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TO IMMEDIATE F C O

TEL NO 121 OF 15 FEBRUARY

INFO IMMEDIATE SALISBURY

Read in full.

RHODESIA: POLITICAL SITUATION

1. PIK BOTHA CALLED ME IN YESTERDAY EVENING FOR WHAT TURNED OUT TO BE A WIDE-RANGING AND EARNEST DISCUSSION OF THE SITUATION IN RHODESIA. HE BEGAN BY ASKING ME HOW WE THOUGHT THINGS WERE GOING. I SAID THAT AS HE WOULD KNOW INTIMIDATION BY ZANLA/ZANU HAD REACHED SERIOUS PROPORTIONS IN PLACES, BUT THE GOVERNOR HAD TAKEN VARIOUS STEPS TO PUT A STOP TO IT. I HAD PREVIOUSLY SENT HIM DETAILS OF THE ORDINANCES AND THE PROBLEM AREAS AND HE SAID THAT THE CABINET HAD NOTED WITH APPROVAL HOW FIRM LORD SOAMES WAS BEING. I THEN SAID THAT THE LAST THING WE WANTED TO DO WAS EITHER TO BAN MUGABE AND ZANU ACROSS THE BOARD FROM TAKING PART IN THE ELECTION OR TO POSTPONE THE ELECTION ITSELF. HE REPLIED WITH SOME FORCE THAT HE ENTIRELY AGREED: IT WOULD BE CALAMITOUS TO DO EITHER.
2. PIK THEN CAME TO THE IMMEDIATE POINT HE WANTED TO PUT OVER. HE ADDED THAT HE WAS DOING SO AT THE WISH OF THE PRIME MINISTER, THOUGH WHETHER THIS IS REALLY SO OR HE WAS SAYING IT TO IMPRESS ME I AM NOT SURE, AS HE IS APT TO SAY THIS FAIRLY OFTEN. IT WAS, HE SAID, VITALLY IMPORTANT TO BRING MUZOREWA AND NKOMO TOGETHER AND NOW WAS THE TIME, WITH SMITH TEMPORARILY OUT OF THE COUNTRY, TO DO IT. MUZOREWA WAS IN FACT DOING RATHER BETTER THAN HE HAD BEEN OF LATE

MUZOREWA WAS IN FACT DOING RATHER BETTER THAN HE HAD BEEN OF LATE, BUT HE COULD NOT CARRY THE DAY ALONE. HE MUST BE BROUGHT TO THE POINT OF SOMEHOW LETTING NKOMO KNOW THAT HE (NKOMO) COULD HAVE THE PRESIDENCY AND SOME CABINET SEATS IN A COALITION. WHAT WAS NEEDED WAS NOT AN OPEN AGREEMENT BUT A PRIVATE UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE TWO OF THEM. NKOMO PROBABLY BELIEVED THAT HE COULD GET THESE THINGS WITH MUGABE, BUT HE WAS NOT SURE WHAT MUZOREWA WOULD OFFER HIM. TOGETHER THEY WOULD CERTAINLY GET MORE SEATS THAN MUGABE. THE SOUTH AFRICANS HAD LEVERAGE ON MUZOREWA AND WOULD BE EXERTING IT NOW, BUT THEY WERE NOT IN A POSITION TO WORK ON NKOMO. COULD WE NOT FIND SOME DISCREET WAY PREFERABLY THROUGH A BLACK INTERMEDIARY OF GETTING NKOMO INTERESTED IN THE IDEA OF AN UNDERSTANDING WITH MUZOREWA? IF WE (AND THEY) COULD NOT BRING THEM TO MAKE THE FIRST STEPS TOWARDS A RAPPROCHEMENT, THEY WERE UNLIKELY TO MAKE THEM ON THEIR OWN AND WOULD GO ON CIRCLING ROUND ONE ANOTHER. WE MUST OF COURSE BE CAREFUL TO AVOID EVEN THE SLIGHTEST HINT THAT WE WERE ACTING IN UNISON. INDEED THEY WOULD PROBABLY TELL MUZOREWA "NOT TO SAY ANYTHING TO THE BRITISH".

3. PIK SAID THAT THIS WAS ABSOLUTELY CRUCIAL FOR THE FUTURE OF RHODESIA AFTER THE ELECTION. HE HAD NO DOUBT THAT COME WHAT MAY THE FIGHTING WOULD START AGAIN THEN. IF NKOMO AND ZIPRA COULD BE DEFINITELY DETACHED FROM MUGABE AND BROUGHT INTO THE GOVERNMENT, MUGABE AND ZANLA COULD BE DEFEATED. IF NOT THERE WOULD BE CIVIL WAR AND CHAOS, THE WHITES WOULD STREAM OUT OF RHODESIA AND THE RUSSIANS' SURROGATES WOULD BE TEMPTED TO MOVE IN. IT WOULD BE ANOTHER AFGHANISTAN. WHAT WOULD WE DO THEN? WOULD WE SEND IN TROOPS? WHAT WOULD THE S A G THEMSELVES DO? COULD THEY AFFORD TO STAND BY AND LEAVE THE WHITES IN THE LURCH? COULD I IMAGINE WHAT EFFECT IT WOULD HAVE ON PEOPLE HERE IF THEY SAW PICTURES IN THEIR NEWSPAPERS OF WHITES BEING KILLED AND RAPED WHILE THE S A G DID NOTHING?

4. PIK SAID THAT HE WAS TRYING TO THINK OUT ALOUD; AND HE DID NOT PRESS ME FOR ANSWERS TO HIS STRING OF "WHAT IF" QUESTIONS. I SAID THAT I COULD NOT IN ANY CASE GIVE HIM ANY CUT AND DRIED ANSWERS: WE COULD NOT PROVIDE FOR EVERY CONTINGENCY. WE WERE CERTAINLY AVERSE TO SENDING IN TROOPS, HE MUST KNOW THAT. I COULD UNDERSTAND THE S A G'S PREDICAMENT AS HE HAD DESCRIBED IT. PERHAPS WE SHOULD THINK ABOUT THE WHOLE PROBLEM FURTHER AND DISCUSS IT AGAIN? PIK SAID THAT IT UNDERLINED THE NEED FOR EARLY DISCUSSIONS AS HIS PRIME MINISTER HAD PROPOSED, AS WELL AS THE URGENT NECESSITY OF BRINGING ABOUT THE UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN NKOMO AND MUZOREWA WHICH HE HAD MENTIONED EARLIER.

5. THROUGHOUT THE CONVERSATION PIK WAS IN A CALM AND REFLECTIVE

5. THROUGHOUT THE CONVERSATION PIK WAS IN A CALM AND REFLECTIVE MOOD. INDEED HE EVEN SAID THAT IT WAS A TIME FOR US ALL TO REMAIN CALM - EXCLAMATION MARK. FOR GOOD MEASURE HE ADDED IN A FRIENDLY WAY THAT HE THOUGHT THE GOVERNOR WAS BEING UNFAIRLY ASSAILED ON ALL SIDES BY THE PRESS AND HE COULD NOT HELP WONDERING WHETHER WE WOULD NOT IMPROVE OUR PUBLIC RELATIONS IN RHODESIA IF WE COULD GET A FRIENDLY JOURNALIST OR TWO TO REPORT IN DETAIL WHAT LORD SOAMES WAS UP AGAINST WITH ZANLA. WHAT WAS NEEDED WAS THE PUBLICATION OF SPECIFIC INSTANCES OF INTIMIDATION, IF POSSIBLE WITH SOME PICTURES. I SAID I WOULD PASS THIS IDEA ON.

COMMENT

6. MORE THAN ANYTHING I GOT THE IMPRESSION THAT PIK IS NOW GIVING ALL HIS ATTENTION TO THE POST-ELECTORAL SITUATION AND IS INTENSELY WORRIED ABOUT IT. AS WELL HE MIGHT BE, FOR THE S A G COULD EASILY BE FACED IN THE VERY NEAR FUTURE WITH APPALLINGLY DIFFICULT DECISIONS. IF WE ARE TO INFLUENCE THEM IN THEIR THINKING, THE EMISSARY FOR WHOM THEY HAVE ASKED SHOULD COME HERE SOONER RATHER THAN LATER, ASSUMING THAT IT IS IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S MIND TO SEND SOMEONE. AT THE SAME TIME WE SHOULD BE IN NO DOUBT THAT IN THAT EVENT P W BOTHA WILL USE THE OCCASION TO TRY TO DRAW US INTO FURTHER COMMITMENTS IN RHODESIA THAT WE DO NOT WISH TO MAKE. BUT AS SEEN FROM HERE IT IS HIGHLY DESIRABLE THAT AT LEAST WE SHOULD BOTH PUT OUR CARDS ON THE TABLE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

LEAHY

x Sz: A. Botha will pay another visit to S. Africa very shortly.

NNNN

IMMEDIATE