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PRIME MINISTER'S CONVERSATION WITH THE LORD PRIVY SEAL:  
1300 HOURS: SUNDAY, 13 JANUARY, 1980

LPS I would have rung before, but I wanted to have a word with Robin Renwick who's just come back.

PM Yes, I gathered he's on his way from one of the telegrams.

LPS Although I, like you, I suspect, am strongly in sympathy with what Peter proposes, Robin thinks that to put it in what's in paragraph 4 - quite as starkly as that - would produce considerable danger of Walls blowing up and refusing to cooperate and God knows what else. So he would favour turning that down.

PM Turning the opening words down?

LPS No no, it's the 3rd sentence of paragraph 4.

PM One moment. 3rd sentence. "This must be" - the one starting there?

LPS Now it's for consideration - we can either send it as it is, and it's up to the Governor to object if he thinks it's impossible to carry out, or we could tone it down a bit. Peter's ringing me between 2 and half past from Riyadh.

PM It doesn't quite answer the Beit Bridge stuff I'm so worried about, because you can't have a bridge over half a river.

PLS I agree. But the thing about Beit Bridge is that it focusses attention on the whole problem.

PM Yes it does. But tell me, can't Walls provide someone for the other end of Beit Bridge?

LPS Well of course he could, but it's just that he's being unreasonable. I mean it's become a sort of psychological issue for him.

PM Well in that case, can we please persuade Walls to provide someone else. I rather gathered from something or other, Ian,

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that there are only 30 at the other end of Beit. Well surely he can provide that.

LPS Well of course he can. But it's this, being so blooded-minded and hysterical.

PM Blooded-minded and hysterical. There's too much at issue Ian. Is there any point in you going out?

LPS Well I don't know. I don't think so. Robin thinks ..... can be dealt with after a bit, but to tackle Walls head-on now might provoke an explosion and a refusal to cooperate. And jeopardise all that's been achieved. As I say, our alternative seems to be either to send the thing as it is, and if Christopher really feels that, he can telegraph back.

PM I doubt whether he will.

LPS Or to tone down the consultation with Peter, tone down the instructions a bit, i.e., so that aiming to get Beit Bridge settled well before the Election but not this week, and getting the action on the rest, not necessarily total removal, but.

PM Ian, I think we've got a problem now. You've seen the letter I've had from Ramphal. You've seen what every other wretched person has said, and it's all on television. We've got a problem now, and the problem is a perfectly simple one. It looks as if we are not honouring Lancaster House. Now we must honour Lancaster House, and that's that. Precisely how it's done is a matter for you and Peter and Robin and Tony Duff and Christopher to work out. But if ever you dishonour any clause of Lancaster House, the whole thing falls.

LPS I agree of course. But technically Beit Bridge dishonours Lancaster House.

PM Well not the other end of it. One end's on their territory. We can't tell them what to do.

LPS But the ones in Rhodesia are dishonouring it.

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PM Yes. But that's only 30. Surely they could get 30 people down there.

LPS On any grounds of rationality there's no problem but they're not being rational.

PM This is a matter of persuasion. Surely Tony Duff could persuade him to do that. I mean, there's so much at stake. I myself would have dealt with that end of Beit Bridge first, because that's what they're coming at us about.

LPS But the other is <sup>potentially</sup> the/more explosive.

PM I agree. The other is potentially more explosive. But the Beit Bridge is the tricky one at the moment, isn't it. Don't you think we'd better show willing immediately on something?

LPS Show willing.

PM Yes, by removing the South Africans at the Rhodesian end of Beit Bridge.

LPS I'm strongly in favour of that, but as I say, the advice from Robin is that Walls will blow a fit at that.

PM If he's told, yes. If he's asked, specifically?

LPS But I think he might blow up even more if we just did it through the South Africans without telling him.

PM Ah, but I didn't think there was anything like that involved. He would, and he'd say what's going on behind my back? Therefore it is far better, as a matter of trust, to do it with him.

LPS But this I say is what is worrying Robin, that it might make him blow up and say to hell with you, like - I don't know whether you've seen one or two of the telegrams - I think we'd better call the whole thing off. He's behaving like a child in my view. So one can't be certain that he won't behave like a child.

PM There's something very strange. Something must have

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unnerved him very much. I tell you what it is, it's the success of the Patriotic Front when they return.

LPS Yes, but that was bound to happen.

PM Because of the novelty?

LPS Yes. Saying such silly things. Like the situation is worse than it was before the ceasefire, which, you know, at least 10 times better.

PM But Ian, I wouldn't get too worried about these things. Look, I don't half toss off some pretty sharp things, and so does Peter sometimes. No one suggests we mean them.

LPS Well I rather take that view, but he seems to be. So you'll be in favour of sending it as it is, and let Christopher.

PM Just let me have a look at that first sentence. I would say we feel this should be done now. We feel that in the interests of everyone this should be done now.

LPS We feel in the interests of everyone this should be done now.

PM Yes.

LPS As I say, that is my instinct.

PM The greater the delay. You can let it be known that that is my view is well. But never never never put the whole thing in issue for 30 bods.

LPS I quite agree, but unfortunately, as I say, logic doesn't prevail among these people. I think I quite agree.

PM No, but sense might, when he's calmed down, and when he knows that it's a specific request.

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LPS            Shall I, as Peter's ringing between 2 and.

PM            I'm here.

LPS            Shall I tell him what you think and hold the telegram till then?

PM            Yes I think so. Now the other thing, Ian, I felt was that the message which it was suggested I send to Mugabe was a bit offside. I didn't half turn it down at the beginning, but don't forget - you've seen that, have you? That's the one that would be out in the world press even though it's only oil and can be misconstrued, and I really think we'd better get that absolutely right. What we were doing there was saying everything at Beit Bridge is justified. It's not troops, it's preservational communications links.

LPS            Yes, it's both, isn't it?

PM            It is, but the preservational communications link really ought to take place with South Africans at one end and Rhodesians at the other. It is perfectly justified to preserve a communications link; not merely perfectly justified, but vital.

LPS            Yes, but the troops are there too. You think we went too far?

PM            I think it was a bit naive. And I think that it would cause. I think it's far better, in view of what you are going to send today, to say that of course we're absolutely concerned that Lancaster House Agreement must be honoured in full. One end of Beit Bridge is in South African territory; the communications link must be preserved, but we're looking into things at the other end.

LPS            Well I'm not sure the message hasn't gone, that's the only thing.

PM            Well I don't know; that's why I got on this morning,

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when I got the other 2 telegrams this morning. But for heaven's sake, whatever we are Ian, don't let's be naive. Or deceptive.

LPS The thing is, we've sent a flash telegram to Papadopoulos to find out whether it's gone or not.

PM Yes, well this is why I got onto Tim Lankester this morning to say in view of the other two telegrams I really think that what we've sent to Mugabe won't necessarily stand up, and it must stand up.

LPS Yes, fine.

PM Any Ian, I'm here till I return to No.10.

LPS Well I hope I won't have to trouble you again, but if I do I will.

PM Thank you. 'Bye.

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ABJ  
Duty Clerk  
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