

**January 21, 1980**

**Telegram, From Salisbury, Secextern Cape Town,  
Meeting with Nkomo about RSA Troops and  
Electoral outlook**

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**Summary:**

Overview of meeting with Nkomo and his concerns about the stationing of South African forces in Rhodesia, specifically Beit Bridge. An overview is then provided of the major black parties competing in the upcoming elections.

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NO. K. 41

As has been telephonically envisaged, I met Nkomo Saturday evening. Also present were Cephass Msipa (a member of his Executive Committee) and Stroebel.

Nkomo went straight to the point and said that he was worried about the South African troops at Beit Bridge. He said that he was aware of other troops in Rhodesia, but that it did not worry him and that moreover they were under Rhodesian command. He does not understand why South Africa insists on keeping the troops at Beit Bridge—it is not to the advantage of Rhodesia or to the advantage of South Africa. On the contrary, it could be to our disadvantage on international scene. Moreover it could also have the effect that this presence would be exploited, especially by the African states, to oppose recognition of the new Zim. because the election, due to the presence of foreign troops, could be interpreted as being not free.

My reaction to this was that the troops, amongst other things, are there with the approval of the British and that we want to safeguard the bridge and thus keep our trade route open not only with Rhodesia, but also with Zambia, Zaire and Malawi, and added that in spite of prevailing attitudes with Zambia we nevertheless export that country's copper and import mealies there. To this Nkomo replied that neither he nor Mugabe would ever take steps to blow up the bridge. He added that it is just as important to him to keep the bridge open—on the contrary, he wanted to see that the facilities at the bridge were improved, that the bridge is widened. For the same reason he had also not blown up the Chirundu or Victoria Falls bridges. It is not in the interest of Rhodesia.

Upon this I mentioned our concern about possible SA ANC and/or SWAPO actions, and mentioned that he was quoted in the press as having said that he would house these two groups after Zim became independent and that he would assist them in their actions against South Africa. He categorically denied this and assured me that under him [his leadership] Zim. would not be used as a base for terrorists against South Africa. He is, however, willing, as is recognised by international custom, to harbor fugitives from South Africa, but nothing more. The supply of arms to any group that would be aiming attacks against South Africa is completely excluded. At this stage he suggested that in the best interest of both countries our troops be taken just over the bridge. Thus a highly emotional question would be defused. I suggested that in his public speeches he could perhaps make a contribution to such a defusing by placing less emphasis on the troops. He replied that he himself did not wish to speak about it in public, but that his people expect him to take a stand on the matter. Besides, he added, the references that he had made up to now about the troops are on a reasonably low profile scale, but in such a way that His Honour the Minister gets the message from him—the Minister will, according to Nkomo, know exactly how he (Nkomo) thinks because they understand each other very well. His utterances [statements] are therefore of such a nature that they are meant for the ears of the Minister in the hope that the message is received and the necessary action taken.

Nkomo then enquired about His Honour the Prime Minister's attitude in respect of Rhodesia and the party that wins the election. In this respect he said that according to reports the Prime Minister had said that if the PF comes into power, South Africa would take military action and put the Bishop in office. I categorically denied this and referred to the Prime Minister's reply to a question during a press conference on 22 November 1979 in Johannesburg when he intimated that South Africa will accept the decision of the Rhodesian population in a free, democratic election. He was reassured by this. I undertook to supply him with a copy of the speech.

In general he said he foresaw that the future Zim. and South Africa would extend relations. He is a realist and does not foresee that it could be otherwise. He

specifically referred to our education system and praised it. I added that South Africa could also contribute much to the technological development of Zimbabwe. He referred to the excellent objectivity of Radio RSA's reporting, but said that the news commentary is not conducive to good future relations and asked whether I could possibly be of assistance in this respect. I undertook to give attention to the matter.

At this stage he also referred to Mugabe and said that the latter had already belittled him on various occasions. He (Nkomo) is no communist. (According to him he had his entire education in South Africa and through UNISA and is Southern African orientated). He believes that neither is Mugabe a communist—he is a Catholic—but uses Marxism to further his ideal. Also he (Nkomo) had to make communistic noises from time to time because both of them (Nkomo and Mugabe) got their support from Eastern Bloc countries. For his part, however, it is far-fetched to think that Zim. would be communist orientated. He is a realist and as a realist he realises that he has to live as a capitalist state with South Africa, and in good neighbourliness. He would very much like to meet His Honour the Minister again, but there is now too little time. It is now too close to the election and such a meeting, he feels, should rather be held in Europe after the election.

I also made use of the opportunity to explain our internal [domestic] relations to him. He listened attentively and expressed the hope that South Africa's problems would be solved. He said he realised it was a complex situation and he did not wish to prescribe to us how we should solve our internal matters. We have, according to him, the best human material [manpower] in Africa.

In my opinion the meeting went well—Nkomo also regarded it as very useful. We -arranged to keep contact.

Following is text of telegram No. 33 from Salisbury: SECRET, NO K 33

As has been envisaged in last paragraph of my no. K 28 and 33 (Pretoria) tentative evaluation of prospects in election of the various political parties follows.

#### General

It will be remembered that next Parliament will be constituted of 20 Whites (separate election for them will be held on 14 February) and 80 Blacks (election on 27, 28 and 29 February). For the Black seats country is divided into 8 constituencies [electoral divisions] and voting takes place on party lists. In each district the party therefore places a number of names of its candidates corresponding to the number of seats for Parliament which have been allocated to the specific district on the basis of estimation of the number of voters of the district. If a party draws less than ten percent of the total (estimated number) of votes in the district it gets no representative for the district.

Parties that draw above ten per cent of total votes then divide the number of seats amongst them on the basis of percentage of votes received.

#### Participating Parties UANC (Bishop Muzorewa)

It is the only party with a relatively effective party organisation which can function on a country-wide [national] basis and can activate all the voters. It has set a modern publicity campaign in motion and gives the impression that it opposes PF (ZAPY) REPEAT (ZAPU) and ZANU (PF) effectively. The positive aspects of Bishop's Gov. since taking office, and fact that Bishop has brought peace is being projected effectively. Bishop himself comes across more positive and aggressive. Influence of his 'Man of

Peace' must not be underestimated. If cease-fire holds as at present appears and election is held on free and fair basis, he ought to gain majority of people.

Governor clearly showed that intimidation amongst others by ZANLA will not be tolerated. Continued intimidation by Mugabe followers could have result that Governor disqualifies Mugabe—although this will only be done as extreme measure. Intimidation cannot be eliminated completely, but it will be borne in mind that Bishop has nearly 30 000 auxiliary troops (SFA) who are specially trained to cope with counter-intimidation.

Bishop's greatest potential support comes from cities industrial and mining areas and white farms that represent 60 per cent of registered voters and it stands to reason that certain pressure can be exerted on these people to support UANC, and intimidation can also be more easily restrained than in TTL areas [Tribal Trust Lands] where former terrorists enjoy their greatest support (due to intimidation). If intimidation is restrained there, and that is quite possible because majority of terrorists are now in assembly points under monitory powers, UANC (and other democratic parties ) could expect greater support there. It also depends whether the RF (whites in businesses, industries and farmers) give their support to the Bishop, i.e. assist with transport, winning over, etc. as in previous election. Ian Smith's attitude at present is to remain neutral. Thus he hopes to keep his options open and to prevent the Bishop from achieving such a big majority that he can act completely independently from whites.

We must, however, still see what impact Mugabe's return has on the nation. So far he continues his threats, which, in my opinion, cannot add to his enhancing his support and exposes him to attacks from the parties that want peace. His methods at present therefore prejudice his prospects rather than improve them.

The UANC does not have great support amongst the Matabele, as has also been proven in April 1979 election. Nkomo will gain majority of seats there, with possible 2 by UANC in Bulawayo (where they stand) and Midlands.

Indications are that Bishop and UANC's positions are strengthening. Where previously, at the time of London Conference and after, I had doubted that Bishop would get absolute majority I am now more optimistic. Present indications are that UANC can definitely gain the majority of seats, namely between 40 and 50, with positive strong campaign. Minister David Smith is in agreement with this estimation.

Bishop informed me this morning that lack of funds is seriously hampering his campaign.

ZANU (Sithole)

Sithole's campaign has not yet quite got off the ground. Meeting addressed by him was poorly attended. He has lost much of his support of the April election through his prevarication and accusations of irregularity committed by UANC, and the fruitless court case (which he will formally withdraw next week). There are, however, indications that Sithole will draw support from Mugabe's terrorists who are disappointed with Mugabe's "sell-out" ["surrender"] instead of a triumphant entry into Salisbury. Nevertheless I do not believe Sithole can gain more than four or five seats.

UNFP

The party is purely tribe orientated and Ndiweni's support in the April 1979 election was given to him solely because he is Ndebele. Nkomo has, however, greater status and support than Ndiweni who is tribal chief but no politician. Nkomo will draw virtually all Ndiweni's support to himself. As traditional tribal chief, however, he enjoys more support amongst the rural people in the Matabele tribal areas and he might gain one or two seats. Ndiweni himself said he might gain half a dozen seats from Nkomo as a result of Nkomo's cruelties towards the people, but I doubt that he has that much support.

#### ZDP

All indications are that Chikerema's campaign draws little interest, apart from his own people, the Zezuro. It will be remembered that Mugabe himself is Zezuro, and so is Chinamo, Nkomo's adjunct. Chikerema therefore has strong opposition within his own tribe and little or none on national level. I believe he cannot gain more than a few seats (2).

#### NFZ

Now stands under leadership of P-Mandaza (a previous lieutenant of Ndiweni, who still maintains good relations with Ndiweni and the UNFP). Mandaza claims the resignation of Mawema from the party (he joined the UANC) is to the advantage of the NFZ. As has already been reported, NFZ lays claim to the support of the Karanga tribe. (Karanga is 32 per cent of population). Mugabe's terrorists heavily infiltrated Karanga area in south-east of country, especially because his forces consisted mainly of Karanga. Tongogara, former commanding officer of ZANLA was Karanga. Allegations are that Mugabe had him killed. Support for Mugabe amongst Karanga is therefore doubtful, especially as he is still detaining in Maputo (or has already murdered) more Karanga leaders like Hamadziripi, Grumbo and Taderera. NFZ and UANC are exploiting these uncertainties.

If NFZ launches strong campaign it can obtain amongst Karanga only a significant number of votes, which would be at the cost of Mugabe especially (and not of the Bishop). Mandaza has obtained, as I have heard from a reliable source, funds from overseas, but these are not sufficient. Because his role is important in discrediting Mugabe amongst Karanga, his success will largely determine the number of votes for Mugabe. Nevertheless, time (and finances) are a problem and NFZ can hardly gain more than five seats of which possibly one in Salisbury on account of large concentration of Karanga here. UNFP and NFZ now collaborate and may therefore unitedly exercise influence and new government.. Bishop writes NFZ off as a joke.

#### PF (Nkomo)

All indications are that Nkomo's esteem as national leader has declined in the past few years and presently he is only accepted as leader by the Matabele. To the Matabele electoral divisions only sixteen seats were allocated, but large number of Matabele also live in urban areas and at mines in Midlands. If we accept that he has all the Matabele tribal affiliations, he can at the utmost gain 18 to 20 seats. As Ndiweni may possibly gain a few seats in the rural Matabele areas, Nkomo's share might be less.

#### ZANU(PF)

Mugabe was the most reluctant signatory to the London settlement and even continues from outside the borders with his threats and intimidation and the ZANLA elements are responsible for most breaches of the cease fire up to now. He was warned by Governor to cease breaches. He has not yet indicated when he is going to

return to fight election. Only when he arrives in country will impact of his presence, his style and nature of campaign be analysed and a thorough evaluation of his chances be made. At present his followers continue with intimidation and threats and, according to observers, allow no peace for people who have had enough of war and only desire peace. If a free and fair election, without intimidation, can be held and he can be called to account for his misdeeds over the past years, observers believe that he could make no impression on the electorate. Sithole is competing strongly for his votes and if Mandaza can succeed in getting the Karanga campaign off the ground Mugabe will run into difficulties. At this stage I would not like to go further than to make a guesstimate, namely that he might possibly gain in the region of 15 seats.

For the rest a few insignificant domestic parties remain such as NDU, ZUPO, (headman Chirau), United Peoples Association of Matabeleland, which will receive no support worth mentioning from the electorate and should, for all practical purposes, not be taken into account.

Finally, may I remark that spot-checks by "Gallup" polls amongst the electorate cannot be made so easily as in more sophisticated communities. Preceding evaluation, however, based on best sources available to us. My view is basically optimistic. If no unforeseen incidents influence the course of events, cease-fire holds and is strictly enforced by Governor so that intimidation is eliminated, Muzorewa could obtain sufficient support to defeat Mugabe convincingly in election.