
Documentation

British Lords Demand Zimbabwe's Demise

Britain's not-so-noble House of Lords held a "debate" April 3, on how to dispose of Zimbabwe. The quotes in the following article are taken from the House of Lords Hansard, the official record. The full debate can be found at www.publications.parliament.uk.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), **Lord Mark Malloch-Brown**, responded to comments and questions put to him by the Lords. He began by reading **Foreign Secretary David Miliband's** statement of the day before to the House of Commons, which ends, "Lord Malloch-Brown and I have been in touch with Presidents, Prime Ministers, and Foreign Ministers in southern Africa, and around the world. There is an international consensus that the will of the Zimbabwean people must be understood and respected."

Later in the debate, Malloch-Brown took it upon himself to define the "will of the Zimbabwean people": "With a leader who has ruled in the way that President [Robert] Mugabe has for the past 28 years, it is impossible to conceive of him winning unless there were a massive effort to steal the election result."

Lindsay Patricia Granshaw, Baroness Northover, of Cissbury in the County of West Sussex, emphasized that Zimbabwe is on Britain's regime-change agenda, saying, "We cannot let Zimbabwe slide into chaos. Could the Minister assure us that, even though we have pressing concerns in Iraq and Afghanistan, we will not let Zimbabwe slide down the agenda? How does he think we should balance the claims of those in the old regime?... On the other hand, does he think it better for them to be inside, rather than outside, wishing any new regime ill?"

She continued: "Last year, the FCO gave us a full and im-

pressive briefing on the plans of the international community for a post-Mugabe era. Could the noble Lord [Malloch-Brown] update us on those plans? The *Guardian* reports that 1 billion pounds [actually dollars] in aid is likely to go to Zimbabwe. Can he confirm this?..."

Malloch-Brown: "The estimate is that the absorptive capacity of Zimbabwe in these early stages will probably rise to \$1 billion next year.... It is expected that Britain will play a major part in providing the finance for that...."

South Africa's Mbeki Gets His Orders

Frances Gertrude Claire D'Souza, Baroness D'Souza, Companion of the Order of St. Michael and St. George: "My Lords... does [the Minister] agree with the view expressed by Archbishop Desmond Tutu that now is not the time for quiet diplomacy, and that every possible and very strong representation should be made to [South African] President Thabo Mbeki at this time?"

Malloch-Brown: "The Prime Minister has spoken to Mr. Mbeki and will speak to him again, to re-emphasise the need for consistency in finishing what he began. He can take credit for having begun the change in Zimbabwe. We will press him to be a prominent leader, both in public and private, and ensuring that he finishes that work." [Prime Minister Gordon Brown's meeting with Mbeki occurred on the weekend after the debate.]



Lord Malloch-Brown, U.K. Minister for Africa, Asia, and the UN

Daphne Park, Baroness Park of Monmouth: "My Lords, does the Minister agree that we have left the decisions too long to SADC [Southern African Development Community]?... I hope that the Secretary of State, who said that he would be approaching the new head of the Commonwealth at the appropriate time, will regard this as the appropriate time. It is a time when the Commonwealth can do a great deal. Those African states are members of the Commonwealth. I do not think that it is right... that one part of the Commonwealth should make decisions for all of it. If the Commonwealth, as a whole, observed the next round of elections, or the next situation, that would be a considerable reassurance to the people of Zimbabwe, who have recognized that local considerations—and African ones—have worked against them in many ways. There can be nothing to stop us bringing in the whole Commonwealth—after all, there are Zimbabweans in Australia, New Zealand, and Canada."

'We' Must Have the 'Right People' Involved

Baroness Park: "[I]t is extremely important that we have the right people involved in the UN. Unless the present head

of the UNDP [UN Development Programme] is withdrawn, there will not be very much confidence in the UN's role in the future of Zimbabwe. Two successive UNDP leaders have been far too close to Mugabe, and indeed, in one case, have taken land from him. It will be extremely important to create confidence among the people of Zimbabwe ... but it will be the right people. I propose having Anna Tibaijuka [executive director of the UN Human Settlements Program] as the UN commissioner. ... We will move into the Commonwealth and we will bring the UN up to scratch.

Malloch-Brown: "My Lords, I take the point of the noble Baroness about Zimbabwe returning by its own choice to the Commonwealth.... I doubt whether that is likely to occur within the 21 days before a second round in a presidential election, and therefore whether it is practical to have Commonwealth observers in Zimbabwe for a second round cannot be resolved today."

Bill (William) Manuel Morris, Lord Morris of Handsworth: "As I listened to the [Foreign Secretary's] statement, I transported myself to a citizen living in Zimbabwe, who would like to put one or two very simple questions to the Minister. They would say, 'We have tried soft diplomacy but it has not delivered for us. Have you got a plan B?' ... If the answer is yes, what is it?"



Bill (William) Manuel Morris, Lord Morris of Handsworth

Malloch-Brown: "President Mugabe is on the edge; his days are over; the regime is finished. We are now debating the manner of its ending, not its continuation.... President Mugabe needs to understand that his choices have narrowed to two impossible options if he chooses to go forward: a second round in an election that he would surely lose, now that his political mortality and autocratic rule have been pierced by an inevitable second-place finish in the first round; or the option of trying to steal the election. The position of the SADC leaders, the position of the international community more generally and the position of the people of Zimbabwe ... rule that out. He faces departure from office. We must ensure that we say and do nothing that gives him any wriggle room."

British State 'Almost Hysterical'

Michael Goodall Watson, Lord Watson of Invergowrie: "What plans will the Government make as a contingency—so-called plan B—if the people are not given the outcome of the election that they have claimed?"

Malloch-Brown: "My Lords, we are determined to make sure that, if the election goes to a second round, President Mugabe will not with military or any other help be able to

steal it. Were he to do so, he would confront an international community more united and determined to end this farce than ever before...."

Early in the debate, **Malloch-Brown** said, "There is often a complaint that in the Lords we do not have an audience. Today, we do. I shall quote from this morning's Zimbabwean newspaper, the *Herald*: 'Almost the entire British state machinery—from the BBC to its House of Commons—was almost going hysterical over the delay in announcing the election results by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission.' Apparently, the debate yesterday in the other place [the Lords' obligatory term for the House of Commons] was broadcast live in Zimbabwe and repeated throughout the evening. Therefore, as we discuss the issue today, we do so under the burden that [Mugabe's government] will fall on anything that we say to try to [create] ... a diversion about whether the British are 'up to it again.' Therefore, ... we need to pick our words carefully and avoid anything that can feed these last-minute tactics...."



Michael Goodall Watson, Lord Watson of Invergowrie

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