When thinking about the events of the last six months in soon-to-be independent Zimbabwe, the word 'miracle' immediately comes to mind. I recall when two Zimbabwean leaders in one of the two movements composing the Patriotic Front, came into my office the very week the Lancaster House discussions started last September. They confidently forecast that the discussions in London would probably not last for more than two weeks. In stating this, they simply echoed what practically everyone felt. To reach an agreement would be a miracle, most observers said. I was among them. Nevertheless, because of pressures from Commonwealth countries, from the front line states, and the existence of an expanding guerrilla war, the Lancaster House discussions took place. Compromises, sometimes unhappily, were made. An agreement was reached just before Christmas.

But could the agreement be implemented? Even in mid-February when we arrived in Salisbury, barely two weeks before the elections took place, there was still a question mark in the minds of many as to whether the balloting would really occur. The atmosphere of violence was so intense, the intimidation was so widespread, that it was very easy to think the whole process would break down overnight. Lord Soames, the British Governor, seemed on the brink of ruling ZANU-PF out of election contention at least in certain areas of the country. Mugabe responded by saying that if this happened, the war would begin again. Lord Soames did not use the powers which he had granted to himself to eliminate ZANU-PF and voting took place in a relatively peaceful manner in spite of all the violence which characterized the several weeks of political campaigning. This was a miracle.

Most of the international observers, both official and unofficial, who were in Rhodesia during the election period, agreed that the voting pretty accurately reflected the will of the people of Zimbabwe. The British agreed. There were many voting irregularities, no doubt. But contrasted with the intimidation leading up to the actual voting, the election was remarkably peaceful.

To cap the many unexpected events was the overwhelming victory of ZANU-PF under the leadership of Robert Mugabe. This meant that the Governor had no choice except to invite Mugabe to form a government. Mugabe made his reconciling statement over radio and television to the nation on March 4. Overnight there was a change from the threat of civil war, and the possibility of the white-led coup to an easing of tensions. This all seemed like a miracle.

Our Project

It is not my intention in this report to give an in-depth analysis of what has occurred in Zimbabwe. Rather I would like to convey something of the atmosphere which we found during the short time
we were there in the period leading up to the election. This may make the final transformation from an embattled Rhodesia to an independent Zimbabwe all the more startling.

A word about our project and our group. It was obvious that the elections at the end of February which led the way to an independent Zimbabwe represented an event of fundamental importance not only to that one country, but to all of Southern Africa. These elections were in contrast to those of April 1979 when Bishop Abel Muzorewa and his United African National Council won an overwhelming vote and established the Bishop as a short-lived Prime Minister. Those elections were not contested by the two movements that together had waged the struggle against white minority domination and formed the Patriotic Front. From our point of view, those elections were irrelevant as far as assessing the political attitude of the people of Zimbabwe were concerned. But these February 1980 elections included all parties which wished to contest. In the American Committee on Africa we felt that it was important for a delegation representing not only our own organization, but others with which we worked closely, to be on hand as observers. So we took the initiative in organizing such a delegation of non-governmental American observers. Our team consisted of Tilden Le'elle and myself from ACOA, Ted Lockwood from the Washington Office on Africa, Cynthia Cannady representing Trans-Africa and Robert Edgar, a professor from Howard University who joined our delegation as he was moving on for several months of research in Lesotho. Functioning also as an integral part of our group although he was in Salisbury as a journalist was Mike Shuster who mainly works out of the United Nations. Our purpose was to make our own assessment as to how free and fair these elections under the British administration would be.

We were but a small part of many international observers and journalists who were in Salisbury for the elections and some for the political campaigning leading up to that period. According to Rhodesian government statistics, there were 281 international observers, official and unofficial, on hand for the occasion. There were 530 journalists, 540 of them from abroad. This was quite an influx from all over the world. The country is just a little less in square miles than the state of California. It is divided into eight provinces and 55 electoral districts. There was plenty of room for observers and journalists to spread around. Our group worked most closely with representatives from the American Friends Service Committee including Lyle Tatum and Bill Sutherland. In addition we worked closely with a group of seven observers from Canada. Together with them we issued a joint statement and held a press conference before the voting started making what we felt were some practical suggestions to the British administrators as to what steps might be taken which would help to insure free and fair elections. Our joint statement was taken seriously. It received front page publicity in the press, several minutes of commentary on BBC, and the official press conference conducted by the spokesman for Lord Soames dealt carefully in one of his press conferences with each of the main points we made in our statement. Our group had only passing contact with the delegation of Americans from Freedom House.

Our group moved widely around the country in the something over two
weeks we were there. We rented two cars and covered each of the eight provinces by diving our forces. We also took some trips by plane with the officially organized facility trips that the British administration set up. We visited African townships on the outskirts of larger cities, tribal trust lands which cover about 50% of the country, tea estates and European owned farms, some factories and protected villages. We attended mass political rallies and smaller ones; we visited the offices of each of the major political parties. We had good discussions with Robert Mugabe, Joshua Nkomo and Ndabaningi Sithole. And we talked with top lieutenants of the major leaders of most political parties. We did not have the opportunity to meet with Bishop Azorewa although we tried to set something up. Also we missed talking to James Chikerema of the Zimbabwe Democratic Party simply because our schedules didn't mesh although we talked with leaders in his organization. Our experiences were representative enough to make us feel we could express opinions on what was happening with confidence. We had a good entree with the Zimbabwean political leadership because of our work with them covering more than 20 years. We issued a report about our findings on the freedom and fairness of the elections on March 3rd, the day before the election results were known. This is available on request.

**Intimidation**

A first and dominant impression was that the atmosphere of the country was one of intimidation. For me this began at the airport almost immediately after arrival in Salisbury. In the past I have been refused admittance to Southern Rhodesia on a number of occasions going back to 1954 for reasons never given. Therefore before I embarked on this trip I had taken the precaution of checking with the British Ambassador to the United Nations, Sir Anthony Parsons, to see whether I would have any difficulty getting through immigration. There was no visa requirement for an American passport. He got in touch with the Governor's office in Salisbury and subsequently informed me that I would be able to get in. He very kindly gave me a letter based on the information he had received from the Governor's office. This is really what saved me from deportation. The Rhodesian immigration officials (still in charge at the airport) told me that I couldn't get in, that I was a prohibited immigrant, and gave me a slip which I still have in my possession stating this very clearly. It was then that the note from Sir Anthony helped to reverse the decision after phone calls were made to the Governor's office. There was also some help from Jeff Davidow, the American liaison officer on duty there, and from the Catholic Commission office which was of inestimable help to us in many ways during the two weeks or more we were in Rhodesia. In any event I finally did get into the country and was given a temporary permit saying that I should leave on March 1, the day after the elections, but before the results were known.

The atmosphere of intimidation and violence confronted one almost every place in the country. This must be seen in context. Rhodesia in February, was just emerging from virtually a decade of guerrilla warfare. Four armies were in the country. First there was the Rhodesia military called the Security Force at least 40,000 strong. This was
augmented by the call up (or draft) of another several thousand men, many of them middle age. Second, there was the so-called Auxiliary Force, the private army of Bishop Muzorewa approximately 26,000 strong. In addition there were the two guerilla armies—the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army, ZANLA (of ZANU), with some 16,000 of their men in Assembly Points scattered around the country, and the Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army, ZIPRA (of ZAPU), in other Assembly Points agreed upon as part of the ceasefire arrangement, approximately 6,000 strong. Outside of the Assembly Points there were estimated to be 3-4,000 other guerillas who had not gone to the Assembly Points for one reason or another. This was not all. The police force was everywhere in evidence. Finally there were 1,200 in the Monitoring Force mostly from Britain, but also a smaller number from other Commonwealth countries such as Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, Kenya and Nigeria. One of the aggravations in the country was the fact that most of the guerrillas were in the Assembly Points agreed upon at Lancaster House, but the Security Forces and the Auxiliaries were on duty outside of any special camps.

The presence of guns, armed troops of the Security force and the Auxiliaries, the threat of bombs, the hundreds of arrests of political campaign organizers—all added up to an unmistakable tension. Even in Salisbury where the atmosphere was supposed to be fairly relaxed, no one could enter a hotel without having any bag one was carrying carefully examined by attendants. Bags were examined even going into British Airways or a bank for example. If one visited a political office, in addition to bags being examined, one's person was carefully frisked. The bomb scare was real.

Outside of any of the principal cities (and this was true of any exit roads from Salisbury) there were road blocks manned by police and troops. Usually if there were whites in the car, it was allowed through with only a friendly nod. If there were Africans in the car, it was stopped and searched diligently and identification papers asked for.

In the hotels signs directed that arms must be registered at the desk. We saw men leaving hotels in central Salisbury presumably to travel outside the city in their cars prominently displaying rifles and revolvers.

Only a short distance in the country side from major cities there were signs reading "Warning to motorists—it is dangerous to travel this road after 3 p.m." The implied danger was from a "terrorist" attack. The day we arrived in Salisbury two churches were bombed. The media and officials tried to put the blame on ZANU-PF. This interpretation was subsequently seriously questioned when a
a car with two occupants involved in placing a bomb at a church blew up with a premature explosion. The occupants were killed. It was then discovered that the two occupants were a white and a black and were members of the Rhodesian Security Force.

At the official press briefing conducted by a spokesman for the Governor at the end of every afternoon, statistics were presented. Perhaps February the 19th statistics were typical. That day there were fourteen "incidents", eleven "contacts" (meaning actual exchange of armed fire), eight deaths, and twelve violations of the ceasefire.

Everywhere we travelled, we were met by men with guns. In the Tribal Trust Lands were the Auxiliaries. At a political rally of ZANU-PF held in Mondoro Tribal Trust Land which we attended the second day after arrival, a thousand or so people gathered in the shade of trees. On the fringe of the gathering were the Auxiliaries with their rifles. The stories which we got from one person after another attending this rally was of how they had been beaten and coerced by the Auxiliaries. On some days, we were told by school teachers attending this rally, the school children were afraid to attend school because of fear of the Auxiliaries. The Auxiliaries discouraged people from attending ZANU-PF or Patriotic Front rallies, but actively coerced people to attend UANC meeting, we were told.

There is a curfew hour from sundown to sunrise everyday in the Tribal Trust Lands. We were taken to one family compound in a TTL near Salisbury where a 24 year old son had been shot by the Security Forces because he was late reaching his home. It was after seven o'clock at night and was already dark when he tried to go to his home and was intercepted by the troops. This young man had eleven bullets in him.

Robert Mugabe had several attempts made on his life that were well publicized. One was an attempt to throw a hand grenade into the home where he was living in one of the suburban areas of Salisbury the same place we met with him a few days later. Another attempt, and the more serious one, was made after he had given a Sunday address to a mass rally at Fort Victoria. The explosion on the highway just missed his car and left a gaping hole in the road. The last two rallies that Mugabe was supposed to address (one in Bulawayo on February the 17th and the other Umtali on February the 24th) were held without his presence because of threats to kill him.

Vehicles used by the Security Force and police
on roads in the countryside were all well armored and especially constructed to withstand the explosion of land mines. They made a grotesque appearance.

Our Experience of Detention

We listened to innumerable stories told to us by people who suffered violence and intimidation. But the point was driven home by an experience we ourselves had. On Sunday the 17th of February just a couple of days after we had arrived, we went to the Chiota Tribal Trust Land, an hour or so drive south east of Salisbury, with some of our ZANU-PF friends. Our mission was to see what the countryside was like and also to see what kind of political campaigning was done in this area. We visited a school. We met some of the people living nearby who offered us luscious mangoes. We were told somewhat jokingly "This is African Communism. We share what we have". Then as we left this particular family compound area, and came to a dirt road, we were met by a young man who was obviously frightened. Our cars stopped and he told us that he had just been beaten without any reason by the members of the Security Force. He told us they were coming back. And indeed they did. In another moment the truck carrying 12-15 soldiers all armed with rifles jumped out of the truck carrying them, aimed their guns at us, completely surrounding us. We didn't know what to expect. We not only were fearful for our own safety, but particularly for our Zimbabwe companions. Tilden LeMelle and Mike Shuster were forced at gunpoint on to the truck with the soldiers as were three Zimbabweans. Cynthia Cannady was in one car that had two soldiers and one of our ZANU companions as driver. I was driving the other car with two soldiers with their guns, accompanying me. I was told while I was driving down the road towards the military base to which we were taken that the "Gooks" (the name they used to describe the "terrorists") loved to kill white people and probably those accompanying us were bent on killing us. (I should point out that I never felt safer than with our ZANU or ZAPU friends. The Security Forces and Auxiliaries made me nervous. They had guns.) We were told by these soldiers that they were looking for a terrorist by the name of "Durban", his guerrilla name. They thought they had him. The person who they were assuming was this legendary guerrilla leader was actually a new arrival who had come from Cardiff, Wales where he had been in school. He had arrived in Zimbabwe in January in order to help a political movement of which he was a part, ZANU, carrying out the political campaign.

After a half hour of driving along a dirt road we arrived at the base camp, where there seemed to be a hundred or more
soldiers on hand. The return of the soldiers with the supposed "terrorists" was greeted with shouts of triumph. They thought they had captured Durban apparently. All they had were some unofficial observers and four political organizers for ZANU-PF. After being interrogated here, we were taken on to the police headquarters in the nearby town of Marandellas where we were interrogated further. We were finally let go after this four hour ordeal. We profited from the experience at least knowing what intimidation was like. Our Zimbabwe friends credited us with probably having saved their lives. We were glad to escape with our own.

A Patriotic Front Victory Despite Harrassment

The war situation has taken its toll. Fifteen percent of the whites have left in the last three years. Less than twenty percent of the cattle dips in the rural area are functioning. One half of the rural schools are closed. A half million people are living in the so-called protected villages supposedly to keep them out of reach of guerrillas.

Most observers in Rhodesia were amazed at the size of the ZANU-PF victory in the election. The harrassment of ZANU-PF and the PF (formerly ZAPU) made such a victory seem impossible. Both movements were still looked upon by officials as the enemy. Let me give a few examples of the nature of the harrassment. The first day we were in Salisbury we went to visit some of our friends at the ZANU-PF headquarters. One person I have known ever since the early sixties was Edison Zvobgo. He had studied in the US. Now he was in charge of the election campaign for his party. We had not been talking very long before he said the word had just come that his wife, Julia, had been arrested at Shabani, a center a hundred and fifty miles or so south of Salisbury. Two other party organizers had also been arrested. Apparently they were supposed to have been harboring "terrorists". Actually according to the reports we received, they had been trying to help a wounded comrade who had been injured by the police in an "incident".

We were taken to a hotel in Highfield, an African township on the outskirts of Salisbury, by Nathan Shamuyarira. He and his wife's room had been raided by the police the night before. Papers and clothing, the contents of suitcases and briefcases were strewn all over the room. One thousand Rhodesian dollars (worth one third more than the American dollar) had been taken by the police in the raid. Five men had been arrested. This happened without provocation as far as any of them knew. About a week later Nathan himself was arrested at 3:00 a.m. as were 34 others on a charge of assault. An occupant of the hotel who was later found to be a member of the Selous Scouts, (involved in dirty tricks so many times) said he had been
attacked in the middle of the night. Shamuyarira who was best
known of those who had been arrested, was not even in the hotel
that night. He was at the party rally in Umtali, the one which
Mugabe himself had not been able to attend because of the
threat of assassination. After being detained for twelve
hours, all but one were let go.

Little things were done to make political campaigning
difficult for both ZANU-PF and the Patriotic Front of
Nhema. Phones were not installed in their offices for
example, until two weeks before the voting was to begin.
(Imagine political campaigning without phones.) There were
eight tons of posters and election leaflets which were
not permitted out of the airport for ZANU-PF, material
which had been printed abroad. It was impossible for
ZANU-PF to get insurance for their cars. There were bomb
scares not infrequently at the ZANU-PF headquarters.
I myself tried to go there twice the last few days I
was in Salisbury and on each day the whole street had
been cordoned off because a call had come to the police
saying there was a bomb in the headquarters. In neither
case was a bomb discovered. This interfered with the work
of the party in the last days before voting was to
begin because the building had to be emptied of party
workers for several hours.

There is no wonder that apparently most of the white
Rhodesians were startled and shocked beyond belief that
Mugabe and ZANU-PF won such an overwhelming victory. They
had not been prepared for this in any way. Virtually all
the propaganda in the media was strongly biased against
ZANU-PF. It was painted as satanic, communist movement under
the leadership of terrorists with Mugabe being chief. Bishop
Muzorewa was the darling of the whites. Typical of
articles which appeared in the Herald, the key daily
newspaper, was a front page article of February the 27th,
the day that the actual voting began. The story, commented
on Muzorewa's press conference and read, "Parties that
were former members of the government of national unity
(Muzorewa's short-lived government) had gone to great
lengths to warn voters against choosing a party that
would follow in the footsteps of other independent black
nations in Africa by becoming Marxist-oriented. At a
press conference Muzorewa said Zimbabwe would be invaded
by Russians if the election result went against the
wishes and design of the communists."

The Bishop was pictured as religious, moderate, strongly
anti-communist, and a friend of the white men. By all
odds he had the best financed campaign. He had 6 helicopters
for his use in campaigning around the country. ZANU-PF had
none. South African contributions were credited for giving
substantial aid. In the many full page ads which appeared on
his behalf, he was usually pictured with his religious vest-
ments and holding a scepter and a bible. The image created of Mugabe was that he was anti-Christian, Marxist, and a destroyer of churches. With this public image of both the Bishop and of Mugabe having been put forth, how could the white voters be prepared for what was going to happen in the landslide victory for ZANU-PF?

I got a small insight into the attitude of white Rhodesians on a government-sponsored visit to a tea estate in Manicaland, very close to the Mozambique border. We had lunch at a country club which of course had only white membership. I asked one middle-aged woman sitting near me how many people lived on the estate. She replied, "twelve." Then I asked how many workers are there. And she said, "twenty four hundred." Apparently the workers don't count as people.

Did ZANU-PF and Nkomo's PF Engage in Intimidation?

The answer to this is no doubt in the affirmative. But I must frankly say that in our group we did not experience this. My reporting may seem one-sided. But if the guerrillas who did not report to the Assembly Points coerced the people, it was difficult for outsiders to detect. What we saw and experienced were the Security Forces and the Auxiliaries. And this was true for most of the Zimbabweans. In discussing intimidation with Sithole, as well as with Nkomo and Mugabe, the Auxiliaries were always listed as the prime cause of beatings and violence. If ZANLA and ZIPRA forces had been integrated into the security forces to help keep law and order, not only our experience but that of the people, might have been different. But the British, influenced by the Rhodesians who still ran the government during this period, unwisely decided to confine the guerrillas to camps while allowing the other two armies to take on police duties. If they had had joint responsibilities, the situation could have been drastically improved.

Election Results

Very few people prophesied the kind of overwhelming victory that was won by ZANU-PF in the elections. The country was certainly well politicized. More than ninety three percent of the potential voters went to the polls. With all the atmosphere of violence and intimidation that existed throughout the country, it was truly amazing that during the three days of the actual balloting there was virtually no violence. The people went to the polling stations, they lined up and cast their ballots. No doubt there were some infractions. They were so minor compared with the atmosphere that prevailed throughout the country, that it was almost unbelievable. But then with the results of the elections as one-sided as they were it must have been a traumatic
experience for most whites. Muzorewa won only three seats and eight percent of the vote after all the money he had spent and after all the propaganda which had been put out on his behalf. Between them, the two movements making the Patriotic Front took seventy seven of the 80 seats with fifty seven going to ZANU-PF, an absolute majority. Unfortunately I was not in Zimbabwe when the election results were made public. Cynthia Cannady and I had come back to the United States in order to release our findings before the results of the election were known. We did so in a press conference which was held in Washington on the 3rd of March. But we had a detailed description of the celebration on March the 4th from Mike Shuster and Ted Lockwood. Ted's telex said, "All is calm. Coup possibility removed. Alliance (with PF) firm." There was dancing in the streets. The election results reflected the will of the people.

Will the Patriotic Front Hold Together?

During the election campaign there were strains and stresses in the relation between ZANU and ZAPU. But this was nothing new. ZANU had split from ZAPU in 1963. They had formed a firm alliance for the Lancaster House discussions. ZAPU wanted to continue the alliance during the campaign. ZANU wanted to go it alone with the understanding that they would form a coalition government if they were victorious.

Mugabe and Nkomo met twice during the political campaigning. One grievance Nkomo had was that a dozen of his campaign workers were kidnapped presumably by ZANU-PF. No satisfactory explanation came. And yet Nkomo never made a public statement about this grievance. In fact the public stance taken was that ZANU was the "natural ally" of ZAPU.

Mugabe has included four ZAPU leaders in his cabinet. Perhaps this will help to maintain the alliance.

Conclusion

I have travelled in Africa many times since 1954. I have had some memorable and most unusual experiences. But this experience ranks at the top. I suppose the reason for it is that the results were unexpected. The election came at the end of a struggle that goes back to the original occupation by settlers in 1888. It climaxd an effort that began with the rise of modern nationalism in Rhodesia in 1956. It signalled the end of a vicious period of violence. It has
lessons in it not only for settlement of the problem in Rhodesia, but for Namibia and of even greater importance for South Africa.

It is satisfying that the united Front of ZANU and ZAPU is to be continued. Joshua Nkomo must have been disappointed that his party did not take more seats. He is looked upon as the father of modern African nationalism in Zimbabwe. My own association with the Zimbabwe struggle began with ACOA's sponsorship of a month-long speaking tour for Nkomo in 1959. But in his public statement after the election, Nkomo said it was a victory for the Patriotic Front and he has accepted the important ministry of Home Affairs.

The miracle of this whole episode in history was rightly capped by the statement to the nation that Robert Mugabe, the Prime Minister designate made the evening of March 4th when he said, "Forgive others and forget, join hands in a new amity and together as Zimbabweans trample upon racialism, tribalism and regionalism and work hard to reconstruct and rehabilitate our society."

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