

ZIMBABWE OVERVIEW

DOMESTIC SITUATION

National unity continues to be Prime Minister Mugabe's principal domestic priority. Tribal and racial divisions were reflected in the results of the July 1985 elections. The governing ZANU (PF) Party strengthened its hold on the majority Shona-speaking regions of the country, winning 64 seats, while Joshua Nkomo's ZAPU captured all 15 seats in the Ndebele stronghold of Matabeleland. Another seat went to a splinter party. In the voting for the 20 "white reserved" seats, Ian Smith's Conservative Alliance of Zimbabwe unexpectedly took 15 seats leaving the newly formed white party, the Independent Zimbabwe Group, with only 4 elected members. The remaining white seat was retained by an independent, Chris Anderson, who is now the only white member of the Cabinet.

Prime Minister Mugabe has made clear his intention to enact a series of major constitutional amendments beginning in 1987. These changes are aimed at abolishing the Senate and the twenty seats reserved for whites in the House of Assembly, introducing an executive presidency and establishing a one-party state. There are persistent indications that ZANU and ZAPU may be close to announcing an agreement in principle on the unification of the two parties.

The Government states that it is pursuing this course to break down the Shona/Ndebele tribal rivalries which are a legacy of historical differences and of the ZANU - ZAPU split of guerilla forces in the years preceding independence. The government is also anxious to face as a unified nation the increasing uncertainties in the region. Since 1980 there has been sporadic violence along tribal lines and in 1983 there was serious unrest in Matabeleland.

The Government has come under some criticism for its human rights record. In November, 1985, Amnesty International published a report alleging that it has engaged in extensive human rights violations including torture, unlawful detention, abduction and political "disappearances". These accusations were rejected by the government. Over the last year the human rights field in Zimbabwe has improved considerably. In December, 1986, several senior ZAPU detainees were released. Zimbabwean government claims this brings to 214 the number of detainees set free since the 1985 elections with only 34 still