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RECORD OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE PRIME
MINISTER OF ZIMBABWE, MR. ROBERT MUGABE, AT 10 DOWNING STREET ON
FRIDAY 9 MAY 1980 AT 1140

Present:

Prime Minister

Mr. Robert Mugabe

Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary

Mr. E.R. Kadungure

Mr. Derek Day

Mr. Michael Alexander

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Mr. Mugabe thanked the Prime Minister for extending Lord Soames's stay as Governor in Rhodesia. He had done a "marvellous piece of work" for the country. The contribution made by Britain in sending advisory teams from the Civil Service, the police, the BBC and the army had helped to get the new Government off to an excellent start.

However there were problems.

Security

The first and most serious problem was in the area of security. The Rhodesian army and the senior commanders had accepted the change of regime. The senior commanders in particular had behaved admirably. They had made it plain that they were at the disposal of the new Government and would stay as long as but no longer than the new Government needed them. There was more difficulty with some of the middle ranking officers. But the real problem lay with ZAPU and ZIPRA. It was not clear that Mr. Nkomo was responsible but some members of his organisation were not prepared to accept the new situation and wanted to continue the fight. They had been responsible for a number of very silly acts, some involving deaths. Those responsible had been arrested. But there was still a strong element who were tempted to resort to sabotage in the hope that the ensuing chaos might lead to new elections and the overthrow of the ZANU Government.

/ Mr. Mugabe

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Mr. Mugabe said that the situation in the Assembly Points was a source of particular concern. At Assembly Point Mike 1,500 out of the 2,000 men there had disappeared in the last few days. It was true that a few ZANLA men had decided to be bandits and were being hunted out. But the number of dissidents from ZAPU and ZIPRA was increasing all the time. Moreover there seemed to be a political basis to their activity. The Government might have to act against them soon.

The integration process was not going well. It had started satisfactorily with the effort to integrate one or two units of ZANLA and ZIPRA. But now the Government had decided it was necessary to make a fresh start. The present plan was not working. It looked as though it might have been a mistake to appoint Rhodesian commanders to supervise the process. The trainees were alleging that the Rhodesians were too harsh. The reputation of the British instructors who had been in Rhodesia as members of the monitoring force stood high. Would it be possible for the number of British officers in Zimbabwe to be increased? The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary commented that some of the British officers in the monitoring force had considered that a larger number of them should have stayed behind. Mr. Day said that General Fursdon was hoping to see Mr. Mugabe soon. It might be possible for us to increase the number of instructors in Zimbabwe. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary said that the Defence Secretary was anxious to help. The Prime Minister said that Mr. Mugabe's request should be followed up.

In response to a question from the Prime Minister, Mr. Mugabe said that the integration scheme needed to be as comprehensive as possible. To this end it would be necessary to move guerrillas out of the Assembly Points and into barracks. Once there they could be disarmed and they would only be given their arms back when they were needed for training. This would obviously assist in dealing with the law and order problem. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary commented that some members of the Zimbabwean army forces were going to be trained in the United Kingdom. Mr. Day said that these would be future instructors. The basic training of the forces as a whole would have to be done inside Zimbabwe. The Prime Minister remarked that those who came to the United Kingdom would find it

tough here. Mr. Mugabe said "the tougher the better".

Civil Service

Mr. Mugabe said that the British Civil Service team which had visited Zimbabwe had recommended measures which might be adopted in order to advance Africans into senior positions in the Civil Service while allaying the fears of the white civil servants. The scheme involved the appointment of supernumeraries and the compensation of those whites who became redundant. The Government were still studying the scheme but it was clear that its implementation would require a lot of money. There were at present no black civil servants in the administrative grades and indeed none outside the very lowest levels of the Civil Service. The black graduates had not been allowed to join the Civil Service and they had all gone into industry or teaching or they had left the country. If they were now to be inserted into the senior grades in the Civil Service a considerable number of white civil servants would inevitably be displaced. Would HMG be prepared to help with the money that would be needed? The Prime Minister said that the problem would be looked at. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary commented that the inducement scheme, although introduced with the best of intentions, was now proving counter-productive in that it was tempting too many civil servants to leave their posts too soon.

Aid from third countries

Mr. Mugabe said that he would be grateful for assistance from the United Kingdom in getting members of the European Community to contribute as much bilateral and multilateral aid as possible. The French, for instance, had produced virtually nothing other than a few scholarships so far. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary said that the response of the Europeans had so far been very disappointing. He had been doing some private work to try to improve the situation. For instance in the United States, where the Government had so far been distinctly ungenerous, he had been in touch with Messrs. Rogers and Kissinger. They would be trying to get the American contribution increased. Mr. Wayne Frederick would be trying to get more industrialists involved. In this country, his own company Rio Tinto had announced the investment of £5 million. He would also be encouraging Lord Soames to be active in the City.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary asked whether the difficulties on the financial front with South Africa had been sorted out. Mr. Mugabe said that they had been but only in part. They were prepared to reach an agreement covering the first 80 million rand without any signature on the Zimbabwe side. But they were insisting that in regard to the remainder of the money (85 million rand) a member of the Zimbabwean Government should be sent to South Africa to negotiate and that the agreement should bear the signature either of Mr. Mugabe or of one of his Ministers. It was impossible for his Government to meet those conditions. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary said that he would try to help. The Prime Minister said that it was ridiculous to allow formalities of this kind to stand in the way of an agreement which was in South Africa's interest as well as in that of Zimbabwe.

The internal situation

The Prime Minister asked about the agricultural position in Zimbabwe. Mr. Mugabe said that the maize stocks were low but that this year's crop should not be too bad except in certain areas. The farmers had been granted a price rise but the Government did not wish to pass on the rise to the consumer and it was therefore having to subsidise prices. Resettlement had not yet started but work on a resettlement plan was continuing. The problem was urgent because of the return of refugees, half of whom had now returned from the neighbouring countries. There was a general problem over the expectations of the population. Everyone thought that the installation of a Government for which they had voted meant that they themselves had power. They would have to be educated in the realities. However he had anticipated far more serious problems, particularly with the Rhodesians, than had in fact so far developed. He agreed with the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary that the new country had got off to a marvellous start.

The meeting ended at 1220.

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