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RECORD OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE PRIME MINISTER AND GENERAL WALLS
AT NO.10 DOWNING STREET ON 6 DECEMBER, AT 1230

Present:

Prime Minister

General Walls

Sir Antony Duff

Mr. M.O'D.B. Alexander

After an exchange of courtesies, General Walls said that he expected the Patriotic Front would try to blame the Salisbury delegation for any difficulties which arose in the discussions of the implementation of the ceasefire. The Prime Minister said that in her view the Patriotic Front, in agreeing to the ceasefire, had crossed the Rubicon. It would be impossible for the Patriotic Front now to go back. For them to agree on the main issue and quarrel on detail would cast doubt on their good faith. She had been struck by the evident sense of relief all over the world at the agreement reached the previous day. Everyone considered that final agreement was now a fait accompli. The Prime Minister stressed that it was now the intention of the British Government to go "all the way through to independence".

General Walls said that he knew that the Prime Minister welcomed straight talking. He had a number of problems. The first was that under the British proposals he was divorced from political guidance. If he obeyed the British Governor, he could not consult Bishop Muzorewa who had agreed to stand aside during the interim. He had welcomed ^{"under the counter"} the scheme for the Governor, the Prime Minister, and the present military Commanders to consult together during the interim. He envisaged this as a means of ensuring that their actions would be consistent with the policies of any incoming Government - always assuming that that Government was a moderate one. Even so, two months was a long time for him to be without direct political guidance. Even one month would be a long time. He

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SECRET

SECRET

- 2 -

was very conscious of the responsibility which rested on his shoulders to ensure that the future of Rhodesia was protected. Many people had told him that he was being duped by the Prime Minister and the British Government. The Rhodesian people had put their faith in the military Commanders, and in him, and he had to be certain that what he was doing was in the country's interest. He had to be sure therefore of his access to the Governor.

The Prime Minister said that it was her understanding that the Governor would be entitled to summon anyone to see him at any time. This included, of course, both Bishop Muzorewa and General Walls. It was no part of the British Government's intention to reduce the Governor's capability to keep law and order in Rhodesia. The Governor had to be in a position to create the right conditions for the elections. Sir Antony Duff said that he saw no difficulty in principle about access by General Walls to the Governor. Of course, some of the meetings would be informal.

General Walls said that what mattered was that there was no question of his being denied access to the Governor, and no question of his having to go through others to obtain that access. The Prime Minister confirmed that this was so. She said she would make it clear to Lord Soames both orally and in writing that he must have direct access to the Governor just as the Chiefs of Staff had direct access to her in this country. Moreover, General Walls should on occasion be present when the Governor was seeing Bishop Muzorewa. As far as Rhodesia was concerned, the British Government had but one objective: to bring Rhodesia to independence. It was clear that the country's capability to maintain law and order, exercised through the Governor, had to be maintained.

/ General Walls

SECRET

SECRET

- 3 -

General Walls said that he had taken the easiest of his problems first. He had often been told that previous Rhodesian leaders, like Sir Roy Welensky and Sir Edgar Whitehead, had been duped by Britain's methods of leading them on. He was concerned that a British Governor, under domestic and international pressure, might start wavering when it came to acting in the interests of Zimbabwe-Rhodesia. In reply to the Prime Minister's request for an example of what he had in mind, General Walls referred to the possibility of a build-up of guerilla forces in one of the neighbouring countries. If such a build-up reached the point where the future of Zimbabwe-Rhodesia appeared to be threatened, General Walls said that he would hope that the Governor would agree that something had to be done. No doubt the Governor would hope to secure results by the exercise of diplomatic pressure. If he failed, he might be reluctant to envisage a cross-border operation while the military Commanders might want to take pre-emptive action. General Walls said that his critics were taking the line that once the Governor's authority had been accepted, the military Commanders would be prevented from taking such action.

The Prime Minister said she could not say how Lord Soames would react in these circumstances. She had given Rhodesia one of the ablest and strongest people in the British Government. He was not the sort of man who was likely to be intimidated or pressured. Everything would depend on the relationship between him and General Walls. There would have to be a determination on both sides to keep things straight. She could give no further undertakings. But she stressed the degree of her own commitment and the fact that she herself was unlikely to be intimidated. The Government's objective was to carry through the elections, and to bring Rhodesia to independence. They would not hesitate now.

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Turning to the situation inside Rhodesia, which he said was the most difficult problem of all, General Walls said that he knew for a fact that the Patriotic Front did not intend to implement the ceasefire. They would continue to intimidate and threaten wherever they could. He believed that the British Government agreed that this was the case. He had to be in a position to assure people in Zimbabwe-Rhodesia that the armed forces would be able to counter intimidation. The British proposals allowed for a working arrangement whereby the present armed forces could provide protection and make possible the election of a responsible Government. The Governor must be ready to interpret these proposals in the same way as Lord Carrington had done in private conversations with General Walls. If the Governor were to waver on this, and to try to reduce the ability of the armed forces to deal with the terrorists, General Walls would have forfeited the country's chance of survival. It was against this background that Lord Carrington had offered him a piece of paper. Perhaps Lord Carrington should not have offered the piece of paper, but its existence had enabled General Walls to reassure Bishop Muzorewa and the South African Government. The South African Government had been threatening to remove their men from Rhodesia which would, of course, be fatal to the country's chance of survival.

Lord Carrington had subsequently said that the piece of paper could not be given to General Walls and was now saying that there could be no piece of paper at all. He had also changed his position on the question of South African assistance to Rhodesia. Originally, he had said that he would encourage the South Africans to support Bishop Muzorewa's Government. Now he was saying that there must be no identifiable South African units in the country. If, as a result of Lord Carrington's new position on the question of a South African presence, the Governor were to give instructions for the withdrawal of the South Africans or to lay down conditions on their employment, then "we'd be finished". If it was no longer

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SECRET

- 5 -

possible for him to have the piece of paper, General Walls said that he had to be 100% sure that the contents of the paper nonetheless represented the intentions of the British Government.

The Prime Minister said that the future of Zimbabwe-Rhodesia was at stake. So was the reputation of Lord Soames. So was her own reputation. Lord Soames had made a considerable gesture in agreeing to put his reputation at issue. She did not put her faith in pieces of paper. She put her faith in people. She shared with General Walls an immediate interest in the future of Zimbabwe-Rhodesia, since members of her own family lived there. She shared a larger interest in that she regarded the future of democracy in Southern Africa as being at stake. Her commitment was total. It was no part of her intention to reduce the capability of the only disciplined force in the country to maintain law and order there. General Walls and Lord Soames would, she was confident, be able to work out how to ensure that law and order was kept. General Walls, she repeated, should be in no doubt about her commitment. She regarded Zimbabwe-Rhodesia as being in the front line of the defence of the Western way of life. It was ^{this} on/commitment, rather than in a piece of paper, that General Walls would have to put his faith. He could be assured of her continuing close interest in what was happening. Lord Soames and Sir Antony Duff, and through them General Walls, would be able to get in touch with her whenever they wished to do so.

General Walls said that he also did not put his faith in bits of paper. What the Prime Minister had said was good enough for him. It was fine.

The discussion ended at 1300 hours.

6 December, 1979.

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