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Rhodesia

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

14 May 1979

Dear Stephen,

Rhodesian Elections : Report of UK Observers

Following this morning's meeting of OD, the Prime Minister asked Lord Boyd of Merton to call on her at No.10, at 1700, in order to give her a summary of the report which he, as leader of the team of observers sent by the Conservative Party to witness the Rhodesian Elections, would be submitting on 16 May. The Prime Minister wished to have this information before referring to Rhodesia in her speech in the Debate on the Address tomorrow.

Lord Boyd made the general comment that he and his colleagues had found race relations in Rhodesia to be better now than at any time they could remember: the outcome of the white referendum on the constitution had produced a dramatic effect. Ian Smith himself still presented a problem; it was important that he should at least be seen to be preparing to depart. The Prime Minister commented that Ian Smith would be unlikely to give up until he was quite certain that the new Government would be recognised. Lord Boyd said that Smith was still living in the Prime Minister's residence, which was a pity; Bishop Muzorewa could not in any case resume office until 1 June. It was also essential that David Smith should be persuaded to withdraw his resignation and stay on as Finance Minister, so that the portfolios on defence and law and order would go to black Ministers, as they must.

Lord Boyd gave the Prime Minister a copy of the conclusions of his report and I enclose the text. He said that he and his colleagues were agreed that the Elections had been fair, judged by the strictest western criteria. Their fairness had not, in his view, been affected by the fact that Nkomo and Mugabe had not participated, since this had been their own choice. So far as the freedom of the Elections were concerned, the curfew and martial law had inevitably imposed certain constraints but they had not, Lord Boyd said, had a material effect on the voting.

Lord Boyd said that there would clearly be a massive and disastrous exodus of whites from Rhodesia if the British Government did not now act on recognition. The Prime Minister told Lord Boyd that the Government were in no doubt as to what should be done but

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were still considering the means to be adopted. The Prime Minister expressed the view that President Banda would be helpful; President Moi might be unhelpful but probably would not be obstructive. President Kaunda, however, posed a problem. Lord Boyd said that all the indications were that Mugabe's position was improving at the expense of that of Nkomo - Mugabe was now given support even within Nkomo's tribal area: this might have a salutary effect on Kaunda and a businessman who knew Kaunda very well had told him that Kaunda was in reality on the side of the British Government.

The Prime Minister asked Lord Boyd if the Government could publish his report, as they would like to do. Lord Boyd said that, provided that two appendices on the psychology of the Africans were deleted, there would be no objection to publication.

The Prime Minister told Lord Boyd of the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary's forthcoming talks with Mr. Vance on 22 May and asked Lord Boyd if he would be prepared to talk to Mr. Vance himself. Lord Boyd said that he would gladly do so if this would be helpful. The Prime Minister also asked Lord Boyd to have a word with Lord Carrington about the forthcoming Foreign Affairs Debate in the House of Lords.

Concluding the discussion, the Prime Minister said that the Government would have to engage in thorough consultations before taking action on Rhodesia. It was clear that sudden recognition of the regime would result in an adverse and damaging reaction against the United Kingdom on the part of black Africa.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Martin Vile (Cabinet Office).

Yours ever,
Roger Carrington.

Stephen Wall, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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