

SUBJECT

cc Master
Zimbabwe Relations

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RECORD OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE
PRIME MINISTER OF ZIMBABWE AT 1845 HOURS ON THURSDAY 24 NOVEMBER
1983 AT THE BRITISH HIGH COMMISSIONER'S RESIDENCE IN NEW DELHI

Present:

Prime Minister	Mr. Mugabe
Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary	Mr. Mnungagwa
Sir John Leahy	Mr. Mangwende
Mr. A.J. Coles	

The Prime Minister said that she was glad to have the opportunity of a meeting because things were not going so well as they should between Britain and Zimbabwe. She understood that Mr. Mugabe had had a successful meeting recently with Mr. Rifkind. Our views on certain matters were well known and she would not repeat them. But she wanted fully to understand Mr. Mugabe's thinking - would he please talk?

We wanted to maintain our aid programme. We had agreed to supply Hunter aircraft. And BMATT were engaged in a valuable training operation. She would like a frank discussion. She had no toes to tread on. Her only wish was that at the end of the talk both sides could agree to cooperate. Britain had expected, and still expected, a great deal of Zimbabwe. We had always believed that an independent Zimbabwe, founded on free elections, could change the whole perspective of Southern Africa.

Mr. Mugabe thanked the Prime Minister for offering him an opportunity to exchange views and ideas and thereby to achieve a greater understanding than had existed in the recent past.

When Zimbabwe had commenced its life as a newly independent country, against a historical background of bitter fighting, his party had pronounced itself as committed, were it elected to Government, to a process of reconciliation. That commitment

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was genuine - they were deceiving no-one. Britain and the white community were shocked that the man whom they regarded as a terrorist and a guerilla leader was elected. But his people had never been terrorists - they were in search of freedom, justice and democracy. Having won the election, they had no need to be influenced by the hostile relations that had bedevilled Zimbabwe society. He had told Ian Smith and others that he was prepared to let bygones be bygones provided everybody else was prepared to respond to the hand of friendship. He had asked Lord Soames to remain to give him the tutelage which he needed. Neither he nor the other members of the Zimbabwe Cabinet had experience of Government or administration. The presence of Lord Soames was also needed to assure the British Government and people that the new Zimbabwe Government was not their enemy. Part of British culture had become part of Zimbabwe's culture. There was a large British community which needed assurance. Then help had been sought from Britain on the merging of the various armed forces. The former Rhodesian army had reservations about this exercise unless they were the central unit into which all others would be integrated. But he had set his face against this approach. None of the three armies could be allowed to exist as an army in its own right. There had to be reconciliation and unity.

Britain had immensely assisted the process. Zimbabwe was grateful to this day for the help which we had given in creating a national army. There had since been a few deserters who were creating problems here and there. And there was still much to be done to secure the full loyalty and commitment of the armed forces to the State. The present size of the armed forces - some 41,000 men - was the maximum necessary. The need now was to improve their quality.

Things had gone well in 1980 and 1981. Relations were gaining in strength. But not everyone had responded to the call for national reconciliation. For example, Ian Smith was bitter that the cause for which he had fought was lost. Others had similar feelings.

The Prime Minister said that these things could not be forgotten quickly. Mr. Mugabe said that his then friend and partner, Joshua Nkomo, had also been very bitter. Following
/ the Lancaster

the Lancaster House Conference he had wanted to enter into a pact with Mr. Mugabe's party for electoral purposes. But Zanu had wanted the leadership question to be settled and believed that it was for the people to choose their leader. Nevertheless, they had pledged themselves to coalition with Zapu whether they won or lost. Zapu, however, had broken ranks. They had sought an alliance with Muzorewa and even with Ian Smith. Nkomo wanted to be leader and wanted his party to have a Parliamentary majority. His bitterness continued to simmer. After the elections, the Soviet Union had shipped arms to Zapu. Some of these, including 56 Sam 7 missiles, had now come into the possession of the Zimbabwe Government.

In 1976/77, Zapu had worked out a "zero hour" strategy. They had decided to leave the fighting to Zanu in the expectation that the latter would become exhausted and would not in the end be able to resist Zapu. Then Zapu would have moved in with an army well equipped with Soviet weapons. Later, contrary to the agreement that all weapons would be handed over to a national army, Zapu had hidden weapons. They had acquired over 25 large farms for storing these weapons and also for retraining cadres. Deliberately, they had not integrated their crack forces. When the arms caches had been discovered, his confidence in Nkomo had been immediately dashed. He had removed Nkomo and one or two other members of Zapu from the Cabinet. But there were still Zapu people in the Cabinet today. The situation was now under control but pockets existed eg isolated farms where people felt unsafe.

As to Muzorewa, it was known that he had kept 5,000 of his former troops and sent them to South Africa. Taxed with this, Muzorewa had denied it and said that if it was true, it had been done without his knowledge. He had told Muzorewa that he would take his denial at face value - events would prove whether he was associated with this matter. In 1981 some of these troops, who had been retained by the South Africans, had been re-infiltrated into Zimbabwe. Later, the South Africans had stopped this traffic and concentrated instead on disrupting Zimbabwe's routes to Mozambique. They had also sent some of Muzorewa's soldiers on missions to Angola and Mozambique. The group which had attacked Mtola in Mozambique and some of the mercenaries who went to the Seychelles had been drawn from these people, both black and white.

/ Sithole

Sithole was also a very disappointed man. He had organised subversion but this had not been very significant. It was known that he had sent people to train in Mozambique alongside the MPRA. Now, Sithole was a spent force.

All these people had been accepted as partners to build a new Zimbabwe - it had been hard to accept that they had behaved in the way they had behaved.

Muzorewa had developed links with Zaire and, more recently, with Israel. Israel had earlier trained people in South Africa for the Rhodesian army. Latterly, Muzorewa had gone to Jerusalem, reportedly to study the bible. The fact that South Africa had again started to infiltrate men into Zimbabwe had been one of the factors leading to the detention of Muzorewa.

The outside world claimed that the Zimbabwe Government was harassing its opponents. But it wanted opposition provided it was lawful. There would be elections in a year's time - "they" would be free to set up parties and contest the elections.

With regard to the white community, there had been problems and it was in connection with these that our bilateral relations had gone a little sour. It took time for people with a history of privilege and racial domination to adjust and to accept a new position. He had shown understanding and given them time to adjust. Those who could not do so were urged to leave and some had. Others remained, among them those who had financial need of their pensions. People like this could not accept that the guerillas against whom they had fought yesterday had today become the Government. It was very difficult for them to sever their relationship with South Africa.

In 1981 £36 million worth of ammunition had been destroyed at a barracks just outside Harare. The loss had been tremendous. A committee had reached the conclusion that the sabotage had been arranged from within. Later, a group of three whites and one black had been caught while attempting to enter Zimbabwe from South Africa. Then, an agent of South Africa, working in the Zimbabwe army, had been arrested. He had confessed to giving

South Africa information about the locations of barracks and ammunition dumps, etc. But the policeman in charge of him, who had an Afrikaans name, had arranged for him to be released.

In the Central Intelligence Organisation, Mugabe had kept the people whom he had found there. He knew that they had worked for Smith and had connections with South Africa but they had pledged loyalty so they had been retained. The head of the CIO was initially Mr. Flower, who was well regarded, but who had now retired. Then Robertson had been appointed but he had had to retire through illness. Two members of the CIO had been arrested as agents of South Africa - a charge to which they had confessed. Their coordinator had got wind of their likely arrest and had gone to the UK on a false pretext of wanting to see a sick mother. The British High Commissioner had pleaded for the release of these people. The reaction in Britain had been disappointing. He had been accused of infringing human rights. The Conservative Party, the British press and then the United States had taken up the cry. Orchestration was apparent. The Prime Minister said that there was no orchestration - look at what the press said about her. But Mr. Mugabe was entitled to complain; the press were interested in discord. We knew all about preventive detention from our experience in Northern Ireland where many British soldiers had lost their lives. However, what had really provoked criticism in Britain was allegations of torture ^{of} which she thought Mr. Mugabe had no knowledge.

Mr. Mugabe said that no government would ever instruct that torture be used. But security people had their methods. Mr. Mnungagwa was deaf in one ear as a result of torture. Other members of the present Cabinet had suffered similarly. But the two South African agents in the CIO had not been tortured, though the conditions of their detention were not good. In the case of the air force officers, it had been alleged that three had been tortured and according to the Courts this was true. But his own people would not admit it even to him. If there had been torture it was not because that was the wish of the Zimbabwe Government. When people were arrested and detained - and there was immediate hostile reaction from the Conservative Party (the Prime Minister had at once made representations), then the Zimbabwe Government

wondered whether there was understanding. Did these critics recognise the good that he had tried to do? Did the good vanish because of one or two isolated acts? Where was the balance in this criticism? Why had the positive achievements been ignored? Look at the environment. The majority of the white community were content. They still had their privileges, except the privilege of ruling. They had a far higher standard of living and occupied prominent posts. Firms had not been nationalised and had even been encouraged to expand. Zimbabwe was saddened by criticism that did not recognise the positive achievements.

The Prime Minister said that she had to face questions twice a week in the House of Commons. Recently, she had been asked to cut off all aid to Zimbabwe. She had said that she would not do so - this would not be conducive to helping those whom we wished to help.

Mr. Mugabe said that four of the seven air force officers had now been released. The Zimbabwe Government had been forewarned by the Attorney General that judgement would go against it. The Government had considered the issue and had taken the view that the Court had acquitted these people in view of certain technical considerations of the criminal law, particularly the requirement that confessions must be corroborated. The Government had therefore decided to examine the cases and had found that some had been more culpable than others. When three of the six who had been tried were on the point of release, he had received a message from the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister commented: "And you blew your top". Mr. Mugabe said that he could not accept direction from outside Zimbabwe. He had been very angry with our High Commissioner. The Prime Minister explained that she was continually asked whether we had made representations to the Zimbabwe Government - and we should continue to be questioned in this sense about the three who were still detained. Mr. Mugabe said that he could not be seen to be acting in response to representations by the British Government. No harm would come to the three who were still detained and they were likely to be released in due course. The Prime Minister said that we would try to find a new formula when faced with questions. We could perhaps refer to the fact that one more of the seven

/ detainees

detainees had been released and that our views on this matter were well known. Mr. Mugabe's helpful analysis had brought us up to the present time. Did he still want BMATT? Mr. Mugabe said that he did. They were doing good work. They would conclude the present exercise by August of next year and if another use could be found for them, they would stay on. The Prime Minister said that she was not pressing Mr. Mugabe to keep our soldiers - they were in great demand. She had been worried about the prospect of BMATT training elements of the Fifth Brigade. Mr. Mugabe said that the Fifth Brigade was notorious for nothing. The fact that they had been trained by the North Koreans did not make them any more dangerous than other units.

The Prime Minister said that since the question of the air force officers, there had been no fresh difficulty and we hoped that that situation could continue. Mr. Mugabe said that there was one point when he was very angry with the British Government. This had been when he had visited Ireland on his way to the United States. The Irish Government had told him that they were under pressure from Britain to raise the question of the detainees. The press there had been interested only in that issue. It had appeared that the British Government was preparing pressure for him everywhere he went. The whole matter seemed to be orchestrated. That was why he had made his public criticism of the Prime Minister, not because our general relationship was sour.

The Prime Minister asked Mr. Mugabe to understand. British public opinion expected perfection from Mr. Mugabe - his intellectual ability was unquestioned, he was known to be a religious man, he had won a free election. To have brought Rhodesia from its former condition to a state of independence was an enormous achievement. So when Mr. Mugabe had come to power people's expectations of him were unreasonably high. Everyone who knew him knew that he was incapable of corruption and everyone who met him thought highly of him. She had told him at No. 10 Downing Street that the Zimbabwe judicial system was very highly regarded. All these factors had led us to judge that acquittal of the air force officers must mean their release. Mr. Mugabe commented that these expectations were in a sense justified but people should take into account the fact that

/ Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe was going through a difficult period of transition. The Prime Minister said that it was true that critics did not take into account the fact that Mr. Mugabe and his people had suffered and had experienced preventive detention. The task of integrating the armies had not been easy. Mr. Mugabe said that he would never claim that the fact that he had been detained entitled him to detain others. But did people in Britain really expect that the situation in Zimbabwe would have been normalised so soon? What was the state of America four years after independence? The Prime Minister said that this was a fair point. Critics assumed that Zimbabwe should learn faster than others had. Britain had not moved to a one person/one vote basis until 1950. Mr. Mugabe said that if his Government had resorted to mass detentions, the world ought to be alarmed. But when it was only a matter of a few people, he ought to be given some credit for judgement. The cases of those still detained would come under review.

The Prime Minister repeated that we would try to find some new formula for use in public. We could state that there was a review tribunal which regularly reviewed cases. The cases of those still detained were on the cause list for the review tribunal. She now had a better understanding of Mr. Mugabe's viewpoint.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary recalled that when the air force officers had been acquitted he had received an immediate report to this effect. When this had been followed by a report of the detention of some of them, there had naturally been great disappointment.

The Prime Minister said that there would be occasion for more discussion at Goa. Taking up a reference by the Prime Minister to the President of Mozambique, Mr. Mugabe said that Mr. Machel had taken 2½ hours to describe to him his visit to Europe. Most of this time had been spent in praise of The Queen, the Prime Minister, etc. Machel had been deeply excited by his visit. He did not want to come under Soviet influence. No-one wanted to. Machel had been very grateful for the aid package he had been offered in London.

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At this point, the Prime Minister and Mr. Mugabe had to leave for dinner with Mrs Gandhi. The discussion ended at 2000.

A.S.C.

24 November 1983

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file 3

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

24 November 1983

Dear Brian,

Mr. Mugabe

The Prime Minister had a bilateral meeting with Mr. Mugabe on 24 November during the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in New Delhi. I enclose the record of the conversation.

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

I should be grateful if the record could be very closely protected. Its contents should be brought to the attention only of those who have an essential operational need to know of its contents.

Yours ever

John Major

Brian Fall, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

BF

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TELEGRAM NUMBER 935 OF 24 NOVEMBER 1983
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FROM LEAHY WITH CHOQM DELEGATION

PRIME MINISTER'S MEETING WITH MR MUGABE

1. THE PRIME MINISTER HAD A MEETING WITH MR MUGABE THIS EVENING LASTING ONE AND A QUARTER HOURS. MUGABE WAS ACCOMPANIED BY MESSRS MNUNGAGWA, MINISTER OF STATE FOR NATIONAL SECURITY, AND MANGWENDE, THE FOREIGN MINISTER. THE SECRETARY OF STATE AND I WERE ALSO PRESENT. A FULLER ACCOUNT WILL FOLLOW. MEANWHILE, YOU MAY LIKE TO KNOW THAT:-

(A) THE DISCUSSION CONCENTRATED ON THE ZIMBABWE GOVERNMENT'S POLICIES SINCE INDEPENDENCE AND ON ANGLO-ZIMBABWE RELATIONS.

(B) WHILE THERE WAS PLENTY OF PLAIN SPEAKING ON BOTH SIDES THE ATMOSPHERE WAS GOOD THROUGHOUT, AND I JUDGE THE AIR HAS BEEN CLEARED A LOT.

(C) ALTHOUGH MUGABE MADE NO PROMISES ABOUT THE TIMING OF THE RELEASE OF THE THREE AIR FORCE OFFICERS STILL IN DETENTION, HE GAVE A STRONG HINT THAT PROVIDED HE WAS NOT SEEN TO ACT UNDER PRESSURE FROM US IT WOULD NOT BE LONG.

2. THE PUBLIC PRESENTATION OF WHAT TRANSPIRED AT THE MEETING, IN TERMS BOTH OF WHAT IS SAID TO THE PRESS AND TO PARLIAMENT, WILL NEED CAREFUL HANDLING. INDEED, SINCE MUGABE WAS APPARENTLY KEEN BEFORE THE MEETING THAT IT SHOULD BE KEPT PRIVATE WE ARE NOT VOLUNTEERING ANYTHING ABOUT IT TO THE PRESS. BUT, IF ASKED, THE NUMBER 10 PRESS OFFICER INTENDS TO SAY NO MORE THAN: THE PRIME MINISTER HAD A CHAT WITH MR MUGABE OVER DRINKS THIS EVENING IN THE HIGH COMMISSIONER'S HOUSE, MR MUGABE BROUGHT THE PRIME MINISTER UP TO DATE ON DEVELOPMENTS IN ZIMBABWE, YES THE DETAINED AIR FORCE OFFICERS WERE MENTIONED AND MR MUGABE WELL KNOWS OUR POINT OF VIEW ON THIS. MR INGHAM WILL CONFIRM LATER IF HE HAS HAD TO MAKE USE OF THIS LINE AND NEWS DEPARTMENT SHOULD STICK CLOSELY TO IT. IT IS PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT TO AVOID THE USE OF SUCH PHRASES AS "REPRESENTATIONS WERE MADE".

PLEASE PASS ADVANCE COPIES TO NUMBER 10 PRESS OFFICE AND NEWS DEPARTMENT.

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