

MEET THE LEADERS

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The following is a transcript of an interview by Lawford Sutton-Pryce, of the Rhodesia Broadcasting Corporation, on March 26, with the three black leaders who signed the internal constitutional agreement with the Prime Minister, Mr. Ian Smith.

They are Bishop Abel Muzorewa, United African National Council; the Rev. Ndabaningi Sithole, African National Council (Sithole); and Chief Jeremiah Chirau, Zimbabwe United People's Organization.

The programme was entitled "Meet the Leaders".

Question: Gentlemen, it is now some three weeks since the Interim Agreement, or the Settlement Agreement, was signed in Salisbury and I think we have had time to gauge some of the international reaction. Some of you have been away from this country to gauge it for yourselves. Bishop Muzorewa, if I can start with you, a comment first of all by the American Ambassador to the United Nations, Mr. Young, who is in Africa at the moment. He said that the Settlement Agreement signed in Salisbury is something less than majority rule. There are other comments from overseas that the Agreement is a sham and that it leaves the whites very much in control. Your comments on the international comments?

Bishop Muzorewa: Well first of all I want to point out that my observation is that Ambassador Young has been terribly brain-washed by the so-called Patriotic Front and the so-called front-line states. This is their language. I think anyone who is trying to be open minded about our settlement will find that what we have done is working the mechanics of transferring power, which has the majority of our people in control, and on December 31 that will be completely fulfilled. I think one point we must put here is that people are so afraid of what they have experienced in the past and are so afraid now to look into the future. This also happened, for instance, in Tanzania. When the mechanics of transferring power were completed in Tanzania I'm told—in fact it is written—that President Nyerere took two solid days to persuade his people that in fact they had the instrument to move on to full majority rule, because they were so sceptical. There were people who were talking like Ambassador Young and other people, yet today Tanzania is in full control of the situation. And so it is going to be with us. It is a genuine Agreement for transferring power from the minority to the majority. Let them say what they want.

Question: Rev. Sithole, some people are also saying that the three of you who joined in the internal talks should have held out for a better agreement; that you could have got a better deal if you had left it a little bit longer?

Rev. Sithole: Well it all depends upon what they have behind their minds. As far as we are concerned, for the last 13 years the British and other people tried to get a settlement for this country but they failed. Now we have done our very best and we are very happy, and very proud, and very confident that we finally got the settlement. Now what is most important for the outside critics to remember is that the war has been escalating, many people were being killed—I think at the rate of more than 20 a day—and we had to settle the problem as quickly as possible and we are happy that we have a firm date of independence, which is 31st December, 1978, and on the basis of majority rule, and on the basis of “one man one vote”. That is the thing for which our freedom fighters have been suffering for, and even dying for.

Question: Chief Chirau, as yet nobody outside the country has accepted the Agreement and recognized the new Interim Government. Do you see any benefits flowing internally from this agreement?

Chief Chirau: First of all I must say that we three here are so happy because we are representing 90 per cent. of the African majority of this country—the people who gave us a mandate to come to the Agreement which we have signed. The people who might be outside who say that they are not recognizing our Internal Settlement because it is not genuine; I think they are not the people to tell us what to do. We know what our people want. We live with our people. We know the problems facing our people. We have to solve this problem here so we have come to an agreement which was right for our people; which our people have been asking for—one man one vote—which we forced the Prime Minister, Mr. Smith, to agree to. Now I have been to the British Government and talked to Dr. Owen himself, I can add to what my colleague Bishop Muzorewa said, that Ambassador Young has been brainwashed by the Patriotic Front. It might be the same again with Dr. Owen himself. He has been very much in the sight of the Patriotic Front or in fear of what they call front line states. When I talk to the British people they understand because I put my case clearly to them. They supported it and I'm sure they wanted to be on our side.

Question: Bishop, the question of international recognition is obviously crucial to the whole issue. Now you did hold talks both in London and Washington—what are your overall impressions? Are we going to get recognition at some stage?

Bishop Muzorewa: After I talked to Dr. Owen in London and to the leaders of the Opposition, I went to New York and to Washington and talked to the Secretary of State, Mr. Cyrus Vance. I had a very good time with about 25 Congressmen and Senators who came to hear our case, and when I looked at the newspapers every day and discovered that 90 per cent. of all the editorials, after they had been analysed by our people, were supporting and pushing the United States government to recognize us. And when I know that the British public and Opposition is really interested in what we are doing I am quite convinced that sooner or later we are going to be recognized. I would ask a very blunt question to any of those people who are going to try to hold against recognizing us. I would ask this question. I have seen a lot of these countries in Africa and elsewhere recognizing some governments which came to power by just one man holding a gun and shooting everybody and declaring himself the leader of a country, and they have been recognized in 48 hours, recognized by people including even like the British and Americans. I would ask the question why on earth would they not recognize a government that has been set up by honest people who have tried to do it on a democratic basis? That is the question I would put and I hope it is going to—I trust rather than hope—I trust that there are some people who are going to still recognize it on that basis.

Question: Rev. Sithole, one of the constant criticisms that has come from all over the world has been that the external nationalist leaders are not included in this Agreement. Do you think it is all right to leave them out or should they be brought in some way or another?

Rev. Sithole: Well right from the beginning the external leaders were invited to join the talks but they refused to come back into the country and join us. The reason why they have refused to come back is that they know they are massively rejected by the people in this country. But even deeper than that they have a very strange philosophy which is quite unacceptable to most of us. Namely, they feel very strongly that all power should be handed over to the Patriotic Front, but we do not subscribe to that view. We feel very strongly that all power must be handed not to a

particular political leader or to a particular political organisation but to the people of this country, then in turn the people of this country will delegate this power at free elections to the leaders of their own choice. The invitation to the external leaders to come and join us is still open. They can come and participate in free elections, like anybody else, but certainly no special place will be created for any of them, just as in the agreement no special place has been created for any of the internal leaders. What is important is that they should come back and submit themselves to the verdict of the people of this country no matter what external support they may get. The crucial question is the verdict by the people of this country.

Question: What do you see happening to the terrorist war assuming that the external leaders stay out of the Agreement?

Rev. Sithole: As far as the guerilla fighters go, as soon as proper arrangements are made they will come back home. I'm sure during the course of these talks many of the leaders here, not only in this studio, but also inside the country have received inquiries from the guerillas inside and outside the country asking when the settlement was going to be signed and when the Interim Government was going to be formed so that they may return home. So that by and large as soon as the Interim Government is in the whole swing most guerillas will come back home.

Question: Bishop, I remember well before the Victoria Falls settlement talks, both you and the Rev. Sithole calling for a ceasefire which didn't in fact happen, so why is the terrorist war going to stop this time when it didn't stop last time?

Bishop Muzorewa: Well actually we must admit that that was pretty much a dud, because they could ask us one question — where is majority rule? Because as my colleague here has already said people were fighting; were fighting for majority rule. Now that majority rule is here, and it will be complete by the 31st December, it is just logical to expect them to come back because what they are fighting for is here. At that time, in fact, it was not there.

Question: Chief Chirau, what can you really achieve for independence by December 31st? It seems a very very tight schedule?

Chief Chirau: I am hopeful and I'm sure we are going to achieve independence on 31st December. We have fixed this date — we didn't fix the date without examining it. We know there is a lot to

do, like preparing the Voters' Registration Roll, but I don't think that will cost us a lot of time. We have a good country here, when I say a good country we have a country with better roads and people are in good places where we can go easily, so I am quite confident that on 31st December we will have our independence.

Question: In the meantime though, Rev. Sithole, between now and then you have this Interim Government where the three of you, with Mr. Smith, will be holding the position of the Executive Council. Now there seems to be a grey area here as to the powers of the Executive Council, the powers of Ministers and also the powers of the present Parliament which, of course, is still in session. What is the relationship between the Executive Council and the present Rhodesian Front-controlled Parliament?

Rev. Sithole: Well as you have indicated things have not as yet been worked out, but it is quite clear to us that the present Parliament will be placed in mothballs, so to speak, while the Executive Council does most of the work. Now the relationship is still to be worked out, but the Executive Council will be the supreme council and the Ministerial Council will take its orders from the Executive Council.

Question: So you don't see any cause for conflict between now and 31st December, between the existing set-up and the previous set-up, Bishop?

Bishop Muzorewa: I don't believe there will be any conflict, especially as from what I understand. I know that Mr. Smith has been moving along with the Parliamentary caucus step by step and whenever we need to use the Parliament for whatever we need to be passed it is understood by them, and by all of us, that everything must be facilitated so that we move to the target date without any interference.

Rev. Sithole: So I think it is extremely important to note that 31st December, 1978, is an extremely important date in the history of this country. Everything has got to be done so that the promise of that date is realized, otherwise we will have a terrible situation here.

Question: One of the things, for instance, that has got to be done in this interim period is that there is still some racial legislation, some racial discrimination which exists in the country. How do you plan to dismantle that, Chief Chirau?

Chief Chirau: Well we want to see the racial discrimination removed straight away now.

Question: So that will be done. One of the first tasks of the Interim Government?

Chief Chirau: Yes, that's right.

Question: Rev. Sithole, let's look ahead to December 31st and let's look at it from the point of view of the white people in this country. Most white people have many fears at the moment about what might happen in this country after December 31st. There are fears about Africanizing their jobs; fears about nationalizing their businesses. Do you think this might happen after December 31st?

Rev. Sithole: No, I don't think so. Those fears are groundless. What we want is to maintain as far as possible what we have got and expand it. What to us is most important is that we create equal opportunities for all. As to how various individuals will exploit the opportunities, that will be entirely their own business. We are not going to have ideologies imported from abroad which bear no relation to the situation here. What we want is to expand what we have so that as many people as possible can have these things. Of course, we do have even now some cases of nationalization — the railways for instance. We are guided by three important questions in our economic approach — for instance how much should a State own so that it does not become a threat to the people. If a State becomes too powerful it becomes a real threat to the freedom of the people. The second question is how much should various communities or collections of people own so that they are strong enough to reassert their integrity against otherwise a threat in state. And the third question is, of course, how much should the individual own so that he is not helpless in the political affairs of the country, so that he can reassert his integrity against the community as well as against the state. In other words we believe in a certain measure of free enterprise.

Bishop Muzorewa: I want to add to what my colleague has said, that is, maybe this is too blunt for some people, but we have been watching those who have their independence around us who did nationalize all the things that were going on in their country just for the sake of nationalizing, and we have seen the results that we would not want to repeat here. And if at all we are going to be wise and learn by the mistakes and the foolishness of other people we would not in this country nationalize for the sake of

nationalizing. Now there are people here, for instance, who do not realize, especially those outside, that we have come this far in the development of our country to the point that we are now classified as a semi-industrialized country. This is because two communities contributed to what they could. Those with the capital, expertise, labour and all that and this far we have reached and we must be very careful whoever comes to the leadership of this country must be very careful to progress from that steadily, rather than to disturb it and find that we become a banana republic.

Rev. Sithole: I want to add a little bit on this. I want the whites of this country to trust us as we trust them. This country was built by two, black and white. When the white comes to this country they brought money and skills. Africans of this country provided labour and built this country to the state which you see today. We don't want to push the whites away. We want the whites in this country to call this country their mother's country. I don't see why they say that with this change they so fear — why? What they have done? What's wrong? I don't see. It's only the Government that we want to put it right because the Government has been in minority hands. We want the Government to go to majority. There is nothing to do to try to push one another out. It is not so.

Question: I think the fears of the whites are probably based on the examples in the rest of Africa. Rev. Sithole you have travelled extensively of course in black Africa — why have they failed and you think you will succeed?

Rev. Sithole: I think although it is unfortunate that we have not become independent up to this day, yet in many ways this fact alone has been a blessing in disguise in that we have seen the mistakes of our own independent African countries and therefore we have learned one thing — what to avoid so that we will not spoil our own country, and also what to do so that our country gets better and better from one period to another. Now we have come to realise more clearer than ever before that political leaders are not necessarily industrial leaders or commercial leaders or financial leaders, so that we have become even more humbled that when it comes to industry we accept the fact that we are not captains, as politicians, of industry. What we seek in this country is the co-operation of captains of industry and finance so that our own role will be a little more realistic than the roles other preceding politicians have taken on.

Question: Bishop, if we go back to the British six principles, one of them was that any agreement must be acceptable to the people of Rhodesia as a whole — now how do you propose to set about proving to yourselves and to the world this agreement is acceptable to the majority of the people of this country?

Bishop Muzorewa: We think that by an election time when the people will have known what constitution we are putting before them that will be one way of testing the acceptability of the agreement. Now this question is being raised a lot inside and outside. If people feel, and if it becomes necessary that we should have an exercise of some kind, of testing the acceptability of what we have agreed on, as far as we are concerned we have nothing to fear. We could consider very seriously and hold some kind of a referendum, something like that, or another Pearce Commission sort of thing if that is necessary. As far as we are concerned from what is going on now my colleagues have been holding meetings and we had a rally last week, and so forth, and we have a general consensus of how things are going, how people are accepting this agreement, so that we are not really worried about it.

Question: Do you consider, for instance, the size of the crowd that greeted you when you returned from overseas as being a tacit acceptance of the agreement?

Bishop Muzorewa: That is correct.

Rev. Sithole: Yes, I think the people as a whole accept the Agreement. For instance, to refer to the Bishop's crowd that went there to greet him, they are extremely interested in the agreement. I have had two big rallies, one in Umtali and one in Chiredzi and I have asked specifically the question — hands up those who accept the agreement. Of course, without exception hands have gone up. I have asked the question: "Hands up those who would like the war to stop?" without exception hands went up. I have asked the question: "Hands up those who would like to see our sons and daughters return from the bush?" without exception hands have gone up. I must say this Agreement has not only the support of the civilian population, but it has also the support of the guerillas. We have received information from various sources regarding the full support — after all the only reason why they have been fighting has been majority rule on the basis of 'one man one vote'.

Chief Chirau: And I have done two tests on this question. I have done one in a political way and I have done one in traditional

way. Let me start in the political way. We have started to test our people from the grass roots. In branch level they have come to Central Executive, and National went through. Then I come to traditional way — we start from sabuku and their villagers. Then we go to the headmen and I get OK and I go through the Chiefs and they say OK. I go to the Council of Chiefs, they say OK. I don't see the reason we can give another test again like a referendum. Well the Bishop says that if there is then still a feeling that we must hold it there is no fear about it. We can do it but we know our people are behind us. They are going to support it.

Question: Do people in the tribal areas really understand the agreement, Chief Chirau?

Chief Chirau: Yes, we told them. We told them what we are doing.

Bishop Muzorewa: I think this question all the time from outside, people want to under-estimate the people in the rural areas. When the Home/Smith settlement proposals came here we thought the rural people will not know anything about this, they are going to accept it, but they were shocked. They understood enough to reject, and similarly this time they understand enough to accept it, so there is no problem.

Question: Rev. Sithole, what do you see as the main difference between the Salisbury Agreement and the Anglo-American recommendations contained in the British White Paper?

Rev. Sithole: Basically, the two documents agreed amazingly in most respects. The only basic difference is that the Anglo-American proposals would like to see power transferred to a dictator, not to a group of men, whereas the Internal Settlement Agreement transfers power to a group of men. That is the only fundamental difference. Otherwise, on such points as a justiciable Bill of Rights, majority rule on the basis of one man one vote and an independent judiciary and other things of that nature we agree completely. Now the only reason we are against this Interim Government as put forward by the Anglo-American proposals is that too much power is put in the hands of one man and, as Lord Acton once said: "All power corrupts, but absolute power corrupts absolutely."

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