



AMERICAN FRIENDS SERVICE COMMITTEE

INTERNATIONAL DIVISION

SOUTHERN AFRICA INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS REPORT

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Letter No. 2
from Ted Lockwood

Dear Friends,

I've spent the last two months exploring homes bases: Harare, the one I have tentatively selected, and Gaborone, the one that Maghan suggested. I've tried to settle in but I can't say that I have succeeded in being more than a visitor. But even a visitor has certain first impressions that may have a certain superficial or even lasting validity.

First Impressions

Harare and Gaborone are both capital cities. Both are bustling commercial centers with a wealth of consumer goods hard to find in Lusaka, Dar es Salaam or Luanda.

Harare is bustling, big, strenuous, rumor-ridden. Harare is a churn, a cockpit of politics. It's easy to feel the clash of nationalist politicians striving to consolidate power, striving to gain it or not lose it. The racists are leaving but not without a sour or defiant or limp complaint. Some are staying and get fined or jailed for their language. The old order is changing but the new one has not yet been fully born. Skills are departing; untried new blood is eager to fill the place. Harare is assessing its direction for the future, but is unsure of its identity. It's proudly African but parliament opens with British-style pomp and circumstance. Black boys and girls with boaters and blazers with seals mingle equally with their white counterparts. Workers in stores wear proper ties and say Madam and Sir. But in the communal areas the n'angas are active, the spirit mediums and healers and bewitchers operate and people speak Shona or Ndebele and not English.

Harare is assessing its direction for the future. Is it moving too slowly toward socialism? Will business lose patience and pull out? Or is it too powerful already? Does foreign aid have strings attached? Has the debt trap been entered or not? Harare is a kaleidoscope of public personalities, rhetoric that escapes and seizes a life of its own, changing ground rules, treason trials that end in acquittal but are overruled by indefinite detention of the principal accused.

Gaborone is smaller, much smaller, even though it's the fastest growing city in Africa. Five years since my last visit, I find the growth hard to believe. Yet it seems relatively calm, easy-going and self-assured. It accepts the limits imposed by the grip of South Africa's financial and military power even as it tries to transcend them. Not many settlers have lived here. The bitter hostility and antagonism between the races that characterizes South Africa is not present. The passionate politics of the refugees from South Africa, Namibia, Zimbabwe and Angola enter and are placed in sanctuary but not in the mainstream of Botswana

politics. No one can afford that. And yet Gaborone is the formal center of SADCC and the late Seretse Khtama was the principal inspiration for its founding. And SADCC is intended to liberate its members from South Africa's grip.

Gaborone retains the flavor of a country town. Important people are easy to see. President Masire sits in the front row of a public lecture on drought like any other member of the public.

Gaborone lives much more in the shadow of South Africa's might. It has never claimed to be in transition to socialism. It is a fast-growing capitalist capital. Gaborone's food, except for its meat, is mostly imported from South Africa. So is its electricity and water. Anglo-American Corporation dominates the mining industry even though government shares in the revenues and influences job decisions. South African newspapers, magazines, and books are abundantly available as they are not in Harare. In the wake of the Pretoria bombing, Botswana is anxious to provide no excuse for another Matola incident. South Africa is blustering and promising to strike back at any state that lets ANC even transit its territory. Botswana has been specifically warned.

There are long-term plans to lessen dependency on South Africa; a coal-fired electricity station is in the works. Industry is being urged to go to areas other than Gaborone where water is more abundant, like Selibi-Pikwe.

Relations between Harare and Gaborone have been strained over how to handle the dissident problem.

How Are Things in Matabeleland?

So many Americans continue to ask this question. "Are you safe?" The bad reports of February have created a lasting after-image.

Yes, I am safe. I recently drove from Gaborone to Harare via Bulawayo and Gweru and encountered no problems. I passed about ten armored trucks or armored vehicles loaded with troops but there were no shots. The government says that things are returning to normal in Matabeleland and Midlands. They certainly are quieter. But there are worrisome indications that peace is not yet at hand in any larger sense.

Perhaps it would be worthwhile to try to sum up the position in more detail.

The Economic Background to the Dissident Problem

The dissident revolt cannot be understood unless it is read against the background of deepening economic recession and difficulties in implementing the government's ambitious plans for reconstruction and development.

The government's plan for a gradual transition to socialism projected increased delivery of agricultural, educational, health and welfare services and increased investment in the public sector based on an annual growth rate of 8%. In 1982, however, because of the worldwide recession and unprecedented drought, growth slowed to 2%. According to the Reserve Bank, "The outlook for 1983 is not good and it is possible there may even be a marginal decline."

With domestic and export demand down and foreign exchange dwindling the government has recently concluded a Z\$375 million loan agreement with IMF and a loan of U.S. \$70 million with the World Bank. While the terms of these loans are not known, the government's recent actions suggest that it is following IMF and World Bank conditions. Devaluation of the dollar by 20% to improve export competitiveness; restraint on wages; withdrawal of proposals to end corporate tax deductions; relaxed control over remittance of profits. At the same time the government has raised the sales tax to 16%, probably the highest rate in the world. For 1982/83 the government expects to raise 43.6% of its revenues from sales, customs, excises and other such taxes on goods and services - just about as much as it raises from income taxes. In 1979/80 the percentage was 38%. Since independence, the government has been borrowing heavily to pay for its social welfare improvements at steadily higher rates.

Inflation remains high at 18% with rises in bus and rail fares and electric rates still to come. Zimbabwe has the highest price for fuel in southern Africa, about Z\$5 an imperial gallon. Wage earners thus may well feel that much of the gains they made after independence are in danger of being eroded away.

With hoped-for new private investment not materializing as anticipated, and with only \$1 billion pledged, the government is going to be hard pressed to realize its ambitious goal for new capital investment in the private and public sector.

The government, accordingly, has embarked on a policy of reducing expenses in order to reduce the deficit by at least \$200 million. Simultaneously it is faced with having to raise an unanticipated \$120 million to pay for drought relief. No one knows from where.

Where will the cuts come? Defense expenditures are to be cut in half according to Dr. Bernard Chidzero, primarily by the ending of demobilization pay programs. In addition, public sector investment will be reluctantly reduced.

Under the circumstances, funds for continuing the advances in health care, education, and welfare services will be very hard to find. The emphasis will increasingly be on self-help and bootstrap operations.

The Land Reform Problem

Perhaps the most explosive problem the government faces is the unsatisfied land hunger of the rural farmers. Throughout the war, the cry of the liberation movement was "We want our land back!" Teenage fighters from the rural peasantry fought and in some cases died to get a new deal for the 4.3 million rural Africans who were confined to the Tribal Trust Lands, only 42% of the total country and that the poorest land. Overstocking, lack of credits, extension services, and fertilizers were a recipe for crippling poverty and malnutrition. Even in 1980, cash income in the communal areas still averaged only \$18 a month; 90% of the food and export crops are grown by the commercial farmers, who are predominantly white. However, with better marketing facilities, communal land yields are up from 5% of total crops to something over 10% in the last three years.

By using unutilized and underutilized land in the commercial areas, the government plan has been to resettle some 162,000 families over a three-year period "subject to practical financial and economic restraints". It felt it could not

risk the loss of food crops and export earnings if it tried to nationalize the commercial farm lands and reestablish them as collective production units. Although the plan could not fully reduce the overload on communal lands, it was a reasonable start. (The government says that there are 700,000 families on land that can only support half that figure.)

The difficulty is that by the government's own admission the program has been painfully slow. With three different government departments involved, progress suffers from lack of coordination. Understandably, the government has been concerned to do resettlement correctly and with proper advice, guidance and inputs. But there are many complaints of inefficiency, bureaucratic inexperience, lack of drive and confusion between overlapping authorities. There are four different land use options: a) intensive village with individual arable and communal grazing allocations, the traditional pattern; b) communal living and cooperative farming; c) a core estate operated communally; and d) cattle and game husbandry on more extensive but poorer lands. Inevitably, a complex plan with many options is more difficult to administer. In Matabeleland, there have only been some 1300 resettlements. The government says this is due to lack of willingness to work with government. But it is more likely due to the fact that option (d) was added late and is the one most suitable to Matabeleland.

Whatever the reasons, the total settled so far is only some 21,000.

A key part of the problem has been the government's inability or unwillingness to break out of the formula that the Whites and Great Britain insisted on at Lancaster House: purchases of land must be on a willing-buyer, willing-seller basis. But the foreign funds to accomplish this have been slow in arriving. The commercial farmers, foreign donors, and some government officials want to keep the program as small as possible. Money now in hand will pay for the resettlement of only a few thousand more farmers. But annual population increases in the communal areas are far greater than the present rate of resettlement.

The government, however, now faces a spontaneous squatter movement that is taking the law into its own hands. This is happening not only in ZAPU areas but in ZANU areas also, particularly in the fertile eastern regions. Squatters are simply seizing government and commercial land and claiming title or squatters' rights to it.

In Matabeleland, farmers affected by the drought are moving cattle onto commercial land where there may be forage. While the government is trying to run a program in a planned way with consent, it cannot move fast enough. Many cattle are being slaughtered before they starve and there is fear that breeding stock will be depleted.

Meanwhile, in Harare and Bulawayo the squatter population is growing by leaps and bounds, far outstripping facilities, housing, etc. Landowners are illegally leasing their land to people who want to build their own shacks much to the consternation of the government which sees real problems ahead in health and sanitation. At Russeldene Farm in Harare South, a large number of squatters have occupied land which Deputy Minister Mark Dube has ordered them to leave. At last report, the squatters were continuing to defy government orders.

With the ending of the demobilization pay programs, the government is going to have to deal somehow with the situation of the some 7,700 combat veterans who

have been demobilized but who have no jobs and are not doing education work. They are the tinder for dissident flames.

Who Are the Dissidents?

The origin of the dissident movement lies in discontent on the part of former ZIPRA soldiers in the new integrated army. They began to complain that the new army was discriminating against them in terms of promotion, leadership positions and demobilization. Their spokesmen were Lieut-General Lookout Masuku and former ZIPRA Military Commander Dumiso Dabengwa who wrote to the prime minister and minister of defense on their behalf. The government for its part denied completely any such alleged discrimination.

Mistrust between ZIPRA and ZANLA elements in the national army had been considerably worsened by outbreaks of fighting in February, 1981. According to statements made by Masuku at his recent trial for treason, weapons were cached around Gwai River Camp for defense of ZIPRA soldiers in case of another outbreak. Caches of arms were also made on party-owned farms and on Nitram properties controlled by Joshua Nkomo.

According to Acting President of ZAPU, Josiah Chinamano, the caching of arms had been common knowledge for a long time and had been subject of discussions in the government, in which he had taken part. However, the government disclaims any accurate knowledge of where the caches were and says that ZAPU dragged its feet and refused to cooperate in turning the arms in.

Then, in February, 1982, the government decided that in fact the caches were not merely defensive but that they were evidence of a plot to overturn the government. Nkomo and senior ZAPU ministers were turned out of government and charges of treason were brought against Masuku and Dabengwa, based primarily on the discovery of specific arms caches. After a long trial, Dabengwa and Masuku were declared innocent by the High Court in Harare, but the government proceeded to lock up Dabengwa and Masuku under an indefinite detention security order.

The government maintains that the dissidents' political allegiance is to Nkomo, that their political philosophy is ZAPU, and that they intend to overthrow a democratically elected government by force.

ZAPU, on the other hand, disclaims responsibility for the dissidents, deplores violence on all sides, and says the dissidents are simply "misguided youth" who should be given an amnesty. Their problems should be looked into by an impartial parliamentary inquiry.

The truth is hard to ascertain. Who are the dissidents really?

Some may be ex-guerillas who play criminal for personal gain like the ex-ZIPRA who held up a cinema so that he could get to Zambia. Some may be political radicals who believe the government has sold out the cause for which they fought by installing a black bourgeoisie and ignoring the poverty of the masses. Some may be ex-combatants who charge the government with discriminating against them in the army and failing to deliver employment or studies for those demobilized. Some may be Nkomo loyalists who are angry at what they see as an injustice. Others may have rejected Nkomo's leadership long ago, and see him as a "sellout".

Some dissidents may in fact be South African trained infiltrators bent on destabilization who have no genuine ZAPU connections and no political motivation other than to cause havoc and get paid.

To date, I have seen no clear political statement of the movement's objectives. It seems to have grown spontaneously out of the discontent of ZIPRA soldiers.

Dissident Destruction

The serious damage which dissidents have caused should not be underestimated. It does pose a threat to the government's authority. No government can afford to ignore an insurrection aimed at destroying its legitimacy and aborting its development plans.

In August, dissidents set fire to ten tractors, six heavy vehicles, one Land Rover, and two trailers. Six tourists were abducted and now appear to have been killed. In October, nine pieces of road building equipment were set on fire. On December 24th, Christmas Eve, they burnt two buses and a truck, killed three persons and injured twenty-one. On December 31st, they ambushed a private vehicle and all six of its occupants were killed.

Twenty-three commercial farmers or members of their families have been victims of dissident attacks since January last year. The latest have been in May at Gweru and another at Figtree in June. White commercial farmers continue to report the presence of groups of 15-20 dissidents roaming on their lands. They complain that the army does not respond to their requests for help. While many are re-arming themselves for self-defense, others may be putting their places up for sale and planning to emigrate. One farmer in a "hot" area claims that 50% of Matabeleland farms have been offered to the government.

In the first three months of 1983, a third fewer tourists came to Zimbabwe than in 1982. Although this may be partly due to restrictions on tourism imposed by Zambia, it probably reflects years of dissident activities. Business began to fall off drastically last August at a time when dissident activists were flaring up.

Crackdown

Faced with these acts of sabotage and violence and frustrated by what they saw as ineffective action by regular troops and the welcoming attitude of the population, the government deployed the Fifth Brigade, a specially trained and largely Shona unit, which was directly responsible to the prime minister with instructions to crack down and crack down hard. Defense Minister Sekeramayi, in a public speech, appealed to all "patriotic Zimbabweans to assist the government in liquidating the bandits".

What followed is now well-known.

There is no need to repeat the reports of killings, beatings, and brutalities which western reporters filed. These reports were often based on interviews with refugees or with hospital staff and some were based on information which nongovernmental agencies and church missions had received over a number of months,

not because they were out looking for it, but because they were dealing with terrified refugees. To be sure, some of it was second-hand and corroboration was difficult to secure. Witnesses fearful of the consequences often changed their stories. Development officers and church authorities had collected evidence to impel them to express concern that the countryside might be facing a civil war with ethnic overtones.

As early as last fall, Catholic authorities had been meeting with government to express their unease over the developing situation. When the international press began to report on what was going on in February, church, NGO and the diplomatic community began a more urgent dialogue with government.

The NGO community selected a delegation to seek an audience with the prime minister, which was granted in early March. The Protestant Church authorities presented their evidence. The Catholic Justice and Peace Commission head, Michael Auret, together with one of the Catholic bishops met with the prime minister.

In each case, the prime minister listened carefully, asked for detailed documentation unless it had already been provided and promised to investigate the charges. He refused to appoint a judicial commission of inquiry as the Catholic delegation had requested. Some of the security ministers present at the NGO conference accused the delegation of mouthing ZAPU propaganda.

While the diplomatic community voiced its concerns privately, it has not cut off aid. Only the Swedish aid agency, SIDA, suspended talks on a new two-year aid program in order to "gather information about developments in Zimbabwe", but by mid-May SIDA announced that its \$32 million program would go ahead.

The confrontation between government, NGO's and church groups appears to have had some useful side effects. Several NGO's, who might with some plausibility have been accused of having a pro-ZAPU bias, appear to be trying to make certain that their programs are not focused too narrowly on projects in ZAPU territory. At the same time, there is a widespread impression that the government, without admitting to past brutalities, has put out the word to troop commanders that the troops are to be more disciplined, restrained and monitored. Since May 1, people from the rural areas have been coming in for training courses, which had been interrupted by the crackdown activities for a number of months, I learned at the Quaker-founded training center at Hlekweni in Bulawayo.

In April, the government began to lift curfews and allow drought relief and food supplies to be resumed. It ordered stores and clinics to be reopened. And in an effort to "win hearts and minds", the prime minister paid a two-day visit to Tsholotsho and Lupane in mid-May. These were two districts where there had been alleged massacres. He urged a crowd reported to number 25,000:

"The country belongs to all of us and we must all work for its development."

He said it was absurd to say the country had not been liberated, or that the government was just for one part of the country. He invited local officials to voice their grievances and problems. Two weeks later ministers and cabinet officials in charge of health, water, local government, and land paid a follow-up visit to address the issues raised.

Refugees Continue to Stream into Botswana

Notwithstanding the government's efforts to stress development, the fact remains that young men who have received ZIPRA training or who have been identified with ZAPU in local leadership do not feel safe in Matabeleland and are continuing to leave for sanctuary in refugee camps in Botswana. Some of these refugees are dissidents, demobilized ZIPRA or ZAPU local leaders.

On the day that I visited Dukwe Camp, an hour-and-a-half west of Francistown, there were 3,609 Zimbabweans counted on the roll. That was May 24th. One hundred and sixty-five had arrived in the previous week. When I entered the commandant's office, there were about 47 new arrivals squatting on the ground waiting to be registered.

The beginning of the Zimbabwean refugee exodus seems to have been in December. By the end of December there were 601. By the end of March the numbers had swollen to 3,000 more or less, 2,747 having arrived in the four months. Some had departed, possibly for South Africa.

Most of these refugees arrive with very little or no personal belongings. Many arrive hungry and with cases of TB and bilharzia. Refugees enter Botswana very easily. The border is normally crossed daily by Kalanga and Ndebele people who live on both sides. In some cases a village may have its cattle post on the other side.

An analysis of new arrivals in the first four months shows that 92.2% of the Zimbabweans arriving were male. And of the males, the vast majority were between 16 and 30. Seventy-three percent were between 16 and 25, prime military age.

But the most pitiful are orphaned boys and girls, many of whom have traveled on their own, searching for relatives.

The refugees are in Dukwe by necessity and not by choice. The food rations are adequate nutritionally but a source of constant complaint: milk, beans, meal and a tin of fish every 14 days. The new arrivals are living in tents, which will be chilly as winter comes on. Not unnaturally, given these circumstances, five to ten refugees go AWOL every day. This procedure has its risks. It's Botswana Government policy to deport any refugees who are absent without leave from the camp. When I asked the camp commandant, however, whether stories I had heard in Harare about a mass exodus of 1,500 Zimbabweans for South Africa were true, he said that it might be true only in the sense that if you add up 5-10 leaving every day it could be 1,500 in a year. Because of the size of the area, it is impossible to patrol or control. There is no impassable perimeter fence.

Zimbabwe-Botswana Tension Over the Refugee Problem

A high ranking delegation of Zimbabwean security officials visited Gaborone in mid-April at the invitation of Botswana to discuss the refugee issue. The Zimbabwe position was that all refugees should be returned forthwith since this issue was an internal matter. Zimbabwe was an independent country and Botswana had no right to intervene by treating dissidents as refugees. Botswana, however, told the Zimbabwe delegation that it had a long-standing policy of being a sanctuary for refugees. If the refugees absconded from Dukwe or if they engaged in

acts of hostility to Zimbabwe or if they were simply looking for work and were not refugees in a true sense, then they would be deported, but not otherwise.

Botswana is cracking down on Zimbabweans who are floating around without proper papers and who are not genuine refugees. Seventy were recently deported. But a genuine refoulement, that is, a forced repatriation is against the refugee conventions. The difficulty is that the definition of a refugee is very hard to administer. Botswana is probably not in practice going to deport people simply on the ground that they once had military training under ZIPRA and it is in no position to judge the extent of their dissident activity in Zimbabwe. On the other hand, Zimbabwe has just announced a protocol with Botswana under which dissident refugees will be caught and returned. How effective this will be remains to be seen.

The Prospects for Peace

Understandably, the Zimbabwe Government has responded angrily to western media portrayals of the conflict as another tribal clash. The truth is more complex than this stereotype allows.

In a column entitled This myth of civil war a prominent Zimbabwean journalist made the following points:

1. There is no exclusively tribal party in Zimbabwe. Membership is open to people of almost all tribes.
2. Both of the central committees of PF ZAPU and ZANU PF are made up of the major tribes.
3. There has been so much social and political integration between Shona and Ndebele that very few Shonas are without relatives among the Ndebeles and vice versa.

Nevertheless in spite of these facts, the two major parties, ZAPU and ZANU, have not yet achieved their goal of creating an integrated national party. ZAPU remains predominantly Ndebele-speaking and represents the people of Matabeleland and some of the Midlands. It has scattered adherents in Mashonaland. Its Acting President, Josiah Chinamano, is a Shona but he candidly admits that ZAPU is overwhelmingly Ndebele. To say Ndebele is really to describe a cultural amalgam; the Kalangas, for example, are actually Shona in origin but were incorporated into Ndebele culture and politics by conquest. Correspondingly, ZANU is predominantly Shona-speaking and an amalgam of many subgroups. One can cite prominent exceptions like Canaan Banana, the president, or Enos Nkala, who are Ndebele, but basically ZANU represents the Shona speakers, who are 77% of the population. The election of 1980 shows a breakdown of votes in very much this way.

It should be emphasized that some measure of national integration has already been achieved. Six ZAPU members serve in the government at ministerial level although these are not key posts. The dissident crisis has created within government and within the moderate ZAPU leadership an urgency to solve the divisions by creating a merger between the two parties. Preliminary talks have been held since April and are continuing with a view to resolving problems, but it appears that major hurdles still have to be overcome although minor ones have been

adjusted. Proposals will have to be passed by central committees and perhaps ultimately ratified by party congresses. ZANU has recently announced that a congress will be held next year.

Another success in integration is the national army, about 30% of which is former ZIPRA troops, although this integration is now imperiled.

On the eve of Parliament's opening, Secretary General Msika has called for an amnesty to all dissidents to allow them to return home, and for the establishment of a parliamentary select committee to probe the root cause of the dissident problem. He denied that ZAPU has created the dissidents in order to topple the government.

"Everybody is co-operating with the Government and every ZAPU member recognizes the authority of the Government."

In London, where he resides after his flight on March 8th, Joshua Nkomo denied that he was the leader of the dissidents or that the party had organized them. He called for an unbiased investigation of the army actions in Matabeleland, and a parliamentary investigation of the dissident phenomenon. "My party and I are just as interested in finding out who is behind these people."

While it is clear that the western media has blown up the idea of civil war out of all proportion, it remains a fact that the government's hardline approach appears to have led to a much greater polarization and alienation between the rank and file of ZAPU and ZANU, making talks of merger and unity much more difficult an accomplishment. The gap of distrust which was narrowing appears to have widened. At the same time, the flames of disunity are being fanned by enemies of Zimbabwe's socialist direction.

The Zimbabwe Government says that aerial reconnaissance shows a number of training or reception camps in the northern Transvaal where South Africa is training and equipping dissidents, former Muzorewa soldiers, and ex-Selous Scouts to create havoc that will exacerbate Zimbabwe's political problems.

A Final Word

It would be unfair to dwell on problems alone. The angry pressure from the povo, as the people are called here, can be seen as a healthy sign of political awareness and an opportunity to steer a course for a more grass roots-oriented development. The government has a great reservoir of good will and popular pride behind it notwithstanding those who have turned toward militant dissent. Now it must find the political will and the means to turn the popular desire for improvement into greater concrete achievements. With less foreign aid available, the people themselves are the greatest resource for mobilizing, planning, and acquiring new skills. But without national unity, the people will not be able to go forward. There are encouraging signs that leadership is seriously determined to overcome the divisions but there are many rivers still to cross.