

early 1970s but joined Mugabe in 1976 when, in his view, the Bishop became too accommodating of the white minority government.

In Parliament the presiding officers of the Senate

and the House of Assembly were chosen when it opened in mid-May. Mr. Nollan Makombe was elected as President of the Senate and Mr. Didimus Mutasa as Speaker of the House.

RHODESIA TO ZIMBABWE: CAMPAIGN '80

By Gordon Fairweather

The Southern Rhodesian elections of February 1980 were supervised by a British Election Commission. One of the members of the Commonwealth Observer Group was Gordon Fairweather. Mr. Fairweather prepared an account of his experience for the July issue of Report magazine and he has kindly agreed to allow the Canadian Regional Review to publish an extract from his article.

The Commonwealth Observer Group was made up of representatives of 11 member states, Australia, Bangladesh, Barbados, Canada, Ghana, India, Jamaica, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka. The Chairman was Rajeshwar Dayal of India, former Foreign Secretary with long experience at the United Nations and in ambassadorial posts. The other observers were drawn largely from judicial or ambassadorial positions although the Nigerian representative was a former aid to President Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana. The observer from Papua New Guinea was Minister of Labour in the government of that country.

We became a highly congenial group but our

main role was to bring a dispassionate collective judgement to bear on the question whether the elections were free and fair. I must not overstate our role but the fact remains that the Group did form an integral part of the entire dramatic movement from armed struggle to peace by means of the electoral process.

We had to observe, to report, to see, to hear and to get the feel of what was going on in the country. We arbitrarily divided the country into five regions and set up modest offices in Bulawayo, Gwelo, Umtali, Fort Victoria and our headquarters in Salisbury. Staff were present in the five offices throughout the campaign and we let the public know that we

were available to hear complaints about the conduct of the campaign, and that we would seek remedies or explanations about them from the authorities. Trust was vital to the success of our mission. We had to be seen as being independent of the Rhodesian civil service, which was responsible for the election arrangements, and of the British supervisors.

Observers and assistants rotated their visits to each part of the country so that when polling days arrived one or more of us had covered each of the 55 administrative districts of Rhodesia. I was fortunate to have been assigned two excellent assistants, Michael Phillips, now Deputy Canadian High Commissioner in Kenya, and Jack Forrester, senior information officer with the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer of Canada. An additional 30 people including three Canadians arrived a few days before voting began, and thus reinforced, the Observer Group visited 409 of the 657 polling stations during the three voting days.

Because I had been a candidate in so many elections, I was determined to move around as much as possible. Obviously official briefings were important but I became convinced that the Group might find itself immobilized in Salisbury confronted by piles of documents and thereby lose touch with the day by day progress of the campaign. Most were glad when our actual travel plans were settled.

I set off for Fort Victoria, a U.S. frontier-like town in the south, where the provincial officials were certain that Robert Mugabe was the devil incarnate and that the Zanla army consisted of terrorists bent upon pillage, rape and killing despite the cease-fire. To remain dispassionate through all the hyperbole required all my patience, yet, objectivity was vital, and I disciplined myself to a judicial demeanour as I explored the small towns and villages by mine-protected vehicle, car, truck, helicopter or single-engined aircraft.

The country was swarming with heavily armed security forces and each day combined operations would issue casualty lists which made exaggerated and usually quite unsubstantiated claims about who had been responsible for the latest deaths. We found that the responsibility for violence could be evenly apportioned between the Auxiliaries (a political army of the United African National Council, Bishop Muzorewa's Party) and the Zanla wing of the Patriotic Front.

I liked to visit missions and hospitals where teachers and nurses were candid about their assessment of the political situation. Most people knew why we were there and were glad to talk to us. The Catholic Bishop of Gwelo gave me the first intimation of the likely outcome one month before the campaign ended when he said that the "people are going to vote for peace, they are not interested in ideology but in peace. They believe Mugabe can bring peace." The Bishop's assessment was to be reinforced and it became obvious that the desire for peace transcended tribal and political divisions.

Peace was a recurring promise too. Bishop Abel Muzorewa campaigned as "Man of God, Man of Peace, Man of Power and Man of the People". He failed to fulfill the three earthly claims.

I met the leaders of the main parties (nine parties competed but only four were serious contenders) and was impressed most by Robert Mugabe. Joshua Nkomo seemed to be a somewhat tragic person, greatly admired by most Zimbabweans, but unable to translate that respect into votes anywhere but in his own home country of Mtshabeleland. The Bishop refused to see the Group as such, but did invite four of us to his official residence the day the votes were being counted. He gave me the distinct impression of a person quite out of control of events.

The election was all engrossing and even social occasions did not give one a chance to escape. Rather they served as opportunities for hosts and guests to continue the debate, to predict the results and to forecast either the end-of-the-world or the coming of the promised land depending upon one's biases. I sat in a garden watching tennis matches while the players argued about who was responsible for the latest violence. I had Sunday dinner in a household where adherents of Moral Rearmament suggested that faith contained all the essentials for the new day. When I went to Zambia for a short visit of "R and R" with the Canadian High Commissioner in Lusaka, I was given a schedule packed with visits and appointments having to do with the Rhodesian elections. Zambia, like Mozambique, was desperate for peace.

Rhodesian television (which reminded me of the 1950's) is a state owned facility, and was noticeably insensitive to the unfolding political drama. An absence of investigative journalism was obvious, and the news was scandalously imbalanced. References

to Messrs. Mugabe and Nkomo not only were never complimentary, but no attempt was made to analyze party promises or give background information about the political leaders themselves.

Two or three personal recollections might help give a flavour of how things were during the campaign. I was urged by the Commonwealth Cease-fire Monitoring Force to go into an assembly point and speak to the armed and restless Zanu forces about the election process. I am not noted for being first off the mark to meet challenges, yet this journey was indeed the first for a Commonwealth Observer inside such a camp. The journey made was in a land rover, driven at a furious pace on rutted roads by a young British subaltern. I sat beside him buckled in and choking with dust, and the rest of the convoy roared along behind us even dustier and more uncomfortable.

We toured the camp and then a couple of hundred NCO's (or their equivalent for there are no ranks in the people's army) squatted with AK automatic rifles across their thighs. I was just about to launch into my short election talk when I spotted one of the soldiers dressed in a tee shirt which bore the message "Patience My Ass". I begged him to give me just five minutes, and then he could do what he liked with his patience.

In a school near the little town of Bindura, the headmaster got all the children assembled outside

on the grass in front of a large map of the world in concrete. We visitors picked out our various countries and said a few words about them. After this, there were questions and a small Zimbabwean boy of 10 or 11 asked me if it was true that Mr. Rhodes had put some money in the bank so that the boy could go to Oxford some day. I said indeed it was true and what is more, now his sister standing beside him could go too. The headmaster asked me not to push change too far and too fast.

I was in a taxi in Montreal the other day and the driver recognized me and asked me if I had been in Africa. I said yes and he responded "Gawd, that's one of the things that's worked in the world lately". And worked it has, and I have had the great good fortune to watch it on behalf of the Commonwealth, yet all the while very conscious of being a Canadian.

Independence came because people put faith in the processes of peace. Strange is it not that the fruits of peace should have to be described as being the result of a miracle. The new Prime Minister, erstwhile devil-incarnate, talks about "love and reconciliation", and people cannot believe what they are hearing. This man comes out of jail and exile and talks about forgiveness.

It matters a great deal that Zimbabwe should work after all.

