

~~Prime Minister.~~

Mr Coles ✓ A.J.C. 23/11.

FROM: Sir J Leahy
 DATE: 23 November 1983
 cc: Private Secretary
 PUS

MEETING WITH MR MUGABE: 6.30PM 24 NOVEMBER

1. The two Ministers with Mr Mugabe will presumably be Messrs Mnungagwa, Minister of State for National Security (in PM's Office) and Witness Mangwende, the Foreign Minister. Their presence will, unfortunately, not make for the sort of relaxed discussion that would be possible in a tete-a-tete meeting. In these circumstances really delicate or sensitive bilateral matters, ie the air force officers, might best be left until the Prime Minister has a chance for a private discussion in Goa; and this meeting treated as a fence-mending occasion to address some wider questions. But since Mr Mugabe has asked for the meeting (though he is reluctant to admit it) Mrs Thatcher might perhaps let him open up and make the running?
2. Subjects which spring to mind for a general discussion are:
 - World Economic Issues (the CHOGM discussion will just have begun).
 - Mugabe's view of the role of the Commonwealth.
 - The role of the Russians in Africa.
 - Zimbabwe's relations with South Africa.
 - Namibia (what practical suggestions for resolving present problem? Denunciation of "linkage" not enough).
3. Should the air force officers come up (despite paragraph 1 above), the Prime Minister could say that the two of them should have an opportunity to talk about this later on during their stay; in the meantime she would merely say that she had heard from Mr Rifkind that he had had a good talk with Mugabe about the case and she had also noted that Air Lt Lewis-Walker had been released.
4. If I may make a further point, the Shona, like many Africans, are not accustomed to confronting awkward problems head on in conversation. Face to face they speak more circumspectly and allusively than we. They therefore read much more into what is actually said than we would do. What we would consider as no more than frank they would readily consider as downright threatening.

John Leahy

Sir J Leahy