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QUESTION OF SOUTHERN RHODESIA

Statement made by Mr. Mtshana Ncube of the Patriotic Front
at the 31st meeting of the Fourth Committee on 29 November 1979 1/

1/ Distributed in accordance with a decision taken by the Fourth Committee at its 31st meeting, on 29 November 1979.

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1. We wish to make a further statement to enlighten delegates on the discussions now going on in London on Zimbabwe. We do not wish to say anything here that will stand in the way of a peaceful settlement, but we believe certain facts need to be stated to assist the Fourth Committee in its discussions.
2. Let us not brush aside the real problems preventing a peaceful resolution of the conflict in Zimbabwe; let us not try to convey to this Committee the idea that there are no problems and that there would be no problems. There has been some attempt not to inform this Committee of the real obstacles to peace which the British Government has created by its ceasefire proposals, and its manner of handling the negotiations. Indeed, there have been statements by the British representative which betray the arrogance and paternalism characteristic of colonial rulers, and consistently apparent in the British negotiators in their attitude towards the Patriotic Front throughout the negotiations.
3. In many ways what the British representative says impugns the capacity of members to judge the facts on the conduct of the current talks, otherwise the British representative would not have treated lightly the real problems created by Britain's not so subtle desire to have the Patriotic Front surrender to the Salisbury regime.
4. British arrogance so far heaped on the Patriotic Front found its way into the Fourth Committee meeting of November 28 in what the British representative called his right to reply. In that brief intervention the representative all but threatened delegates not to speak on Southern Rhodesia either because they were geographically too far or were ignorant of the issue. Mr. Chairman, this is the attitude with which the Patriotic Front has been expected to put up at the talks despite our responsible attitude.
5. Not only did the British representative seek to create the impression that there were no difficulties with the ceasefire negotiations, but he also tried to present the picture of an impartial British Government in the negotiations.
6. The Patriotic Front has always maintained that the British Government never did, and does not now, intend to decolonise Zimbabwe. Therefore, at best Britain

would want the continuation of colonialism; at worse it will settle for neo-colonialism.

7. This assessment by the Patriotic Front has been proven correct at every stage of the three-part negotiations now in progress at Lancaster House in London. First, the British Government's proposals on the Constitution sought to retain much of the political and economic power in the hands of the supporters of the present settler colonial, racist and puppet regime of Salisbury. Secondly, the proposals on transitional arrangements were geared for maximum advantage to the Muzorewa-Smith regime. Now Britain's proposals on the ceasefire are a recipe for war and not peace.
8. The British Government proposes, among other things, the following towards a ceasefire:
 - a) Confinement and grounding of Patriotic Front forces to 15 specific places while Rhodesian forces remain in combat posture in their bases and not in barracks.
 - b) While Patriotic Front and Rhodesian forces are technically equal, the Governor is indirectly mandated to choose forces for the maintenance of security from among Rhodesian forces.
 - c) A ceasefire monitoring force made up of a handful of soldiers (from some commonwealth countries) which will be deployed only after disengagement by the opposing forces to ensure that there is no contact between the two sides.
 - d) A Ceasefire Commission, which is made up of the commanders from both sides, and whose sole responsibility is to investigate alleged or threatened ceasefire violations, and not to prevent them.
9. The Patriotic Front objects to these proposals vehemently because they are not going to secure a ceasefire, and because they give advantage to the colonial regime forces over those of the Patriotic Front. The most urgent areas of concern by the Patriotic Front on the ceasefire question are the disposition of the forces; the peace-keeping force; the time of ceasefire; and the role of South Africa and the private armies, so-called auxilliary forces.
10. On the question of the grounding and confinement of Patriotic Front forces to 15 specific places, the British have assumed that it will be the Patriotic Front forces which will violate the ceasefire. This is not only one more example of British arrogance, but clear evidence of their partiality. How can anyone (except one predisposed to take the side of Salisbury) assume that the colonial forces which have been the instrument of illegality and rebellion for 14 years should now be trusted to abide by the ceasefire arrangements when there is no demonstrable incentive or force to make them? Obviously the British are not concerned with a permanent peace which will lead to the creation of a stable and prosperous Zimbabwe. They look upon these talks and all their proposals as an opportunity to bequeath to Zimbabwe not only the ravages of colonialism but also an inherent political, social and economic instability which will be exploited by those who have, together with Britain, resisted the genuine decolonisation of Zimbabwe.

11. The British carefully propose the "quarantining" of Patriotic Front forces in 15 specific areas suggested to them by the Salisbury military leaders. In the special circumstances of the situation in Southern Africa, this confinement of our forces makes them sitting ducks in case of a coup by the colonial soldiers, or in a pre-emptive bombardment by South Africa whose interests in preventing a Patriotic Front victory are no secret.
12. The British consistently refuse to accept the reasonable Patriotic Front position which sees a ceasefire in two stages. The first would be to cease movement and the second would be to move the respective forces to agreed places where they would be kept by a full-fledged peace-keeping force. No other force but a full peace-keeping force can ensure that there will not be an outbreak of hostilities with dire consequences for the people of Zimbabwe and, indeed, for international peace and security.
13. While there may be some movement in the latest British suggestions, these too fall short of what is essential for a ceasefire and for genuinely free and fair elections. The British now say they may slightly increase the number of monitors to about 1,000. The issue is not just numbers but the military capability of any force which is to stand between the contending armies. Moreover, the British monitoring team will have only defensive and not offensive weapons. Actually, there is nothing to prevent them from being overrun by the colonial and South African soldiers in a coup attempt.
14. We notice also that in their latest attempt to meet Patriotic Front objections the British still cling to a peace-keeping force which will be nothing but a toothless bulldog supposed to be frightened by its appearance rather than what it can actually do. They still cling to the erroneous view that distance can be a military deterrent. It is our view that any disengagement which is not final and sealed leaves room for violations of the ceasefire.
15. On the question of time when the ceasefire should come into effect, the latest British proposals are deliberately silent. We want a categorical statement which recognizes that a ceasefire cannot be timed. It can only be determined by events on the ground.
16. In our view, Mr. Chairman, the events on the ground will be determined by the activities of private armies (euphemistically called auxilliary forces); the 20,000 more auxillaries now under training in the Transvaal by South Africa for Muzorewa; the 155,000 firearms now in the hands of white civilians. The Patriotic Front has called for the dismantling of all private armies. Selous Scouts, the return and confinement of the 20,000 so-called auxillaries now under training in South Africa; and the disarming of the white civilian population. This, the British have refused to do. Thus a ceasefire is unlikely to obtain and to hold under these circumstances.
17. Mr. Chairman, it does not take too much imagination to see that South Africa is, by virtue of its involvement, placed in a position in which it can intimidate the population of Zimbabwe to vote for the puppets if it should infiltrate the so-called auxillaries into Zimbabwe.
18. Furthermore, Mr. Chairman, the Patriotic Front wants only a civil police force for the ceasefire period, and therefore has called for the dismantling of the

Joint Operational Command which contains para-military police. In addition, we have called for the grounding of all military aircraft. The British have not responded to these important issues the solution of which will ensure a durable ceasefire and preparation for a genuinely fair and free election.

19. Mr. Chairman, you will understand our concerns. We cannot allow our people to be guinea pigs for British neo-colonial schemes. We have fought to secure the lives of our people in freedom and justice and we are sure this Committee will stand with us in this noble objective.