

Note to the File

Subject: Visit of F. Cuny to refugee camps in the N.E. refugee influx zone in Zimbabwe, September 24 1987.

On September 24, on a visit to the Mazoe River Bridge Camp in N.E. Zimbabwe I noted a situation which was probably part of a developing pattern of forced repatriation of refugees (refoulment) from Zimbabwe to Mozambique.

During the visit to a new extension (#12) of the camp in the company of one of the camp social workers, I interviewed some of the new arrivals to the camp. In each case the refugee spoke Portuguese and I conversed in Spanish which was surprisingly good enough for us both to comprehend the other. In one case, the refugee spoke English since he had worked on a white-owned farm for several years in Zimbabwe.

The situation as I pieced it together was that most of the "refugees" have in fact lived and worked in Zimbabwe for many years (some of them since before Zimbabwe became black ruled in 1980). The average length of time for a family to have lived in Zimbabwe appeared to be about 4-1/2 years and many had been situated some distance from the border. All were previously self-settled and what I would have classified as economic migrants, not refugees in the classical sense. None indicated that they had actually come to Zimbabwe because of violence.

At another new extension which had been set up several months earlier (#11) that I had visited earlier, I noticed only a few young men. In (#12) there were many, almost all of whom were between the ages of 17-35. Several told me they were afraid of being sent to Mozambique and forced to join the army to fight RENAMO. Several said they believed that is what had happened in section 11.

In my opinion, the Zimbabwean authorities are moving people of Mozambican origin into the camps, settling their dependents, then turning the men over to the MPLA (Frelimo).

Another major concern was the level of measles among new arrivals to the camp. The death rate in the camp was 1.2 per ten thousand per day among the entire camp but the rate among the new arrivals was 2.2 due exclusively to measles. Since most, if not all, of the new arrivals were living outside of camps before being brought to the Bridge Camp, this could indicate 1) an epidemic in the border area and/or 2) an epidemic inside Mozambique that has spread to the border. The immunization programs in the camps appear to be adequate, but I suspect are spotty in the border areas. More important, if measles is on the rise inside Mozambique, it will be very difficult to address it with RENAMO holding a significant part of the territory.

It will be important to check to see if there are any other reports on measles in the area.

Other than the above incident, the situation in the camp appeared to be relatively good. I was especially impressed with the latrines and the overall sanitation program.

My observations were reported to the US Embassy (Fugit) and discussed informally with UNHCR in Harare.

Note to the File

Subject: Visit of F. Cuny to refugee camps in the N.E. refugee influx zone in Zimbabwe, September 24 1987.

Background:

On September 24, I visited two refugee camps in the N.E. refugee influx zone of Zimbabwe in company with two officers from the Ministry of Social Welfare who were going to the camps to arrange for local payment of staff wages. I had requested the visit at the end of the UNHCR S. Africa Emergency Management Training workshop which had just been completed in Harare. One of the officers who accompanied me was a participant in the workshop. Prior to my visit, I had been informed (by UNHCR) that it was impossible to get permission to visit camps in the area since there were many incidents along the border. (The previous Sunday, the Ministry had arranged for the participants to visit a "model" camp that was several years old, a camp where most visitors are taken. Even in that camp, taking photos and meeting with the refugees independently was prohibited.) However, during the workshop I established a good rapport with the head of the refugee section (probably with some of my more caustic remarks about HCR), and when I asked him at the end of the session if he could arrange a visit, he called the other officer aside and asked him to arrange it for the following day.

The camps that we visited were the Mazoe River Bridge Camp and the Nyamatikiti Camp approximately 20 kilometers south in the same area. We spent about 4 hours in the first and about 2 1/2 in the second.

Both camps are fairly old, they have been in existence for over 5 years. In the Bridge Camp however, there are several new extensions (sections) with new arrivals to the camp. The population at the time of my visit was approximately 12,000 of which 2,000 were new arrivals. The population of the Nyamatikiti camp was 2500.

The areas in which the camps are located are very poor and barren, there is some farming, but it is very poor and the people get most of their money from raising cattle and goats. At the second camp, water is a problem. Water is trapped and stored in a small tank several hundred meters from the main camp, pumped up to a battery of aerial tanks, chlorinated, then drained into the camp distribution pipes. The tank is now low and the water at the taps is muddy. If no rain comes in several months, the authorities will have to tanker water to the camp.

Other than the water shortage at Nyamatikiti, the camps appeared to be in fairly good shape physically. I was especially impressed by the widespread use of the VIP latrines and the overall cleanliness of the camps.

All other systems in the camps appeared to be normal and the food rations were reportedly reaching the people on a regular schedule.

Note to the File

Subject: Visit of F. Cuny to Nyamatikiti Refugee Camp in the  
N.E. refugee influx zone in Zimbabwe, September 24,  
1987.

Background:

On September 24, I visited the Nyamatikiti Refugee Camp in the N.E. refugee influx zone of Zimbabwe. During the visit I learned that the Jimmy Swaggart Ministries had applied for, and received, permission to establish a presence in the camp. They were distributing clothing and other goods and were promising to do much more (but nobody could define what!). The Zimbabwean authorities were very perplexed about what to do with the group who they felt were somehow tied to the "American effort to support RENAMO" (many of the staff told me they suspected they were CIA operatives -- and claimed that other volags had hinted as much).

The only signs that I saw of the Swaggart team was a revival tent that had been set up in the camp. The camp administrator told us that the revival was scheduled for the following weekend.

I looks to me like the TV evangelists have caught on to World Vision's successful marketing techniques and are preparing to make big bucks on people's compassion. The mercynaries are are at it again! The worst part is that they are so counterproductive and destructive when it comes to giving aid and relief. I also noted the "yellow T-Shirt trick", so look out for a baby-snatch.