("another area of dangerous tensions"), the East/West division (regarding which he welcomed the second agreement on Strategic Arms Limitation between the United States and the Soviet Union, but expressed serious concern about the "scale of the Warsaw Pact's military build-up" which could adversely affect détente), nuclear weapons control (expressing regret that the 1968 non-proliferation treaty had not won universal adherence, and referring to the negotiation of a comprehensive test ban treaty between the United States, the Soviet Union and the United Kingdom), the world economic situation (described as "grim"), energy (on which he appealed for a reduction in the consumption of oil), and the North/South dialogue (warning against "the dangers of rhetoric" and the creation of new bodies in the field of international economic relations, and advocating instead, as the first step, a substantial improvement of the world economy through increased production, without which resources could not be transferred from rich to poor through increased aid, trade and investment.

Summary compiled by  
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