



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

22 November 1982

Dear Sir,

Not a necessary letter - indeed a very casual one.

Zimbabwe

Prime Minister
to note.

A.J.C.B./u.

Thank you for your letter of 16 November enclosing your note of the Prime Minister's recent conversation with Mr Ian Smith. We are preparing advice (in consultation with MOD) on our general policy towards Zimbabwe and on our military assistance, but you may find it helpful to have comments now on the other points in your letter.

Zimbabwe Media

In the early days after independence, when the media, particularly radio, were taken over by extreme ZANU radicals, there was some truth in the charge that there was regular abuse of Western countries. But the extremists have since been weeded out and coverage of international affairs is now much more even-handed. There are occasional snipes at Britain, eg on Northern Ireland; but British events also attract favourable publicity (eg the very full coverage of Princess Anne's visit there earlier this month). Coverage of the Falkland Islands was not wholly sympathetic, but the Zimbabweans did make some effort to remain impartial. The media tend to adopt orthodox third world/non-aligned positions on most international issues, but direct Communist efforts to influence the media have met with little success. The press, radio and TV rely overwhelmingly on Reuters, the BBC and other Western sources for their coverage of international affairs.

Detainees

There has been little change in the position of the Air Force detainees for some weeks, but there has been some movement in the case of some of the remaining civilian detainees. I attach a revised note which summarises the present position on all detainees. Since the Secretary of State for Defence's representations to Mugabe in September, the High Commission has followed up strongly with the Home Affairs Minister Dr Ushewokunze. Both Commander BMATT and the CGS, during his October visit, spoke strongly to Mugabe about proper behaviour on the military side. There is evidence that the Zimbabwean military hierarchy are conscious of the need to improve army discipline and behaviour, and the work of BMATT makes an important contribution to this end.

We arranged for Vice President Bush to be briefed to raise this question on his official visit to Harare from 16-18 November. We have since learnt that the Vice President

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took a tough line in private discussions with Mr Mugabe and his Ministers on the rule of law and on human rights, with particular reference to the alleged torture of the detained Zimbabwean Air Force personnel. He had pressed for a speedy, open trial. Although the Zimbabweans were sensitive to this criticism, the Americans had been assured in return that the defendants would be given a proper Court hearing, with one senior interlocutor adding that the Government would be perfectly willing to accept a Court verdict dismissing the case against the defendants on the grounds that statements had been obtained from them under duress.

Contacts with Mr Smith and Mr Nkomo

There is no question of the High Commissioner' avoiding meetings with Mr Smith and Mr Nkomo as a matter of policy. Although the Zimbabwe Government might be suspicious of too close a relationship (as you know, they regard Mr Smith as one of the least constructive of the Republican Front members of Parliament and they dismissed Mr Nkomo from the Government last February following the discovery of arms caches on land belonging to his party), the High Commission maintain normal contacts with members of the Republican Front and ZAPU and there is no reason of principle why these should not include Mr Smith and Mr Nkomo. But there are practical difficulties. Mr Smith has not proved easy to catch when contacts were offered (eg invitations to Queen's Birthday Receptions and our attempts to arrange a meeting with Lord Carrington during the latter's visit to Salisbury last March); and it is less easy to maintain contact with Mr Nkomo now that he spends nearly all his time in Bulawayo. We shall however be asking the High Commissioner, who is at present on a duty visit to Zambia and Malawi, to look again on his return at the question of contacts with Mr Smith in particular in the light of the points he raised with the Prime Minister.

I am copying this letter to Richard Mottram (MOD) and Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

Going over,

(B J P Fall)
Private Secretary

A J Coles Esq
10 Downing Street

*what are
"normal"
contacts?*



ZIMBABWE: DETAINEES

1. Over 30 whites (and numerous blacks) have been detained under Zimbabwe's emergency power regulations (which were inherited from UDI) during the past year. Twenty of the detainees have been released.
2. The white detainees fall into two main categories: those suspected of political offences, and Air Force personnel suspected of sabotage at Thornhill Air Base. In several cases South African complicity is suspected. A third category are people detained for usually minor firearms offences.
3. As well as several blacks, some of the white AFZ officers and a white civilian MP, Mr Stuttaford (acquitted and released on 10 October) are believed to have been tortured or ill-treated in some way.
4. British Ministers have on several occasions raised the question of detainees with Zimbabwean ministers and pressed that they should be brought to trial without delay. During his visit in September, Mr Nott told Mr Mugabe of our concern about reports of torture against the Air Force personnel. The British High Commission subsequently repeated our concern to the Minister of Home Affairs, Dr Ushewokunze.
5. The position of the Air Force personnel has improved in the last few weeks. Torture has stopped and several officers have been released. There is no evidence that the witch hunt against Air Force officers is continuing. The seven officers still detained have now appeared before a magistrate, indicating that the judicial process has started. Although the Air Force detainees seem unlikely to come to trial much before early February 1983, this is by no means unusual for the Zimbabwean legal system. Physically the detainees are said to be in reasonable shape: but there is inevitably mental strain. There is no reason to believe that the conditions in which they are being held are any worse than those for other prisoners (but since we do not have consular access we have to rely on second-hand reports). On 12 November two of the lawyers representing some of the detainees were arrested and charged before magistrates under the Law and Order Maintenance Act on two counts: making 'subversive' statements likely to bring authorities into disrepute: and with contempt of court. The charges arise from allegations by the lawyers during a recent press conference that their clients had been tortured. A police request for travel documents to be confiscated was refused and the lawyers

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continue to hold their passports. One of them, Hartmann, is a mono-UK national. The lawyers are themselves legally represented and have been remanded on sureties of Z Dollars 5,000 each until 26 November. This may be extended.

7. As for the civilian detainees, all have access to legal representation and receive visits from their families. A group of four (the Bertrand case) were tried and convicted (as it happens by a white judge) in May 1982 of conspiracy to commit acts of terrorism and sabotage. They are no longer detainees but are serving prison sentences. Their appeals are to be heard at the end of November. We have consular access to Stephen Bertrand (a mono-British citizen) and have been allowed a visit to his father (a dual).

8. The trial of another mono-British citizen, Hartlebury, accused of spying for South Africa, began in camera on 15 November. We have had regular consular access to Hartlebury, who is in good health.

9. The maltreatment of detainees is a blot on Mugabe's record. On the whole, however, the Zimbabwe Government's record on human rights has been reasonably satisfactory: and the courts have maintained a high level of integrity.

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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

24 November 1982

ZIMBABWE

Thank you for your letter of 22 November. The Prime Minister has noted the points made about the Zimbabwe media, about detainees and about contacts with Mr. Smith and Mr. Nkomo, but has commented that she does not find the picture conveyed very reassuring.

With regard to the last of these subjects, the Prime Minister notes that the High Commission maintain "normal contacts" with members of the Republican Front and ZAPU. Mrs. Thatcher would be grateful for more details of what these contacts involve.

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

A. J. COLES

Brian Fall, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

JP