

**December 27, 1977**

**Memorandum, 'Visit to Head Office, Mr. David  
Richardson, Liaison with the Rhodesian African  
National Council'**

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**Summary:**

Richardson describes a visit to Rhodesia and meeting with Bishop Muzurewa. Describes tribal factors that influence alliance formation among opposition groups in Rhodesia.

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MEMORANDUM. 27 December 1977.

THE CONSUL-GENERAL, NEW YORK.

VISIT TO HEAD OFFICE : MR. DAVID RICHARDSON : LIAISON WITH RHODESIAN AFRICAN NATIONAL COUNCIL

My memorandum 8/3 of 28 October 1977 and your letter to the Secretary in this connection bear reference.

Mr. and Mrs. Richardson returned shortly before the Christmas week-end from their visit to Africa and South America. During the week-end, while they were guests at our house, Mr. Richardson told me the following:

Their visit to Africa went very well. In Rhodesia they had discussions with Bishop Muzurewa and his people. On this occasion he was told that they have abandoned the idea of forming an alliance with N'Komo in favour of a new idea to obtain co-operation with Mugabe. Briefly some of the most important reasons for this change of strategy are the following:

Old moot points between Muzurewa and N'Komo have already begun to take on a certain degree of unbridgeable bitterness.

It appears clearly that their different tribal backgrounds are a strong factor. (Muzurewa is Mashona and N'Komo is N'Dbele/Matabele). The N'Dbeles are suspected of wanting to establish "a new minority government". (They form only about 10% of the population).

Early in the race for leadership N'Komo had already obtained the support of Tiny Roland of Lonrho company, probably with the understanding that the latter would receive considerable advantages from the N'Komo Government. On the one hand this position is morally unacceptable for Muzurewa and on the other hand strengthens N'Komo's bargaining power through Roland's influence on Pres. Kaunda of Zambia and in London, as well as the advantage which Roland's financial support affords him. It causes N'Komo to be less willing to make concessions. There are strong indications that Mugabe is losing his hold on some of his more militant generals. He himself never was much of a military leader and apparently owes his position mainly to the fact that in his camp he was regarded as one of the best qualified to negotiate....

Mugabe himself is also a Mashona and in public speeches Muzurewa has never taken a strong standpoint against Mugabe. Should he be able to get Mugabe in his camp in an acceptable way it would afford him unequalled prestige, even should most of Mugabe's generals not follow suit. Mr. Richardson says that he was surprised by this new turn, but that it makes sense to him as Muzurewa is apparently convinced that with Mugabe's support he could establish a strong government which could avoid a full-scale civil war. In this process he will still to a large degree be dependent on support from the white ranks, especially with regard to the Rhodesian army. He needs the latter to ensure that he -retains the upperhand over Mugabe and that in the process the tables are not eventually turned. Further he believes that white support is indispensable for Rhod.'s economic future. Apparently he has already appealed to whites who have left the country to return.

Muzurewa presumably has one big problem, namely a shortage of money. This places him in a weak position especially regarding N'Komo, who with Roland's money has apparently already established a large organisation. He fears that with this N'Komo might eventually cause him problems in an election.

At this stage Muzurewa already has, according to Mr. Richardson, a debt burden of 80,000 dollars. He is not keen to accept money from circles who in future could wring economic concessions from him. Money from South Africa would be ideal for him as he believes South Africa could have no other motive than good neighbourliness. He would in any case strive for good co-operation with South Africa as the economy of his country is now closely linked to the economy of the Republic. Furthermore at this stage he is also not sure how Africa would receive an independent Rhodesia under his government. That is why it would be important to him not to lose the friendship of South Africa.