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Subject

NOTE OF A CALL BY MR. IAN SMITH ON THE PRIME MINISTER AT THE HOUSE OF COMMONS ON TUESDAY 16 NOVEMBER 1982

Mr. Ian Smith called on the Prime Minister today in her room at the House. He was accompanied by the Rt. Hon. Julian Amery, M.P. Mr. Gow and I were also present.

Most of the talking was done by Mr. Smith. He said that he was grateful to the Prime Minister for making time for him. It was important that she should be briefed on the latest situation in Zimbabwe. It was possible that she was not receiving full information. He had just returned from the United States where his interlocutors were taken aback by his description of what was going on in Zimbabwe.

He was concerned that the free world, especially the United States and the United Kingdom, were falling into the trap of aiding and abetting the establishment of a one-party Communist state. Things in Zimbabwe seemed to be going in that direction, apparently with the concurrence of the free world. The Government of Zimbabwe openly admitted that their philosophy was Communist and that they had embarked upon establishing a one-party state.

They had taken over the communications media. None of their opponents had access to radio or television. He himself had no access at all and Mr. Nkomo complained equally strongly. The programmes were remarkably slanted.

The Government was nationalising industry. For a year they had existed on the fat inherited from the pre-independence government. Now they were living day-by-day on hand-outs from the free world. They had renewed the state of emergency which was not justified by the security situation but was simply a means of circumventing the Constitution and the Declaration of Rights. Arbitrary arrests were carried out. Complaints to the police were met with the answer that they had no power to intervene. The cases of Stuttaford, the York brothers and the imprisoned airforce officers

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were well known. Stuttaford had been incarcerated for ten months on a ludicrous charge of planning a coup. Three men who had given evidence on his behalf had been re-arrested. There was no doubt that Stuttaford and the airforce officers were tortured. There was medical evidence to substantiate this. One visitor who had seen the airforce personnel had said that three of them would have committed suicide had they been able to do so. He (Mr. Smith) was convinced, as were many other people, that the airmen had had no intention of carrying out a coup. It was incomprehensible that they would have blown up their own aircraft.

To begin with, he had got on well with Mr. Mugabe and had told his own supporters to co-operate with him and try to make the Lancaster House agreement work. Relations for a year or so after independence had been relatively good. Then Mugabe had started to talk publicly about a one-party state. Mr. Arthur Bottomley had expressed his concern about this publicly at a Parliamentary Conference. Soon after that Mr. Smith had told Mugabe that he would have to dissociate himself from the idea of a one-party state which was harming Zimbabwe and turning investment away. Mugabe had been annoyed and had never spoken to Mr. Smith since. Mr. Nkomo saw Mugabe very rarely. Mugabe had then offered posts in the Government to some of the members of Mr. Smith's party, on condition that they broke away from him.

There was a good deal of intimidation. Some of his people had been told by blacks that it would be better for their health if they severed links with his office.

He had asked some of Mugabe's Ministers why they continued to make provocative statements about the free world, especially the United States and the United Kingdom, when these countries were the only ones which were helping Zimbabwe. The reply had been that Mr. Smith was old-fashioned. Western representatives never put questions of this kind. Recently, Zimbabwe had received a new soft loan of \$27 million from the United States.

/ In response

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In response to a question from the Prime Minister Mr. Smith said that abuse of the United States and the United Kingdom on radio and television was a virtually daily occurrence. The tide did now seem to be turning. More and more blacks were becoming disenchanted. People were complaining that the economic situation was worse than during the time of economic sanctions - and there was no political freedom. At an earlier stage, he had wondered whether Mr. Mugabe was aware of the behaviour of some of his Ministers. But he had now reached the conclusion that Mugabe did know what was going on and condoned it. It was important to realise that Mugabe took his orders from the Central Committee and there was no way in which he could disagree with it.

The regime was now bankrupt. They could not fulfil their promises. The payment of civil servants' salaries had been long delayed. He appreciated that the West could not indulge in crude blackmail. But it should be possible tactfully to point out to the Zimbabwe Government that they must accept certain obligations. It should be made plain to them that certain practices and human rights abuse should be stopped. Zimbabwe should not be helped with Western money to join the Communist world. An effort must be made to arrest the process, otherwise the country would be lost.

Mr. Smith said that he had only seen the British High Commissioner once. Nkomo similarly had little contact with him. The United States Ambassador also appeared to avoid the Opposition. How could these representatives provide their Governments with information about the views of the whites if they did not speak to him - or the views of the Matabele if they did not speak to Nkomo? Free world Ambassadors ought to meet leaders of the political parties on a regular basis. This would help them to resist Mugabe's attempts to despatch them to oblivion. He had heard from the United States that Vice President Bush intended to see him and Mr. Nkomo if and when he visited Zimbabwe. Other Americans had said the same. The Soviet Union was now moving in. It had an Embassy in Harare which was growing fast. It was strongly backing SWAPO. The Russians had already secured Angola, Tanzania and Mozambique and had Zambia pretty well under

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their thumb. If they took Zimbabwe, Botswana and Namibia would follow.

A. J. C.

16 November 1982

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cc MOD
CO

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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

16 November 1982

Dear Brian,

Zimbabwe

Mr. Ian Smith paid a private call on the Prime Minister this afternoon. I enclose a note of the main points he made.

The Prime Minister told me afterwards that she was concerned about the developing situation in Zimbabwe. The reports which reached her from many quarters were now difficult to ignore. She thought it desirable that a more vigorous attempt should be made to establish the facts and to make these known more widely.

Mrs. Thatcher would be grateful for advice on three points arising from her meeting with Mr. Smith:

- (a) How far is it the case that the United Kingdom and other Western countries are the subject of daily abuse on radio and television in Zimbabwe?
- (b) What is the latest situation on the detainees? (I appreciate that you provided a brief for the meeting with Mr. Smith but I think it would be useful if the facts could be summarised again.)
- (c) Is it the case that the British High Commissioner, as a matter of policy, avoids meetings with Mr. Smith and Mr. Nkomo and, if so, should this practice not be changed?

The Prime Minister has also reiterated her view that, in the light of the reports of torture in Zimbabwe, we must reassess our military aid (my letter of 18 October refers).

The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary may wish to consider, with the Secretary of State for Defence, how this can best be carried forward. It may be that, in addition to the specific points on which the Prime Minister has asked for briefing, it would be desirable for Mrs. Thatcher to receive a general paper on our policy towards Zimbabwe. In the light of that, the Prime Minister may wish to consider having a discussion in OD.

/ I should.

I should emphasise that we have asked Mr. Smith to keep the fact of his call on the Prime Minister to himself. We are initiating no publicity.

I am copying this letter to Richard Mottram (Ministry of Defence) and Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

You see

John Coler

Brian Fall, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.