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FOURTH COMMITTEE
28th meeting
held on
Thursday, 1 December 1977
at 10.30 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 28th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. MAMPUYA (Zaire)

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5 December 1977

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The meeting was called to order at 11 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 24: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES (continued)

1. Mr. ROBINSON (Guyana), speaking on a point of order, drew attention to a gross inaccuracy in the report of his delegation's views in the summary record of the 24th meeting. The third sentence in paragraph 26 should end with the words "United Kingdom", the rest of the sentence being deleted. The following new sentence should then be added: "Such a settlement should, of course, fully respect the rights of the people of Belize and should take due account of the interests of Guatemala". While his delegation was aware of the procedure for submitting corrections to summary records, it had chosen to draw the error to the Committee's attention because of the gross nature of the misrepresentation, because of the importance his Government attached to the issue and because corrections were not issued until the end of the session.

REQUESTS FOR HEARINGS (A/C.4/32/10/Add.2 and Add.3)

2. The CHAIRMAN drew attention to the requests for hearings which had been received from the Reverend Ndabaningi Sithole, President of the Zimbabwe African National Union, (A/C.4/32/10/Add.2) and Mr. Elton Razemba, African National Council of Zimbabwe (A/C.4/32/10/Add.3). If he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee agreed to accede to those requests.

3. It was so decided.

AGENDA ITEM 92: QUESTION OF SOUTHERN RHODESIA: REPORT OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE SITUATION WITH REGARD TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES (continued) (A/32/23/Add.1, A/32/57, A/32/61, A/32/63, A/32/92, A/32/98, A/32/109/Rev.1, A/32/115, A/32/235, A/32/259, A/32/266; S/12393 and S/12395)

4. At the invitation of the Chairman, the Reverend Ndabaningi Sithole (Zimbabwe African National Union) took a seat at the petitioners' table.

5. The Reverend Ndabaningi SITHOLE (President Zimbabwe African National Union), speaking as founding president of the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) and an initiator of the struggle, said that, on his return to Zimbabwe from exile in July 1977, he had visited various centres in order to assess the mood, aspirations and demands of the people. He had concluded that all wanted a settlement based on the principle of one man, one vote. He had also been impressed by the fact that the whites, in general, had become more realistic and had begun to accept the African demands for independence in the land of their birth. That was due partly to the impact of the armed struggle and partly to the external pressures

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(The Reverend Ndabaningi Sithole)

which were exerted from time to time. Therefore, if the situation could be exploited to the full, people in Zimbabwe were ready for a settlement - not just any settlement - but one in which power would be transferred to the people.

6. He thanked the United Nations for the good work it had done. He regarded the United Nations as the conscience of the modern world and hoped that it would continue to be responsive to the needs of the underdogs in the world.

7. ZANU had recently held a convention - to which political and non-political delegates from across the nation had been invited - in order to consider carefully the recent Anglo-American proposals. Delegates had subsequently visited various centres to discuss the proposals with leading personalities, black, white, Asian and Coloured, in order to obtain the people's general reactions to the proposals. On the whole, it was felt that the proposals, for the first time, provided a useful framework within which differences could be reconciled. The first part of the proposals, which dealt with matters of substance, contained much that was acceptable. For example, ZANU liked the fact that the principle of one man, one vote had been accepted and it endorsed the principle of non-racialism, having long been working for a non-racial society. It welcomed the statement that independence should come in 1978, the fact that the proposals accepted the principle of a justiciable Bill of Rights and the fact that there would be a legislative assembly composed of 80 Africans and 20 non-Africans.

8. With regard to the second part of the proposals, which dealt with the transitional period, ZANU accepted the principle of a transitional period in which power would be transferred in an orderly manner to the people as a whole. It was pleased to note that the transitional period would be limited to six months. However, it did not like certain features of the proposals. Firstly, with regard to the United Kingdom Resident Commissioner, who would form the administration, ZANU felt strongly - and the feeling was general - that so much power should not be concentrated in the hands of one man who was not in any way responsible to the people. It was generally felt that the interim administration should not be composed of one man and, although a United Kingdom presence was welcomed, the feeling was that that presence must be controlled. An interim administration council might, for instance, be established, composed of five people headed by the Resident Commissioner. Secondly, ZANU did not agree that a formal agreement should be preceded by a cease-fire. In fact, the reverse was true for, if the cease-fire came first, the negotiating position of the nationalists would be greatly undermined. Another point which was very contentious was the question of the army. Whereas the Rhodesian security forces felt that the army should consist only of such forces and exclude freedom fighters, the freedom fighters felt that it was the Rhodesian security forces which should be excluded. The dispute could not be settled by accommodating just one party and it would be naive to think that the problem could be settled by excluding the freedom fighters. It was essential to adopt a policy of integration.

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(The Reverend Ndabaningi Sithole)

9. The fundamental problem facing Zimbabwe was the question of the transfer of power from the white minority to the African majority. He wished to stress that point in view of the deliberate efforts, both overt and covert, to force a deviation from the course which had been taken when the armed struggle had begun in 1964. Naturally, that raised the fundamental question of who constituted the African majority. Attempts had been made, time and again, to intimate that power should be transferred to a particular organization or leader in Zimbabwe. It was, however, essential that power should be transferred to the African majority and no leader could say that he represented the majority until after free elections had been held.

10. Referring to repeated statements that power should be transferred to the Patriotic Front, he said that, while it was below his dignity to campaign against any organization, the constant mention of the Patriotic Front merely complicated the search for a solution. How could the Patriotic Front represent the majority of Zimbabweans when it did not exist as such in Zimbabwe. He challenged delegations to send investigators to Zimbabwe to look into the presence of the Patriotic Front there. They would find ZANU and ZAPU - both of which had been banned - and the United African National Council. The Patriotic Front was not a political reality, but an international political gimmick designed to impose leaders on Zimbabwe. If power was transferred to the Patriotic Front it would mean that it had simply been transferred from one minority to another. Such a solution was inconsistent with the problem. Zimbabwe must start its independent life on the right footing. In that connexion, he again stressed the crucial point that power must be transferred from the white minority to the black majority, not to any particular leader, for political leaders came and went. Otherwise there would be chaos, anarchy and an endless succession of coups. Once power had been transferred, elections could be held so that the people could delegate that power to the leader of their choice. It would be not only illogical but also immoral to transfer power to a particular leader.

11. The people of Zimbabwe had been fighting for a long time for acceptance of the principle of one man, one vote. Although Mr. Smith had always stated that there would not be majority rule within his lifetime, he had recently accepted the principle of adult suffrage. He himself interpreted that as meaning "one man, one vote"; however, as had been pointed out, Mr. Smith's words had been "adult suffrage", not "universal adult suffrage". In any event, the war in Zimbabwe was not a racial war but a struggle for franchise. Had the principle of one man, one vote been accepted in 1964, it was likely that there would not have been an armed struggle.

12. After reviewing all the meetings which Mr. Smith had held in the past with different leaders in order to solve the question of majority rule - all of which had failed - he said that only time could tell whether Mr. Smith was, in fact, being sincere and whether the latest initiative would have a different outcome. The difference, in the present case, was that at no time in the past had Mr. Smith publicly accepted the principle of adult suffrage as he had done recently.

13. Referring to Mr. Smith's comments regarding an internal settlement, he stressed that whatever settlement was reached must be within the framework of the

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(The Reverend Ndabaningi Sithole)

Anglo-American proposals, if it was to succeed. While ZANU did not trust Mr. Smith, particularly in the light of the recent unforgivable massacres, it planned to wait and see what he meant. He noted that the United Kingdom and the United States were talking with Mr. Smith and expressed the hope that a settlement might be hammered out. ZANU was entering into the exercise in the same spirit and no one should be under any illusion that it would accept anything less than the effective transfer of power from the white minority to the African majority.

14. The Reverend Ndabaningi Sithole withdrew.

15. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Razemba (African National Council of Zimbabwe) took a place at the petitioners' table.

16. Mr. RAZEMBA (African National Council of Zimbabwe) said that the people of Zimbabwe were currently engaged in a life and death struggle against Rhodesian fascist colonialism. The central aim of the struggle was no longer merely to gain the franchise but to capture State power and the control of the army, the police, the air force and the judiciary. The situation inside Zimbabwe was, on the whole, excellent and morale among the people was high. The colonial forces were being dealt mortal blows by the liberation forces, and many parts of the countryside, especially in the east, north-east and south-east, were nearly liberated. In the rural areas many communication lines had been cut and the revolutionary police of the liberation army was in effect keeping law and order there. Many people defied the illegal régime openly and were no longer paying taxes to it. The response of the people to the war had been tremendous; people of all ages, recruited mainly by the United African National Council (UANC) were enlisting in the liberation army by the thousands. The illegal régime had placed security men in the schools but had failed to check the flow of students and young people leaving to join the liberation forces. The war was now even beginning to affect urban areas.

17. Government reprisals had been very severe, often taking the form of detention and interrogation under torture; the fascist régime was making a desperate attempt to find the freedom fighters and to isolate them from the masses of the people. Millions of the peasantry had been confined in concentration camps, the so-called protected villages, in which life was extremely difficult. Curfew hours were extremely long and interfered with agriculture. In an attempt to ensure that no food reached the freedom fighters, the régime had even made it an offence to preserve food left over after a meal. Hunger and disease were constantly present in the camps, from which many peasants had fled to the mountains, where they hid in caves.

18. The people of Zimbabwe had learnt through bitter experience that colonialism in its fascist stage could only be wiped out through revolutionary armed struggle, which, in turn, improved the general revolutionary consciousness of the people.

19. The people of Zimbabwe had no illusions that economic warfare against Southern Rhodesia could ever be regarded as a major form of the struggle. The United Nations sanctions programme needed stronger supervision and South Africa must be

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(Mr. Razemba)

forced to conform if sanctions were to be effective. There were over 400 United Kingdom companies operating in Southern Rhodesia; they could not prosper if they did not break the sanctions. He was pleased to be able to report that many of those companies were now leaving the country. The Southern Rhodesian economy was showing great strains, which reflected a manpower shortage resulting from the loss of technicians and skilled workers and the heavy burden of sustaining a war economy for a prolonged period.

20. Unfortunately, the Zimbabwe liberation struggle had been troubled in recent years by a lack of unity and by changes in leadership. Issues dividing factions of the liberation movement included the question of constitutional talks with the illegal régime, ideology and the relationship between the military cadres and the political leadership. In that connexion, he stressed that the so-called Patriotic Front, which had been devised by the leaders of certain front-line States and imposed by them on the liberation struggle, was a club of outsiders with strong backing from abroad but entirely unknown in Zimbabwe. It was a regrettable fact that the military cadres fighting in Zimbabwe were as divided as the political leadership; there were about six separate groups, of which, in his view, UANC had the largest following.

21. The seeds of civil war had been planted and it was important for the United Nations to know the true nature of the Zimbabwe liberation forces. The front-line States were, unfortunately, not the best source of information, since some of them were working feverishly in collusion with the major Powers to install a leader of their own choice in Zimbabwe, despite the bitter complaints by several leaders in the country. It was also no secret that a certain Zimbabwean movement was being supported by the social-imperialist Power and its satellites to seize State power from the first ruling party in Zimbabwe; that movement was not doing much of the actual fighting, as its plan was to preserve its forces for the civil war. Some weak front-line States were being pressured to fall into the orbit of that dangerous new force which was causing most of the confusion in the Zimbabwe liberation movement after having come to Africa in the guise of a friend. Its real aim was to subjugate the world.

22. The United African National Council was not in principle opposed to constitutional conferences, provided that it was understood that the people of Zimbabwe must take power through control of the vital State organs. His movement had agreed to participate in the Anglo-American plan as a basis for negotiation on the understanding that the Zimbabwe parties concerned would be treated equally, and it had been amazed by the attitude of the United Kingdom Government, which seemed to wish to exclude UANC from cease-fire talks on the grounds that it had no army. The United Kingdom representative had stated at the 27th meeting that the new Zimbabwe National Army would consist of Patriotic Front forces and part of the Rhodesian forces, with no mention of the UANC army and other armies operating in Southern Rhodesia. If that was the current view of the United Kingdom Government, it was totally unacceptable and confirmed the concern of UANC that that Government was trying to install a leader in Zimbabwe from the outside. In that connexion, he reminded members of the Committee of paragraph 1 of Security Council resolution 415 (1977) which requested the Secretary-General to appoint a

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representative to enter into discussions with the British Resident Commissioner designate and with all the parties.

23. The problem of disunity was extremely serious, both internally and externally. Some liberation movements without much following were afraid of elections, which might put an end to the present international goodwill they were enjoying. UANC had always stressed that no Zimbabwe nationalist movement which had participated in the talks at Geneva should be excluded from further talks, unless, of course, it refused to participate. Furthermore, UANC had insisted that the United Kingdom Government, the so-called administering Power, should preside over the talks. It was somewhat ironic that the representative of the Patriotic Front had described those who had agreed to talk to Mr. Smith as puppets, when the leader of the Patriotic Front itself had also held secret meetings with representatives of the Smith régime in Zambia. UANC urged the Zimbabwe freedom fighters to continue fighting while the leaders were talking.

24. The struggle in Zimbabwe was one for national liberation, not a socialist revolution. The general climate in the world was to support anti-colonialist struggles and UANC sincerely hoped that States would intensify their moral and material support to the peoples of southern Africa in general, and those of Zimbabwe in particular. UANC was broadly based, both at home and abroad, and should be given United Nations assistance, despite the efforts of some neighbouring States to discredit and destroy the movement internationally.

25. Mr. Razemba withdrew.

26. Mr. KANGAI (Observer, Patriotic Front) explained that the Reverend Ndabaningi Sithole was no longer the President of the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU), a function which was exercised by Mr. Mugabe. ZANU had allied itself with the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) in the Patriotic Front and, despite their differences, those two organizations were united in the fight against the common enemy. They were the only organizations which counted as far as any interim or independent government was concerned. Contrary to what had been claimed, the Patriotic Front was in favour of fair elections, but only after having fully participated in the transitional government. The Reverend Ndabaningi Sithole was no longer a guerrilla leader; the fact that he had been well received by Vorster in South Africa and by Smith proved that. In a few days, he would be embarking on negotiations with Smith.

27. The representative of the United African National Council (UANC), led by Bishop Muzorewa, had claimed that ZANU had no support inside the country. On launching the armed struggle, ZANU had been forced to go underground, but the people attending UANC meetings in large numbers were in fact ZANU supporters who were unable to hold their own meetings. The Reverend Ndabaningi Sithole and Bishop Muzorewa were actually recruiting Zimbabweans into Smith's army, the very army that had carried out the recent attacks. That was not the behaviour of "fathers of the revolution".

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28. Mr. VAN COPPENOLLE (Belgium), speaking on behalf of the members of the European Economic Community, said that for the past 12 years the world had witnessed a tragic anachronism resulting from the unilateral and unconstitutional declaration of so-called independence in Southern Rhodesia by which a minority racist régime had imposed its will on the overwhelming majority of the population. Faced with a succession of unsuccessful attempts to establish a régime acceptable to the people as a whole, the international community could understandably be tempted to take a pessimistic view and to advocate hasty solutions. The nine countries of the European Economic Community refused to share that pessimism in view of the determined efforts currently being made to ensure an ordered and peaceful transition to majority rule and independence.

29. The Anglo-American settlement proposals, which had been patiently and wisely put forward in continuous consultations with all the parties concerned, deserved consideration and support. The central principles of the proposals were that there could be no independence before majority rule and that independence, which was to come about in 1978, should reflect the genuine aspirations of the population. The plan was in accordance with the accepted democratic standards of the international community and, in the view of the nine EEC countries, it was equitable and viable since it took into account all the legitimate rights and interests at stake. The countries of the European Economic Community therefore hoped that all parties would have at heart the need to continue the dialogue on the basis of those proposals, with the firm intention of reaching a peaceful settlement. Until such a settlement was achieved, violence and war would continue to take their toll. The recent acts of aggression perpetrated by the rebel régime, which the nine EEC countries condemned, were but a further illustration of that fact.

30. In the wake of the Anglo-American initiative, the hard-pressed Smith régime had offered to negotiate in what was apparently a new overture. As a result both of international pressure and of the situation in the country itself, the Salisbury régime appeared to have become resigned to accepting majority rule based on the principle of universal suffrage. While the sincerity and real scope of Mr. Smith's proposal certainly remained unclear, there was nevertheless an indication that a new element had perhaps been injected into the negotiations. Time would tell whether it was a new delaying or diversionary tactic which aimed to exclude one or other of the parties.

31. The nine EEC countries welcomed the fact that the United Nations had recently assumed a more direct role in the search for a final and peaceful solution to the Southern Rhodesian problem. They had reacted favourably to Security Council resolution 415 (1977) calling for the appointment by the Secretary-General of a representative to enter into talks with the British Resident Commissioner designate and with all the parties. That resolution was seen as a clear indication of the international community's acquiescence in the Anglo-American endeavours to bring about a peaceful settlement and accession to independence. The countries of the European Economic Community would certainly abide strictly by the Security Council sanctions, which they believed would have a growing dissuasive effect. They impatiently awaited the time when they would be able to establish links with the Government of an independent Zimbabwe to which they would offer their support, co-operation and friendship.

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32. Mr. SEKYEI (Ghana) said that his delegation saw the problem of Southern Rhodesia in two distinct parts: the supposedly simple problem of forcing Mr. Smith to relinquish his hold on the levers of power, and the more complex one of finding channels and safeguards to deliver power safely into the hands of the majority in Zimbabwe in accordance with the principles of self-determination. Although the recent Anglo-American proposals had not succeeded in solving the first aspect of the problem his delegation believed that they deserved better success than they had achieved. For the first time in a very long period, the administering Power had seemed ready and willing to assume its full responsibilities within the Territory during an interim period. The idea of a United Nations force mandated by the Security Council to support, inter alia, the maintenance of internal law and order during the transition seemed basically a very sound one, although its relationship to the other forces to be combined and established within the Territory and to the administrator himself were yet to be defined more precisely. As had already been pointed out by others, there could have been a greater sharing of power between the administrator and the Southern Rhodesian people. The package was not perfect, but it could provide a basis for negotiation.

33. It had become clearer than ever that the second, and more complex, part of the problem could not be tackled successfully until the control of defence and internal order had been prised out of the hands of the rebel racist régime. His Government had always maintained that that control should never have found its way into those hands in the first place. Fearing the consequences of that dangerous transfer of power when it had first been proposed in 1963, it had tried to block it in the Security Council but had been foiled by a single veto cast on the instructions of the United Kingdom Government of the day. By that veto, the racist minority had received a gift which made it unique among the colonies of the Empire, namely full control of one decisive attribute of sovereignty, internal defence, prior to the establishment of majority government. Since then, the minority régime had employed that power to attack, oppress and torture the defenceless and racially different majority. Most attempts to coax it out of racist hands had relied on mere dialogue, with no force or strength other than that of feebly applied sanctions with their obvious loop-holes. The essential result of all such dialogue from 1965 to 1977 had been a refusal by the régime to relinquish control of internal defence and security in any circumstances. The Geneva Conference had foundered on that very rock and at the current session the General Assembly had heard that Ian Smith still insisted on retaining internal security in the hands of his own forces, even during any transition. He had arrogantly described the mission of Lord Carver and General Chand as a "travelling circus" and a "lamentable failure". The way was therefore clear for his own equivocal, procrastinating remedies, marked by the usual prevarication and trickery. He was proposing preparations for constitutional talks ostensibly aimed at majority rule but with safeguards which, according to him, would serve the same purpose as the qualitative franchise. It was not clear whether that meant a blocking minority vote or a minority veto, but it seemed clear that not all parties would be allowed to participate in the talks or the elections. Reportedly, those elections would be held under the control of Smith's police and military, unchallenged by any elements such as the freedom fighters in Zimbabwe. The levers of power would not be given up. There would be no return to legality and the freedom fighters would be excluded. On those conditions there could be no relaxation of external pressures.

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(Mr. Sekyi, Ghana)

34. The next step would therefore appear to be for the General Assembly and the community of nations at large to concentrate the greater part of their energies on the first aspect of the problem. Smith had to be forced to give up the levers of power and the instruments of oppression. Ghana had clearly committed itself to total support of the extension of sanctions and the intensification of the armed struggle, failing a real reversion of authority to the administering Power or an irreversible transfer of power to the Africans in Zimbabwe. It was to be hoped that the world community would take what was apparently the only line of action left to it. It had first to bring about Ian Smith's capitulation if it was to have any chance of success in considering the modalities of self-determination and the manner in which the people of Zimbabwe as a whole would select their government and leaders.

35. The Security Council and the General Assembly had long recognized the legitimacy of the liberation struggle and, if the Maputo Declaration was anything to go by, the legitimacy of the armed struggle had also been recognized by all but a few countries. Some had maintained that resort to violence was against the letter and spirit of the Charter of the United Nations, while others had argued that support for the armed struggle would be prejudicial to their role as mediators in any negotiated solution. However, it was surely legitimate to resist oppression by armed self-defence when the oppression was carried out by an armed minority on such an appalling scale as in Southern Rhodesia. Where negotiation and even mandatory sanctions had proved ineffective for so long, nothing in the letter or spirit of the Charter forbade self-defence. It had to be recognized, moreover, that it was not the ineffective sanctions or intermittent fruitless dialogue which had brought Smith to the point of apparent willingness to negotiate more seriously, but the armed struggle which had spread into the northern, eastern and south-eastern sectors of the Territory to come within striking distance of all the major cities and railways, and had succeeded in stretching the racist forces and quickening the exodus of racist settlers. The conduct of the armed struggle to date and the fear of escalation and super-Power involvement had created pressures without which negotiation alone could have no reasonable hope of success. To abandon or relax those pressures made little sense at the current stage; far from jeopardizing negotiations, they made them seem more credible and worthwhile. His Government was therefore convinced that the correct policy would be for the United Nations to support them to the full and maintain them at the maximum.

36. The legitimate armed struggle merited the fullest moral, financial and material assistance from the United Nations and its specialized agencies, even though that struggle would continue to be fought outside the United Nations, on the battlefields, until final victory had been achieved. The United Nations had a special responsibility for sanctions. The closure of the considerable loop-holes in those sanctions was immediate and urgent. Oil, munitions, other goods and investments had continued to flow freely into Southern Rhodesia through South Africa and until that giant loop hole had been closed the world would continue to waste resources on a futile exercise. Until the flow of oil and of further investment into South Africa was halted, the apartheid economy would grow and its armaments' factories would supply its buffer State, Southern Rhodesia, with the

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(Mr. Sekyi, Ghana)

weapons of internal oppression and external aggression, while the oil fuelled the war machine of Vorster's satellite.

37. His delegation joined the call for immediate and total sanctions against the rebel racist régime, with the application of the full range of measures envisaged under Article 41 of the Charter, and, at the same time, for mandatory economic sanctions against the Vorster régime so that sanctions against Southern Rhodesia would at last become effective. As a first step, it would advocate action along the lines proposed by the Security Council Committee established in pursuance of resolution 253 (1968) and the Conference of Commonwealth Heads of Government, which had called for an extension of oil sanctions to the apartheid régime and for legislation to make parent oil companies in Western countries liable for violations of mandatory sanctions by their South African subsidiaries. While the international community hesitated and procrastinated over such measures, the apartheid régime had already been anticipating the sanctions by engaging in an active search for alternative sources of energy, including power from nuclear reactors, of which nuclear bombs could be a by-product. Even a child could see that the imposition of effective oil sanctions under Chapter VII of the Charter would bring the minority racist régimes to their knees in a relatively short time. Vorster and Smith were buying time by protracted negotiations, without slowing down their programmes of massacre or torture. The world was asked to believe that if mandatory sanctions, particularly with regard to oil, were made truly effective, Smith would be too angry to negotiate further and Vorster might refuse future talks with the five Western countries. The fact was, however, that if Smith and Vorster ran out of oil it would soon cease to matter whether they wanted to negotiate or not. They would capitulate. But the longer they were allowed to stave off sanctions indefinitely, by negotiating indefinitely, the less likely they would be to surrender if and when the loop-holes were closed. For that reason, his delegation insisted that the loop-holes should be closed immediately.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.