AMERICAN OBSERVERS CALL ON BRITISH TO END BIAS IN ZIMBABWE

February 26, 1980

At a press conference in Salisbury on February 25, a group of five American and seven Canadian election observers called on the British Governor Lord Soames to take a series of steps before the election to correct the British bias in favor of Bishop Muzorewa. The American observers included representatives of the Washington Office on Africa, TransAfrica and the NAACP, and the American Committee on Africa.

The observers charged that British allegations of intimidation by ZANU (PF) are very one-sided. From what they have observed, they reported that the principal blame for intimidation lay with the security forces and the auxiliaries loyal to Bishop Muzorewa.

The observers also expressed grave concern about how a government will be formed after the election is held. They expressed concern that whatever party or coalition forms a government should represent at least fifty percent of the African voters.

The group called on British Governor Lord Soames to take the following steps before polling begins on February 27:

1. Return all auxiliaries to bases.
2. Keep the Commonwealth monitoring force at the assembly points until a new government is formed.
3. Extend the buffer zone around the assembly points from 5 to 10 kilometers.
4. Cancel the call-up of Rhodesian troops.
5. Issue a statement before the election results are announced ensuring that the Governor will call first on the African party which wins the largest number of seats to form a government.

This is a summary of their statement based on a phone conversation from Salisbury. The full text of their 8-page statement will be available later.

It is expected that the election results will be announced on Monday, March 3rd. How much time it will take to form a government after that is not known.