



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

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Rhodesia 7/8/79
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Ramphal mtgs
4 December 1979

Near Rhodesia,

Call by Mr. Ramphal

As you know, Mr. Ramphal, the Commonwealth Secretary-General, called on the Prime Minister yesterday evening to discuss the present situation in the Lancaster House Conference. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary was present.

Mr. Ramphal raised four issues.

The Conference

Mr. Ramphal passed on to the Prime Minister a message from Mr. Nkomo to the effect that Mr. Nkomo recognised that "the bus was on the move" and that he intended to be on it. Of the other members of the Patriotic Front, Mr. Ramphal said that Mr. Tongogara wanted a settlement and that Mr. Mugabe probably did too although he was still "in a dialectic". The real difficulty lay with Mr. Tekere who was still resisting agreement. However Mr. Ramphal was confident that the Patriotic Front would come up to the mark, probably on the following day. He himself would be seeing both Mr. Nkomo and Mr. Mugabe later in the evening and would be telling them that the time for delay was past. Mr. Sule, the Nigerian observer, would be doing the same. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary stressed that the Conference would have to be completed by the end of this week. He hoped that the Patriotic Front were clear about this and that they recognised that the discussions on implementation could only take a few days. Mr. Ramphal thought there would be no difficulty about this. Mr. Nkomo, at least, was desperate to get back to Rhodesia.

South African Involvement

Mr. Ramphal said that the revelation that South African troops were present in Rhodesia had been very damaging. It had caused real concern within the Patriotic Front. They seemed to be alarmed lest the South Africans should remain in the country and should subsequently get hold of planes and bomb them or take hostile action in some other form. Mr. Ramphal said that he had told the Patriotic Front that they had no cause for alarm. A British Governor would not allow the South Africans to remain in the country. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary made it clear that he agreed with this. He had told Mr. Pik Botha that, while

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he had no wish to be informed officially about whether or not there were South Africans in Rhodesia, any troops there should be removed as soon as possible. He was more worried about what would happen if the talks broke down. There was a real possibility that in those circumstances the South Africans would go into Rhodesia.

The Interim Period

Mr. Ramphal said that the Patriotic Front were worried about the role of the Rhodesian Air Force, and in particular of their combat planes, during the interim period. Could the combat planes not be grounded? The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary said that Rhodesian Air Force planes would have to be used during the interim period for communications and monitoring purposes. It was absurd to suppose that the planes would be used to shoot up the Patriotic Front in their assembly areas. The Prime Minister pointed out that there would in any case be monitors in the assembly areas and that it was unlikely that anyone would take the risk of attacking them.

The Commonwealth Observers

Mr. Ramphal said that he had not come to talk in detail about the Commonwealth observers but he had been in touch with the Canadian and Australian Governments and he thought they would agree to participate both in the national and in the collective Commonwealth effort to observe the elections. He thought that the views of a credible Commonwealth group would carry a great deal of weight with the world at large. The present mood of the Commonwealth was in any case helpful and constructive. The group would make it easier to control the views of potentially difficult countries like Nigeria. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary commented that the composition of the group proposed by the Secretary General seemed reasonable.

Mr. Ramphal said as he left the meeting that Mr. Nkomo had asked him to convey to the Prime Minister and the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary his deep sense of appreciation of what they had done in trying to resolve the Rhodesia problem in recent months.

Yours ever

Richard Alexander

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