

COFC (4)

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Private Secretary
cc B/Pls. Chalker
B/Pls.

BRITISH HIGH COMMISSION
HARARE

Mr Cullenmore
cc Mr Ferguson
Mr Pringle
26 August 1986

A Reeve Esq CMG
Under Secretary
FCO

An entirely predictable picture.

Prime Minister

A fascinating letter & well worth reading. CDP 879

Dear Tony,

Bah!

[Handwritten signature]

ZIMBABWE'S REAL POLICY ON SANCTIONS

1. We have been reporting by telegram (Harare telnos 351 and 358) our assessments of Prime Minister Mugabe's options on sanctions, how they might affect this country and whether he might take any anti-British action. I thought there might now be some value in reporting, at greater length than a telegram permits, some views on what is already happening - or rather not happening - on sanctions.

Some Real Views

- 2. For a year now we have been asking Zimbabweans, as occasion offers, why they demand comprehensive mandatory sanctions since, if taken literally, they know these would mean suicide for Zimbabwe. The answers, absurd as many are, convey real truth, and a selection of quotes direct to us or via contacts, may be useful:
 - (a) Permanent Secretary MFA (last year): "We are not demanding sanctions, the international community is, and who are we to stand in their way?";
 - (b) Nigerian High Commissioner (following day): "We are not demanding sanctions, the FLS are, and who are we to stand in their way?";
 - (c) Senior Black Civil Servant: "Of course you are right, but you have forgotten the importance of rhetoric in African politics";
 - (d) Deputy Prime Minister Muzenda: "We will never commit suicide by imposing sanctions ourselves on South Africa";
 - (e) Finance Minister Chidzero: "Of course we know that South African frontier closure would be devastating for us. We shall not commit suicide ourselves";
 - (f) Security Minister Mhangagwa: "If the South Africans close our frontiers, we would collapse within a fortnight";

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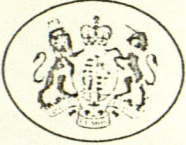


- (g) Politburo Member: "I am surprised that the British, who taught us hypocrisy, should find our attitude surprising" (a particularly honest one, this);
- (h) Political Editor of The Herald: "Alright, our attitude (to Beitbridge closure) is hypocritical; but we are closer to the problem, so we're allowed to be more hypocritical than you";
- (i) Senior Minister Nyagumbo (after Marlborough House): "This sanctions business is madness. Of course we will do nothing. The blacks in South Africa are not ready - they are not yet confronting the Boers";
- (j) Energy Minister Kangai on fuel problems (after Marlborough House): "Don't worry. Sanctions are just words. They are just politics";
- (k) Labour Minister Shava (after Marlborough House): "There is no problem. We shall continue trading through private sector channels. The Boers will not hurt us - they need us as much as we need them";
- (l) etc, etc.

Beira Corridor

3. The attitude to the Beira Corridor, Zimbabwe's only lifeline if the transport weapon is seriously used, is revealing. The Mugabe/Machel communique on 20 June gave it "immediate priority". But no Minister has yet shown any interest in doing anything practical about it. The key Minister of Transport remains the disgraced and absentee Ushewokunze. His nice Deputy Minister has no management experience and is out of her depth. His demoralised Permanent Secretary can only describe Zimbabwean inertia to us "indeed, a truly pathetic situation". The only prospect for spending money quickly on patching the road before the rains break it up, and continuing the patch job on the railway to increase its capacity, is the private sector Beira Corridor Group led by Denis Norman, the ex-Minister of Agriculture and Eddie Cross, the dynamic Managing Director of the Cold Storage Commission. Their main current requirement is the signature of Finance Minister Chidzero underwriting (not paying) their commercial borrowing. Chidzero has been procrastinating for two months and continues to do so, despite Mugabe's statement on return from Lancaster House that the corridor must be made ready to carry Zimbabwe's trade "within three months", (physically impossible anyway), and that Zimbabwe will work "48 hours per day" to ensure this. Though the Zimbabweans politely welcomed the Secretary of State's offer of the telecommunications project, we have had to make all the running. Only the (white) Head of the Railways, and a single (white) Deputy Secretary for Roads are genuinely keen within the Government to act urgently. The Swedish Aid Representative tells us he has had exactly the same experience for nine months, trying to spend the Scandinavians' one hundred million Dollars. "I have worn blisters

/on



on my hands beating on their doors. Now I am tired. I am simply waiting for them to knock on mine".

Contingency Planning

4. The same unreality characterises the newly formed Cabinet Committee on sanctions (which met for the first time on 6 August!). The Permanent Secretary of the obvious coordinating Ministry, Finance and Economy, tells us proudly how they won the battle to shuffle off the Chairmanship on to the ineffectual Trade Minister. Though they seem to have called for the most elementary data on dependance on South African routes, and are vaguely following this up (for instance by asking the old Commonwealth & Danish Missions here about alternative markets and sources of supply), their attention was quickly diverted onto the question of how they themselves could get round Mugabe's notional commitments at Marlborough House. Last week's test firing by the South Africans of their transport weapon has made little dent in their complacency. They need to be hurt a good deal more, with factory and mine closures or, their own cars seizing up for lack of lubricants, before they will take the sanctions issue seriously.

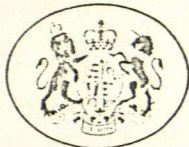
5. Black Zimbabweans are still dangerously complacent about the real possibility that their own rhetoric leading the global sanctions campaign, and South African reactions to it, will lead the six land locked Commonwealth States in the region into the confrontation with South Africa which they have so far avoided. Samora Machel's warnings are shrugged off. No one will apply his mind to the real possibility that the internationalisation across the region of the internal South African conflict could actually make Zimbabwe in coming years resemble Mozambique today. They still cling to the view that their own real position is that enunciated by Mugabe at the UN in 1980, namely supporting sanctions but being unable to apply them themselves.

Dangers

6. The absence of any real intention to confront the SAG could lead to a relatively stable situation across the Limpopo, were it not for three factors:

- (a) Mugabe's ability to let his own (genuine) emotions about apartheid run away with him, painting himself into a corner from which self-destructive action is the only way to save his face;
- (b) the total lack of communication between the two governments, increasing the risk of a spiral of mutually destructive provocation, retaliation, and escalation;
- (c) increasing SAG anger at Zimbabwe's international posturing, goading them to apply the transport weapon as retaliation for Zimbabwe's words rather than its deeds. Indeed, although the pain inflicted so far this month has been

/modest,



modest, we assume that this could change radically in the aftermath of more Mugabe rhetoric at the NAM, especially if combined eg with a few more bombs in white supermarkets in South Africa.

Implications for British Policy

7. There now seems a real danger of the South African tragedy extending itself to 25 million Commonwealth citizens in this region, albeit by nonchalance and fecklessness rather than by design. This is clearly the second major problem for this region which, unlike the internal South African problem, receives no kind of attention globally, least of all from the governments concerned. Since I imagine we would wish to do what we can to avert this double disaster, could I make some suggestions?

- (a) we could encourage Zimbabwe and the SAG to make a real effort to re-establish reasonable communications with each other. NIS or a chosen white Zimbabwean might seem the best channel;
- (b) we could help the SAG to understand Zimbabwe better; and encourage them to continue to react to Zimbabwean deeds rather than words, notably by reference to Smith's mistake in 1972, in closing the Rhodesian/Zambian border;
- (c) we could encourage our Commonwealth partners to understand regional realities better. We will continue to do our best locally; but there might be something to be said for
 ? | action in capitals eg by showing them selected bits of
 . | this letter;
- (d) we could encourage the media, notably the BBC World Service, to focus more explicitly on the realities down here, rather than on the deafening chorus of global rhetoric;
- (e) finally we could perhaps take up with Ramphal the interesting point he made publicly before Marlborough House, about the world switching to the principle of "graduated voluntary" sanctions (which we have been applying for 20 years anyway), in return for our reserving our only real leverage on South Africa (our veto protecting them from the inconvenience of "comprehensive mandatory"), as a deterrent against disproportionate use of their transport weapon.

Yours ever,

Melhuish

M R Melhuish

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PS

Since drafting the above, Mugabe has been to the FLS and SADCC summits at Luanda and has signed the thoroughly wet, and sensible, communique issued from there (Luanda telno 263). We need to get some collateral on this before assessing what this means for Zimbabwe but the bag is closing and I do not want to hold this up.

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