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Do. No 10 Downing St.

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DUBFO 009/09

OO FCO DESKBY 091930Z

OO HARARE

PP WASHINGTON



GRS420

RESTRICTED

DESKBY 091930Z

FM DUBLIN 091850Z SEP 83

TO IMMEDIATE FCO DESKBY 091930Z

TELEGRAM NUMBER 255 OF 9 SEPTEMBER 1983

INFO IMMEDIATE HARARE

INFO PRIORITY WASHINGTON

M

FOR RESIDENT CLERK

MY TELNO 254: AFZ OFFICERS

1. MR MUGABE GAVE A PRESS CONFERENCE IN DUBLIN AT 18.00 ON 9 SEPTEMBER. HE DID NOT MAKE A STATEMENT ABOUT THE AFZ OFFICERS, BUT WAS ASKED ABOUT THEM REPEATEDLY.

2. MR MUGABE SAID THAT THE CASES WOULD BE LOOKED AT OBJECTIVELY ON THE BASIS OF INFORMATION OF A "SECURITY AND INTELLIGENCE CHARACTER." THOSE WHO WERE "LESS INVOLVED" WOULD BE RELEASED. ASKED WHETHER THE TAOISEACH HAD MENTIONED THE AFZ OFFICERS DURING THEIR PRIVATE CONVERSATION, MR MUGABE SAID "DR FITZGERALD, UNLIKE MRS THATCHER, DOES NOT SEEK TO INTERFERE IN THE INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF MY COUNTRY." HE ADDED THAT HE HAD TOLD DR FITZGERALD THAT THE CASES CONTINUED TO BE REVIEWED AND THAT HE WAS AWARE THAT TWO OF THE OFFICERS WERE IRISH NATIONALS.

3. CLEARLY IRRITATED BY THE REPEATED QUESTIONING, MR MUGABE ASKED WHY THERE WAS SO MUCH CONCERN... WAS IT BECAUSE THE MEN WERE...

3. CLEARLY IRRITATED BY THE REPEATED QUESTIONING, MR MUGABE ASKED WHY THERE WAS SO MUCH CONCERN. WAS IT BECAUSE THE MEN WERE WHITE, OR BECAUSE THEY WERE MRS THATCHER'S KITH AND KIN? (BBC AND ITV JOURNALISTS WERE TAKING A PROMINENT PART IN THE PRESS CONFERENCE.) HE WENT ON TO DEFEND THE SYSTEM OF RE-DETENTION ON SECURITY GROUNDS, ARGUING THAT ZIMBABWE FACED A THREAT OF DESTABILISATION BY SOUTH AFRICA. HE ALSO DESCRIBED THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM AS 'ABSOLUTELY STUPID' BECAUSE A PERSON WHO HAD COMMITTED A CRIME COULD BE ACQUITTED IF HIS CONFESSION WAS EXTRACTED BY TORTURE. IN HIS VIEW, THE EVIDENCE SHOULD BE JUDGED ON ITS OWN MERITS, AND IF SOMEONE HAD BEEN TORTURED IT WAS UP TO THEM TO TAKE LEGAL ACTION AGAINST THE POLICE.

4. LATER IN THE PRESS CONFERENCE, MR MUGABE SAID THAT THE 5TH BRIGADE HAD DONE 'MARVELLOUS WORK' IN MATABELELAND AND THAT ATROCITY STORIES WERE 'EXAGGERATED'.

5. AFTERWARDS, TOWNSEND (1ST SECRETARY, DFA) TOLD ONE OF MY STAFF THAT MEMBERS OF THE ZIMBABWEAN DELEGATION HAD HINTED TO HIM THAT REPRESENTATION ON BEHALF OF THE AFZ OFFICERS MIGHT BE COUNTER PRODUCTIVE.

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