American Observers Report
Intimidation in Rhodesia Elections

A team of four Americans is in Rhodesia to observe the elections to be held as a result of the Lancaster House agreement. The group consists of George H. Houser, executive director of the American Committee on Africa (ACOA), Tilden LeMelle, professor at Hunter College in New York and ACOA treasurer, Cynthia Cannady, an attorney from Washington, D.C. representing TransAfrica, a black American lobbying organization and Edgar Lockwood, director of the Washington Office on Africa.

The following statement was received from George H. Houser and Tilden LeMelle.

Rhodesia, February 20, 1980. "Free and fair elections in usual sense are impossible in Rhodesia now. The best that can be said is that if results are accepted without a complete breakdown, a tolerable peace may be realized.

"Guns are everywhere - the Rhodesian army, the so-called auxiliaries some 22,000 representing politically the muscle for Muzorewa, some guerrilla groups still at large outside the assembly points, and individual whites carrying rifles and revolvers as they travel around.

"In the country side the people are certainly intimidated. In our experience so far we have seen how this intimidation works against ZANU(PF) and favors Muzorewa. In two tribal trust lands south of Salisbury some sixty miles, we have seen how the auxiliaries use their guns to intimidate people favorable to ZANU(PF) - by beatings and threats aimed at keeping people from attending ZANU rallies. We ourselves were surrounded by regular Rhodesian security forces at gunpoint with threats of killing our ZANU companions as "terrorists." We were interrogated at the army base in Chiota reservoir, then by the Special Branch..."
at police headquarters at Marandellas.

"Intimidation? We felt it.

"Virtually all whites here are for Muzorewa. The white landowners will threaten their workers with loss of job if they don't vote for UANC. Sithole told us this happened in April elections and will happen this time.

"The white press is completely biased - blaming all violence on "terrorists" meaning ZANLA and ZIPRA. No blame on security forces or auxiliaries.

"Our observations will be broadened in the days to come through visits to other areas of the country."