

## Feuding Fathers of Their Country

*Mugabe weighs moving against Nkomo as violence increases*

**W**ith no warning, the shots were fired from the thick bush at the nine tourists traveling by truck from Victoria Falls, the most spectacular waterfall in Africa, to Bulawayo, Zimbabwe's second largest city. Armed men ran to the vehicle, took the six male tourists as hostages and gave the tour guide a ransom note addressed to Prime Minister Robert Mugabe. The message said that the kidnapers would "blast these kids" by week's end unless Mugabe released from jail two former leaders in the guerrilla army of his rival, Joshua Nkomo. The note was signed "Zipra Forces," the name of Nkomo's guerrilla army that was disbanded after the nation's seven-year civil war ended.

Nkomo publicly called on the kidnapers to free the tourists. Mugabe, meanwhile, sent 1,500 members of the army, aided by helicopters and spotter planes, on a massive bush country search for the hostages: two Americans, two Britons and two Australians.

Joining in the search were three men from Britain's crack Special Air Service, the unit best known for its daring rescue in May 1980 of hostages held in the Iranian embassy in London. The four teams of trackers, occasionally crawling on hands and knees, were able for a time to follow the kidnapers' trail through the bush, but lost the track after local tribesmen drove their cattle through the area. The government suspects that the villagers were trying to protect the abductors. Indeed, the kidnapers were reportedly hidden overnight by a member of Nkomo's Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU), and the government has placed several villagers under arrest. Exclaimed a frustrated government searcher: "We've been within inches of them every blasted night!"

The kidnaping, which took place in the heartland of Nkomo's Ndebele tribe, was just one of several recent signs that the uneasy truce among the Ndebeles, Mugabe's majority Shonas and Zimbabwe's white minority is threatening to break apart only 27 months after the transformation of white-dominated Rhodesia into black-dominated Zimbabwe. Mugabe and the rotund Nkomo had helped negotiate the terms of Zimbabwe's independence. In the ensuing election, Nkomo was defeated for the prime ministership by Mugabe, and since then there has been a growing rift between the two nationalist leaders. Last February, Mugabe dismissed Nkomo from his Cabinet post as Minister Without Portfolio for allegedly plotting to overthrow the government. Despite Nkomo's denials, Mugabe suspects his rival of having masterminded a series of outbreaks of violence and sabotage and even an assault last month on the residences of Mugabe and Supplies Minister Enos Nkala.

Last week, in the most damaging attack yet, saboteurs cut through a barbed-wire fence at Thornhill Air Force Base near Gweru and destroyed or severely damaged 13 aircraft, about 25% of Zimbabwe's combat force. The government has detained six whites and five blacks who were linked to Nkomo for questioning about the incident. Last March, two former officers in Nkomo's Zipra forces—KGB-trained Dumiso Dubengwa, who served as intelligence chief, and ex-Deputy Commander Lookout Masuku—were arrested after Mugabe's men discovered large caches of arms and ammunition on



**Troops beating a man suspected of concealing information about the kidnapers**

*An uneasy truce was threatening to break just 27 months after the nation was born.*

property owned by Nkomo's ZAPU. About 1,200 onetime Zipra soldiers have deserted the nation's army, undermining the plan to unite the formerly warring factions into a single national force.

**R**obberies are also on the rise, and fear has been increasing among the country's 170,000 whites (reduced by emigration from 212,000 27 months ago) in the wake of the killing two months ago of Farmer Brian Dawe. He was hit by a burst of gunfire while quietly watching television with his wife and three children at his remote farmhouse.

Trying to check the lawlessness, the government has launched a cleanup operation, code-named Octopus, in the Bulawayo region, including a nighttime curfew on the western suburbs. Mark Dube, Deputy Minister of lands resettlement and rural development, told Parliament that dissidents responsible for gangsterism should be brought to the capital, Harare, and publicly executed by firing squad in the stadium.

As the internal strife increases, Zimbabwe fears a slowdown in its campaign to attract more foreign aid and investment, which it desperately needs to counter the effects of its civil war. The country anticipates gaping budget deficits as it seeks to finance health-care programs and universal education. On a recent fund-raising tour of European governments, Prime Minister Mugabe attempted to convince his hosts that his much publicized split with Nkomo does not jeopardize Zimbabwe's stability. Last week the U.S. signed three agreements worth some \$5.5 million in training and food, bringing total U.S. aid to Zimbabwe to \$42.7 million in 1982. Even with such aid, a severe drought is expected to reduce the nation's agricultural output this year by 20%, and depressed prices for such exports as chrome, nickel and copper have

led bankers to predict a sharp slowing of Zimbabwe's economic growth, to 3% or less in the coming year from a robust 8% just last year.

Mugabe has made it plain that he believes Zimbabwe would benefit from one-party rule, although he has not tried to impose it for fear of alienating businessmen and farmers as well as foreign investors. But as provocations increase, he is under increasing pressure from members of his ruling ZANU-P.F. Party to move against Nkomo. Mugabe angrily told Parliament last week that he planned soon to announce new measures that would be "extra-legal" and "extremely harsh" to stop the banditry. As Nkomo listened quietly, Mugabe warned: "These men are ZAPU and the weapons are from ZAPU." Mugabe said the government had been far too lenient on ZAPU. Declared he: "We may demand two ears for one ear and two eyes for an eye." The swords are drawn and it will be a *luta continua* [constant battle] to the finish." —*By Kenneth M. Pierce. Reported by Marsh Clark/Harare*