

In London, en route to Rhodesia, we met the Commonwealth Secretary-General, Mr. Shridath Ramphal, whose remarks to us are at Annex 4. We also took the opportunity of meeting Britain's Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Relations, Lord Carrington, who had chaired the Lancaster House Conference. In welcoming us, he emphasised the paramount importance of our work, and assured us of the co-operation of the British administration in Rhodesia.

The Group and its first complement of 22 Assistants reached Salisbury on 24 January. We began our work with discussions with the Governor and senior officials both British and Rhodesian. We also addressed letters to the leaders of all political parties asking to meet them (Annex 5), and were able to have detailed discussions with Mr. Joshua Nkomo (Patriotic Front), Mr. Robert Mugabe (ZANU - PF), Mr. James Chikerema (Zimbabwe Democratic Party), the Rev. Ndabaningi Sithole (ZANU), Mr. George Kluckow (Rhodesian Front) and Mr. Henry Chihota (National Democratic Union). All of them welcomed our presence, and we kept in touch with them or their representatives throughout our stay.

We regret that Bishop Abel Muzorewa, President of the United African National Council, was unable to see us. The letters exchanged with him are at Annex 6. Some of us were, however, able to talk to him informally and a few others met senior UANC members in the provinces. Most of us also met prominent members of the other parties during our travels including Chief Ndiweni (UNFP) and Dr. Bertrand (UPAM) in Bulawayo.

In addition, we met representatives of relevant non-governmental agencies, including church organisations, social workers and influential members of the public.

We maintained frequent contact with the Governor, Lord Soames, as well as with the British Election Commissioner, Sir John Boynton, and their respective staffs. Among the more important Rhodesian officials we met were Lieutenant-General Peter Walls, Commander of Combined Operations, and the Police Commissioner, Mr. Peter Allum. We also kept in touch with the National Election Directorate, the Commonwealth Monitoring Force in Salisbury and in the field, the offices of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, and the International Committee of the Red Cross.

We were conscious from the outset of the need to get the broadest view of developments, and to canvass opinion, both urban and rural, as widely as possible. We therefore decided to spend a substantial part of our time away from Salisbury, and much of it visiting rural areas. We were the only group of observers to set up offices in four provincial centres - Bulawayo, Fort Victoria, Gwelo and Umtali - besides our headquarters in Salisbury. These

were manned for the entire period of our stay, and enabled us to cover the country comprehensively. We made our presence and role known through newspaper and radio advertisements, as a result of which many people sought us out to talk to us. These efforts greatly widened the range of information available to us.

From our second week, we travelled extensively, in small groups that based themselves in each provincial office by turn. To underline the collective nature of our responsibilities and to neutralise any possible suggestion that particular national tendencies might have affected the process of our observation, each group was so mixed as to consist of not less than four and at times as many as eight different nationalities. This helped each of us impartially to observe the election campaign and assess the mood of the public in different parts of the country. Periodically we assembled in Salisbury to exchange observations as a group. Our programme was kept flexible, allowing us to concentrate attention on areas which required special investigation from time to time. The decentralisation of our operations made possible a great deal of independent travel, and was vital for the effective coverage of polling stations at the time of the elections.

We went to a large number of the Tribal Trust Lands (TTLs) in which one fourth of the African population of Rhodesia lives. We visited urban areas, African townships, protected villages, government offices, cease-fire assembly places, army and Auxiliary force bases, police camps, refugee centres, national crossing points, schools, hospitals, missions, prisons and detention centres, and major concentrations of employees at factories, mines and commercial farms. We talked to people on urban streets and by rural roadsides, in bars, shops and market places. We visited each of the country's 55 administrative districts, many several times.

Of necessity, we obtained much information from official quarters, but always tried to crosscheck it with other sources. The contacts we developed with a widening cross-section of the community, both European and African, helped us to do so.

In order to safeguard our independence as Observers, as well as to be seen to be acting independently, we travelled without official accompaniment whenever practicable given the circumstances in the country. This helped to encourage frankness and confidence on the part of those with whom we wished to talk. There were, of course, occasions when the need to observe the functioning of government in relation to the electoral process required us to travel with officials. When we needed interpreters, we tried not to depend on official assistance. We worked away from the glare of publicity and as a general rule declined to permit the press to accompany us in order to gain the trust of those with whom we were speaking.

By rotation, some of our members were always present in Salisbury to keep in touch with developments and with the main political parties and governmental agencies. We attached particular importance to attending meetings of the Election Council, in which every party took part.

As the dates for the polling for the Common Roll seats approached, designated Observers assumed responsibility for our coverage of the poll in

each of the eight provinces. Our second complement of 30 Assistants arrived a week before polling began. Careful preparations were made for the most effective dispersal of Observers, Assistants and Secretariat staff for observing activity at polling stations in 54 of the 55 administrative districts in the country. (Mudzi District, where administration had collapsed and which only had three polling stations, so sparse was its population, proved impossible to cover). While some worked from centres where we had offices, others took up residence in other provincial towns, several going to remoter places went equipped with camp beds and ration packs. We also augmented our coverage by making judicious use of the facility trips provided by the Election Commission. (Our disposition throughout the country is shown in Annex 7).

Between us, we spent 2,646 man-days in Rhodesia. We covered a total of 72,000 kilometres by road and 97,600 kilometres by air within the country. We made considerable use of mine-protected vehicles in areas unsafe for motor cars, and sometimes travelled in areas which we had been officially advised not to enter on grounds of security. No mishap befell us.

Over the period of the poll we visited 267 static and 170 mobile polling stations out of a total of 335 static and 322 mobile stations. Checklists were used at each station. When the votes had been counted, all Assistants and Secretariat officials in the provinces joined us in Salisbury to be available for discussions and debriefing.

At the conclusion of the poll, and before counting began, we issued an Interim Report setting out our findings in general terms. This appears as Annex 8.

We concluded our observations at the announcement of the results of the poll. At this stage the most difficult part of the exercise had been completed. The President and members of the Senate were to be elected by members of the House of Assembly in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution. Our Terms of Reference related to the elections insofar as they involved the people of Zimbabwe, and required us to judge whether these were conducted in an acceptable fashion. We therefore understood our task as being complete on the announcement of the result.