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TELEGRAM NUMBER 674 OF 25 NOVEMBER
INFO PRIORITY PRETORIA AND WASHINGTON

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MY TELNO 670 : I D SMITH

1. I CALLED ON THE MINISTER OF JUSTICE THIS MORNING.
2. I TOLD MUBAKO THAT I WAS DEEPLY CONCERNED AT THE IMPACT IN BRITAIN - AND ELSEWHERE - OF THE NEWS THAT MR IAN SMITH HAD BEEN SUBJECTED TO PEREMPTORY RETENTION AND INTERROGATION BY THE POLICE ON WHAT WOULD APPEAR TO THE WORLD TO BE THE FLIMSIEST OF EXCUSES. THE ZIMBABWE GOVERNMENT'S TREATMENT OF MR SMITH HAD BEEN A TOUCHSTONE OF ITS POLICY OF POST-INDEPENDENCE RECONCILIATION. THAT POLICY WAS THE ESSENTIAL FOUNDATION ON WHICH OUR SUPPORT, IN TERMS OF AID AND ALL OTHER MATTERS, ALONG WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE WEST AS A WHOLE, HAD BEEN BASED. RECONCILIATION HAD BEEN THE KEYNOTE OF MR MUGABE'S POST-ELECTION ADDRESS TO THE NATION IN APRIL 1980, AND THE WEST'S RESPONSE WAS A PRIZE THAT ZIMBABWE COULD SIMPLY NOT AFFORD TO RELINQUISH. I REMINDED MUBAKO OF THE OVERNIGHT DETENTION OF GARFIELD TODD BY THE POLICE IN JANUARY 1980, ON SPURIOUS CHARGES LEVELLED BY SINISTERLY MOTIVATED INFORMERS. THE GRAVE EMBARRASSMENT THAT HAD CAUSED THE GOVERNOR AT THAT DIFFICULT BUT FAST-MOVING TIME WAS TRIVIAL COMPARED WITH THE IMPACT TODAY, IN MUCH EASIER CIRCUMSTANCES, OF THE TREATMENT METED OUT TO MR SMITH.
3. I WENT ON TO WARN MUBAKO OF THE DISASTROUS CONSEQUENCES OF THE ALLEGATIONS OF TORTURE OF DETAINEES IN THE THORNHILL CASE. NO CONVICTION OBTAINED ON THE BASIS OF CONFESSIONS BELIEVED TO BE EXTRACTED BY TORTURE COULD EVER COMMAND RESPECT. WORSE, NO GOVERNMENT COULD AFFORD TO IDENTIFY ITS REAL ENEMIES BY SUCH A MEANS. THE SECURITY OF THE STATE ITSELF WAS THEREBY THREATENED, SINCE THE REAL TRUTH COULD NEVER BE KNOWN.
4. I CONCLUDED WITH THE ISSUE OF SUMMARY DETENTIONS FOR FIREARMS OFFENCES. THESE WERE CREATING JUSTIFIED ALARM AMONG THE FARMING COMMUNITY, THE VERY CORNERSTONE OF ZIMBABWE'S ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE. MOST SUCH OFFENCES WERE TRIVIAL. OFFENCES DESERVING FINES SHOULD ATTRACT FINES, NOT DETENTION. TO TRANSLATE MINOR FIREARMS OFFENCES FROM THE REALM OF THE FIREARMS ACT TO THAT OF STATE SECURITY UNDER THE EMERGENCY REGULATIONS WAS WHOLLY UNJUSTIFIABLE. THERE WERE MORE ACTIVE WHITE FARMERS IN ZIMBABWE TODAY, TO OUR ASTONISHMENT, THAN THERE HAD BEEN AT INDEPENDENCE. NO SINGLE ELEMENT IN THE COMMUNITY WAS MORE ESSENTIAL TO THE GOVERNMENT'S POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC SURVIVAL THAN THE EFFICIENT COMMERCIAL FARMER.

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/S. MUBAKO

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5. MUBAKO THANKED ME FOR RAISING THESE ISSUES. HE DID NOT KNOW WHAT LAY BEHIND THE INCIDENT INVOLVING MR SMITH. BUT HE WOULD SPEAK TO THE ACTING PRIME MINISTER TODAY, ALSO TO THE MINISTERS FOR HOME AFFAIRS AND STATE SECURITY, AND TELL THEM WHAT I HAD SAID, AT THE SAME TIME EXPRESSING HIS OWN CONCERN AT THE INTERNATIONAL IMPLICATIONS.

6. IF, AS WE BELIEVE, USHEWOKUNZE WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE INCIDENT AND MNANGAGWA, ENRAGED BY IT, RESPONSIBLE FOR OVER-RULING USHEWOKUNZE'S ORDER AND HAVING THE PEOPLE CONCERNED RELEASED, WHAT MUBAKO SAYS TO MUZENDA AND MNANGAGWA AT LEAST WILL NOT FALL ON DEAF EARS. AND THE ISSUE WILL LOOM LARGE IN THEIR BRIEFING OF MUGABE ON HIS RETURN.

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