

CONFIDENTIAL

ge mail
Rhodesia File Pt 11 2
Iran File Pt 2
Kampuchea Oct 79
Sir; base of PM File

RECORD OF A MEETING BETWEEN THE PRIME MINISTER AND UNITED NATIONS SECRETARY GENERAL, HELD AT THE UNITED NATIONS SECRETARIAT BUILDING AT 1145 HOURS ON 18 DECEMBER, 1979

Present:

Prime Minister	Dr. Kurt Waldheim
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs	Mr. Brian Urquhart
Sir Michael Palliser	Mr. Rafi Ahmed
Sir Anthony Parsons	
Mr. G.G.H. Walden	
Mr. M.A. Pattison	

Rhodesia

Dr. Waldheim offered warm congratulations on the success of the Lancaster House conference on Rhodesia. The United Nations had been delighted by the news, and he had cabled a message of congratulation to the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary. Lord Carrington said that there was still an outstanding difficulty. Bishop Muzorewa had now asked for clarification of news media reports of British concessions to the Patriotic Front. He believed this would prove to be last minute nerves. Dr. Waldheim said that the United Nations had received the news of a ceasefire agreement with great enthusiasm. Rhodesia had been a difficult subject for the General Assembly, but the announcement at the President of the General Assembly's lunch of the initialling had been greeted by applause from even the most radical of representatives. The Prime Minister commented that this wholehearted support from all sides had been characteristic since the negotiating process had been set in hand at Lusaka. Everybody wanted success. The right moment had come. This did not mean the problems were over. Battles were never finally won.

Dr. Waldheim said that he hoped the achievement over Rhodesia would have an impact on the Namibian negotiations. The Prime Minister foresaw an impact on the whole of South Africa, and especially on the Front Line States. Dr. Waldheim

CONFIDENTIAL

/ said

CONFIDENTIAL

- 2 -

said that the Front Line states seemed to have been helpful. The Prime Minister said that they no longer wished to play host to the problems of Rhodesia. The success of the Conference was a blow for democracy in the heart of Africa, where democracy was not always in the ascendant. Dr. Waldheim recalled a discussion with President Nyerere in Monrovia in the summer, where the President had assured him that he would press the Patriotic Front if the British were ready to set in hand the negotiating process. The Prime Minister commented that all the Commonwealth leaders had been very helpful at Lusaka. They had even been prepared to respond to her opening statement by redrafting their own prepared speeches to pick up her theme. Work had then gone into a small group, once again proving that plenaries were always too big for worthwhile negotiations. Since then, a great deal of time had been spent on the negotiations. Ultimately, the strategy had proved effective. It was a tribute to the genius of the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and his staff. She recalled the decision to insist on negotiating an agreement on a constitution before allowing discussion of transitional arrangements. Lord Carrington commented that the agreement was still fragile, as that day's pronouncement from Bishop Muzorewa had demonstrated. All parties had been very nervous in the final days of discussion. The Prime Minister added that all the parties had concerns about their own security.

Dr. Waldheim asked how the issue of bases had been solved at the final stage. Lord Carrington said that the Patriotic Front were all gathered on the Mozambique and Zambian borders. He had said that they should be assembled in those areas. The Patriotic Front claimed also to have significant concentrations of men in the centre of Rhodesia. The British Government were aware of only a few there, but had finally offered one additional base, in that area, with an understanding that the Governor would re-assess the situation if it proved that there were greater numbers of Patriotic Front forces in the central area. The Patriotic Front had declared 35,000 men, much more than the

/ British

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

- 3 -

British Government's own information suggested. The United Kingdom estimated the Patriotic Front forces as in the region of 16,000, compared with Bishop Muzorewa's Government forces of about 45,000. Dr. Waldheim said, that for presentational reasons the Patriotic Front may have wanted to claim a figure in that region.

Dr. Waldheim characterised progress on Rhodesia as one positive development in a period of troubles. Washington was now getting very restive about Iran. The new Iranian representative, Ambassador Farhang, had yesterday paid his initial call. He had instructions to explore how the United Nations might be able to contribute to a peaceful outcome of the situation. In the course of their one hour talk, he had floated one new idea. Dr. Waldheim stressed that he was passing this on in the strictest confidence, and that it had not been made public. The thought was that the United Nations could help by sending to Iran a small group of UN Ambassadors, whilst the Iranians themselves proceeded with their plans to establish some form of grand jury. The composition and terms of reference for such a group would have to be very carefully worked out. It would certainly have to include some Muslim representatives. Some names had already been suggested. From Europe there might perhaps be a Nordic representative. The total number should be five or six. Its purpose would be to establish contact with the various forces in Tehran active in the situation. But there would have to be a formal mandate. Ambassador Farhang had insisted that this could not in any way substitute for the grand jury but might be complementary. Dr. Waldheim had stressed that such a group could not be identified with the activities of the proposed grand jury, although it was not impossible to retain the possibility of some form of international inquiry later. He had said that he could consider the idea of a contact group from the United Nations mandated to make contact with the Iranian authorities. Ambassador Farhang seemed open to this possibility. Dr. Waldheim had suggested that such a group, invited by the Secretary General, might even go to Tehran before Christmas.

/ In

CONFIDENTIAL

In the light of its talks, it might be possible for the Iranians to release at least some hostages over Christmas as a gesture. Farhang had not rejected this, but had reported back to Tehran and expected to provide a response in two days. Dr. Waldheim had then reported his conversation to the United States authorities, who did not discourage the proposal.

Dr. Waldheim was expecting a response on 19 December. He was already thinking of a possible composition for the contact group. This could offer a new start to serious negotiations. They had once been in progress, until interrupted by the sudden departure of the previous Foreign Minister. He had already had a number of telephone conversations with the new Foreign Minister. He was, however, worried by Mr. Gotzbzadeh's excessive use of television for pronouncements on the situation. But he clearly wanted a settlement. Ambassador Farhang had told Dr. Waldheim that the Iranian public had to be prepared for the release of the hostages but had underlined that the authorities did not have complete control over the students. The Prime Minister asked how the public could be prepared for the release of the hostages if the authorities were not in control. Dr. Waldheim saw this as a psychological problem. It was a question of putting over an idea. If, for example, a group from the United Nations were looking into Iranian grievances, this could help. There were obvious difficulties in setting this up; but the idea of a contact group from the United Nations, visiting Iran to discuss ways and means of resolving the crisis, was a plausible approach which had not been rejected by the parties. If the next day's answer were positive, he would immediately put together the group, including a U.N. Under Secretary General. He would hope to despatch it before the end of the week. Lord Carrington asked whether the Iranians' own tribunal would be in operation at the same time. Dr. Waldheim said that they were still at the stage of setting that up. There might have to be parallel action. The Prime Minister

/ said

said that such a United Nations group could only go to Iran with the declared purpose of negotiating for the hostages' release in line with the decision of the International Court of Justice. Sir Anthony Parsons commented that the Iranians could well find this unacceptable.

Sir Michael Palliser asked whether the United States had indicated what limits they wish to establish on the activities of the group. Dr. Waldheim thought that the group might be able to invite some of the hostages to give their views on the situation, as a result of which those witnesses might be expelled from Iran. He had said to Ambassador Farhang that it was difficult to see how the hostages could be expected to give evidence after a long period of inactivity, handcuffed and blindfolded by day. The Ambassador had said that they were no longer treated in this manner. Dr. Waldheim had insisted that there should be an understanding about the release of some of the hostages before Christmas.

The Prime Minister asked whether anyone knew what the students really wanted. Her fear was that the Ayatollah Khomeini was not in control. Dr. Waldheim's sources indicated that Khomeini did still have ultimate authority, and that the students would - if reluctantly - obey his instructions. A United Nations group would have to have guarantees that Khomeini would see them and perhaps that they would see some of the hostages. The United States concern was that such a group could be exploited by the Iranians. This was why results would need to be demonstrated, in the form of some early release of hostages, to pre-empt any risk of the group being seen purely as an adjunct to the Irani tribunal. There might have to be some follow-up to the group's work - perhaps in the form of a commission of international jurists. But one need not exclude the other. The Iranians knew that their tribunal would not be taken seriously at the international level.

CONFIDENTIAL

- 6 -

The Prime Minister commented that any commission of inquiry would be a dangerous precedent. If there was justification for one, it would be easy to find justification for 50. The ideas outlined by the Secretary General were not attractive in themselves, but she appreciated that they might be the only available tactical approach. She herself found it disturbing to think of a Russian or Hungarian involved in such a group. Dr. Waldheim acknowledged the problems. The Americans would also be sensitive about terms of reference. At the outset of the crisis, they had been desperately looking for any way to respond. Now their approach was a little more restrained. Within the United Nations, the African group had proved to be against any commission of inquiry, although the United States would have been ready to go along at an earlier stage. The Africans could see risks for themselves. They were happy to leave the ball in the Secretary General's court. He saw the contact group idea as the best way out of the immediate dilemma.

The Prime Minister wished it was possible to be clear what the students required. If the motive was purely vengeance, it was impossible to see a way out. Sir Anthony Parsons feared there was nothing more subtle in their motives. The student label was certainly misleading. His personal guess was that the captors were Mujaheddin, an extreme right-wing religious group whose leaders had never surfaced when operating as guerillas in the Shah's day, and still remained anonymous. Now they simply wanted to get the Shah back. The movement would maintain some kind of balance with Khomeini, and in the end they would probably not want to undermine his authority. Within the approach outlined by the Secretary General, the key would be a most careful briefing of the contact group. Dr. Waldheim said that he would of course select a very experienced group. He acknowledged the need for the most careful preparation. He saw the Iranian praise at the Shah's departure from the United States - characterising it as an Iranian

/ victory -

CONFIDENTIAL

victory - as a step in the process of preparing Iranian opinion for the eventual release of the hostages.

Lord Carrington asked how long the United States would be prepared to hold back on other moves if a contact group were established. The Security Council resolution had been ignored as had the judgement of the International Court of Justice. Dr. Waldheim said that they would give it a week. His most recent discussions with Mr. Vance suggested that Americans would be prepared to give this last opportunity a chance. If it failed, then they would move for Chapter 7 sanctions. Lord Carrington asked whether the Americans would be able to carry a Chapter 7 determination in the Security Council. Dr. Waldheim was uncertain. On 15 December, Mr. Vance had spoken to him of preparing the ground for a Council meeting in view of the conflicting reports of the mood in Tehran. He had asked Mr. Vance to wait a few days. With the contact group idea now being explored, the Iranians could accuse the US of trying to undermine this approach if the US were to press for a sanctions resolution now. Sir Anthony Parsons commented that a resolution adopted with the minimum nine votes would in practice be an Iranian victory. A Chapter 7 determination would need at least 13 votes to achieve worthwhile pressure on Iran. He knew of one non-permanent member of the Council who seemed certain to abstain. Dr. Waldheim commented that a Security Council vote would be awkward for a number of countries. Initially everyone had been prepared to support the United States on such a grave violation of international standards. But sanctions were a different proposition. There were now noises of unease from some countries, and he felt that the USSR might not go along with sanctions. The situation had become very emotional, and a number of countries might consider that sanctions might not work. The Prime Minister commented that the situation was now worse than at the outset. Its familiarity, after 6 weeks, might lead some people to lose sight of the true horror.

CONFIDENTIAL

- 8 -

The Prime Minister said that, if President Carter was to hold back whilst a contact group went to work, he would need to be able to justify his delay in public. Dr. Waldheim replied that this was why he had insisted on the need for some hostages to be released before Christmas. He had even prepared a letter to Khomeini drawing attention to the recent ~~suspension~~^{postponement} of the ~~General Assembly~~^{Security Council} out of respect for holy days in the Muslim calendar and suggesting that the release of hostages would be a mark of respect and understanding for the Christian festival of Christmas.

The Prime Minister asked what the Iranians could find acceptable now that the Shah could not be returned by the United States. Dr. Waldheim found it difficult to assess this. Recognition by the international community of Iranian grievances against the past regime might meet the need. Sir Anthony Parsons commented that it was not the Iranian style to meet half-way in negotiations if they were already getting concessions. He commented that an ideal member of a contact group would be Ambassador Salim, whose credentials were ideal, as a young Muslim African with a radical background.

The Prime Minister observed that Dr. Waldheim was in the centre of a wide range of problems. But the Iranian one was of a type and seriousness which had not been encountered for a long time. Dr. Waldheim said that there was a particular problem in the absence of real interlocuters. The Prime Minister returned to her concerns about the objective of a contact group in Iran. But she acknowledged its value for the refugees as a reassurance to them whilst it was in Iran. Lord Carrington commented that it would add respectability to a very unrespectable event. Dr. Waldheim concurred. The Prime Minister added that once the group had gone to Iran it could not come out with nothing achieved. Lord Carrington said that there would have to

/ be

CONFIDENTIAL

be some understanding about results before the group departed. Dr. Waldheim said that the International Community had to use whatever avenues were open, especially in a situation where the true source of power and authority was obscure.

Kampuchea

Dr. Waldheim reported that the Thai Prime Minister had cabled him the previous day to ask for permanent observers to be placed in the border area. He could not respond to this without Security Council authority, although he always tried to be flexible in such requests. In this case, the USSR would obviously use the veto. As he had told Mrs. Carter, the only course open to him was to increase the humanitarian personnel in the area, to give a greater sense of UN presence.

Dr. Waldheim drew attention to a growing dispute involving UNICEF, the Red Cross and Washington. The US Administration claimed that their intelligence revealed the diversion to Vietnam and to its military forces of relief supplies. The Executive Director of UNICEF, Mr. Labouisse, had returned from the area a week ago, and had not found this true for the bulk of supplies. Labouisse believed that the USSR was not sabotaging distribution. They had in fact been helpful, for example with transport. Dr. Waldheim's own view was that something over half the supplies were reaching the civilian population, whilst the rest were going to Kampuchea and Vietnamese forces. The Prime Minister interjected that this was a very large proportion. Dr. Waldheim had no proof. His assessment was based on impressions.

Dr. Waldheim referred to a proposal to establish a demilitarised zone in western Kampuchea. The Vietnamese had said that they were ready to cease attacks on the 2-300,000 people in the border area, but could not accept a demilitarised zone

/ because

CONFIDENTIAL

- 10 -

because they wanted to retain the freedom to attack remaining Pol Pot forces. The Prime Minister commented that this was a strange argument. In a recent conversation with the Indonesian President, she had been told that Pol Pot was still quite strong. The fighting season had now restarted. Dr. Waldheim had had a report that day from Sir Robert Jackson, who had just returned from the area. He had found the Vietnamese now in a holding position, not attacking. Dr. Waldheim hoped that in the future he would be able to organise a peace conference as had been suggested, but the time was not yet right.

The meeting concluded at 1230.

MA

19 December, 1979.

CONFIDENTIAL