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TO IMMEDIATE F C O

TELEGRAM NUMBER 282 OF 25 MARCH

INFO CAPETOWN, PRETORIA, GABORONE, LUSAKA, MAPUTO, WASHINGTON  
AND MODUK (DS11).

MIFT: CALL ON MUGABE: MATABELELAND

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1. MUGABE EXPLAINED THE DECISION TO DEPLOY THE FIFTH BRIGADE IN TERMS SIMILAR TO THOSE USED EARLIER BY SEKERAMAYI (MY TELNO 191): EARLIER EFFORTS HAD BEEN UNSUCCESSFUL, AND THE LEVEL OF DISSIDENCE WAS UNACCEPTABLE, NOT LEAST THE KIDNAPPING OF FOREIGN NATIONALS. THEY WERE ACUTELY EMBARRASSED BY THEIR EARLIER INABILITY TO DEAL WITH IT. HE WENT ON TO SAY THAT IS WAS CLEAR THAT EXCESSES HAD BEEN COMMITTED. HE WAS NOW BEGINNING TO GET SPECIFIC INFORMATION. THE NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS (SEE MY TELNO 178) HAD NOW PRODUCED SPECIFIC CASES. ADMITTEDLY MUCH OF THE EVIDENCE WAS HEARSAY. HE WAS GETTING THE ARMY TO MAKE A THOROUGH INVESTIGATION OF WHAT HAD HAPPENED AND TO REPORT TO HIM: HOW MANY CIVILIANS HAD BEEN KILLED, HOW AND WHY. HE FELT THAT THE PROBLEM WAS NOW CONTAINED, BUT HE MUST AWAIT THE RESULT OF THE ARMY'S ENQUIRIES. (THIS IS NOT PARTICULARLY SATISFACTORY BY OUR STANDARDS BUT IS PROBABLY AS MUCH AS WE CAN REALISTICALLY HOPE TO GET IN ZIMBABWEAN CIRCUMSTANCES: NO PUBLIC SACKCLOTH AND ASHES, BUT MEASURES TO DETER A RECURRENCE.)

2. MUGABE SPOKE BITTERLY ABOUT RECENT COVERAGE IN THE WESTERN PRESS: THEY EXAGGERATE, THEY FOCUS EXCLUSIVELY ON THE BAD NEWS, THEY OVER-DRAMATISE IT, THEY IGNORE SUCCESSES AND EVEN IGNORE THE FACT THAT THE ARMY WHICH THE BRITISH HAVE HELPED TO AMALGAMATE IS HOLDING TOGETHER, ETC. HE SAID THERE WAS ABSOLUTELY NO QUESTION OF THE GOVERNMENT WISHING TO TRAMPLE ON HUMAN RIGHTS, BUT THEY HAD TO TRY TO MAINTAIN ORDER. THERE WAS ALSO ABSOLUTELY NO QUESTION OF A WAR AGAINST THE NDEBELES. THE PRESS WERE FASCINATED BY THE IDEA OF A CIVIL WAR, BUT IT WAS NONSENSE.

3. HE SAID THAT HE WAS MOST GRATEFUL FOR THE UNDERSTANDING AND RESTRAINED LINE WHICH THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT HAD TAKEN OVER THE CURRENT DIFFICULTIES IN MATABELELAND. WE SEEMED TO DIFFER FROM SOME OTHERS IN THAT RESPECT. HE SAID THAT WE WERE NATURALLY VERY CONCERNED ABOUT THE SITUATION, BUT THAT WE WELL UNDERSTOOD THAT PROBLEMS OF TERRORISM, DISSIDENTS, OR GUERILLA UCTIVITY WERE EXTREMELY DIFFICULT FOR GOVERNMENTS TO CONTAIN AND DEAL WITH.

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4. I SAID THAT I WISHED TO MAKE PERSONAL OBSERVATION ON THIS SUBJECT ALSO. I IMAGINED THAT HE WAS UNDER PRESSURE FROM MANY QUARTERS TO TAKE A VERY TOUGH LINE, TO BAN ZAPU, TO DISMISS ZAPU MINISTERS, ETC. I COULD UNDERSTAND THE EMOTIONS WHICH WOULD LEAD TO SUCH SUGGESTIONS, BUT HISTORY WAS FULL OF EXAMPLES OF THE DANGERS TO A <sup>MAJORITY</sup> ~~MINORITY~~ OF SEEKING TO EXCLUDE A MINORITY ENTIRELY FROM THE PROCESS OF GOVERNMENT AND FROM PUBLIC LIFE. I HOPED THAT HE WOULD KEEP IN MIND THE IMPORTANCE OF AVOIDING A LINE OF ACTION WHICH MIGHT CREATE A CONTINUING AND VERY LONG-TERM PROBLEM. MUGABE TOOK THIS WELL. HE POINTED TO HIS PAST RECORD AND SAID HE HAD NO INTENTION OF 'ENMITY' TOWARDS ANY MINORITY. HE WAS KEENLY AWARE THAT THE MILITARY EFFORT MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY A POLITICAL ONE. IN THAT CONTEXT HE HAD VARIOUS MOVES IN HAND. HE HAD RECEIVED A REQUEST TO MEET CHINAMANO, THE ACTING PRESIDENT OF ZAPU, AND WOULD AGREE TO DO SO. HE HAD ALSO AGREED TO A SUGGESTION THAT MISS NGWENA (ONE OF THE ZAPU DEPUTY MINISTERS) SHOULD BRING A DELEGATION OF MATABELELAND CHIEFS TO SEE HIM. HE WAS ALSO IN TOUCH WITH A FACTION IN ZAPU WHICH FELT THAT NKOMO HAD BEEN TAKING TOO RIGID A LINE. CALLISTUS NDLOVU (ANOTHER ZAPU MINISTER) WAS A PROMINENT MEMBER OF THAT FACTION. HE WOULD PURSUE THESE DISCUSSIONS. I ENCOURAGED HIM IN THAT LINE. HOWEVER AS I AM REPORTING IN A VALEDICTORY DESPATCH, IF ANY ACCOMMODATION IS TO BE REACHED I THINK IT WILL HAVE TO BE VERY MUCH ON MUGABE'S TERMS, AND CERTAINLY NOT ON NKOMO'S.

BYATT  
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ZIMBABWE

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TELEGRAM NUMBER 281 OF 25 MARCH.  
INFO ROUTINE CAPE TOWN, PRETORIA, LUSAKA, MAPUTO, GABORONE,  
WASHINGTON AND MODUK.

ANGLO/ZIMBABWE RELATIONS.

1. I PAID A FAREWELL CALL ON PRIME MINISTER MUGABE THIS MORNING. DISCUSSION ABOUT MATABELELAND AND ZAPU IS IN MIFT AND I AM REPORTING SEPARATELY REMARKS ABOUT LONRHO.
2. HE BEGAN BY EXPRESSING SATISFACTION ABOUT THE STATE OF RELATIONS BETWEEN ZIMBABWE AND BRITAIN. HE REFERRED TO HIS DESIRE TO MAINTAIN A STRICTLY NON-ALIGNED STANCE AND SAID THAT AT NEW DELHI HE HAD BEEN CAREFUL TO CRITICISE BOTH SOVIET ACTION IN AFGHANISTAN AND KAMPUCHEA AND AMERICAN ACTION IN GUATEMALA AND NICARAGUA. HE WOULD LIKE ZIMBABWE TO MAINTAIN FRIENDLY RELATIONS WITH BOTH THE SUPER POWERS, BUT NON-ALIGNMENT WAS IMPORTANT. HOWEVER, THE RELATIONSHIP WITH BRITAIN HE REGARDED AS AN EXCEPTION: HISTORY AND COMMONWEALTH MEMBERSHIP GAVE IT A SPECIAL CHARACTER AND HE WAS VERY ANXIOUS TO SEE THAT CONTINUE. HE THOUGHT THE RELATIONSHIP WAS NOW ON A FIRM BASIS AND HE HOPED THAT IT WOULD CONTINUE TO DEVELOP UNDER MY SUCCESSOR. (BEARING IN MIND SOME PAST PROBLEMS, I SAID THAT IF AT ANY TIME HE WAS WORRIED I HOPED THAT HE WOULD NOT HESITATE TO SEND FOR MY SUCCESSOR AND SHARE HIS ANXIETIES : HE NODDED.)
2. MUGABE SAID THAT HE WAS VERY GRATEFUL FOR THE ASSISTANCE WHICH WE HAD GIVEN IN THE AID FIELD AND THROUGH BMATT: "MORE THAN COULD REALLY HAVE BEEN EXPECTED". HE HOPED THAT IN DUE COURSE WE MIGHT BE READY TO PROVIDE MORE MONEY TO HELP WITH RESETTLING PEASANTS ALTHOUGH HE RECOGNISED THE FINANCIAL CONSTRAINTS. HE HAD MENTIONED THIS TO THE PRIME MINISTER LAST MAY " SHE SEEMED TO THINK THAT WE HAD ENOUGH". I SAID THAT WE HAD AT LEAST NOT DECIDED (NEXT WORD UNDERLINED) AGAINST FURTHER HELP FOR LAND SETTLEMENT SHOULD MORE BECOME NECESSARY IN THE FUTURE.
3. HE ASKED ME PARTICULARLY TO CONVEY HIS THANKS TO THE PRIME MINISTER FOR BMATT, WHICH HAD PLAYED AN INVALUABLE PART AND WHICH HE SINCERELY HOPED WOULD CONTINUE. HE MENTIONED SPECIFICALLY THAT HE HAD RECENTLY BEEN RECEIVING VERY HELPFUL ADVICE FROM GENERAL SHORTIS ON ARMY ORGANISATION AND WENT ON TO TALK ABOUT THE PROPOSALS FOR DEMOBILISING MOST EX-ZIPRA IN THE ARMY. THAT WAS SHELVED: HE HAD BEEN TALKING TO

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SEVERAL OF THEM AND HAD CONCLUDED THAT MOST WISHED TO MAKE 'A LOYAL CAREER' IN THE ARMY AND THAT DESERTIONS WERE LARGELY A PROBLEM OF THE PAST. HE KNEW THAT GENERAL SHORTIS WAS TO LEAVE IN A FEW MONTHS AND TO BE REPLACED BY A BRIGADIER: HE HOPED THAT WE WOULD CHOOSE AS GOOD A SUCCESSOR. I SAID THAT I HAD HEARD FROM THE GRAPEVINE THAT THE INTENDED SUCCESSOR WAS A MAN OF HIGH CALIBRE.

4. I THOUGHT IT AS WELL, IN THIS ATMOSPHERE, TO DEAL WITH SOME OF THE RECENT AWKWARDNESSES. I SAID THAT, WITH SO LARGE A BRITISH AND DUAL NATIONAL COMMUNITY, CONSULAR AND RELATED MATTERS PROVIDED A LOT OF MY HIGH COMMISSION'S BUSINESS. I THOUGHT THAT GENERALLY OUR COMMUNITY WERE NOW REASONABLY CONTENT, BUT THOSE IN THE TROUBLED AREA ROUND BULAWAYO WERE AN EXCEPTION AND WERE VERY WORRIED INDEED. MUGABE NODDED AND SAID 'WE ARE DOING OUR BEST FOR THEM'. I SAID THAT THE ABOLITION OF DUAL NATIONALITY CAUSED ANXIETY AND THAT I HAD BEEN REPEATING TO BRITISH DUAL NATIONALS HIS PUBLIC ASSURANCE (NOT PRETTY OLD) THAT INDIVIDUALS WOULD NOT BE PENALISED FOR MAKING A CHOICE ONE WAY OR THE OTHER BETWEEN THEIR TWO NATIONALITIES. I HOPED THAT I WAS RIGHT. HE SAID YES INDEED, AND THAT HE WAS SURPRISED THAT PEOPLE WERE STILL WORRIED ABOUT THIS. (THIS ASSURANCE WILL BE USEFUL IN OUR LOCAL CONSULAR DEALINGS.)

5. TURNING TO DETENTIONS, I SAID THAT I WAS GLAD TO HEAR THAT A FIRM DATE HAD NOW BEEN SET (23 MAY) FOR THE TRIAL OF THE AIR FORCE OFFICERS WHOSE SITUATION HAD EARLIER CAUSED DIFFICULTY BETWEEN US. I WANTED, ON A PERSONAL BASIS, TO URGE ON HIM STRONGLY THAT SHOULD ANY OF THEM BE ACQUITTED HE SHOULD THINK IN TERMS OF LETTING THEM GO FREE, OR AT WORST DEPORTING THEM, AND NOT OF RE-DETENTION. I WAS THINKING OF INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC REACTION. THE CASE WAS VERY DIFFERENT FROM THAT OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN AGENTS, HARTLEBURY AND EVANS. IN THE LATTER CASE EVERYONE WAS PRETTY CLEAR THAT THE CONTENT OF THE TWO MEN'S CONFESSIONS WAS TRUE AND THAT THE ACQUITTAL HAD TAKEN PLACE MERELY BECAUSE OF LEGAL DIFFICULTIES ABOUT THE MANNER IN WHICH THE CONFESSIONS HAD BEEN OBTAINED (NOT, REPEAT NOT, TORTURE). IN THE CASE OF THE AIR FORCE OFFICERS, HOWEVER, WHILST SOME OF THE CONFESSIONS MIGHT BE TRUE, THERE WAS WIDESPREAD UNCERTAINTY AS TO WHETHER OTHERS WERE NOT SIMPLY SIGNED OUT OF FEAR. REACTION TO RE-DETENTION MIGHT THEREFORE BE PRETTY STONG. MUGABE THANKED ME FOR THESE REMARKS AND REPEATED (SEE MIFT) THAT IT WAS NO PART OF HIS POLICY TO PURSUE AN ANTI-HUMAN RIGHTS LINE, BUT HE GAVE NO PRECISE INDICATION OF WHAT HE WOULD DO IN THE CASE OF ACQUITTAL (HE MAY NOT YET HAVE DECIDED).

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/b. MUGABE

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6. MUGABE HIMSELF RAISED THE QUESTION OF SMITH'S VISIT TO LONDON LAST NOVEMBER. HE SAID THAT HE HAD NO OBJECTION TO PEOPLE TALKING TO PROMINENT ZIMBABWEANS WHO TRAVELLED ABROAD, BUT WHAT HAD GALLED HIM OVER THE SMITH VISIT WAS THE FEELING, FROM REMARKS IN PARLIAMENT, THAT WE HAD INITIALLY TENDED TO ACCEPT SMITH'S VERSION WITHOUT LISTENING TO THE OTHER SIDE. HE SAID THAT SMITH'S VERSION HAD NOT BEEN ACCEPTED UNCRITICALLY AND REMINDED HIM THAT HE HAD WISELY AGREED THAT HIS MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE SHOULD CALL SUBSEQUENTLY ON MY PRIME MINISTER. NKOMO WAS AT NO TIME MENTIONED IN THIS PART OF OUR TALK.

7. THE WHOLE INTERVIEW WAS VERY CORDIAL AND CONSTRUCTIVE IN TONE.

BYATT

ZIMBABWE

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