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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

3 December 1979

*Dear Michael,*

The Prime Minister's Meeting with the Commonwealth Secretary-  
General: Rhodesia

When the Prime Minister sees Mr Ramphal this evening he is likely to wish to discuss Rhodesia.

The Prime Minister could explain that Lord Carrington's statement of 28 November was designed to deal with most of the concerns raised by the Patriotic Front and that we are very disappointed that, despite this, the Front have not so far accepted the ceasefire proposals.

Mr Ramphal may raise:-

(a) South African forces in Rhodesia: It has been made clear to everyone concerned that we do not envisage external intervention in Rhodesia under a British Governor.

(b) The Rhodesian Air Force: This will be effectively monitored.

(c) The Disposition of the Forces: There will be reciprocal disengagement. It will be for the Rhodesian forces to make the first move by disengaging to enable the Patriotic Front forces to assemble. What happens thereafter will depend on the success of the assembly process. It will not be possible to achieve an effective ceasefire and the deployment of the monitoring force if a significant proportion of the Patriotic Front forces remain in the field with their arms. If the assembly process is successfully completed we envisage

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that the dis-engagement will be complete and the ceasefire fully effective.

Mr Ramphal is also likely to raise with the Prime Minister his strongly held view, for which he has some support from other Commonwealth Governments, that the Lusaka agreement implied that the Commonwealth observers of the Rhodesian elections should be formed as a single team organised by the Commonwealth Secretariat and reporting through it to Commonwealth Governments. Mr Ramphal has proposed to us that a Commonwealth observer group should be formed, perhaps under the leadership of B K Nehru (former Indian High Commissioner in London) with representatives of some of the following countries: Australia, Barbados, Canada, Jamaica, Cyprus, Sri Lanka or Malaysia, Papua New Guinea or another Pacific country, Sierra Leone, Kenya, Mauritius and Nigeria. He would like to attach a back-up staff of 150. On the face of it, Mr Ramphal's proposed group appears to be about as moderate a line-up as one could reasonably expect. However, there is a danger that operating as a group it would arrive at a consensus view harmful to our position: the moderate, non-aligned members of the group would not wish to stand out against the strongly held views of, for example, Jamaica and Nigeria; and Canada and Australia would be loath to divide the group by producing a minority report representing only the "old" and white Commonwealth. We cannot stop Mr Ramphal from sending his team (though we can perhaps persuade him that the figure for back-up staff is wildly inflated); but if we stand firm in treating Mr Ramphal's team as only one among several groups of Commonwealth observers, reporting independently and with equal status, we should be able to persuade Australia, New Zealand, and possibly Canada and one or two others to stand out from the Ramphal exercise.

We have therefore made it clear that we cannot accept an exclusive team or that any team organised by Mr Ramphal can be regarded as producing the sole authoritative Commonwealth view. The Prime Minister may wish to reiterate to Mr Ramphal that we are inviting all Commonwealth countries which wish to do so to send observers to the elections and the election campaign. We understand that some Commonwealth countries are likely to send separate teams. If other Commonwealth countries wish to join together to send a single team, that is for them to decide; but it is unfortunately the case that the Commonwealth Secretariat cannot be regarded as impartial as between the internal African leaders and the Patriotic Front (whom they have been advising throughout the Conference). Furthermore any joint team will have to be kept to manageable proportions: and will have to be

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treated on the same basis as groups of observers from individual Commonwealth countries. It cannot have a special status. The numbers that the Governor will be able to cope with are limited, and he will have to decide what will be possible in practice.

*yours ever*  
*Roderic Lyne*

(R M J Lyne)  
Private Secretary

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