



PM/83/73

PRIME MINISTER

No.

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Prime Minister

I think this would be worth
saying with the President.

A.J.C. 23/9.

Now see my letter of
25/10 about Zimbabwe.

A.J.C. 26/10.

Visit to Washington: Zimbabwe

with DC

1 In my minute of 22 September I considered the implications of the airforce officers' case for our policy towards Zimbabwe. My main conclusion was that at least for the present we should maintain our aid to Zimbabwe; and that to pull out precipitately would damage our own important interests in that country and in the region, and give opportunities to the Soviets and others to make further mischief in Southern Africa.

2 We have now received an indication that the United States are about to take a different line. We learn on good authority that Shultz is proposing to cut aid to Zimbabwe drastically (by half in 1984 and one-third in 1985: a cut of \$47 1/2 million). There is apparently a real danger that the White House may cut it still more, perhaps completely. This move seems to stem from a general malaise about aid policies generally, but coupled particularly with irritation with Zimbabwe's abstention in the Security Council on the South Korean airliner. News of the cuts could leak in the next week or so.

3 The implications of this development could be serious for our interests. It is most unlikely to influence Mugabe in a positive sense. The most immediate effect would almost certainly be to harden his attitude towards the remaining air force officers in detention and greatly lessen the prospects for early release. The cuts would remove a major part of the incentive for Zimbabwe to remain orientated towards the West. The damage would be all the greater if, as is at least possible, the US example caused other major donors such as the FRG to follow suit.



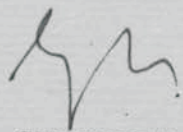
Mugabe would be encouraged to turn more to the Soviet bloc for assistance. The US decision would be a severe jolt to the white community and increase the rate at which they leave the country. It would cut much of the ground from under the feet of moderates like Finance Minister Chidzero who support a mixed economy and Western investment. ✓

NO . 4 I think there is a strong case for raising this issue with President Reagan. It seems to me that he has not considered the matter in the wider context of Western policies in Central and Southern Africa and of the problem of external destabilisation in that region. The sort of message which I think we should try to get across is that we support his efforts to get the Cubans out of Angola as part of the Namibia negotiations; we believe the West should strongly contest Soviet influence throughout Africa, including the black states on South Africa's border; and that, despite all the difficulties which we understand only too well, we see continuing Western aid for Mugabe as crucial for Western interests in Southern Africa.

5 Although the information about Shultz's decision was given to us in strict confidence, there would be no difficulty about your saying that our Embassy in Washington had heard rumours that a decision might be reached to make large cuts in aid for Zimbabwe.

6 I am copying this minute to Michael Heseltine and to Cecil Parkinson.

Foreign and Commonwealth Office
23 September 1983


GEOFFREY HOWE

ZIMBABWE : UK/Zim Aels

MS

22. 11. 1983

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PM/83/72

PRIME MINISTERZimbabwe: Air Force OfficersPrime Minister

Content with this approval?

A. J. C. 12/9.

1. You asked for my recommendations on the implications of this case for our relations with Zimbabwe.

2. Bilateral Relations

The whole episode of the trial has been marked by pigheadedness and lack of foresight. The court system has emerged with flying colours: the black judge behaved courageously. But the way the verdicts were brushed aside demonstrates the growing trend towards arbitrary action by the Executive. Detention and torture were practiced under Smith and are still common in both Black and South Africa. Even Moi, with whom we enjoy good relations, sometimes detains people without trial. This helps to explain but does not excuse.

3. We must expect further similar cases. Mugabe faces a formidable security problem: tribal and political rivalries, and South African destabilisation. He has decided to react firmly and, if necessary, brutally.

4. All this is very disturbing. The obvious question is whether we should go on supporting a Zimbabwe which in some important respects has failed and will continue to fail our highest hopes at Lancaster House. Despite this there are a number of arguments in favour of maintaining our support.

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- (i) For us to turn our back on Zimbabwe would be a profound blow to the morale of the white community. It could lead to a mass exodus. Many (about 80,000) are entitled to British citizenship. Some would go elsewhere, but we could be faced with a considerable problem.
- (ii) Our aid does give us some influence. It did not prove enough in the case of the Air Force officers to ward off detention. But without Mugabe's reliance on aid from the UK and our allies we would not have made the progress we have in obtaining their release. There are other examples. Commander BMATT succeeded in stopping a recent demobilisation plan by the Army Commander aimed against the ZAPU (Nkomo) supporters in the Army. Our land resettlement aid has helped to restrain pressures to take over commercial farms mostly owned by whites.
- (iii) If we pull out, others will be very ready to step in. Mugabe is already seeking some balance in the East for the country's pro-Western links. The Communist bloc are trying hard, especially in the military and security fields, so far with only limited success. Mugabe is highly suspicious of Soviet motives, but he has to mobilize help from somewhere and will almost certainly turn more to them or their surrogates if the West withdraw.
- (iv) Zimbabwe still retains substantial elements of a genuinely multiracial society. Its success or failure could influence developments within South Africa.
- (v) Zimbabwe is not a major market in world terms. But UK investment there is worth about £800 million, and it is on the way to becoming our third most important export market in Africa. British firms have urged on us to continue both BMATT and developmental aid.

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(vi) Important British interests are thus at stake. Our attitude will play a crucial part in determining Zimbabwe's future. Other Western countries will take their cue from us. It is still possible that with our support the country will pull through at a fair level of stability and freedom.

5. There might indeed come a time when the situation has so badly deteriorated that it would be right for us to cut our losses. But we are not yet at that point. To pull out precipitately would damage our own interests, undermine those of our friends and give opportunities to the Soviets and others to make further mischief in Southern Africa.

Air Force Officers

6. Mugabe's handling of the Thornhill sabotage has culminated in a humiliating shambles. He bitterly resents outside criticism. He has released three officers but he appears convinced of the guilt of most of the others. The Home Affairs Minister assured our High Commissioner that all will be released eventually, but there must be some danger that it will be months and possibly even years before the last ones are let out.

7. A major goal must be to obtain the release of all the men as quickly as possible. We have taken a firm line in private while being as restrained as we can in public. I think it right for the moment to stick to that line. Richard Luce had a most useful meeting with Mr Mugabe at Gatwick on 10 September: he was able to reinforce our concern while dispelling some of Mugabe's resentment.

8. Over the past few weeks we have avoided taking decisions on any significant new initiatives in bilateral relations (eg military aid) and we shall continue to do so. I do not

/think



think we need go further than this for the time being. I recommend that we should resist demands for public denunciation and retaliation, which could jeopardise the prospects for further releases. But we may well have to reconsider if Mugabe reaches a final decision to keep all the remaining men in prison for an indefinite period.

9. I am copying this minute to Michael Heseltine and to Cecil Parkinson.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'G. Howe', written in a cursive style.

GEOFFREY HOWE

Foreign and Commonwealth Office
22 September 1983

Zimbabwe: Relations

Pt 3



SEP 1983



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