

High hopes, harsh realities

For nearly two weeks in July, 40 Orange Free Staters travelled by bus through Zimbabwe and Zambia meeting politicians, farmers, educators, business people and ordinary citizens. CHANTEL EDWARDS joined them for some of the journey.

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Democracy has been achieved in Zambia and its people are proud of their achievements.

But look a little closer and it is democracy only at the level of politics and even then it is fragile. Corruption still has a firm hold of society and Zambians fear a return to one-party rule.

Playing host to an Idasa study tour at his presidential estate, President Frederik Chiluba speaks with optimism about the future of Zambia. He is convinced that democracy is the only answer for change.

"Democracy can work in Africa, we will make it work in Zambia. No country will be spared, they will be in some way democratised." He adds: "After all, in a military coup Dr Kaunda would not have been spared. The aim of a democracy is to conserve life."

Our delegation leaves State House suitably impressed by President Chiluba, but despite his optimism we are not convinced all is well.

A week of discussions with various high profile people in Lusaka has left our group reeling with information.

Zambia with its high degree of urbanisation and a population of nearly eight million people has no national urbanisation strategy and the stress is showing.

Shanty settlements have mushroomed up all around Lusaka, the capital city, with little or no services being provided. I am informed by a member of the United Nations Economics Commission for Africa that as a means of controlling such areas, a bulldozer is sent in periodically to raze the area, but the people just keep coming back.

Informal markets are difficult to control, but provide a major source of income for a society faced with employment figures that have declined substantially since independence in 1964.

Wandering through them one is overwhelmed by the urgency with which sellers accost visitors begging one to buy something. Small fires in tin drums have become restaurants where you can purchase corn on the cob, fried chicken and hunks of meats accompanied by "nshima", a local variety of South African pap.

A barber plies his trade at a street corner and nearby, a constant clanging reveals a panelbeating business for household pots and other wares.

In direct contrast to the noise and bustle of the city our delegation finds itself ushered into a building that houses the Institute for

Zambian Communication. Previously the broadcasting studios for Zambian television, the studio is now used to provide in-service training for journalists all over Africa.

In these hushed surroundings we listen as speaker after speaker is brought in to inform us about the Zambian situation. Accusations and justifications abound as hints of corruption and fears of a return to a one-party state emerge. Soon after our return to South Africa, the Minister of Youth Sport and Child Development resigns claiming his government is corrupt.

Mr Enoch Kavindele, interim president of the United Democratic Party and former contender for the presidency in opposition to Dr Kaunda, explains the legacy of corruption faced by the MMD government.



President Frederik Chiluba

Land claims: What price

By ANDRIES BOTHA

The land issue in southern Africa must be evaluated in historical context. At first, European settlers lived next to and later among Africans. They used overwhelming educational and technological advantage to subjugate and dominate their African neighbours.

In addition, the whites settled on the land and held it under individual freehold title – a concept totally foreign to the tradition of southern Africa. The continued resistance of most whites to the natural migration of blacks into land held under freehold title over time has resulted in the present emotive situation with interesting variations in Zimbabwe and Zambia.

Zambia, the most sparsely populated of the two, has the poorest infrastructure. Its government is actively seeking out settlers

"Dr Kaunda instituted a leadership code that effectively cancelled any opposition within his own party. Under this code no members of parliament were entitled to own a business with salaries, housing and transport all being supplied by the government. This meant Dr Kaunda could at will remove a member of parliament from his position leaving him destitute. Members of parliament for the Movement for Multi-party Democracy (MMD) have seen what has befallen those who worked for Kaunda and they do not want the same to happen to them."

In an attempt to address the situation MMD has as part of its manifesto the following quotation: "The hour has come for a president who makes himself answerable and accountable for the actions of

with the skills to develop the country's huge agricultural potential. Why, after 27 years of independence, has a democratically elected government adopted this policy?

Zambia has been through nationalisation and redistribution – planned and executed by globally trained economists, sociologists and agriculturalists.

Unlike Zambia, both Zimbabwe and South Africa have very good agricultural infrastructures, but there is high urban unemployment and severe pressure on communally held land. Notwithstanding intermittent media reports to the contrary, communal farms have failed to deliver the goods.

The most basic reason for this failure is that no individual has a demarcated area whereon he or she has the right or security to erect capital structures.

In Zimbabwe, the historical imbalance in



The Idasa tour group on the steps of the State House in Lusaka.

the people in his cabinet."

According to MMD MP Akashambatwa Mbikusita-Lewanika, corruption is still present but it is more open now. "People are still pursuing their own agendas but the protection of corruption no longer exists. Our press is free and open."

Mr Fred M'membe, managing director of the only privately-owned newspaper in Zambia, *The Weekly Post*, enthuses about the current freedom of the press despite attempts by government officials to force him to resign. "The *Weekly Post* which previously was run by the Movement for Multi-party Democracy has now become its strongest critic."

During our stay in Lusaka the newspaper repeatedly calls for the resignation of the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries, Guy Scott. He is strongly criticised for importing contaminated grain into Zambia and it is being alleged that the contract

under which the grain was imported has directly benefited his own interests.

The editor-in-chief of the government-owned *Zambia Daily Mail*, Mr Emmanuel Nyirenda, also accepts the new government's commitment that they will not interfere in the press.

However, Mr Kavindele of the UDP claims that the MMD did not win the elections because it was a credible party, but rather because people were desperate for change.

"The need for change was so great that if President FW de Klerk of South Africa had stood, he would have been voted in."

President Chiluba disputes such claims saying that his party won the election because they campaigned and because their manifesto was accepted. "Democracy is what the culture will permit and not what the constitution says. No constitution will be perfected in one particular period. What we

see as democracy now may not fulfil democratic needs later."

Mr Kebby Musokwane, secretary-general for the official opposition, the United National Independence Party, denies that there has been a true transition to democracy.

"In order for there to be a true democracy the opposition should be able to make a difference. It should constitute a third in parliament in order to provide the necessary checks and balances. If Unip does not come anywhere in the next election, we are afraid that Zambia will return to a one-party state."

"At present there is a lack of progress towards democratic organisations, structures and processes. Democracy is not an event but a process. We are in danger of the current political system in Zambia being reduced to a democratic state without democratic individuals."

Despite the severe criticisms bandied about by the opposition, everyone agrees that some form of African union, if not political then economic, is necessary.

Dr Kenneth Kaunda, ousted president of Zambia, emphatically requests that a conscious effort be made to roll back the frontiers, so religiously protected, which are not economically viable.

The spirit of co-operation abounds and with 60 percent of its population unable to feed itself Zambia is looking to widening its trade links with South Africa.

According to the Minister of Trade, Industry and Commerce, Ronald Penza, Zambia has an open policy regarding trade and investment. "The two need to be combined as a package so as to avoid our local trade and industry being neglected."

Dr Jonathan Chileshe, head of the trade and development finance division of the UN Economic Commission for Africa, is less subtle. "South Africa is a brother. You can choose your friends, but you cannot choose your brother. African countries must learn to live with their neighbours. We must work out a method by which South Africa can best benefit from the whole of Africa and how smaller African countries can benefit from South Africa."

The openness of the Zambian people and their complete honesty and willingness to talk to a group of South Africans from the Orange Free State leaves one encouraged that somehow the problems will be sorted out. Certainly for us and the present political climate in South Africa, President Chiluba's welcoming words were worth remembering: "Our politics is emerging with warmth, I urge you to take that warmth back with you to South Africa."

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for past wrongs?

landholding was initially addressed at independence when it was agreed that the government would have first option on land for sale at ruling prices.

Since then the government has passed the controversial Land Acquisition Act to enable the expropriation of an additional 6 million hectares.

The Commercial Farmers' Union regards an equitable redistribution of land as essential, but has serious reservations about the provisions of the bill. Chief among these is the arbitrary pricing by the government without recourse to law. The union points out that only 2,8 million of the 3,3 million hectares originally bought have been settled and mostly unsuccessfully. Reasons proffered are: poor selection of candidates, inadequate training and little or no follow-up support.

What can South Africa learn from its

neighbours? Firstly, it must be recognised that the gross racial distortion of land holding must be addressed and the sooner, the better.

South Africa's arable land is generally more arid and prone to frost than either of our two neighbours. While clearly we must have a restructuring of land ownership, the scope for additional people on the land is extremely limited.

The greatest danger to guard against is the false belief that land redistribution can solve a national unemployment problem. Dumping the urban homeless on agriculture will result not only in their becoming even more destitute, but also in further stress on an already battered rural economy.

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