



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

28 October 1983

Dear Roger,

ZIMBABWE

When the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary called on the Prime Minister this morning there was some discussion of our policy to Zimbabwe, in the light of the forthcoming visit to Harare by Mr. Rifkind. The Defence Secretary's minute of 26 October and Sir Geoffrey Howe's minute of 27 October about the sale of RAF Hunters are relevant.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary said that although Mr. Mugabe's public statements in recent weeks had been very regrettable and although the impression he had made on the United States Administration during his visit to Washington had been appalling, we must be aware that there was a danger of Zimbabwe going in the same direction as Angola and Mozambique and that prospect would almost certainly be enhanced if Mugabe was replaced by someone else. In considering the question of aid to Zimbabwe we of course had to take into account political reactions here to our continuing aid programme. But if we cut off aid and Mugabe reacted violently, one result would be that the feeling of insecurity among the white community would be greatly increased and we might face the possibility of a major exodus.

Following further discussion, the Prime Minister agreed that we should proceed with the sale of RAF Hunters to Zimbabwe. We should not make an improvement in the position of the Air Force officers a condition of the sale for that approach could well lead Mugabe to behave intemperately and in a way that would prejudice rather than help the position of those officers. But having made plain that we were prepared to proceed with the sale, Mr. Rifkind should do all he could to extract assurances with regard to the treatment of the officers.

On the separate question of the programme loan agreement, we should do our best to ensure that the signature of this agreement attracted as little publicity as possible and was separate in time from our statement of willingness to proceed with the sale of Hunters.

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

Your ever
 J. L. Cole

Roger Bone, Esq.,
 Foreign and Commonwealth Office