

American Friends Service Committee
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ZIMBABWE TEAM REPORT #4

Salisbury, Zimbabwe
March 5, 1980

This is a transcript of a trans-oceanic telephone interview made on Wednesday, March 5th with Bill Sutherland, AFSC Representative in Southern Africa and Lyle Tatum, also representing AFSC in Salisbury, Zimbabwe. Both men were speaking from Salisbury. John Sullivan, AFSC's Associate Executive Secretary for Information, is the interviewer.

John Sullivan: Bill Sutherland traveled all over Zimbabwe (Manicaland, Matabeleland, Victoria) and talked with other observers who also traveled elsewhere in the country. He reported that there had been some harassment of voters but that it occurred at the hands of all parties and not only by the guerillas as had been widely reported. He noted, however, that the many observers agree that the elections fairly reflected the wishes of the people.

Bill Sutherland: I think that this became possible because the world spotlight was on Rhodesia at this particular time. Approximately 1,000 observers were going all over the country. They were not only observing but taking an active part in curbing the excesses of the political parties, the government and the partisan behavior of the officials. Furthermore, many official and unofficial observers cautioned the Governor against banning parties or disenfranchising the voters from particular areas.

Secondly, much credit must be given to the national election directorate in carrying out the elections. They did a splendid job in getting information to the voters, and in convincing them about the secrecy of their vote. I think all people are ready to say they did a splendid job in that respect.

Thirdly, and finally, the Zimbabwe people themselves showed that they could not be bought or intimidated. They have gone to the polls in great numbers and, in those areas where there was said to be the least intimidation you have the greatest number of people voting for the ZANU-PF Mugabe party which was supposed to be the greatest intimidator. As the Commonwealth observers put it, the people showed a lively appreciation of the issues, and a keen involvement in the election process and in the future destiny of their country.

J.S.: Very good, Bill. Now Lyle Tatum, let us have your observations.

Lyle Tatum: Before the election there was a great deal of speculation about possible coalitions making up the new government. Mugabe's impressive win ended the argument. The Governor had no alternative to Mugabe and the invitation was extended to form a new government by 10:00am yesterday morning. Mugabe had said all along

that Nkomo's wing of the Patriotic Front would be part of his government. That has been confirmed. Nkomo's role is not yet spelled out but he is expected to be either President or Deputy Prime Minister. A Senate of 40 seats must now be established. Then the stage will be set for independence. That should happen within the next two weeks.

There was a strong dirty anti-Marxist campaign during the election. The big question now is how Marxist will Mugabe be with his government policies? The ZANU-PF election manifesto, Mugabe's campaign speeches and Mugabe's remarks since the election have all been moderate, conciliatory and intended to prevent panic. He has maintained that the land to be redistributed is only the unused and the under-utilized land. There is lots of that. He has spoken of agricultural cooperatives for resettling those persons uprooted by war. He has reaffirmed today that he will not interfere with the private ownership of mines and industry. Rhodesia was already a country with state control in many areas. It looks as though there are not going to be radical economic changes in the near future as Mugabe plans to avoid upsetting Rhodesia's basically strong and varied economy.

On the international scene, Mugabe says Zimbabwe will be non-aligned between East and West but seeking friends on all sides. There will be changes as a result of the elimination of racial discrimination, greatly increased educational facilities and the Africanization of jobs, particularly in the civil service. As of now, the future looks good for Zimbabwe.

J.S.: Bill, on the question of intimidation, what is likely to be the future situation in regard to violence by any party?

B.S.: At the present time there is an atmosphere of peace. I think that the possibility of the coup which was talked about by the white minority, supported by South Africa, has been lessened by the cooperation which is now taking place between the Prime Minister Designate Mr. Mugabe, Lt. General Walls and the other officers. There is now the integration of the various guerilla forces with the regular army. As these things proceed, I think that the possibility of violence is minimized.

J.S.: Bill, what is the likelihood of the black people's expectations being met by the Mugabe government which does face very severe days ahead in assembling its platforms and policies? Is there a likelihood of any disappointment in that respect?

B.S.: For most people the ending of the war itself is so meaningful to them that it will not be forgotten. The fact that there is no more war will be considered a great achievement by the ZANU-PF government.

J.S.: A question for Lyle Tatum: What do you expect to be the ongoing reaction of whites to the new government?

L.T.: Well, the initial reaction has been one of great surprise and of relief. I think that if these first good couple of days are continued, things are going to be in good shape.

J.S.: Another question: We have heard rumors that there might be some offer of aid from South Africa to the new government.

L.T.: No, there has been no offer of aid from the South African government, at least that has been publicized. Their public statements

are of the nature that they accept the election and the results of the election. However, they also gave out a warning that Zimbabwe should not be used as a base for guerilla operations against South Africa. They have said nothing about financial assistance.

J.S.: One final question: What are the kinds of U.S. aid that would be most needed and useful?

L.T.: Well, the U.S. has already said they will give aid on the resettlement of people. There is a crying and immediate problem and I would expect that whatever the U.S. wants to give would be absorbed in that tremendous tasks.