

SUBJECT  
cc Machel



## 10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

20 October 1983

Her Royal Highness

Visit of the President of Mozambique

The Prime Minister had a tête-à-tête conversation with President Machel at noon today. Colonel Honwana and I were present.

The Prime Minister said that she was very pleased that the President was paying this visit to the United Kingdom. We were anxious to learn about the situation in Mozambique. We were most grateful for the role which he had played in bringing Rhodesia to independence and in particular his efforts to persuade Mr. Mugabe and Mr. Nkomo that they should seek a solution by negotiation.

We were also grateful for the constructive role which President Machel was playing with regard to Namibia. This problem was proving more difficult and of longer duration than we had anticipated. The presence of the Cubans in Angola and the view taken of this by the United States were factors which could not be ignored.

President Machel said that our effort with respect to Zimbabwe had been mutual. The United Kingdom, and especially the Prime Minister herself, had played an extremely important part. Successive British Governments had tried to deal with the problem but had lacked the understanding and the courage to handle it successfully. The decisive stage was the UK's acceptance at Lusaka of its responsibility as a colonial power for solving the problem. That had enabled Mozambique to work with Mugabe though that had not been an easy task.

It was in the context of the Non-Aligned Movement that Tanzania, Zambia, Angola, Mozambique and Botswana had taken the decision that Zimbabwe should participate in the Lancaster House talks. Mugabe and Nkomo had initially felt that the Front Line States were betraying the struggle but he himself had taken a firm position in favour of Zimbabwe's participation in talks.

The Prime Minister commented that the President's role in persuading Mugabe had been very important. She recalled a meeting

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with Mugabe, Nkomo and Muzorewa towards the end of the negotiations when they had all undertaken to submit themselves to the ballot of the people. Each of them expected to win but each felt that he was entering the unknown. We had been very relieved that the election result was clear and decisive.

President Machel said that Mugabe, Nkomo and Ian Smith would all, at a certain point, have liked the talks to fail. But he had argued that Mugabe and Nkomo should not be the cause of breakdown; that should be Smith if anyone.

The Prime Minister said that we were also helped by the fact that the time was right for a settlement. President Machel agreed. In addition, the parties in Zimbabwe all believed that it was the wrong time to start a new stage in the war. If flexibility had not been shown at the critical moment, there could have been a breakdown in the talks even though it was the right time for a solution.

Some countries had been suspicious about the elections which were held. The Prime Minister said that we had gone to great lengths to ensure fair and free elections, for example by arranging for observers and even for British policemen to attend.

President Machel said that he wished to reiterate his personal admiration for the energy and vision that the Prime Minister had shown. The Prime Minister said that she had been greatly helped by the skill of Lord Carrington and by the decision taken at Lusaka to put the matter in the hands of Britain. Once we had a clear responsibility, we were able to act much more decisively than if we had been negotiating as a member of a group.

President Machel said that Britain still had a responsibility to exercise in Zimbabwe for the sake of stability in that country. Mozambique was concerned by the situation and in particular the rivalry between ZANU and ZAPU. When in London Nkomo had written many letters to him requesting that he intervene with Mugabe. The President had urged Mugabe to make it easy for Nkomo to return and had argued that the differences between them should be resolved in Zimbabwe and not through the media.

The Prime Minister said that Nkomo had behaved well during his stay in London in that he had not indulged overtly in political activity. We had always believed that, provided he obtained satisfactory guarantees, it was right for him as a political leader to return to his country. President Machel said that Mugabe well understood that point and had arranged secure guarantees.

Continuing, the President said that he wanted to ask the Prime Minister to talk to Mugabe. Perhaps she did not know him very well. The Prime Minister said that she expected to see Mugabe at CHOGM. President Machel said that that was why he was raising the matter. Mugabe had many problems. He was scarred with ten years of imprisonment and by his experience of the bloody

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history of Zimbabwe. We should try to understand the effect these things had on him. He hoped that the Prime Minister would spend a couple of hours talking to Mugabe in New Delhi. The Prime Minister said that one was bound to feel rather reticent being the representative of the former colonial power. President Machel said that he understood that point. He himself had been colonized but he had good relations with many politicians in Portugal, particularly with the Portuguese who had been in Mozambique. The image of a colonial power which a subject state obtained was inaccurate in that it was based on the experience of settlers from that country. The settlers tended to be members of the administration, the police, the prison service and other institutions and were associated with ideas of injustice and discrimination. The colonial territory was ignorant of the true nature of the people of the metropolitan power.

The Prime Minister said that she hoped that Mr. Mugabe did not have this image of Britain. With regard to the Air Force officers imprisoned in Zimbabwe, we had made the same kind of representations to Mugabe as we would have done to any Head of Government where such things had happened to people who were either of British nationality or of dual nationality. Mugabe had perhaps not understood that we would have acted in the same way in the case of other countries. But that background made it a little difficult to talk frankly to him. President Machel said that he nevertheless wished to urge the Prime Minister to do so. He himself would talk to Mr. Mugabe before CHOGM.

The Prime Minister said that we well understood that Mugabe had problems. We tried to help. For example, our military advisers were doing a first-class job in welding together the armed forces. She would think further about the idea of a meeting at CHOGM. Mugabe had been rather forthright in public about her. But we were anxious that he should succeed. The decision to use the ballot box rather than the bullet had been a most important one. If Zimbabwe succeeded this would have a great influence on other Southern African problems.

The tête-à-tête conversation ended at 1225 hours and was followed by a plenary session. I enclose a record of the plenary talks.

I am copying this letter and enclosure to Richard Mottram (Ministry of Defence).

*Yours ever*  
*for Col.*

R.B. Bone, Esq.,  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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