



PRIME MINISTER'S
PERSONAL MESSAGE
SERIAL No. T129/79T

PRIME MINISTER

CANBERRA

29 OCT 1973

My dear Prime Minister,

What has been achieved so far at Lancaster House in the talks chaired by Peter Carrington will go down in history as a magnificent achievement. So many past efforts to settle the Rhodesia problem have - tragically - ended in failure, but the present talks hold out much more hope of success than any of the earlier ones. You and your Government have gone far indeed to bring to fruition the promise of Lusaka, and in this you know that you have our full support.

I made clear in a message passed to your officials through Australia House two weeks ago that we would gladly do anything we could to help the talks progress to an acceptable settlement. That message was prompted by concern that there was some risk of a failure on constitutional issues. Happily, those aspects are now resolved and there is agreement on what is clearly a fair and genuine black majority constitution.

Your Government's fundamental strategy in the talks - namely, to achieve agreement first on a constitution in order to create an atmosphere which would facilitate subsequent accommodations on the more difficult questions of pre-independence arrangements - has been outstandingly successful.

As the conference now tackles these more difficult issues, and as a result of reports we have had from our High Commissioner in London, I thought it might be useful if I set out the feeling we have about them and their relation to the agreement we reached at Lusaka.

The first point I wish to make concerns the pace of the conference. There has been an initial exchange of views on arrangements. I know you will have in mind that it is most important that there should be ample opportunity now for the fullest elaboration of the views of all parties and for exploration through all possible means of ways in which they might be developed and, where necessary, modified. Andrew Peacock has already told your High Commission of the difficulties for us and others if you were to decide after a comparatively short discussion of pre-independence arrangements that agreement could not be reached on them with the Patriotic Front delegation and to implement them without that agreement.

As to the actual arrangements proposed so far I should like to make a number of points. In making them I am very conscious of two fundamental points agreed on at Lusaka:

- . that the search for a settlement must involve all parties to the conflict; and
- . that the Government to be formed must be chosen through free and fair elections properly supervised under British Government authority and with Commonwealth observers.

As I see it there are many ways in which "British Government authority" can be manifest; I can understand some of the concerns which have been expressed about the need to involve all parties to the conflict, and I believe it should be possible to find ways of accommodating them without any challenge to that authority.

Central to this is the question of security, and the role and status of the Rhodesian armed forces and the forces controlled by the Patriotic Front. I believe that the idea of a United Nations Supervisory Force does not come reasonably within the framework agreed on at Lusaka and that, on the basis of discussions there, ought to be ruled out. However, if the question of supervisory and security arrangements became the sticking points on which final agreement depended, then would it be worth considering a joint Commonwealth group under your Government's authority and direction as a possible way around this problem? My Government would be ready to consider Australian involvement in tasks additional to election observation as part of a joint Commonwealth effort. The possible use of a Commonwealth force has a long history going back at least, I think, to the "Tiger" Talks in 1966. Comments by certain of your spokesmen indicate that you do not rule this out. If you do decide on this course of action, we will certainly study sympathetically any proposals you might put forward, which might include involvement in such a force and observation of the whole transitional process, if this would be helpful.

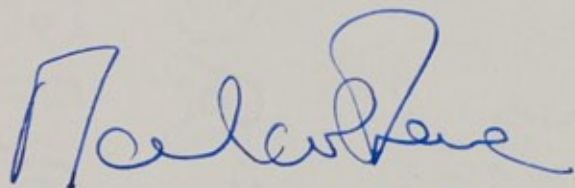
Other points at present at issue should, I believe, be capable of resolution through patient discussion. These include the length of the transition period, which should clearly not be a sticking point in negotiations.

Proposals for a sharing of authority during this period would again seem to me to be quite outside the Lusaka Agreement, which accepted without any question that the arrangements must be under British authority. But I would have thought that a consultative or advisory group composed of the parties principally concerned, but without any executive powers, might be worthy of consideration.

Concerning sanctions, it seems to me that if, following on agreement about the constitution, agreement is also reached on pre-independence arrangements, then what you propose is quite reasonable.

I said at the beginning of this letter that the progress that has already been made is magnificent. You are moving closer to a breakthrough in a problem which has bedevilled the world and brought tragedy and suffering to countless thousands, most of all to the black and white people of Zimbabwe, for long years. If you can achieve this, your Government and the other parties to the talks will have gained a victory which will have enormous significance for the cause of peace and racial harmony in all of Southern Africa and in the world as a whole.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Malcolm Fraser', with a horizontal line underneath.

(Malcolm Fraser)

The Rt. Hon. Margaret Thatcher, M.P.,
Prime Minister of Great Britain,
10 Downing Street,
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UK.