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10 DOWNING STREET

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PRIME MINISTER'S
PERSONAL MESSAGE
SERIAL No. T143/79T

THE PRIME MINISTER

14 November 1979

Dear Mr President

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Pmt

Many thanks for your message of 5 November, which has encouraged me to feel that there is a great deal of common ground between us in our approach to the Rhodesia problem. I note that you still feel that the period we envisage for the electoral process is too short. The British Government has always taken the view that the independence constitution should be implemented as soon as is consistent with the holding of free and fair elections. Their starting point was that the election period need not last more than four to six weeks. But they have taken account of the strongly held views that it should be longer, in eventually deciding that it should run for two months from the date when a cease-fire becomes effective. It will take up to two weeks to bring the cease-fire into effect. The election will be held eight or nine weeks after the cease-fire comes into effect.

I entirely agree with you that provisions should be made against possible breaches of the cease-fire. For this reason, we shall be putting forward proposals in the Conference for a Commonwealth monitoring force, to which a number of other Commonwealth countries have now agreed in principle to contribute. This will provide all parties with reassurance that the maintenance of the cease-fire will be impartially observed and controlled. With the agreement of the parties and of the contributing countries, this force could play a stabilising role in resolving military questions which could arise after elections and before independence.

/Following

Following intensive discussions with President Kaunda, I gave him a paper which sets out fully our views on the way ahead. I am asking our High Commissioner to give you a copy of this paper for your strictly personal information.

I am convinced that we now have a set of proposals for the interim period which will be fair to all parties. I very much hope that the Patriotic Front will agree to participate in the elections.

With best wishes,

Signed

MT

His Excellency Alhaji Shehu Shagari.