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FM HARARE 051700Z SEP 83

TO FLASH FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 748 OF 5 SEPTEMBER

INFO IMMEDIATE DUBLIN AND WASHINGTON

MY TELNO 747: AFZ OFFICERS

*Read in full.*

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1. MUGABE SUMMONED ME TO SEE HIM EARLY THIS EVENING. HE WAS IN AN ANGRY AND UNCOMPROMISING MOOD. HE WAS SUBJECTED TO A LONG CATALOGUE OF COMPLAINTS AND ACCUSATIONS ABOUT HMG'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS HIM AND HIS GOVERNMENT. HE RAKED OVER PAST HISTORY, INCLUDING THE PRIME MINISTER'S RECEPTION OF MR SMITH, THE REFERENCE IN PARLIAMENT DURING THE MATABELELAND CRISIS TO HUMAN RIGHTS IN ZIMBABWE, AND MR ONSLOW'S VISIT AND WHAT HE CHOSE TO REGARD AS THE PRESSURES APPLIED ON THAT OCCASION. HE DESCRIBED THE PRIME MINISTER'S MESSAGE TO HIM AS AN ATTEMPT TO BRING INADMISSIBLE PRESSURE TO BEAR AND SAID THAT THIS FIRST REACTION ON RECEIVING IT WAS NOT TO RELEASE ANY OF THE OFFICERS AT ALL. HE CHOSE TO REGARD THE REPORTS AND COMMENT IN THE BRITISH MEDIA ABOUT THE REDETENTION OF THE OFFICERS AS ORCHESTRATED BY HMG; AND HE DISPUTED THE BASIS FOR OUR REPRESENTATIONS, SUGGESTING THAT THESE WERE MOTIVATED PURELY BECAUSE THE DEFENDANTS WERE WHITE MEN AND HIS GOVERNMENT WAS BLACK. HE ACCUSED US OF THREATENING TO WITHDRAW AID AND SAID THAT, SO FAR AS HE WAS CONCERNED, IF THAT WAS OUR ATTITUDE HE WOULD DO WITHOUT IT. WE SHOULD ACCEPT THAT ZIMBABWE WAS



NOW INDEPENDENT AND THAT WE WERE NO LONGER RESPONSIBLE FOR RUNNING HER AFFAIRS. HE HAD REASON TO SUPPOSE THAT SOME AT LEAST OF THE AIR FORCE OFFICERS, WHO HAD SUPPORTED THE REBEL REGIME AND HAD CONNECTIONS WITH SOUTH AFRICA WHICH THEY MIGHT WELL RENEW, STILL REPRESENTED A SECURITY RISK. HE WAS GOING TO DEAL WITH THEM IN HIS OWN WAY AND WOULD NOT BE DICTATED TO BY ANYONE OUTSIDE. ALL THIS AT SOME LENGTH AND WITH CONSIDERABLE HEAT AND EMPHASIS.

2. AS AND WHEN HE HAD AN OPPORTUNITY, HE ATTEMPTED TO PUT THE RECORD STRAIGHT. HE SAID THAT, ON THE CONTRARY, OUR CONCERN WAS TO TRY TO PRESERVE A CLOSE AND SUPPORTIVE RELATIONSHIP WITH ZIMBABWE: WE HAD DONE ALL WE COULD TO RESIST PUBLIC PRESSURE AND TO TRY TO RESOLVE THE PROBLEM QUIETLY AND AMICABLY: THAT WE HAD CERTAINLY NOT ORCHESTRATED THE MEDIA BUT THAT WE DID HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY FOR SOME OF THE OFFICERS, NOT BECAUSE THEY WERE WHITE OR EVEN BECAUSE THEY WERE OF BRITISH ORIGIN, BUT BECAUSE THEY HAD BRITISH CITIZENSHIP IN ADDITION TO THEIR ZIMBABWE CITIZENSHIP. BUT HE WAS BARELY PREPARED TO LISTEN' STILL LESS TO CONCEDE THAT WE WERE ACTING OUT OF AN HONEST DESIRE TO TRY TO PRESERVE A RELATIONSHIP IN THE FACE OF A PROBLEM WHICH AFFECTED US BOTH.

3. WHEN WE WERE ABLE TO DISCUSS THE IMMEDIATE STEPS, HE SAID THAT HE WAS STILL PREPARED TO RELEASE SLATTER AND PILE, PROVIDED THAT THEY LEFT THE COUNTRY IMMEDIATELY THEREAFTER. THE CHANGE OF MIND OVER BRISCOE HAD TAKEN PLACE BECAUSE HIS PEOPLE HAD PRODUCED EVIDENCE THAT HE WAS A SOUTH AFRICAN CITIZEN. HE SAID THAT IN FACT HE HAD HIS IRISH PASSPORT AND THAT HE WOULD PRODUCE IT FOR HIS PEOPLE TO SEE (AND AM DOING SO AT THIS MOMENT). HE WAS NOT TO BE DRAWN ON THE OTHER OFFICERS, EXCEPT TO SAY THAT THEIR CASES WERE ALSO BEING REVIEWED. BUT FROM THE TONE OF HIS REMARKS ABOUT THEM, IT WAS CLEAR THAT HE BELIEVED THAT THERE WAS EVIDENCE OF THEIR GUILT, OR AT THE VERY LEAST OF PAST ASSOCIATIONS WITH SOUTH AFRICA.

4. MEANWHILE, THE UPSHOT OF OUR LATEST CONVERSATION WITH SLATTER AND PILE IS THAT THEY ARE STILL PREPARED TO COMPLY WITH THE ZIMBABWEAN GOVERNMENT'S INSTRUCTIONS AND TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY ON RELEASE. BUT THERE ARE A GREAT MANY FORMALITIES AND ARRANGEMENTS WHICH THEY WILL HAVE TO MAKE BEFORE THEY ARE READY TO GO ALD THIS MAY WELL TAKE SEVERAL DAYS.

5. HE WILL COMMENT ON ALL THIS TOMORROW AND REPLY TO YOUR TELNO 440, FIRST TWO SENTENCES.

EWANS