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FROM SALISBURY 281645Z FEB 80
TO IMMEDIATE FCO
TELEGRAM NUMBER 871 OF 28 FEBRUARY 1980

Read in full
M

INFO IMMEDIATE CAPE TOWN (PERSONAL FOR AMBASSADOR).

RHODESIA.

1. RENWICK SAW NKOMO AT HIS REQUEST TODAY. NKOMO'S MAIN PURPOSE WAS TO TALK ABOUT THE POSSIBILITIES OF FORMING A GOVERNMENT AFTER THE ELECTIONS. RENWICK ASKED HIM WHETHER, IF MUGABE WON MOST SEATS AND THEN SOUGHT AN ALLIANCE WITH HIM, NKOMO WOULD AGREE TO SERVE UNDER HIM, OR AS PRESIDENT. NKOMO SAID THAT HE WOULD NOT: MUGABE HAD BROKEN THE ALLIANCE WITH HIM, AND HAD PREVENTED HIM FROM CAMPAIGNING. NKOMO WAS CONFIDENT OF THE SUPPORT OF MOST OF THE TWENTY WHITE MPS (THOUGH HE KNEW THAT DAVID SMITH AND CRONJE, WHOM HE IS SEEING SHORTLY, STILL FAVOURED THE BISHOP). HE WOULD LIKE AN ALLIANCE WITH THE UANC. THE PROBLEM WAS MUZOREWA: HE WAS NOT ACCEPTABLE ELSEWHERE IN AFRICA. COULD HE BE PERSUADED TO ACCEPT THE PRESIDENCY? IT MIGHT BE DESIRABLE TO INCLUDE SOME ZANU(PF) IN A FUTURE GOVERNMENT. IF NKOMO HEADED A GOVERNMENT, HE WOULD BE CONFIDENT OF SECURING INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT. THERE MIGHT BE A ROW IN THE OAU WITH NYERERE TRYING TO PROMOTE THE INTERESTS OF MUGABE. IF SO, NKOMO WAS PREPARED TO FACE THIS.

2. RENWICK MADE IT CLEAR THAT MY OBJECTIVE AFTER THE ELECTIONS WOULD BE TO DISCOVER HOW A GOVERNMENT COULD BE FORMED WITH THE WIDEST POSSIBLE SUPPORT. IT WOULD BE NO USE REVERTING TO ONE OR THE OTHER OF THE ALIGNMENTS WHICH EXISTED AT LANCASTER HOUSE (MUZOREWA AND THE WHITES: OR NKOMO AND MUGABE). NKOMO TOOK THE POINT. HE CONSIDERED THAT THE ESSENTIAL CRITERION WAS THAT THE NEW GOVERNMENT MUST HAVE A WORKING MAJORITY IN THE ASSEMBLY. RENWICK SAID THAT IT WAS ESSENTIAL THAT IT SHOULD ALSO HAVE A MAJORITY OF THE AFRICAN SEATS. THE GOVERNOR WOULD ENGAGE IN THOROUGH CONSULTATIONS BEFORE DECIDING HOW TO PROCEED.

3. IT WAS CLEAR THAT NKOMO SUSPECTS THAT HE IS LIKELY TO WIN FEWER SEATS THAN MUGABE (DUE IN PART, IN HIS VIEW, TO INTIMIDATION). HE IS CONCERNED TO REACH SOME UNDERSTANDING WITH THE UANC, BUT WOULD BE EVEN LESS DISPOSED TO TAKE SECOND PLACE TO MUZOREWA THAN TO MUGABE. ALTHOUGH HE SAYS HE WOULD REJECT AN OFFER FROM MUGABE SIMPLY TO FORM A GOVERNMENT WITH ZANU(PF), HE PROBABLY WOULD TRY TO OFFER ZANU (PF) SOME PLACE IN ANY GOVERNMENT HE TRIED TO FORM.

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4. IT WAS MADE CLEAR TO NKOMO THAT WHAT I DECIDED TO DO WOULD DEPEND ESSENTIALLY ON THE ELECTION RESULT: BUT THAT I WOULD WANT TO KEEP IN THE CLOSEST TOUCH WITH HIM AND THAT HIS ROLE WOULD BE OF GREAT IMPORTANCE IN HELPING TO UNIFY THE COUNTRY AND ATTRACTING INTERNATIONAL ACCEPTANCE.

5. WE ENCOURAGED NKOMO TO SEND AN EMISSARY TO LAGOS. HE SAID THAT HE MIGHT SEND JOHN NKOMO. HE WILL VISIT THE ZIPRA ASSEMBLY PLACES WITH GENERAL MACLEAN ON 1 MARCH.

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[PASSED AS REQUESTED]

FILES

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