

OFFICE OF THE COMMONWEALTH SECRETARY-GENERAL  
MARLBOROUGH HOUSE · PALL MALL · LONDON SW1Y 5HX

Mufaxed to Chequers  
Copied to FCO

18.00  
12.1.80  
ABJ.

12 January 1980

Rephys...  
[Signature]

My dear Prime Minister,

I am writing out of deep concern. The prize of peace and a democratic solution in Rhodesia is close at hand and your contribution to it has been monumental. But despite major achievements and a level of success with the ceasefire that exceeds even the most optimistic forecasts, there is now a grave and present danger of its collapse, or of even worse disasters.

Two factors above all others are contributing to this. First, a situation in which the use of the Governor's 'reserve' power to call on either the Patriotic Front or Rhodesian forces to aid the civil power has produced a result that is widely understood as allowing the latter, including the highly politically partisan 'auxiliaries' to be 'at large'. The report that a Rhodesian air force strike had actually been ordered against a small number of Patriotic Front forces not yet assembled, and yesterday's killing of others, are clearly not in the spirit of the Lancaster House agreements and understandings. They only fuel the contention that the implementation of the ceasefire and the administration of the transition is not even-handed. It is in this latter area of loss of confidence that, perhaps, the greatest threat to success lies.

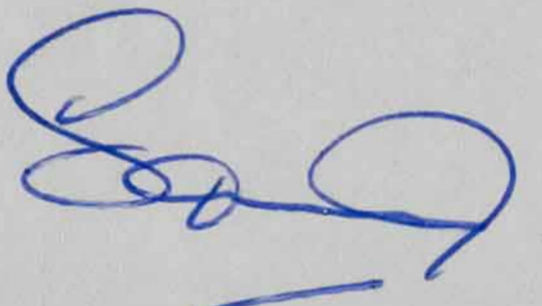
The second factor of danger is the continued presence of South African forces in Rhodesia despite the clearest assurances to the contrary given by the British government to the Patriotic Front - assurances which were critical to securing agreement to the ceasefire proposals and, therefore, to the Lancaster House agreements in general. As you know, they were assurances I helped to convince the Patriotic Front leaders they could accept as a sufficient guarantee of implementation. But my personal embarrassment is as nothing compared with the sense of outrage their open breach has predictably produced in Africa. It adds further

.....2

The Rt. Hon. Margaret Thatcher M. P.  
Prime Minister of Britain  
Prime Minister's Office  
No. 10, Downing Street  
London S. W. 1

pressure to the strain on confidence that I referred to earlier, quite apart from the spectre of South African 'intervention' that it inevitably raises.

I know, of course, how difficult is the Governor's role; but it will become altogether untenable unless we speedily improve the situation. I have not been pessimistic in the past. I ask you to believe that I write now only because I sense massive dangers. The Commonwealth, the Front Line states in particular, want to help. The story since Lusaka has been one of steady achievement through collective Commonwealth effort - achievement which would not have been possible without such teamwork. We could fail even now if we fail to hold the team together. I appeal for your personal help to sustain it.

*Yours sincerely,*  


Shridath S. Ramphal