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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

WJ/VL/B
Rhodesia Sit
cc CO.
Subject Commonwealth -
June 1979 - (Visit of
the Commonwealth
Secretary - General - Mr
18 June 1979 Ramphal)

Dear Sir,

Call on the Prime Minister by the Commonwealth
Secretary General at 10 Downing Street on
18 June 1979

The Commonwealth Secretary General, Mr. Ramphal, paid his first call on the Prime Minister at No. 10 at 1715. Sir Antony Duff was present. The following is a summary of the main points which arose during just over an hour's discussion.

The Commonwealth

Mr. Ramphal said that he could report to the Prime Minister that the Commonwealth was in good shape. Rhodesia presented a special problem but, apart from that, the Commonwealth was at a high level of collective confidence. The period which had been marked by doubts on the part of the new members as to whether the Commonwealth was practicable or useful, and on whether it was still dominated by the UK, had passed; and the general mood was now more confident and relaxed. The public view of the Commonwealth was, however, less satisfactory. There was still a tendency to see the UK's decision to join the EEC as an act of voluntary separation from the Commonwealth, despite the fact that this view was not held to any significant extent, if at all, within the Commonwealth itself. Some countries, such as Australia and New Zealand, had their own problems with the EEC and there were current difficulties over the Lome renegotiation: but there was no hostility whatsoever within the Commonwealth to UK membership of the Community. The Commonwealth was, Mr. Ramphal said, highly valued in the international community, particularly by men like Secretary General Waldheim and Mr. McNamara. They recognised that the Commonwealth community was sufficiently small to make it possible to do business within it but that, at the same time, it had a wide geographical and racial spread. For these reasons, the Commonwealth could draw on an immense reservoir of international goodwill.

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Some remarks by Mr. Ramphal about the nature of the meetings of Commonwealth Heads of Government led into a discussion of the substance of the Rhodesia problem. The Prime Minister said that there would be certain things which she would have to say and do about Rhodesia which she was convinced were right: once the grounds for Rhodesia's illegal status had been purged, certain consequences had to follow. The UK and others had recently recognised a number of African regimes - for example, Uganda and Ghana - who did not owe their authority to any kind of democratic elections and whose constitutions were in no way superior to the present constitution of Zimbabwe/Rhodesia. At Lusaka, all those concerned would have to put forward their respective views on Rhodesia; but, the Prime Minister said, it would be important to avoid a heated argument about the issue. Mr. Ramphal said the Front Line Presidents would tend to argue that the First Principle had not yet been fulfilled and that Rhodesia did not in fact enjoy majority rule; President Carter's determination would have reinforced them in this view. Lord Harlech's mission might, Mr. Ramphal said, contribute to a good climate for discussion and perhaps point the way forward. Mr. Ramphal emphasised that the Front Line Presidents, even President Machel, had a very real concern lest developments in Rhodesia could lead eventually to the strengthening of Soviet influence in Southern Africa.

The Prime Minister expressed the view that President Machel was not particularly well placed to talk about Soviet influence. In the eyes of the ordinary British citizen, there was now no reason for not helping Bishop Muzorewa. If he were not supported, the war would intensify. Rhodesia could contribute so much to the region, not least to Zambia, and the British Government had a duty to bring Rhodesia back to legality and to lift sanctions. When Mr. Ramphal suggested the the Front Line Presidents might take the line that the war should first be ended by discussions leading to a ceasefire, the Prime Minister pointed out that some of the Front Line Presidents were harbouring terrorists on their territory. The Prime Minister recalled President Kaunda's statement to her that "force was the only way". The Prime Minister stressed that the British Government was confronted by a problem of timing: sanctions would lapse in November since there was no way in which Parliamentary approval could be won for their renewal. The Prime Minister said that her fear was that the talks in Lusaka would get nowhere and that positions would then harden on all sides.

/Mr. Ramphal

Mr. Ramphal said that he thought that the Front Line Presidents were taking their discussions with Lord Harlech very seriously: none of the Heads of Government wanted the Lusaka meeting to be another Singapore - they did not wish the fabric of the Commonwealth to be damaged. Mr. Ramphal explained that he thought that the other Heads of Government would react positively to a frank explanation by the Prime Minister, in restricted session, of the Parliamentary dimension to the Government's handling of the Rhodesia problem although they would, of course, respond by describing their own political difficulties on the issue. Sir Antony Duff said that he thought that the Front Line Presidents were genuinely concerned that a solution should be found but that the issues had been totally obscured by emotion and by their hatred for Mr. Smith; since 1976, they had seen no way of making progress except by means of force. A thorough political discussion in restricted session at Lusaka could create an easier relationship which would be valuable to the UK when the Government did what it would have to do. The Prime Minister said that it would be important to show the African Heads of Government that she was not simply waiting to recognise Bishop Muzorewa's regime as soon as the Lusaka Conference was over. In further discussion of Rhodesia, the Prime Minister stressed that it would be important to give Bishop Muzorewa some kind of support and encouragement in order to strengthen him against the possibility of a Marxist Zimbabwe under Mugabe. The Prime Minister made it clear that there could be no accommodation with terrorism of any kind: she was not prepared to accept arguments to the effect that what could not be achieved politically should be achieved by the bullet. When Mr. Ramphal said that he thought that the Patriotic Front would be more interested in negotiation than in the continued use of force, the Prime Minister commented that they were only interested in negotiations if they were confident of ending up on top. Mr. Ramphal said that President Nyerere would take the view that there would be a better chance of keeping Marxism out of Rhodesia by reaching a settlement now, even if Robert Mugabe were to become President.

C.H.G.M.

Mr. Ramphal told the Prime Minister that he would be sending her a letter about the procedure for the C.H.G.M.. He explained the importance of the restricted sessions at these meetings. It would be important to choose the right moment to begin the discussion on Rhodesia. The Prime Minister agreed that this part of the debate could best begin once a good relationship had been established on other issues; her own preference would be to tackle Rhodesia on the Friday afternoon. Mr. Ramphal strongly agreed with this approach

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and said that he thought that President Nyerere would be the best opening speaker in the discussion on Rhodesia; he could be relied upon to tackle the matter in a balanced manner and to set the tone for what followed. Mr. Ramphal said that the Conference would then adjourn for the weekend but that there would be opportunities on Saturday and Sunday for bilateral discussions from which he hoped that some convergence of view would emerge. He had been urging President Kaunda to take the chair for the discussion of Rhodesia, in the hope that the duties of chairmanship would act as a constraint on his sometimes emotional approach.

Mr. Ramphal went on to say that he hoped that the Prime Minister could agree to be one of the four speakers who would respond to President Kaunda's speech of welcome to the participants on the first day of the meeting; the other speakers he had in mind were Mr. Malcolm Fraser, President Zia of Bangladesh and, if he attended the meeting, General Obasanjo of Nigeria. The Prime Minister said that she would be prepared to make one of the opening speeches, provided that her speech could be the last of the four. She said that she appreciated that Mr. Ramphal was trying to be helpful to her in making his proposal.

Mr. Ramphal said that after the opening session, which was the only public occasion during the meeting, there would be a general debate on the international political situation, which he hoped Mr. Desai would open; this would cover such topics as detente, disarmament and the changing power structure in the world. On the Thursday morning, there would be a specific debate on the problems of South East Asia, including those of Indo-China, the policies of the "new" China and of the Vietnamese refugees. He had been intending to ask the Malaysian Prime Minister to open this debate but in view of recent developments doubted whether he would now be suitable. Mr. Ramphal said that he hoped that the Prime Minister would take part in this debate and say a word about the problems of Hong Kong. These debates, together, would take the meeting up until the afternoon of Friday, 3 August and the discussion of Rhodesia could then begin. Other political topics which would be tackled at the beginning of the following week were Belize and Cyprus. These would be followed by an economic debate, to be opened by Mr. Fraser and in which Mr. Manley would speak on the deficit situation in the l.d.c.s. Mr. Ramphal said that he hoped that the Prime Minister would tell the meeting, during this debate, about the Economic Summit in Tokyo. Finally, Mr. Ramphal said, there would be a number of functional issues to discuss: follow-up to the Bangalore Meeting on industrialisation, multilateral aid programmes and, Mr. Ramphal suggested, the phenomenon of the micro-states.

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I should be grateful if Mr. Ramphal's suggestions for the Lusaka agenda could be borne in mind in the preparation of the draft list of briefs for the C.H.G.M..

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

Yours ever,
Bryan Cookson.

J. S. Wall, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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