

CONFIDENTIAL

RECORD OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE PRIME  
MINISTER OF ZIMBABWE AT 10 DOWNING STREET AT 1200 HRS ON TUESDAY,  
14 JUNE, 1983

Present:-

Prime Minister	Mr. Mugabe
Sir John Leahy	Mr. Kajesi
Mr. A.J. Coles	Mr Mazibisa

\*\*\*\*\*

Mr. Mugabe opened the discussion by congratulating the Prime Minister on the result of the recent General Election. In response to a question from the Prime Minister, he said that the situation in Zimbabwe was as normal as could be expected and far better than the press in Western countries suggested. There had been a bad situation towards the end of last year resulting from an escalation of dissident activity. The Government of Zimbabwe had decided to deploy more troops to deal with this problem and in doing so had incurred the wrath of the media and a number of charitable institutions. These critics, however, had not been in a position to know the real situation because a curfew was in existence and travel was restricted. He admitted that the Zimbabwe troops had been over-zealous and ordinary citizens had been made to suffer - but not to the extent made out by the media. It had been necessary to act firmly to prevent the situation becoming still worse. As a result of the efforts made to explain to the people in Western Matabeleland the reasons for the government's action, the situation had returned to normal. This did not mean that every dissident had been accounted for. Some were still

/using

CONFIDENTIAL

using Botswana as a refuge. But the numbers of dissidents had diminished. The Government of Zimbabwe had been criticised for violating human rights when in fact they had been enlarging the area of freedom and working to consolidate the kind of society which they were pledged to uphold where human rights could thrive. It was the dissidents who were working against this.

The Prime Minister commented that the reports we had received had certainly led us to believe that the situation at that time was bad. We had heard a good deal of massacres and it appeared that people in the area had had imposed upon them the difficult task of proving that they had no links with the dissidents. Some of the troops seemed to have behaved ruthlessly. While people of European origin had seemed to be reassured by the firm action taken, morale had suffered because of one or two terrible murders of white farmers. Mr. Mugabe said that these cases had involved people living in considerable isolation who had become a target for dissidents and ordinary criminals.

The Prime Minister said that there was considerable interest in the current trial of Zimbabwe Air Force officers. Mr. Garfield Todd had assured her earlier that the system of justice in Zimbabwe remained thoroughly impartial and that there would be a fair trial. He had spoken highly of the Chief Justice. We had heard of the possibility that even if those concerned were acquitted they might be redetained. That would do irreparable damage to Zimbabwe's reputation in the field of human rights.

Mr. Mugabe said that the former Chief Justice had now retired. In order to understand the situation it was necessary to appreciate

CONFIDENTIAL

- 3 -

that there were activities in the security field which, because of the technicalities of the law, were not easy to prove. The Government possessed evidence of certain acts performed by the individuals who stood accused. But because the law of evidence required that any information given by these individuals should be given freely, it was sufficient for them to allege that the environment of their detention was uncongenial for the evidence to be dismissed. The Prime Minister commented that information obtained as a result of torture was surely not admissible. Mr. Mugabe agreed but instanced the case of one of the accused who had simply argued that his place of detention was uncomfortable and that therefore the confession he had made was not admissible. In cases where the Government judged that the evidence was credible and that there was a case to answer, the individuals could not be allowed to go free. Agents of South Africa had been working within Zimbabwe and it was their activities which had resulted in the destruction of the aircraft. Zimbabwe did not detain people arbitrarily. The evidence would be carefully weighed and if, in the Government's opinion, the persons concerned were judged likely to have committed the acts in question, they would be redetained as the commanders of ZIPRA had been (there was plenty of evidence against the latter but this could not be proved in court). However, it did not follow that because the ZIPRA personnel had been redetained, others would be. The Air Force officers would not necessarily be re-arrested. It depended entirely on what the Government believed their role to have been. Some looked less culpable than others. He had not yet personally examined all the information but he could give an assurance that these people would be treated as fairly as possible.

CONFIDENTIAL

/ Current

CONFIDENTIAL

- 4 -

Current circumstances in Zimbabwe were not properly understood. People believed that the present government was opposed to human rights and in favour of dictatorship. This was not the case. They had fought for freedom and supported freedom.

The Prime Minister enquired about the state of the economy. Mr. Mugabe said that the economic situation was difficult but not as bad as in other African countries. The drought was serious but had been worse in South Africa and Botswana. Zimbabwe's tobacco yield this year would be better than last year. But the wheat crop would be smaller and wheat would have to be imported. The mining sector had been hit by recession but was now picking up. The gold price had been affected by the General Election in Britain. Once at a level of \$430 an ounce, it had dropped below \$400 but the trend was now improving. Other minerals, for example chrome, asbestos and nickel had been through a difficult period, especially last year. The iron and steel industry had suffered a setback. The Prime Minister said that while everyone had suffered as a result of world recession and while Zimbabwe had had the problem of drought in addition, it was her impression that other countries had suffered even more.

In response to a question from Sir John Leahy, Mr. Mugabe explained that Zimbabwe now imported oil through Mozambique rather than from South Africa. The South Africans were supporting the so-called Mozambique resistance movement and were attacking Zimbabwe's supply routes through Mozambique because they did not wish trade to be diverted from the traditional South African routes. Zimbabwe had had to deploy troops in Mozambique to protect the pipeline.

CONFIDENTIAL

/ The Prime Minister

CONFIDENTIAL

- 5 -

The Prime Minister asked whether the integration of the armed forces was still proceeding well. Mr. Mugabe confirmed that it was. BMATT were doing a marvellous job.

The Prime Minister observed that Mr. Nkomo was still in Britain - what was the attitude of the Government of Zimbabwe to his return? Mr. Mugabe said that Mr. Nkomo was free to come back at any time. The Zimbabwe police apparently wished him to answer for one or two cases but these were relatively minor. The police would not drop the cases but their nature was such that he was unlikely to have to go to prison. There was no reason why he should not return. Mr. Nkomo had spoken to the Minister of State for Security at the end of April and had stated his intention to return - he had been told that there was no objection to this. Mr. Nkomo's wife was being looked after. It was difficult to see what his problem was. There had been, perhaps, genuine fears when his house was searched, but now that he had an assurance from the Zimbabwe Government, he could return safely. If, however, he wished to continue to live in London, that was another matter. The Prime Minister said that we had not discussed the question with Mr. Nkomo. He was treated as a purely private person.

In answer to a question from the Prime Minister, Mr. Mugabe said that Zimbabwe had been keen that the Security Council debate on Namibia should be constructive. This had been the case and a unanimous resolution had resulted. The question should now be handled by the UN Secretary General. He would presumably consult with the Contact Group and proceed to hold discussions with the South Africans. It was to be hoped that South Africa would not continue to resist the trend. The United States should not continue to make a link with the Cuban presence in Angola. That issue

discussed

/ could

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

- 6 -

could be discussed in its own right. The Prime Minister asked how Mr. Mugabe interpreted the recent efforts of the South African Prime Minister to promote constitutional change. Mr. Botha appeared to be on the right course but to be encountering criticism from both left and right. Sir John Leahy said that he thought that Mr. Botha would proceed with his ideas but at a slow pace. Mr. Mugabe said that the rightists would continue to resist the proposals. But in any case Mr. Botha would not go so far as to advocate full democracy in South Africa. The Bantustans were not much affected by his proposals.

Following a brief exchange about the Non-Aligned Summit Conference, the Prime Minister, in answer to a question from Mr. Mugabe, said that the Williamsburg Economic Summit had been a success. But the financial problems of a number of key developing countries remained a constraint on world recovery.

Mr. Mugabe commented that a number of African countries were in difficulties. The Prime Minister expressed the view that the problems of Zambia were largely due to a failure of agricultural policy. She regretted the fact that President Moi had recently encountered political difficulties in Kenya. He had been a very helpful influence at the Lusaka Commonwealth Conference.

The discussion ended at 1300 hours.

A.J.C.

14 June, 1983

CONFIDENTIAL



JD

SUBJECT

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

14 June, 1983

cc Master

Dear Brian,

VISIT OF MR. MUGABE

The Prime Minister of Zimbabwe called on the Prime Minister this morning (your letter of 13 June refers). I enclose a record of the conversation.

I am copying this letter and enclosure to Richard Mottram (Ministry of Defence) and Tony Rawsthorne (Home Office).

Yours ever  
John Major

B. Fall, Esq.,  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

CONFIDENTIAL

JK