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THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Oval Office Meeting with President Robert G. Mugabe of Zimbabwe

PARTICIPANTS: The President  
Brent Scowcroft, Assistant to the President  
for National Security Affairs  
Robert C. Frasure (notetaker)

Robert G. Mugabe, President  
Mary Muchada (notetaker)

DATE, TIME: July 24, 1991, 11:00 - 11:25 a.m. EST  
AND PLACE: The Oval Office

The President: I want to welcome you here. We have no set agenda. But if you have a private point to make, please do so.  
(U)

I think our bilateral relations are not bad. We have had our ups and downs. That is inevitable. But it is always useful to clear the air. I remember your kindness to me in 1982. If there is any subject you want to raise, please do so. (U)

President Mugabe: I want to express my profound gratitude to you for this visit and for this opportunity. There is a need for closer relations in areas of mutual concern. A major area which I want to discuss is our structural adjustment. This is being done in an historical context. It is an adjustment from the colonial situation in which there was an imbalance in society.  
(U)

We have accepted that we have a multi-racial society. We want to sustain that fact. White standards are up. Some Blacks have been raised to that level. We need to get more up there. (U)

We need to develop an economy with an open market system. We need your inputs. We have received U.S. aid in the past and hope we can be treated in a slightly more special way. (U)

We are forging a society as a model for South Africa. If we fail, I don't know what will happen there. (U)

We are glad our relations with the Whites are close. We don't want to send out any Anglo Saxons. We are very close. They are rooted in Zimbabwe. (U)

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The President: Do most of your Whites live in the countryside?  
(U)

President Mugabe: They are both urban and rural. Some are in farming. Most are in urban areas. They run factories. We need to have their help in expanding jobs. (U)

The President: Yes, there is a world recession. I was talking to a Congressman the other day from Mississippi -- one of our poorest states -- and he said to me that you don't understand the people, that they are hurting. Your interests are abroad, he said. (U)

I'm hoping our economy is coming out of it. But it is not as strong as it should be. (U)

President Mugabe: That was the main subject I wanted to raise.  
(U)

The President: Have your economic guys come along with you? (U)

President Mugabe: Not Chidzero. He had to stay to do our budget presentation tomorrow. (U)

The President: It's lucky you are out of town! (U)

President Mugabe: He must defend it. (U)

The President: Should we talk about South Africa in the Cabinet Room? (U)

President Mugabe: I am full of praise for how the U.S. has handled it. You have relaxed sanctions. You had a commitment to do so when certain conditions were met. We appreciate that you still demand that human rights be observed and that some sanctions remain in place. (U)

The President: We are not washing our hands of it. (U)

President Mugabe: There has been a wave of violence. (U)

The President: Terrible, terrible. Who is to blame for it? (U)

President Mugabe: Much of it is Black on Black. But the government took advantage of it. (U)

Let me mention two sensitive points, first, Angola. (C)

President dos Santos of Angola asked me to express his appreciation to U.S. for its help in the Angola peace process. Secondly, he would like to visit in September. Thirdly, he says the American representative in Luanda is not playing a fair role. (C)

The President: I don't know whether it is fair or not. (C)

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Dos Santos has come a long way. (C)

We are favorably disposed to him. We don't want to undermine him. We don't want to send a signal that he is not appreciated. (C)

We would like to invest more there. Can we do that? (C)

Mr. Frasure: We will probably need to have a democratic government in place first. There are certain prohibitions. (C)

President Mugabe: My second point is that I have Mengistu now in Zimbabwe. It is a real shocker for us. I talked to him, and he gave me the whole history of Ethiopia, of the Arabs trying to take over. (C)

He said he had appealed to the U.S. to mediate. It was decided by his ministers that he should step down. He was told that, if he left, there would be a peace process and no secession of Eritrea. (C)

Mengistu said that, as soon as he left, the U.S. called on the Tigrayans to go into Addis Ababa. There was no attempt to get peace. (C)

He asked if it is still the view of the U.S. that Ethiopia is one country. He is grieved at the killing. (C)

Mengistu asked me to raise this with you. Is President Bush interested in Ethiopia? Why do the Americans hate me? (C)

The President: There is a long history there. Now the shoe is on the other foot. Mengistu was very anti-American. He cast his lot with the other great power. (C)

There was a bad relationship and a lot of it was personal. (C)

Mr. Frasure? Do you want to speak to this point? (U)

Mr. Frasure: With respect, President Mugabe, Mengistu is not being straight with you. (C)

We did try to arrange a provisional government. We were trying to do that in London after Mengistu fled the country. We were on the verge of an agreement when things fell apart in Addis. Even people from the successor regime felt the other side should come into Addis to maintain order. We concurred with Democratic Front forces to go into Addis. (C)

On Eritrea, it is a very tough problem. The fact is that the other side won a thirty year war and controls the place. Ideally we would like a united Ethiopia. But the situation on the ground is something we don't control. It here is a referendum in two years, we and others will have to respect the results. (C)

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The President: If Mengistu liked the United States, he had a funny way of showing it. ~~(C)~~

We didn't want to get in over our heads there. But we do want a presence. ~~(C)~~

Where is Mengistu living now? In Harare? (U)

President Mugabe: We gave him a guest house. We took him in. (U)

The President: We should try to calm that situation. (U)

President Mugabe: You have my letter on Chidzero. (U)

The President: A good man! Baker knows him well. He is well regarded. But we are not behind any one candidate. ~~(C)~~

It is Africa's turn. We are open minded. Will Chidzero get African support? (U)

President Mugabe: Yes, I think so. (U)

The President: Shall we go next door? (U)

-- End of Conversation --

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