

Zimbabwe

CONFIDENTIAL

17342 - 1

OO HARARE
GRS 367
CONFIDENTIAL
FM F C O 121715Z SEP 83
TO IMMEDIATE HARARE
TELEGRAM NUMBER 459 OF 12 SEPTEMBER
INFO PRIORITY WASHINGTON, DUBLIN, OTTAWA

YOUR TELNO 773 (NOT TO ALL): APZ OFFICERS

1. MR LUCE MET MR MUGABE DURING HIS BRIEF STOPOVER AT THE AIRPORT ON 10 SEPTEMBER.
2. THE ATMOSPHERE WAS AT FIRST TENSE. MR MUGABE SPOKE WITH SOME BITTERNESS ABOUT THE CRITICISM OF HIS POLICIES BY HMG AND BY THE BRITISH PRESS. THERE WAS A CLIQUE WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT, OR AT LEAST THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY, WHO WERE ATTEMPTING TO DESTROY THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES. HMG HAD NO DOUBT INSPIRED PRESS STORIES SUGGESTING AID COULD BE CUT OFF, AND WERE ORCHESTRATING INTERNATIONAL CRITICISM. HE HAD A SERIOUS SECURITY PROBLEM AND THE OFFICERS HAD BEEN ENGAGED IN ESPIONAGE. THE BRITISH MEDIA WERE CONSISTENTLY BIASED.
3. MR LUCE SAID THAT THERE WAS NO TRUTH IN PRESS REPORTS THAT HMG HAD THREATENED TO CUT OFF AID. HMG WERE ANXIOUS THAT THE PROBLEM SHOULD BE KEPT IN PERSPECTIVE. NEITHER THE PRIME MINISTER NOR THE SECRETARY OF STATE HAD MADE ANY PUBLIC STATEMENT ON IT DESPITE THE STRONG PRESSURE THEY WERE UNDER. THE RELEASE OF THE TWO OFFICERS WAS WELCOME NEWS. THERE WAS A GREAT DEAL OF PUBLIC CONCERN. ANYTHING THAT COULD BE DONE TO EASE THE TENSION WOULD GREATLY HELP PRESERVE OUR RELATIONS. GIVEN THE HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONNECTIONS BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES, THERE WAS INEVITABLY INTENSE INTEREST AND STRONGLY HELD VIEWS. EVENTS LIKE THIS WERE BOUND TO HAVE AN IMPACT. THERE WAS NO CLIQUE IN THE GOVERNMENT: BUT IT WAS NO SECRET THAT A NUMBER OF CONSERVATIVE PARTY MEMBERS WITH SINCERELY HELD VIEWS HAD OPPOSED THE LANCASTER HOUSE AGREEMENT AND REMAINED CRITICAL OF ZIMBABWE. THE TREATMENT OF THE AIR FORCE OFFICERS WAS THE SORT OF ISSUE THEY WOULD INEVITABLY SEIZE ON. HMG DID NOT HAVE

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

17342 - 1

ANY RIGHT TO TELL MR MUGABE WHAT TO DO, BUT WE DID HAVE THE RIGHT TO EXPLAIN THE EFFECT WHICH CERTAIN ACTIONS WERE LIKELY TO HAVE ON OUR BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP. WE MUST WORK TOGETHER IN ORDER TO CONTAIN THE DAMAGE.

4. MR MUGABE BECAME PROGRESSIVELY MORE RELAXED DURING THE CONVERSATION. THE DISCUSSION WENT ON TO COVER A NUMBER OF OTHER TOPICS. THE MEETING ENDED WITH FRIENDLY GOODBYES. IT SEEMS TO HAVE HELPED TO CLEAR THE AIR.

HOWE

NNNN
DISTRIBUTION
LIMITED
CAFD
OADS
NEWS DEPT
CONS DEPT
PS
PS/MR RIFKIND
PS/PUS
MR SQUIRE

2

CONFIDENTIAL