

February 27, 1978
**Report, South African Department of Foreign
Affairs, 'The Reverend Sithole's Visit to Europe'**

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Summary:

Description of Sithole's discussion with British Foreign Secretary Dr. Owen regarding possible arrangements in Rhodesia, including composition of potential interim government.

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Transcript - English

Mr Killern
Secret.

The Reverend Sithole's visit to Europe Sithole told me that he was very satisfied with the way the talks went with the British Foreign Secretary. He said he was now very hopeful that independence for Rhodesia would become a reality during 1978....

The first meeting with Dr. Owen took place in a tough atmosphere and lasted 2 ½ hours. Sithole gave Owen a full account of the settlement reached and what it meant for Rhodesia. He stressed that the settlement was a fact which nobody could change and that nothing could stop it. Sithole further emphasised that if they had to go it alone, they were prepared to do so and added that they were even prepared to die for it. When Dr Owen referred to the importance of bringing in the Patriotic Front in any settlement, Sithole told him that the PF were welcome to join the talks but that such participation could not be accepted on the terms of the PF.

At the next meeting between Rev Sithole and Dr. Owen the atmosphere was much more relaxed and friendly. The latter was more sympathetic to the internal settlement arrangement. During these and subsequent talks the following main points emerged;

Dr. Owen was emphatic that Mr. Smith should not be permitted to be the leader of the interim government. Mr. Sithole agreed but stressed the need for Mr. Smith to be part of it. He said that if this was not the case, the white people would lose confidence and there would be a mass emigration of whites from Rhodesia. This had to be avoided as the cooperation of the white people was very important for the future development of Rhodesia. Dr. Owen agreed but added that if Mr. Smith should head the interim government problems would be created. The OAU, for example, would not accept such an arrangement. Dr. Owen also said that if a black leader would lead the interim government he would be in favour of recognition of the government and sanctions would be lifted.

Dr Owen felt strongly that the interim government should not function for an unduly long period as its credibility would suffer and there would be a loss of confidence.

As far as the allocation of ministries in the new government were concerned Dr Owen held the view that while Mr Smith could be part of the cabinet he should not be allocated either the Ministries of Justice or Defence. This, Dr Owen said, would create suspicion and complicate matters.

In connection with the proposed referendum, Dr Owen said that it should not be for whites only but all the people, to show that all Rhodesians accepted the internal settlement.

Rev Sithole made it clear to Dr Owen that he did not desire a UN peace-keeping force during the interim period leading up to the elections. He had no objection to UN observers in Rhodesia during the elections.

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