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The Shadow of the Dam

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THE SHADOW OF THE DAM

DAVID HOWARTH

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Introduction

I WENT TO AFRICA in 1959 intending to write about the Kariba Dam. The building of that enormous hydroelectric plant was a great industrial achievement, not only because it is one of the half-dozen biggest things of its kind in the world but also because of its position in the heart of the African wilderness.

But when I had studied it and thought about it, I found I was even more interested in the wilderness than in the dam. I had learned quite a lot about the effects of the environment on the building of the dam, but not so much about the effects of the dam on its environment. So in 1960 I went there again; but instead of going back to the dam, I went into the valley of the Zambesi about a hundred miles farther up the river, where the flood which the dam had caused was still rising. It was down in the wild hot forests of the valley, in the bungalows of government officers and the villages of the local tribe, that I heard most of this curious, pathetic story; and it still seemed to me more interesting in its way than all the scientific marvels of Kariba. It is simply the story of the fifty thousand primitive people called Tonga who lived in the valley be-

fore the dam was built, and of what happened when they were told that the flow of their river was going to stop, and their land was going to disappear below the water of a lake.

In contrast to the thousands of men who helped to build the dam, only a very few Europeans appear in this story, and nearly all of them are members of the British Overseas Civil Service. I met them all—John Sugg, Alan Prior, Tony d'Avray, Alex Smith, and the rest—and they were all very kind to me, and helpful. But I think the reserve for which the British are famous probably reaches its fullest development in the Overseas Civil Service. These men are extremely diffident. Tradition, habit, and inclination all combine to make them so. They are devoted to their job, and they were perfectly willing to talk about that, but they did not like to talk about themselves, and I did not like to press them. The dramatic and tragic events in the valley before the flood affected them very deeply, and they wanted the truth to be told about these events without any adornment; but they did not think people would be interested to read about them as individuals. I am not sure that I agree with them, but I think I should feel the same if I were in their position; and so I have not tried to portray them in detail, but have let them remain the rather shadowy characters they would prefer to be. They are all in Rhodesia still, contending from day to day with the problems of their dual vocation of governing and helping simple Africans, and I hope this book will not disturb them very much.

I was also helped by many other people in Africa, and I should like to express my thanks to the Government of Northern Rhodesia for allowing me to see documents from its archives; to the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute for good advice about the Tonga; to Colin Black of the Federal Information Department; to Hezekiah Habanyama, who is a Tonga himself; and to the chairman and staff of the Federal Power Board.

I also sincerely thank Dr. Elizabeth Colson of Brandeis University, Massachusetts, and Thayer Scudder of Harvard, who each spent a year living with the Tonga to make a sociological study of the

tribe before the advance of civilization overtook it. The results of their work are to be published by the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute in two volumes, *Before Kariba: Social Organization of the Valley Tonga,* by Dr. Colson and by Mr. Scudder. Both of them very kindly allowed me to read their manuscripts, and this help was invaluable. I do not think I have ever heard before of any author being so generous to another.

It is only fair to add that none of these people is responsible for any interpretations I have placed upon the facts.

Finally I want to explain that I did not mean this to be a political story, and I have kept political opinions out of it; but it is hard to get away from politics in Africa at present, and the story certainly has political implications. Four of the main elements of politics in British Africa come into it: the "white settlers," represented by the industrial masterpiece in the gorge far away at the foot of the valley; the civil service, in the persons of the District Commissioners and District Officers; the simple Africans of the remote countryside; and the African politicians of the towns. It offers one example of how the diverse interests of these four groups may lead, in spite of everyone's best endeavors, to a violent situation which nobody in any of them desires. I hope that some people who read about this small tragedy will find it helps to explain for them, as it does for me, some of the major tragedies of modern Africa.

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The Shadow of the Dam

1

THE DAM

NOBODY REALLY knows what Kariba means. It is simply an African name: the name of a gorge on the river Zambesi, 800 miles upriver from the sea, and 250 miles below the Victoria Falls. The gorge was discovered by Dr. Livingstone in 1860, and it was already called Kariba then by the primitive people who lived in the neighborhood. For almost a century after that, nobody heard of Kariba except a few hunters and prospectors and colonial civil servants, and the gorge itself remained as wild and almost as remote as it was when Livingstone found it.

But for the last two or three decades, while time in the Zambesi Valley was almost standing still, the highlands a couple of hundred miles to the north and south, where Europeans could work and live in comfort, were being steadily industrialized. A quarter of a million Europeans, mostly British, came to live there, and under the influence of British law and medicine the native people throve and increased in numbers.

Once this colonial process has begun in any country, nobody can stop it. The native population grows because it is more or less

protected from strife and famine and disease. It becomes too big to subsist on the primitive agriculture which kept it alive before the process started. So it has to turn or be turned to industrial work to maintain itself; and industry has to be expanded to absorb it. A colony of this kind can never stand still, as an older country can: it must either rush on toward becoming an industrial power or else fall back toward famine and chaos worse than before it began.

In Rhodesia this process was already irreversible in the 1940's. European immigrants were pouring in, and the African population was said to be going to double itself every twenty-five years. As more and more Africans were born, more and more went to town to work in industry, and industry was booming. About 1950, somebody with foresight pointed out that if the boom went on—and it had to go on—it would be brought to a sudden halt in the end by a shortage of power. The only power supply in the country was from coal, which was mined in Southern Rhodesia and hauled enormous distances by rail. When estimates of future expansion were made, it looked as though the coal mines and the railways would be loaded to their limits by 1960. Before then, the country would have to expand the mines and double the railway tracks, or else find another source of power. Because atomic power was still too far away, hydroelectric power was the only alternative. It was then that people in cities in Rhodesia first began to hear of the Gwembe Valley and Kariba.

A few engineers and surveyors had been to Kariba. From a technical point of view, it seemed a place which almost demanded a dam. The river was confined in a narrow bed with steep walls seven hundred feet high. To dam it was feasible, but difficult enough to inspire ambitious engineers; and the most attractive aspect of the place was not merely the gorge, but the valley above it.

The principal use of a dam in a hydroelectric plant is to store water in a reservoir so that a constant amount of water can be run through the turbines, and a constant amount of power taken out, however much the flow of the river varies. Rivers in Central Africa

vary very much from season to season, because nearly all the rain falls in four months of the year. Small rivers dry up in the winter, and the Zambesi itself shrinks to a twentieth of its summer flow; and in some summers the rains themselves are sparse. For this reason a hydroelectric plant in Africa needs a very large store of water: to be on the safe side, enough to last two years. A dam 420 feet high at Kariba would flood nearly the whole of the valley and make a reservoir 175 miles long and up to 20 wide, by far the biggest in the world, and it would produce enough power to carry on the expansion of industry for many years to come, in both Southern and Northern Rhodesia.

Both technically and financially, this was a colossal project, not only because it needed a very big dam across a very big river but also because the Kariba Gorge was still fifty miles from the nearest road and two hundred miles from the nearest industrial town. In fact, it was much too big a job for either Northern or Southern Rhodesia to tackle alone. It was estimated then to be likely to cost $224 million, and neither country could possibly have borrowed so much money. Nevertheless, the industries of Rhodesia were full of men of pioneering spirit, and many of them were tempted by Kariba, simply because it was so big. It was a glorious castle in the air. They felt that if they could ever build it, it would show the world what these young colonies could do.

Those were the years, in the early fifties, when federation of Southern and Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland was under discussion. Federation seemed to offer the only possibility of building anything so expensive and so big. A federation, which was expected to be a much more stable economic unit than either country could ever become alone, might be able to borrow enough from international sources. So the Kariba Dam became an argument in favor of federation, a symbol of the kind of thing federation might accomplish.

The chief advocate both of federation and of the dam was Sir Godfrey Huggins, who is now Lord Malvern; and when he had achieved the founding of the Federation in 1953, and had become

the Federation's first prime minister, he turned his energy and the weight of his authority to pushing through the project of the dam. Even after federation, it was not nearly so easy as he might have reasonably hoped. Nothing in Rhodesia is ever achieved without an argument—if for no other reason, simply because Rhodesians like to argue; and over Kariba a ferocious argument began which lasted for years and even threatened to split the Federation apart again. The trouble was that Kariba was on the border of North and South; but the Northern Rhodesians had discovered another possible site for a dam on another river called the Kafue, which is in Northern Rhodesia and does not flow into the South at all; and they insisted that Kafue was a better proposition.

Rhodesians now would rather like to forget the great Kafue controversy; when the dust and fur of the thunderous fight were finally allowed to settle, they felt rather foolish about it, like Tweedledum and Tweedledee. Most of them realized then that all they had been arguing about was really a question of colonial pride, of who should have the dam; whereas the real choice between the two places was a financial and technical matter which had been decided far above their heads. The final choice, in fact, did not depend on the opinion of any Rhodesian, but on the advice of an elderly French gentleman from Besançon whom most of the protagonists had never heard of. His name was André Coyne.

M. Coyne was the senior member of an international body of consultants whom Huggins had called in to make a technical study of Kariba and Kafue; and he was and still is the doyen of experts on dams in the Western world. In March, 1955, soon after the rainy season ended, he arrived in Rhodesia and went to look at both the suggested sites. The journey to Kafue was easy, but to go to Kariba was still as much an adventure as it had always been. The road from Salisbury to Lusaka, the capitals of Southern and Northern Rhodesia, crossed the Zambesi thirty-five miles below the gorge; but the hills between the road and the gorge were steep, and the only practicable access was from a point on the road which was 180 miles from Salisbury and fifty from the gorge. From there, a very

primitive track led down to the valley; and it is a sign of the remoteness of the place that although the track must have been made by Europeans within the last fifty years, nobody seemed to remember who had done it.

M. Coyne was escorted by the head of the Southern Rhodesian Department of Irrigation, Mr. Jim Savory; and in his honor the government had prepared an elaborate and comfortable camp. The food and equipment were sent on ahead in two trucks; but, five miles down the track, both of them irrevocably stuck, and when Coyne and Savory caught up with the wreckage they had to load the bare necessities of life in the back of their own Land-Rover. The rest of the fifty miles took them six hours. In the gorge they found engineers of Savory's staff who had already made borings and sunk shafts to test the bedrock; and on their results, in spite of his perilous journey, M. Coyne decided in favor of Kariba.

As soon as M. Coyne had made his report, Huggins and his government set about the exhilarating task of borrowing money by tens of millions of dollars. But the report did not silence the anti-Kariba faction. The estimated cost of the scheme was steadily going up; $224 million, it was learned, would hardly be enough to finish a first stage of the project, with a single powerhouse which would use only half the potential capacity of the river. The whole thing was newly estimated at $316 million.

Even taking the Federation as a whole, some people believed the scheme was out of all proportion to the size of the country: $316 million represented $1,260 per head of the European population, men, women, and children. It was certainly a lot of money to spend on a single project, however important, when the country was still in desperate need of schools and hospitals and every kind of public utility.

But Huggins and a majority of Rhodesians, in that first year of federation, were perhaps carried away with optimism over the apparently limitless future of their country. They were thinking big and looking far ahead, and were not at all in the mood for counsels of caution or patience.

By that time, the middle of 1955, it was very urgent indeed to make a start. M. Coyne and his engineers had said that the scheme could possibly be completed by the crucial date of 1960. But it could be done only if work went on by day and night whatever the weather, and if every part of the work was perfectly coordinated and nothing went wrong, and—most important of all—if a start could be made on the dam's foundation as soon as the rains had stopped in March, 1956. That was in nine months' time; and Kariba was still as far from the road as ever, and the Zambesi was still flowing where the foundations would have to be laid.

Few people can borrow $224 million overnight. Negotiations for the money for Kariba seemed likely to last for months; and yet, if preliminary work was not begun at once, the whole scheme would be finished too late and might as well be abandoned in favor of something smaller and much less attractive.

In the Rhodesian atmosphere of enterprise and enthusiasm, nobody was very much surprised at Huggins's next decision. He authorized the expenditure of a few million dollars to build a road and divert the river, before anyone knew for certain where the rest of the money would come from. This was the kind of decision which may be called bold and statesmanlike if it succeeds, or crazily reckless if it fails. But of course it succeeded.

On the recent maps of Rhodesia the road to Kariba is marked, and it has an official name: the Elephant Path. The building of this fifty-mile highway was an extraordinary do-it-yourself endeavor which also reflected the spirit of the time. When Huggins made his decision, surveyors of the Roads Department were already in the bush, trying to find a route through the complicated jumble of hills around Kariba. A provisional estimate was made that the road would cost three million dollars and take eighteen months to build, and preparations were under way to put the job out to tender. Both the estimate and the procedure annoyed Jim Savory to such a degree that he said his own Department of Irrigation could build the road at a third of the cost and in a third of the time; and when this remark came to Huggins's ears, he simply told him to go ahead and do it.

Huggins, who was an eminent surgeon as well as a politician, has always been a shrewd judge of character, and he must have reckoned that his sudden acceptance of Savory's offer would put the Department of Irrigation on its mettle. In fact, it stung the department to hectic activity. Savory's own surveyors dashed off into the bush to find a better route, and his engineers collected equipment from far and wide. When they heard, for example, of a heavy mechanical scraper in Nairobi, they dispatched relays of drivers who brought it 825 miles under its own power in two days and put it to work on the third.

Savory's drastic undercutting of the Road Department's price had been based on his own observations in the bush. Human roads are usually built in valleys, but elephants make their own roads on the ridges of the hills. This particular road was required to carry loads of over one hundred tons, and much of the cost of building it in the conventional way was due to the need for heavy bridges over all the river beds. His hypothesis was that if one followed the elephants and built the road high up, the rivers would be small enough to be crossed by concrete fords instead of bridges.

The crux of the story of the road has the air of having been invented by a writer; but Savory himself is a sober-minded man and he says it is true. The surveyors made good progress until they came to the final range of hills, and then they reported that they could not find any way through. He went in and joined them himself, and he noticed a well trodden elephant path which led in the right direction. Believing firmly that elephants have at least as good a sense of direction as surveyors, he followed it; and it led him by a perfectly practicable route to the other side. The engineers, who were working night and day, came through behind him.

Six months from the day when Huggins gave the order, the ancient track was finally washed away by a violent storm; the following day, the new road was ready to carry the traffic to Kariba, and it has carried it ever since. The stretch of the road across the final range is marked on the maps by the name the engineers had given it before it was proved to be feasible: Savory's Folly.

While the road was still being driven in, the primeval peace of the gorge had already been shattered for good and all. Mining engineers were in there, preparing the diversion of the river. A rather complicated plan, in several stages, had had to be devised to keep the river out of the way while the foundations of the dam were being laid. First, a diversion tunnel was driven in the south bank of the gorge, to tap off some of the water above the site of the dam and deliver it back to the river bed below. This tunnel provided the first of many superlatives of size at Kariba; it was the biggest tunnel which had ever been made in Africa, forty feet high, thirty-three feet wide, and nearly a quarter of a mile long. While the tunnel was being dug, a temporary semicircular cofferdam was built against the opposite bank. In the dry, inside this cofferdam, the base of the north end of the main dam was to be built.

This early work was mostly done by South Africans and Rhodesians, employed by the Cementation Company, and aided by African underground workers who had learned their trade in the gold mines of Johannesburg.

Those were rip-roaring days at Kariba, when the place had the atmosphere of a traditional mining camp. The men lived in shacks made of Hessian sprayed with cement. Toward the end of the year, down in the bottom of the gorge where they were working, the temperature rose to 120 degrees. Men carried their tools in buckets of water, because otherwise they got too hot to hold. Their standard and probably ancient joke was "Drink your tea up quick, before it gets hot." A doctor said that men were sweating a gallon a day.

Very few of these early workers in the gorge remained there when the dam itself was built. If they had, they would certainly have been shocked by the air of suburban gentility which had settled on Kariba four years later.

Contractors began to flock down the Elephant Path to inspect the site before they made their tenders. In Africa and Europe the most abstruse calculations were being made, not only on the design of the dam and the power stations but also on the vastly complex logistics of the scheme: on installing and maintaining a force of 10,000 men

in such a place; and on supplying nearly two million cubic yards of concrete and the means to lay it; and on providing lines of communication and supply, by air and road and rail and sea, all the way between the gorge and the factories in Europe where most of the machinery would be made.

In the first few months of 1956, Rhodesians found themselves thinking of millions of dollars as chicken feed, while offers of loans were coming in and contracts were being handed out. The Northern Rhodesian copper mines, which were promised the first benefits of power from Kariba, offered $56 million. Barclays Bank and the Standard Bank of South Africa stood in for $5.6 million each, and the British South Africa Company for $11.2 million. The Federal Government itself was putting up $16.8 million.

The British firm of Costain got the first of the major contracts—$9.8 million for building two towns at Kariba, one for the Europeans and one for the African workers. Most of the electrical and mechanical engineering contracts went to British firms or their African subsidiaries: $4.8 million to Metropolitan-Vickers for generators, $5.6 million to British Thomson-Houston Company, Ltd., for switchgear. Sweden got a $112,000 electrical job; France got $1,960,000 for floodgates and valves. Altogether, sixty separate contracts were awarded.

But in March, the biggest loans of all, from the International Bank and from Britain, were still to be confirmed, and the biggest contractual plum was still hanging on the tree: the main civil engineering contract, worth $70 million, for building the power station and the dam itself.

Even then, the opponents of the scheme were still in action. The European Mineworkers Union believed it would make the country bankrupt. "It will be small consolation to us," it said, "to have . . . the largest man-made lake in the world if we have nothing else except bankrupt workers." This was a fear still shared by many people. In the Federal Parliament itself an amendment was moved to drop the whole thing; three Northern Rhodesian members walked out before the vote, and four others voted to discontinue. But on

the very same day a mission from the International Bank arrived in Rhodesia.

Three more months went by, and even the supporters of Kariba began to wonder what was happening, and whether Huggins after all had bitten off a little more than he could chew. But all was well. The first set of loans had all been African: international finance could hardly have been expected to move so fast. On June 22, 1956, Huggins announced that the rest of the money was agreed: $8.4 million from the Commonwealth Development Finance Company, $42 million from the Colonial Development Corporation, and, biggest of all, $80 million from the International Bank. At about the same time, a rumor began to spread and was finally confirmed: the dam was going to be built by Italians.

It could never be said that Rhodesians were glad of this news. With recollections perhaps of the war in the desert, they doubted whether Italians would ever succeed in the job, and some people even hinted that the consortium called Impresit, which had won the contract, had been able to undercut the others through Italian Government subsidies. Behind this expressed misgiving there was a deeper fear that Italians would not uphold the dignity of Europeans in their relations with African workers.

When the first Italian artisans arrived, they were eyed with grave suspicion. Mistrust appears to have centered on their shorts, which were extremely short, and rather tight, and sometimes even colored —quite unlike the stately, voluminous white or khaki garments in which the Anglo-Saxons conduct their colonial affairs. Most of the Italians were also rather small; and a large Irish-Catholic laborer, who saw them arrive at Kariba, seems to have summed up everybody's feelings when he asked with a suitable Irish oath, "Is this the fellers they make Pope?"

But within a year this supercilious attitude was to change to open admiration for the Italians' skill and the perfectly astonishing tempo of their work.

There is always an element of romance in such a prodigious human endeavor as the building of a great dam. Tens of thousands

of men are drawn into it, and some of them become so absorbed in it that they might almost be said to live for nothing else. Some are killed by it; and, when it is finished, the survivors wake up as though they had been dreaming. While the work is going on, and the product of their labor and calculations is growing in concrete in front of their eyes, they suffer reverses, or avert disasters, or celebrate success.

Kariba has seen much more than its share of this kind of romance, in addition to the romance of its situation in tropical wilderness. Sometimes, in the three and a half years since $249 million was collected to pay for it, failure has seemed a possibility, years of labor have seemed to be almost lost, and even engineers have caught themselves on the edge of thinking about the Zambesi with superstitious awe.

Looking back on it now that the dam is finished, one can see three reasons why it was such an especially difficult job. The first is its position: 150 miles down a tenuous forest road from the nearest railway, 750 miles from a port, 5,000 miles from the factories where its machinery was built. The second is the speed of its creation. And the third is the Zambesi itself, which could not have behaved more vindictively if it had really been an affronted deity, as some of the local Africans were said to believe.

The first two of these difficulties were foreseen when the work was started; the third was not.

The dam is a recumbent arch, like the dam which broke at Fréjus, but very much bigger. An arched dam, of course, needs much less material than a straight dam, which depends on its weight and thickness to hold against the pressure of the water; and the Kariba Dam, enormous though it is, is also slim and graceful: more than the height of the cliffs at Dover, yet less than the width on top of an ordinary main road.

Whichever way you look at this mass of concrete, there is never a straight line, except the level top. Its shape is purely mathematical, and when the ghastly mess all round it has been tidied up, and the sides of the gorge have been "landscaped," and the water has reached the floodgates and poured through, adding another arch in

a fall of three hundred feet, Kariba in its tropical forest will be fiercely beautiful.

The town of Kariba, which is three miles from the dam and is built, so they like to say, on seven hills like Rome, could hardly be said to be beautiful, but it has avoided being ugly, and when the lake is full the view from the top of the town will be superb. Again like Rome, it was not built in a day; but it was built in a year, which was not bad going to transform a forest inhabited by elephants and lions into a town so cozily suburban that a street sign marked Acacia Avenue does not immediately strike one as out of place.

There are a good hotel, a hospital, school, shop and open-air cinema, and a neon sign advertising gin; and on the highest point the Italians have built a small beautiful round church, a delicate masterpiece of concrete, designed by one of their engineers and dedicated to Saints Barbara and Joseph and to the men who have been killed by the building of Kariba, who so far number eighty.

The powerhouse is underground, excavated from the rock inside the hills. Some people think it a more remarkable edifice than the dam. It is just about the size and shape of the nave of Westminster Abbey. There are six generators, on vertical axles, driven by turbines underneath the floor. One of them is running now, and the others are all in different stages of construction. Water from the lake will run through six short horizontal tunnels, then fall 280 feet straight down through vertical shafts 20 feet in diameter to the turbines. Some time in the future, a second powerhouse will be built in the opposite bank.

Climbing through these caverns while they were being made was an even more vertiginous experience than climbing on the dam. The noise was stunning, and the dust in the air was thick. Ten-ton dumpers, admirably driven by Africans, tore in and out, removing rock, and pedestrians had to take care of themselves. One felt that the corpse of a visitor would only have impeded the work for a minute, if that; but the minute would have been precious.

Sometimes, harassed by these machines, one found oneself peering down through the cracks in temporary floorboards, through

immeasurable darkness, at men under arc lights incredibly far below; sometimes, one saw a circle of daylight the size of a penny, incredibly far above. It was no surprise, after getting out alive, to learn that the second commonest cause of accidents at Kariba was classified as Falling Objects. (The commonest was Treading on Upturned Nails: African workers like to take off their shoes.)

Most of this civil-engineering work, the dam building and excavating and the mixing of two million yards of concrete, has been done by the Italians, assisted by thousands of Africans; and probably nobody else would have done it so quickly, or have finished the job precisely on time in spite of every setback. Italian dam builders are used to the Alps, where they work tremendously hard in the summer because they cannot work at all in the winter. At Kariba they started at their usual summer speed, without reckoning that the Zambesi was never going to give them a winter's rest by freezing; and they never got out of the habit. Their standard week was forty-eight hours, and they averaged twenty-two hours of overtime, and complained when it was less.

The Italian artisans had not come across the colonial custom of sending for a gang of natives when there is heavy manual labor to be done. At Kariba, when something had to be shoved or lifted, black men and white men put their shoulders underneath it all together—an unusual sight, at least in the recent past, in British Africa; and so the thing was shoved or lifted in less than the time that might have been taken to give the orders. The men were urged on by incentive bonuses, but perhaps even more by pride. Everything at Kariba gave an impression of frenzied hurry and bounding enthusiasm.

When the Italians started work in 1956, a semicircular cofferdam had already been built against the north bank of the river, and a tunnel had been driven in the south bank to divert part of the flow of the river past the site of the dam. During that year a footbridge and then a road bridge were built by Dorman Long, and most of the town was built by Costain; and vast auxiliary works and dumps grew up on every side.

A quarry was opened in the north bank; 750,000 yards of sand were dug in what was to become the bed of the lake, and carted and piled in a considerable mountain on the south bank; crushing and mixing plants were built to produce concrete at the rate of ten tons a minute; and a system of twelve-ton buckets, on the overhead cables which engineers call blondins after the tightrope walker, was strung across the gorge.

Inside the cofferdam that year, the Italians built the bases of the first sections of the permanent dam itself, leaving four openings between them. In July of the following year, that cofferdam had fulfilled its purpose, and it was blown up. Rocks were dumped off the bridge to block the other half of the river bed, and then, in slack water, a second completely circular cofferdam was built. Inside that, in the dry, the foundations of the rest of the permanent dam were to be laid. But before that stage was reached, the engineers had had their first trial of strength with the Zambesi.

The summer is the rainy season, and toward the end of a normal summer in February or March, the Zambesi swells to fifteen or twenty times its winter size.

About the end of 1956, reports began to come from observers far up the river, beyond the Victoria Falls, that a quite exceptional flood was coming down, and early in the new year the level of water rose abruptly in the narrows of Kariba. The first of the cofferdams was then in use. Everybody watched the water incredulously, believing from hour to hour that the rise would stop. At the last moment, most of the machinery inside the dam was hurriedly lifted out: and then the water overtopped it and filled it up. Soon the whole dam was out of sight, except for a swirl in the water and the top of a crane, which also suddenly vanished when nobody was looking.

Afterward, this was called the Hundred Years' Flood; and although measurements of the Zambesi had not been made for anything like a hundred years, it was more than a merely picturesque expression. The frequency of floods in each of the major tributaries was roughly known, and it was only a matter of arithmetic to reckon the odds against the peaks of several tributary floods all arriving at

Kariba at the same moment. That year, the water rose in the gorge by sixty-six feet. The odds against that were about a hundred to one, and the cofferdam had not been built high enough to take care of hundred-to-one chances.

When the water began to subside, the top of the dam was seen to be still intact. The engineers were pleased to have lost not much more than a crane and some time; but the Zambesi god had a much bigger shot in his locker.

During 1957 the second cofferdam was built, and the bases of the remaining blocks of the center of the permanent dam were laid inside it. The blocks were forty feet wide. Some were left low, as gaps in case there was another heavy flood. The others were raised at differing rates, so that the dam began to look like a gigantic half-ruined battlement. On the top of each block, inside a wall of shuttering, Italians and Africans sweated day and night in the stupefying heat of the gorge, receiving twelve-ton loads of concrete from buckets overhead, which they directed by short-wave radio, and driving it into place with pneumatic tools.

As the blocks grew higher, into slender curved isolated towers, the work grew more perilous, especially when the shuttering had to be raised and men clung to the outside of it to move it. One day a jet bomber flew over. On top of one tower, when it approached, twelve men were working, and they all looked up at it. When it had gone, there were only eleven men. The swift current and the human activity kept crocodiles away from the dam, but there were plenty farther down the river. Not many other men fell off.

The second cofferdam was higher than the first, in case the water rose again as far as it had in 1957. But nobody dreamed of preparing for what came down the river from January to March in 1958. This was the Thousand Years' Flood.

Whatever had happened in that rainy season of early 1958, it would have been the most critical stage in the building of the dam; enough had been built to make an obstacle in the gorge, but not enough to stop the river's flow. The Zambesi chose the most effective moment to attack. It is absurd to attribute motives to a river; but

these strange things seem less absurd in Africa, and people who saw the river then had to remind themselves not to be absurd. It looked so like a sentient, ferocious creature, almost caged, but tearing at its bars.

It is oddly noble that men will risk their lives to save a thing like a dam or a bridge. The Italians did it time and again at Kariba then and so did the Africans, not apparently for any particular reward, but just because they could not bear to stand on the bank and see their work destroyed.

But they were always in retreat. The cofferdam sprang a leak through a fault in the rock below it, and while bulldozers and other equipment were still inside, it filled up from the bottom. In a night, when nobody saw it, the road bridge fell, and in the morning it had totally disappeared.

The river began to reach up for the only other bridge, a suspension footbridge which had been a hundred feet above the water. It writhed like a snake when the water touched it. The Italian chief engineer, whose name is Baldassarini, led parties out across it to try to raise it; but it was held down by stays which were under water. An expert swimmer, who had already dived into the cofferdam to rescue an African, put a rope round his waist and swam into the flood and fastened explosives to the stays and cut them. The bridge was hoisted higher, but too slowly: the river got it, a tower collapsed, and the footway buckled and was swept away downstream.

After that, there was not very much that anyone could do, except to watch the water rise to the lip of the cofferdam, and higher still, and pour over everything in a stupendous cataract, with two of the highest towers standing as islands in the middle. The river rose 116 feet above its winter level. The foundations of the dam caused a waterfall 28 feet high, and 600,000 cubic feet per second went over it.

The Italians' reaction, when the flood went down and they saw that the dam was still there, was one that many observers thought impossible: to catch up for lost time, they set themselves an even

higher tempo of production. An all-important deadline was in sight: to seal the dam before the next year's flood. If they had failed in that, the disaster next time would have been complete; but they succeeded with a few weeks still in hand, and stopped the final openings in early December, 1958. After that, work on the dam was simply a matter of keeping ahead of the lake which was rising against it, and the winner of that race, exciting though it sometimes looked, was never in serious doubt. But unexpected trouble was coming in the powerhouse.

Africans had been recruited from all over the Federation to work at Kariba, and some had come from Angola and Mozambique. At the peak of the work, there were 7,000 of them. Most of them were on two-year contracts, and their basic pay as laborers was $0.05 an hour.

Such a miserable rate, of course, can be endlessly debated, with ethical arguments on one side and many practical arguments on the other. It was not quite so low as the bare statement makes it look. The Africans had free accommodation and food and working clothes, and free transport at the beginning and end of their contracts; and it was not only as laborers that they worked. They drove all the trucks and dumpers and bulldozers, and worked all the pneumatic drills, and in those trades their rates were from $0.10 to $0.25. They worked loyally and bravely, for the same long hours as everybody else, and so far as the government or the contractors knew, they were quite content.

In the early part of 1959, among all the other work underground, the vertical water intakes were being lined with concrete from bottom to top. Late at night on February 20th, three Italians and fourteen Africans were working at the top of one of the abysmal shafts when their staging gave way. They fell 230 feet straight down the hole, and 80 tons of wet concrete peeled off the walls of the shaft and fell on top of them. Other bits of staging were hanging loose, and by the time it was safe to approach the bottom of the shaft the concrete had set. The bodies had to be broken out with pneumatic picks.

This macabre catastrophe tried the nerves of everyone at Kariba. On the next shift forty Africans refused to work underground. Shift by shift, the number grew; and two days later the whole of the African force, 5,700 men, came out on strike and sat down on the football ground.

Men from the labor office went in among them, to try to find out what they wanted. It was not very easy, because none of them would act as spokesmen; but shouts from the heart of the crowd could be heard: "Why should we be killed for fourpence?" and, "We want a shilling!" Representatives of the contractors and the Federal Power Board had hastily assembled. They offered a rise to sixpence for underground workers. It was impossible to bargain with such a big, unorganized crowd.

On the same evening the employers gave an ultimatum of sixpence or "release from contract"—in other words, the sack. When this was announced, the Africans cheered, and thousands of them tore up their work tickets and threw them in the air, signifying that they were going home. But the next morning over 3,000 turned up for work again, in their usual disarming good humor, many without the work tickets which they had exuberantly thrown away. The other 1,600 were taken home, together with 400 more who were due for release from their contracts.

This episode taught the employers a lesson. African labor had been so cheap that they had been using far more men than they really needed. Although 2,000 left, only 800 more were ever recruited. So the rather pathetic 50 per cent rise in basic pay hardly cost the employers anything; and a month later, without being asked, perhaps in a moment of remorse, the Italians increased the underground pay to $0.07 and the surface pay to $0.06.

Last May, Sir Roy Welensky poured the last bucket of concrete on the dam. As a matter of fact, the Italians, up to their usual form, had finished the concrete work a week or two sooner than anyone had expected, and they had already celebrated the achievement by transporting a large tree to the middle of the dam and planting it there. But they left a little hole for the ceremonial bucket.

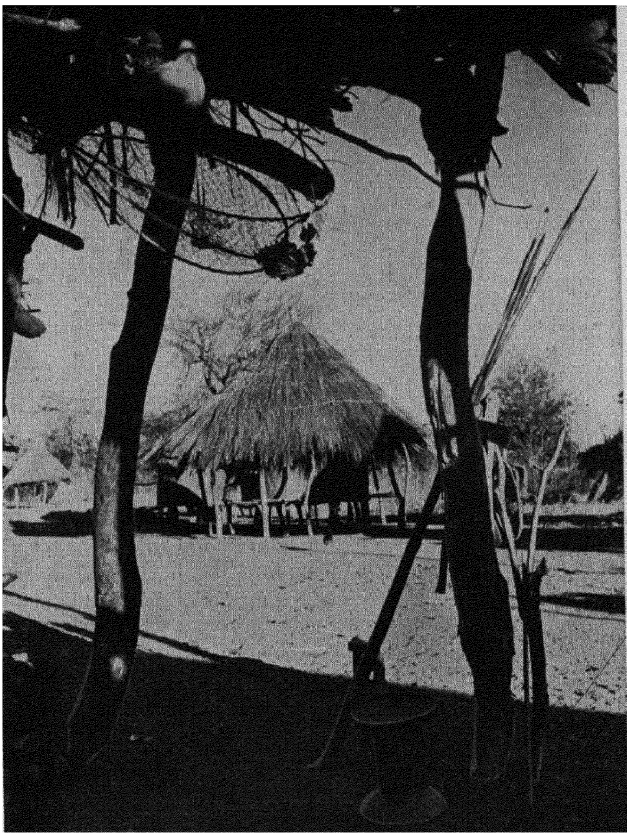


Photo Emil Schulthess

The Tonga villages had hardly changed since Livingstone saw them a century ago.



Photo Emil Schulthess

The tribe was kept alive by the gardens on the banks of the Zambesi, which were fertilized by the river's annual floods.

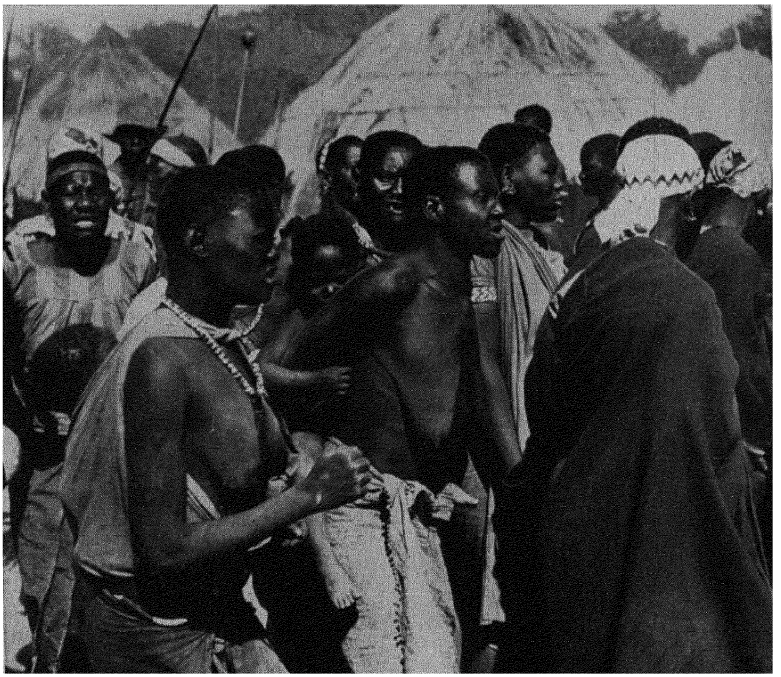
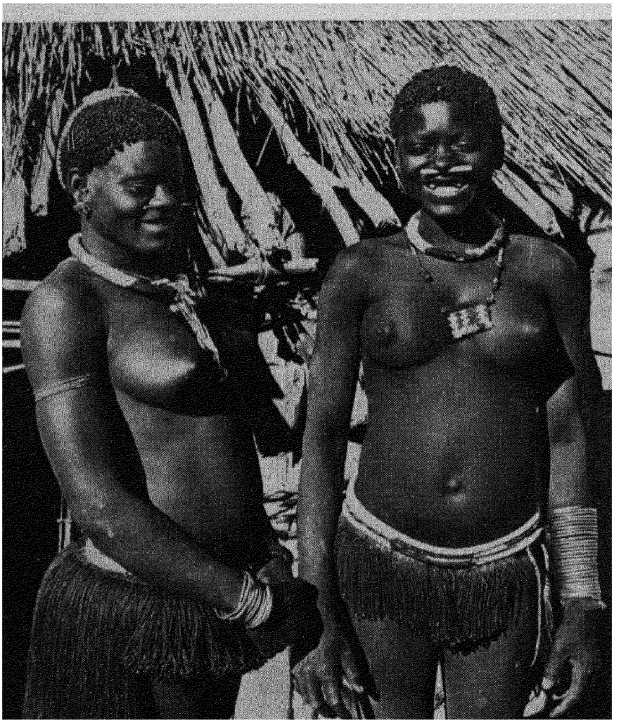


Photo Emil Schulthess

A funeral was the best of the Tonga's parties.



"Few of the Tonga women had any idea what the world was like beyond the horizon."

Since then, the center of interest at Kariba has moved to the mechanical and electrical work, which is mostly British. Loads have come down the Elephant Path, through the tortuous hills, of a size to make an ordinary motorist humble. Hundred-ton transformers, made in England, arrived on articulated fifty-two-wheeled trucks, driven simultaneously by three selected long-distance drivers from Pickfords, one at the front and one in the middle and one at the back.

The first of the six turbines was filled with water in November, and began to turn in December. Back in 1955, the target date was 1960, and there had always been people to say it could not be done. But it was done, with most of 1960 still in hand, in spite of the river's malevolent behavior; and that is the most remarkable thing of all about Kariba.

Now the industrial revolution of Rhodesia could go on. As the population expanded, industry could expand, for years to come, without being limited by lack of electric power. It was a prospect which exhilarated Rhodesians; yet there is always something melancholy about incipient industrial revolutions. Many Africans looked forward to leaving their lands and going to town to work in factories. But others felt quite differently about it. None of the fifty thousand Tonga who lived in the valley where the lake was going to be wanted to move from their ancestral homes. Yet they had to move, or be swallowed up by the rising waters. Many men of good faith and tender consciences were to grapple with this problem before uneasy and not altogether satisfactory solutions would be found to reconcile the understandable grievances of innocent victims and the inexorable demands of progress.

2

THE VALLEY

THE NAME of the valley was Gwembe. It was a spacious country enclosed on every side by steep escarpments, which cut it off from the great surrounding plateau of Central Africa and made it a world of its own. The Zambesi River plunged into it through a series of gorges below the Victoria Falls, and escaped from it, two hundred miles farther down, by another gorge—the gorge which was called Kariba.

In 1955, if one followed rough tracks for fifty miles or so, and penetrated to the crest of the escarpment, the scene was still perfectly primeval. The green floor of the valley, two thousand feet below, extended upstream and down to very far horizons, and the hills on the other side of it were blue in the distance. The whole of it was covered by trees, and so were the hills, to the tops of the highest peaks. From the hills, the forest below looked like an English forest of beech and oak, except that it seemed to be quite continuous, without a single clearing, but close at hand its trees looked strange to European eyes. In some parts of the valley, there were impenetrable thorny thickets; in others, mile upon mile of acacia and mopane

trees, spaced more widely. Some of the trees burst into brilliant flower in the spring, and some grew exotic fruit, or pods like giant beans. Here and there the peculiar trees called baobabs stood out among the rest, with vast tapering trunks and ridiculously meager crowns of branches. Down by the river, magnificent stands of African mahogany rose far above the tops of the other trees.

Up on the hills, there was sometimes a cooling breeze, but if one climbed down to the valley floor it was always hot. In winter it was hot and dry, and in summer hotter still and wet, and in spring it was hottest of all. In the dry winter, from May to September, the noonday temperature fell to the seventies, and people who were used to the valley shivered, and the forest grew brown and brittle. The sun beat down through the bare branches of the trees, and the earth underfoot was dusty. In October and November the temperature rose by day to 110, and even the nights felt stifling. Dust and the smoke of forest fires hung in the air. When summer began, the temperature fell again to the nineties, and then torrents of rain came down and thunderstorms burst in the hills, so that everything in the forest was soaked and then steamed itself dry and then was soaked again. Vegetation sprang into rank and hectic life, and died and rotted quickly in the hot wet air, and the whole valley smelt of decay. Streams became cataracts and the river burst its banks, and it was impossible to travel through the valley.

The forest in the valley was full of life, so full that if one walked quietly into it animals could always be seen and heard. There were elephants, rhinoceros, and buffalo, lions and leopards; majestic sable and roan antelope and kudu and impala, and the small delicate antelope called klipspringer and grysbok and duiker; there were wart hogs and bush pigs and ant bears, porcupines and poisonous snakes, rock rabbits and hares and tortoises, strange birds and fearsome insects, hippopotamuses and crocodiles in the river and baboons and monkeys in the trees: a teeming, fantastic variety of living things.

Walking through the forest, one was less likely at first to see signs of human life. But down in the oven of the valley bottom, by

the riverbank or a tributary stream, one might find a forest path which had the appearance of being made by human feet, or hear in the distance the sound of drums or unmelodious music or the voices of children playing, or come across a herd of goats, tended by a small black naked boy who would stand his ground with apprehension, smiling shyly. The path would lead in the end to a patch of corn, and then to a village: an acre or two of bare earth, stamped hard beneath the trees, and round thatched huts, built of poles and mud, some standing precariously on stilts. And since it was almost impossible for a stranger to approach a village unobserved, the people would be gathered among the huts: bare-breasted women, in beads and bangles, with sticks or porcupine quills through their noses and red ocher in their hair; sly teen-age girls and garrulous children, and men in tattered shorts; and they would laugh and crowd round the stranger, and clap their hands in greeting, cheerful, friendly, and trusting and openly inquisitive, and chickens would scurry underfoot, and thin dogs sniff suspiciously, and the headman of the village would gravely cause two stools or wooden chairs to be brought and put under a shady tree, one for himself and one for his honored guest; for all guests were honored by these amiable people.

They were called Tonga, and there were at least sixty thousand of them in villages scattered through the valley. They were the simplest and most primitive of all people in that part of Africa. Usually, in the past three or four decades, they had seen a white man once a year, but civilization had hardly troubled them at all. In 1955 they lived very much as they had in 1855, when Livingstone passed their way, except that they were no longer harassed, as they had always been before, by fierce neighboring tribes and slavery. The strife and world wars and inventions and progress of all those hundred years had hardly had the slightest echoes in the valley. Most of the Tonga men had been out of the valley from time to time, but few of the Tonga women had any idea what the world was like beyond the horizon of the hills. The valley was all their world; and none of them suspected it was doomed.

3

THE PEOPLE

ALL AFRICANS are thought to have migrated in the past, and anthropologists believe the Tonga migrated into the valley within the last few centuries. But there is no tradition of migration left among them, and nobody knows for certain how or why they came there, or where they came from. They have no history at all before Livingstone; and their history in the hundred years after Livingstone can be very briefly told, because it was so strangely uneventful.

When Livingstone first met them, he described them as "very degraded." It was a curious word to choose. He might well have called them simple or primitive or even barbarous; but there was no reason to think that they had ever been more advanced, so the word "degraded" was really not very appropriate. But that was on the first of the great explorer's two journeys down the Zambesi River, when he discovered and named the Victoria Falls; and at that stage of his career he was still inclined to judge the human race by the standards of Victorian Scotland. In those days the men of the Tonga wore no clothes at all, which he found indecent. "They

walk about," he wrote, "without the smallest sense of shame. . . . I told them that on my return I should have my family with me, and no one must come near us in that state." They asked him what they should wear for that occasion, since they had never possessed any clothes; and he told them that if they had nothing else they "must put on a bunch of grass." At that idea, they laughed merrily.

Nevertheless, the Tonga were friendly and kind to Livingstone, as they have been to well intentioned travelers ever since. "The further we advanced, the more we found the country swarming with inhabitants. Great numbers came to see the white man, a sight they had never beheld before. They always brought presents of maize and mazuka. Their mode of salutation is quite singular. They throw themselves on their backs on the ground, and, rolling from side to side, slap the outside of their thighs as expressions of thankfulness and welcome, uttering the words 'Kina bomba'. This method of salutation was to me very disagreeable, and I never could get reconciled to it. I called out 'Stop, stop! I don't want that;' but they, imagining I was dissatisfied, only tumbled about more furiously, and slapped their thighs with greater vigor. The men being totally unclothed, this performance imparted to my mind a painful sense of their extreme degradation."

On that first journey, Livingstone struck off into the hills when he left the Victoria Falls, and only rejoined the river below the Kariba Gorge; so he learned very little of the Gwembe Valley or of the Tonga who lived in the depths of it. But on his second journey, in 1860, he went down the valley itself with a fleet of canoes. His brother Charles was with him and, perhaps through his influence, he took a more liberal view of the Tonga. "We now saw many good-looking young men and women. The dresses of the ladies are identical with those of Nubian women in Upper Egypt. To a belt on the waist a great number of strings are attached to hang all round the person. These fringes are about six or eight inches long. The matrons wear in addition a skin cut like the tails of the coatee formerly worn by our dragoons. The younger girls . . . have the fringes only in front."

All through the valley, as the canoes drifted slowly down the river in August and September, 1860, people appeared from the forests on the banks and greeted Livingstone's party by clapping their hands. Whenever the party landed, they were given presents of corn, goats, and tobacco, and when they bought canoes, in exchange for cloth and beads, the chiefs dealt fairly with them. When Livingstone preached to them, they seemed to him to welcome the Christian promise of peace. The Tonga had always been marauders, and had tricked and slaughtered neighboring tribes when they had an opportunity; no tribe could have survived at all in Africa in those days if it had not fought to the best of its ability. But they had not been very effective warriors, and had usually had the worst of it in battles with their neighbors. So they told Livingstone that they hoped the British—whom he was always careful to distinguish from Portuguese or Boers—would come to take care of them.

On October 19th of that year, Livingstone and his party reached the foot of the valley at the Kariba Gorge, and for the first time civilized people saw the place where now ten thousand men have labored to build the dam. Thirty hippopotamuses were swimming in the entrance to the gorge. A man on the bank advised Livingstone to hire a local priest to pray for his party's safety in the rapids, but Livingstone scorned the offer. The priest watched the canoes go through the gorge, and "seemed rather surprised to see us pass down in safety, without the aid of his intercession."

Below Kariba, Livingstone met other tribes, and he met the Portuguese, who were trading in slaves and might much more truly have been called degraded; and when he had left the Gwembe Valley and reached the fringe of the civilized world again, he remembered the Tonga, in their simplicity, with something like affection. "If such men must perish by the advance of civilization," he wrote, "it is a pity. God grant that ere this time comes, they may receive that gospel, which is a solace for the soul in death." With that acceptance of the natives' probable fate, and that pious hope, he might be said to have summarized the sentiment of British imperial expansion.

After the last of Livingstone's canoes disappeared down the river, the valley and its people returned to their state of wild isolation, and for the rest of the nineteenth century, if civilization made any impression at all on the Tonga, the impression was mostly bad. In 1877 the great hunter Selous crossed the valley, collecting trophies. Portuguese and Greeks passed through it, trading beads and muzzle-loading guns for ivory. A Cypriot farmer lived in it for many years, and when he died he left a quantity of widows and twenty-seven half-caste children. Nothing happened to stop the bloodthirsty inter-tribal wars. The Tonga lived between the fierce Matabele in the south and the powerful kingdom of Barotse in the north; and in clashes between those tribes the Tonga were always caught between two fires, and raided by both sides for slaves and cattle. And an even worse, half-civilized oppression grew up among them. Half-castes and Africans employed by Portuguese followed Livingstone's route from the lower part of the Zambesi, and entered the valley and seized young Tonga men and girls, and took them away in chains to the refined horrors of the slave markets on the coast.

One laudable expedition ended quickly, with a hint of mystery. In 1880 two Jesuit missionaries tried to establish a European settlement in the valley. But after a fortnight one of them left the valley, and within three weeks the second of them was dead. He was buried where he died, and a cast-iron cross was put on his grave, and the mission was abandoned. Three-quarters of a century later, a party of Jesuits went to exhume his remains before the grave was covered by the flood. They dug up the cross, but there was no vestige of a body underneath it.

By the 1890's British colonialism was approaching; but only a very few of its pioneers went into the valley. In 1896 a man called Sir Charles Metcalfe reached the lower end of it, near Kariba, on an expedition to explore a route for a Cape-to-Cairo railway. When he came to the edge of the valley, his wagons stuck on the escarpment; so he loaded the stores he considered essential on the heads of his carriers and proceeded on foot. Nevertheless, after a week's march, when he reached the head of the gorge, he was still able to

celebrate his first sight of the river by broaching a few bottles of champagne. But he left the gorge the morning after by the way he had come; and when the railway reached the Zambesi, in 1905, it crossed it at the Victoria Falls, 250 miles farther up; and so the valley was still left undisturbed.

In 1898 five British explorers came up the river in a steamboat. Their boat, which was called the *Constance,* could not make any headway against the current at Kariba, so they decided to take her to pieces and carry the pieces up the gorge and put her together again. They succeeded in this extraordinary feat, and steamed up the Gwembe Valley and down again. But they had to abandon one of the *Constance's* boilers in the gorge, and when they came back downstream they were swept through the gorge so fast that they could not stop to pick it up again. Forty years later, the boiler was found and taken to the nearest city and presented to the municipal museum; but through a misunderstanding somebody put it on the rubbish dump instead, and it was never seen again.

The visit of Metcalfe and the voyage of the *Constance* were signs that the advance of civilization, which Livingstone had foreseen, was near the valley at last. About the end of the century, it came up from the south and crept past each end of the valley and surrounded it. Under the imperialistic drive of Cecil Rhodes, British settlers penetrated the vast plateau which lies to the south of the valley, and fought and defeated the Matabele, and the colony of Southern Rhodesia was founded. In the north, the King of the Barotse asked for Queen Victoria's protection, and signed commercial treaties with the British South Africa Company; and from these treaties Northern Rhodesia evolved. The Gwembe Valley, lying between the two, did not belong to the Matabele or the Barotse, but it was so hot and so useless, and the Tonga so insignificant, that the British did not bother to conquer it or make a treaty with its owners. On maps, the whole district was colored red. The Zambesi was marked as the boundary between Northern and Southern Rhodesia, and so the valley was divided along its length between two separate countries; and the Tonga joined the British Empire

without even knowing it had happened. Even then, since nobody had discovered anything of commercial interest in the valley, it was left to bake and then to steam from year to year, and the Tonga pursued their precarious elementary existence.

Undoubtedly the first sign which the Tonga saw of British rule was that the Matabele and Barotse and Portuguese stopped raiding them, and left them for the first time in memory to live in peace; and if some aspects of colonialism seem distasteful nowadays, that fact should be remembered. The second sign, in most of the villages, was a visit of a District Commissioner. Each government appointed a Commissioner to rule its own side of the valley. On the southern side, the Commissioner's tours from village to village began, intermittently at first, in 1896, and on the northern side in 1903. As the governments were consolidated, the tours became more frequent, until the most important and accessible villages were visited every year; and for the next half-century, until 1955, the annual tour of the District Commissioner was the main public event of the Tonga's simple world. Commissioners succeeded one another; but at any time in the dry seasons of those fifty years, somewhere in the colossal hot forest of the valley, two solitary Britons were walking the forest paths, one on the south of the river and one on the north, each followed by a few African messengers and a train of cooks and carriers. In the minds of the Tonga, the District Commissioner came to personify government. He was their magistrate, the highest of all human authorities they knew; and he was also their adviser and advocate, the man they turned to in any serious trouble which beset them, so that they referred to him in their language as their father. On each side of the valley, under one man's rule—completely autocratic, but benevolent and incorruptible—the Tonga enjoyed the only period of peace that they had ever known.

4

THE DISTRICT COMMISSIONER

IN FEBRUARY, 1955, the District Commissioner on the northern side of the valley was finishing a tour of one part of his enormous district. After Livingstone, this was the most important date in the valley's history; it might almost be said to be the date when history began. It was then that the final decision was taken which was to bring the existence of the valley to an end, and in the five years which followed, the Tonga were to experience far more changes and events than in the hundred years which went before. At that time the Commissioner was a man called Tony d'Avray, and he had made his tour in peace of mind, because nobody had told him what was going to happen.

It was the first tour he had made that year. The rainy season had not yet ended, and the temperature was still in the hundreds; the forest tracks were slimy, and the rivers were difficult to ford. On the afternoon of the 1st of March, he arrived at a road, one of four which had been built by then to lead down into the valley at different points on the two hundred miles of the escarpment. A

mile or two up the road from the point where he met it, there was a Jesuit mission station; and twenty miles up it, at the top of the escarpment, there was the settlement called Gwembe Boma which was his own headquarters, the center of government for the Northern Rhodesian side of the valley. Once he came to the road, he could have sent for Land-Rovers to take his party home, but it was getting late and he was tired and hot and not feeling very well; so he decided to pitch a final camp, and he dispatched one of his messengers to the Boma* to say he would be back the next morning, and to fetch him some beer.

D'Avray was certainly not in the mood that afternoon to reflect in general terms about his job, or to look further ahead than the time when the beer might arrive; but however little he may have thought about it, he was heir to a remarkable tradition which had been established by his predecessors in the past half-century. The devastating news still lay a few minutes in the future; but what he thought and did when he heard it was influenced by the tradition of the past, and so one must look into the past to understand his feelings when the news was broken to him.

Before the British rule began, all Central Africans were ruled by their hereditary chiefs. Advanced tribes had hierarchies of chiefs, and their paramount chiefs, the highest of them all, were men of wide influence for good or evil. But the Tonga, who had been bullied for so many generations by their neighbors, had never evolved that kind of government, and each small area of their valley had its own small independent chief whose powers were not very wide. There were also religious leaders, prophets, witches, and sorcerers, and the people were kept in order more by a fear of spirits than by any temporal power. No idea of democratic rule had ever occurred to the Tonga, or to any other Central African people.

British rule continued the system of hereditary chiefs, and merely adapted it to civilized ideas of justice. The native customs

* Originally Boma meant a fortified camp. Now the word is used for the administrative headquarters of each district of Rhodesia.

and laws were maintained, unless they conflicted with the fundamental laws of the civilized world. Barbaric punishments were stopped, and attempts were made to put an end to witchcraft, but the chiefs were supported in their authority, provided they did not misuse it by oppressing their people or breaking the law themselves. They continued, and still continue, to hold their own courts of law, and settle disputes, and sentence wrongdoers to fines or imprisonment, while the District Commissioners advised them on questions of law, and unobtrusively reviewed their decisions, and held courts for difficult and serious cases which the chiefs referred to them. It is often said that some of the British in Africa have taken no interest in Africans except as an inexhaustible source of cheap labor; but the final aim of the District Commissioners, and the colonial administration in general, has always been to work themselves out of a job by teaching the Africans to govern themselves with justice. They have gone a long way toward succeeding, though they could have gone further and faster if they had had more money to spend on teaching.

In the early days there were District Commissioners in some parts of Rhodesia who felt they could only establish authority by a show of toughness, and were not above telling their messengers to beat a man who did not show respect. Perhaps this was inevitable, among people who had always been ruled by force. But in most parts the Commissioner's authority was accepted without any question. The reason for this was simply that British rule could be seen to have subdued the slavers and warlike tribes and brought peace, so that it seemed to peaceful people to have an invincible power behind it. But in fact its power was always nebulous. A Commissioner never had any force he could call to his aid, within many days' march. He never carried arms, nor did his followers, excepting shotguns and sporting rifles when they had to live by hunting, and he relied on nothing but his own personality. Of course, Commissioners made mistakes, sometimes through too much enthusiasm. It was certainly not unknown for them to be irritable, but they had excuses for that in the climate, and the exhausting life they led, and

sometimes in the exasperating habits of the Africans. But once their authority was established, it could only be maintained by absolute fairness and integrity, and by the simple Africans' innate respect for law, and that is how it has been maintained through generations.

With the Tonga nobody needed to be tough. They told Livingstone they would welcome British rule, although they only knew what it meant from what he had told them; and when it came, forty years later, they did welcome it. They took it on trust, and in general their trustfulness brought out the best in their rulers. District Commissioners are usually fond of their people; they could hardly stand the life if they were not. Many of them have to restrain themselves from getting too fond of them, because it is always their duty to find a balance, like a schoolmaster or a parent, between affection and authority. And certainly each District Commissioner who took over the Gwembe Valley grew fond of the Tonga, because they were charmingly cheerful and happy-go-lucky when times were good, and courageous when times were bad, and because they were courteous and kind and friendly but never servile; in short, because on the whole they were lovable people.

The tour which d'Avray had just completed was a routine affair. He had been out for three weeks, moving camp every two or three days, and walking each day to several villages to hear what had been happening during the rainy season, and to listen to troubles and complaints and give his advice, or simply to sit under a tree for an hour or two with the village elders. He had held court, and tried cases of assault and larceny and discussed other cases with the chief. He and his messengers between them had brought the census up to date, so that taxes could be collected; and he had taken with him an agricultural expert, to try to give the people good advice on the perennial problems of growing their crops in the valley.

Of all these activities, which were typical enough of a District Commissioner's work, the collection of taxes had done most, in the course of time, to introduce the Tonga to civilization. The taxes were not very high: on the Northern Rhodesia side, each man had to pay $1.40 a year to the government, and $1.47 a year in rates to the tribal authorities, but the Tonga had never used money among

themselves, or needed it for any other purpose, and they had never produced anything they could sell except a few cakes of tobacco and a certain amount of illicit Indian hemp; and so some of the men had to leave the valley for a period every year, in order to earn the money to pay the taxes. In fact, the object of the government tax, as a matter of policy, was not so much to raise revenue as to make rural Africans work instead of merely growing enough to keep their own families alive. In theory, the amount of the tax had been intended to make each man do an average of three weeks' work a year. But the Tonga had to walk a long way to find jobs, and when they had done so and had their wages in their hands, they naturally thought of things they would like to buy, such as clothes for themselves and blankets and beads for their wives; and in practice, the more adventurous men stayed long enough at work to pay their own taxes for several years, and the taxes of other men in their families who stayed at home to grow crops.

Some Tonga found jobs on European farms on the line of the railway sixty or seventy miles to the north of the valley, and some walked to Bulawayo, two hundred miles to the south. But very few of them took to city life, and none of them ever took their wives on their journeys. As soon as they had earned what they needed, they walked home to their villages in the valley, and told stories for years afterward of the wonders and horrors they had seen. Naturally, they evaded the payment of taxes whenever they could, but when they could not they paid cheerfully. From the earliest years they seemed to regard ten shillings, and the need to earn it, as a reasonable price for a peaceful life.

As a result of taxation, the Tonga men had grown to look more sophisticated than the Tonga women. In Livingstone's day, when the men had worn nothing at all, everyone of both sexes had had their front teeth knocked out. The custom was a peculiarity of the Tonga. There is a scientific hypothesis that it had something to do with the fact that cows have no teeth in front, but the Tonga could never explain why they did it. It was simply the fashion, and it made them more attractive in the eyes of the opposite sex.

A hundred years after Livingstone, the younger men had given

up this custom, because when their fathers went out of the valley to work, without their teeth, they had been laughed at by other Africans; and they had taken to wearing shorts, and quite forgotten the habit of slapping their thighs to welcome strangers. But they still preferred their women without front teeth, and the women's dress had only recently started to change from the short skirt of strings which Livingstone had observed. The women still had quills or sticks in their noses and used red ocher in their hair. They smoked enormous hubble-bubble pipes made of gourds, though the men smoked cigarettes made of reeds; and the only change in their ornaments was that their bracelets and necklaces were often made of European beads instead of river shells.

Yet the men's air of sophistication did not go very deep. Outside the valley, they were confused and unsure of themselves, and so seemed more foolish than they were; it was only at home, in the security of the tribal life they understood, that they could be themselves. It was part of one of the wide tragedies of Africa that most Europeans could never meet the Tonga in their own surroundings, where they were at their best, but only in cities, where they were at their worst.

When d'Avray's camp had been pitched on that sultry March evening, he had plenty of reasons to feel content. He loved the Tonga, although their conservative ways and their slowness in accepting new ideas had sometimes exasperated him; and thanks to the tradition his predecessors had established, and his own efforts to live up to it, the Tonga trusted him and the system he represented. There were lifetimes of work which still remained to be done to help the Tonga, so that when in the end they had to hold their own in the civilized world, they would be able to do it without the disastrous result which Livingstone had predicted. But what had to be done seemed clear enough, and there seemed to be plenty of time to do it; meanwhile, the Tonga were happy and the valley was in peace. And on a more mundane and immediate level, the heat of the day was over, and an evening in camp, which is the District Commissioner's reward, was still ahead. The tents were set

in a beautiful place under trees beside a river, and soon the lamps would be lit and the night noises of the forest would begin. His African servant had made him a bath, which he badly needed, and his cook was preparing the dinner, and he had the agricultural expert as a European companion to talk to, which was unusual; and the beer was on its way from the Boma.

The bomb was dropped by a priest from the Jesuit mission up the road. He had heard that d'Avray was passing through, and he walked down to the camp that evening.

"Have you heard the news?" he asked; and d'Avray answered with more than the usual conviction, because he had been in the forest for weeks and had not heard any news at all. For all that he knew, it might have been any world-wide catastrophe; but nothing would have disturbed him more than the news which the priest had brought him.

"They're going to build the dam at Kariba," the priest said. "I heard it on the wireless."

5

THE ECONOMISTS

D'AVRAY KNEW quite well what the news implied, because a dam at Kariba had been discussed for years; but it astonished and appalled him, because he had been officially told that the scheme had been abandoned.

In the Gwembe Valley, and other such primitive parts of the territories, political and economic problems seemed remote. Among people like the Tonga, there were very few who knew or cared in the least about such things, and District Commissioners, as civil servants, were not supposed to express political opinions. But in the cities of both Rhodesias, federation was a major subject of argument, and feelings were vehement for it and against. The idea of a dam at Kariba was an important point in these arguments.

To the advocates of federation, the project had a further significance. The Zambesi divided the two countries. A dam across it would be a permanent symbolic link between them; and, which was more important, joint federal ownership of such an expensive installation would help to bind the countries together economically, and so strengthen the ties of federation after they were formed.

D'Avray had heard all these arguments whenever he had been to town, or had visitors at the Boma, both before and after the Federation was actually founded, which was in 1953. But as he lived and worked in Northern Rhodesia, he had heard at least an equal amount of the other side of the argument. For many reasons of economics and temperament and tradition, the North had never been so keen on Federation as the South, and it had never been keen at all on building a dam at Kariba.

The argument over the choice between Kariba and Kafue had raged furiously for many years. Kafue was a rather more modest plan. Its estimated cost was only two-thirds of the estimated cost of Kariba. On the other hand, its possible output of power was only half, so that Kariba could be called a better bargain. In reply, it could easily be argued that the price of Kariba was far too much to spend on a single project, especially when both countries were desperately in need of schools and hospitals and every kind of public utility. So there was no shortage of arguing points on either side; and the bitter controversy was deeply dyed by politics. In the minds of Northern Rhodesians, Kafue was a domestic project, a dam of their own which they might possibly have afforded to build themselves; Kariba was always a Federal idea.

The fate of the Tonga was used as a minor weapon in the battle. A dam and a reservoir at Kafue would only have displaced about a thousand Africans from their land, but it was clear from the earliest stages that a dam at Kariba would flood the homes of tens of thousands of Tonga. But the interests of the Tonga carried little weight compared with the industrial interests of the country. If Kariba was built, the Tonga would have to be moved; and the cost of moving them would be only a very small part of the cost of the dam. The advocates of Kariba saw no serious difficulty, and some of them even argued that it would be better for the Tonga in the end to be taken away from the valley and installed in lands which had a healthier climate.

The battle swayed to and fro till 1954, and a decision never seemed close enough for d'Avray or anyone else concerned with the

Tonga to take it very seriously. Then, in May of that year, the Minister of Power in the Federal Government announced that the Cabinet had decided against Kariba, and in favor of Kafue. Northern Rhodesians in general were jubilant, and d'Avray put the whole problem out of his mind, relieved that the vague menace no longer hung over the valley.

This was the reason why the priest's message, brought without warning nine months afterward, was such a shock to d'Avray. At first he could hardly believe it; but there seemed to be no possible room for doubt. Sir Godfrey Huggins himself, the Federal Prime Minister, had issued the announcement: Kariba was to be built before Kafue, subject only to the approval of consultant engineers and the World Bank. The decision had a final air about it, if only because it meant that the Federal Government had totally changed its mind; and governments which change their minds are seldom willing to change them back again. D'Avray's heart sank as he began to think of all the problems which were likely to confront him, and the worse problems which would have to be faced and solved by his friends among the Tonga.

The first question which came into his head was how he could possibly break the news to the Tonga. He himself found the whole thing difficult to imagine. The place where he was camped that night was ninety miles from Kariba; and yet he had been told that the lake would be twenty miles across in that part of the valley. The camp itself was halfway up the escarpment, and he supposed the water would never rise so high; but all the country he had crossed in the past three weeks would be submerged, every village, every hut, every one of the Tonga's gardens, every tree; and all the people he had met in the past three weeks would have to move, and all their cattle and goats and sheep and hens, and all their household goods; and the country he had crossed was only a tiny fraction of the valley.

He wondered how he could ever explain it to them. The Tonga had never even made a cart on wheels, and he would have to explain about turbines and electricity. They had never seen a lake, and

he would have to describe what it would look like, and make them believe in it. They had very little idea of any community larger than their own, and he would have to persuade them that it was right that they should suffer for the sake of the progress of the country as a whole. The whole prospect revolted his feelings as District Commissioner: in all the time he had served and ruled the Tonga, he had never had to persuade them to do anything which he did not sincerely believe was in their own interest as a tribe, and he did not want to start. But if it had to be done, he knew that the District Commissioner was the proper person to do it.

D'Avray and the agricultural expert sat up till after midnight, drinking the beer which the messenger brought from the Boma, and turning over the endless problems in their minds. Agriculture was one of them. The Tonga had never been persuaded to use manure, or even the simplest kind of irrigation, or to practice rotation of crops. The only staple crops they grew were millet, maize, and sorghum and tobacco, and their method of growing them was to let the sunlight into a patch of forest by lopping the trees and burning the branches, and to plant the patch for a few years till the soil was exhausted, and then to abandon it and open another patch. The only permanent gardens they had ever had were on the flood plain near the riverbanks, where the Zambesi overflowed in each rainy season and fertilized the land with a new deposit of silt. The Tonga grew crops in the winter there, when the floods receded. In any year when the rains were sparse there was hunger in the valley; but the winter gardens had kept the tribe alive. Now, the river's floods would be controlled by the dam, and the winter gardens would disappear below the lake. Could the Tonga exist without them? Where could new land be found? Could they be taught to use it less wastefully?

On that first evening, d'Avray could not see any solution to the mere physical problems of moving tens of thousands of people out of one part of the forest and into another. Would they have to walk, and drive their flocks, or could roads be built in time? What would happen to the old people, and the sick and the lame,

the blind, the lepers, and the babies? If this was not organized efficiently and sympathetically, the grandiose project of Kariba, it seemed to him, might easily end in a shameful tragedy.

It was the question of sympathy which troubled him most of all. So far, he and his predecessors had been the Tonga's link with the world outside. The link had not always been perfect, and perhaps it had been too stagnant and conservative; but at least it had always been sympathetic. The Tonga had been cherished, with justice and a courtesy to match their own, and they had been protected, at least while they stayed in the valley, from civilized abuses. But now, d'Avray supposed, all that was coming to an end. He imagined the valley full of technicians, who would not understand the Tonga or care about their feelings. He imagined his people pitched into civilization with cruel abruptness, and suddenly exposed to its vices and oppressions, and he dreaded to think what spiritual and moral effects the process might have on them.

By midnight in the camp, he had talked himself into a state of deep depression. The forest round the camp was awake; he could hear the sounds of its animals. But its people were asleep, and if they slept contentedly and peacefully, it was largely because they had learned in the last fifty years to trust their District Commissioner. He had been proud of that, but now the thought of it only made him sadder.

6

THE CHIEFS

THE FIRST Tonga who heard the news was a man called Hezekiah Habanyama. He was told it by the Secretary for Native Affairs at a governmental meeting outside the valley in April; and after the meeting he went back to his home in the valley feeling very upset and angry. He was not angry with any particular person, or even with the government, because he was a very intelligent person and had recognized at once that it was no use to weigh his own people's interests against the importance of the dam. But he was angry with the evil fate which had brought this menace to the Tonga: a menace which he could not entirely grasp or understand.

Habanyama was unique among the Tonga. He was a short, stocky man of forty, full of energy and humor and common sense, and through a series of lucky chances, and his own ability, he had won his way to Bristol University.

The first of the chances which took him so far in life was that he had been born in a village which was close to a mission school. There were four missions on the northern side of the valley

by 1950: the Jesuits, the Methodists, the American Pilgrim Holiness, and the Salvation Army. The difference in the images of the Christian God which these separate missions conveyed to the Tonga was a source of some confusion, and the Tonga's own religious beliefs were still powerful; but the mission schools were a very important influence. Unhappily, even by 1950, there were not nearly enough of them in the valley for all the Tonga children, and among men of Habanyama's age only a small proportion had any education at all.

It was the Salvation Army which started him on his progress, and gave him his biblical name. At the first suggestion that he should go to school, a family conference was called. The family was alarmed at first by the name of the Salvation Army, translated literally into Tonga; naturally, it made them think the boy was being taken away to fight in some kind of war. After his teacher had explained that misunderstanding, they raised no more objections, and Habanyama did very well at his primary school. But then he encountered a difficulty which still besets ambitious African children. The nearest secondary school was a hundred miles away; so if he was to learn any more he had to become a boarder, and somebody had to pay for his keep. His parents could have fed him at home, but they had no cash to pay somebody else to feed him; and besides, he had come to an age when, from their point of view, he might have begun to be useful in herding goats or helping in the gardens. For many clever African children and their teachers, this problem is never solved; but Habanyama's Salvation Army teacher had so much faith in him that he paid the boarding fees himself, and persuaded his parents to let him go away. This faith had one reward: when the tribe's time of trouble came, years afterward, there was one man among the Tonga who had been to England and seen the world, and acquired a truly European cast of mind.

One of the unusual things about Habanyama, which endeared him to the Englishmen who knew him, was that after his university career he went back to the valley again. Most Africans who do well

in life have to stay in the cities to fulfill their ambitions, and cut themselves off from their tribes, and some of them seem ashamed of their origin and despise the tribal life. But Habanyama always remained a Tonga. He lived humbly, with his Tonga wife and family, and was still devoted to his parents. At European cocktail parties, he could and did mix with the highest in the land; but at Tonga parties, when a Tonga orchestra was assembled for a dance, with seven different kinds of drums and thirty-six cowhorns, blown more or less independently by thirty-six performers each on a slightly different note, Habanyama could drum out a rhythm with the best, and dance most of his village to a standstill.

Of course, this remarkable man had risen to a high position among the Tonga. His family were ordinary villagers, and not in the line of succession, and so he could never have been a chief; but he became the chief councilor of the Gwembe Tonga Native Authority. This was a British invention, a kind of embryo parliament, with a purpose like that of a county council in Britain. Every tribe in Northern Rhodesia had one. It played a large part in the government of the tribe, and also taught the tribal leaders the element of democratic practice. The members of the Tonga Native Authority were a chairman, the seven chiefs of the tribe, seven councilors, some nominated and some elected; five special councilors for such subjects as agriculture and education, who were appointed by the chiefs; and the chief councilor. The District Commissioner attended its meetings as adviser. In the course of time, this council had become an efficient part of local government, and its powers had been gradually increased.

Habanyama's first impulse when he heard the news was to arrange a meeting of the Native Authority, so that he could share the burden with the other leaders of his tribe. But that took time, because the chiefs at the ends of the valley were two hundred miles apart, and at least two messengers had to be sent to each of them, one to propose dates for a meeting, and another to confirm whatever date was accepted by all the members. So it was six weeks before a day could be found when all the chiefs could come.

The meeting was held at a village called Munyumbwe. This was the Native Authority headquarters, and it lay by chance very close to the spot, in the middle of the valley, where d'Avray had pitched his camp on the night when he heard the news. The Authority's meeting place was a raised platform, with a thatched roof over it. At each end of the platform, there were offices for the councilors and clerks, but the sides of it were open. In the heat of the valley, almost every human activity took place in the open air; and to have no walls at Munyumbwe was also perhaps a symbol that the meetings of the Authority, like those of the Parliament on which it was roughly modeled, were not secret. Anybody who cared could sit on the steps of the platform, or under the trees outside.

The meeting assembled with dignity, but without much ceremony. For these occasions, all the members wore shirts, trousers, and shoes, and some had ties and jackets; and the chiefs wore scarlet robes like academic gowns. All the senior members knew each other well, and there was usually a time of gossip and laughter before the chairman called the meeting to order. But the meeting of July, 1955, began with a solemn air. All the members knew that something serious was coming.

The chairman took the head of the table, with Habanyama and the other councilors on his right and the seven chiefs on his left. The chiefs inherited their names with their chieftaincies, like the British nobility, and their names were also used for the areas which they ruled: Sinadambwe, Munyumbwe, Sigongo, Simamba, Mwemba, Sinazongwe, and Chipepo. The chief councilor, looking at the seven familiar faces across the table, knew that the last four would be the most deeply affected by the news which he had to tell. Their lands were right down by the river; the others lived among the foothills of the escarpment, and there was a good chance, he supposed, that they would not have to move. Simamba's area was the nearest to Kariba, but it was the smallest of them all, and he ruled only three thousand people. Mwemba's was the farthest up the valley, and the most remote and primitive. Probably very few of his people had ever heard of the Kariba Gorge, but Mwemba himself was an educated man, and could be counted on to under-

stand about the dam. He was seventy, and had been a teacher in a Methodist school, and spoke English. He had inherited the chiefdom when his uncle grew too old to do the work, but the old chief was still alive and said to be well over ninety. Yet there was no division of loyalty among his people, as there often was when a chief retired in his old age. The younger Mwemba was a strong and conscientious chief. Indeed, he had overcome his Methodist conscience, when he became a chief, by taking several wives; for the Tonga were polygamous, and to have had only one wife, or none at all, would have been an eccentricity which would have made the dignity of a chiefdom difficult to maintain.

Sinazongwe was a very much younger man, uneducated but strong-willed and intelligent. His face was lean and handsome, ebony black, and usually reserved and stern. He was the ruler of eleven thousand people, and the husband of seven wives. Zongwe was a river in his wide territories, and his name, which meant Master of Zongwe, became him well. He also had inherited from his mother's brother, because property and position among the Tonga are passed down the female line; and his great-uncle, the chief of 1890, had been killed in one of the last raids of the Matabele.

Chipepo, who sat next to Sinazongwe at the table, was even younger, and lacked Sinazongwe's air of confident authority. Strictly speaking, he was deputy chief, and had only held that position for two years. His uncle had gone into semiretirement, but was still sometimes apt to forget that he had done so and to behave as if he were chief; and some of the older people in the area were still inclined to give him their allegiance. Young Chipepo was cheerful and easygoing, like most of the Tonga, and perhaps he would have been glad, like many other monarchs, to have led a quieter life; but he was none the less determined to make a success of his career. He had not had any education, but he had been to Bulawayo to work in his early youth, and so he knew something of the world.

The first necessity in moving the tribe was that these four men should understand what was going to happen, and agree to play their part in it.

As soon as Habanyama began his explanation, and the members

began to ask questions, he met a difficulty which was to complicate the whole of the problem for years. Habanyama's own English was almost perfect, but he had to explain in Tonga, and Tonga had no words for so many of the new and unfamiliar things: dam, electricity, turbine, power, cable. The only thing was to use the English words, and in the course of time they crept into the Tonga language; but at first they were only words, and gave the Tonga people no mental image of the physical things they were intended to describe.

The news was received with the deepest gloom and anger. Nobody even suggested that the disaster might be prevented. Although it was only a human decision to build the dam, it seemed more like a cataclysm of nature, an act of God. At first, like d'Avray, the chiefs saw so many difficulties that they could not concentrate their minds on any of them, and the discussion drifted aimlessly. They asked the same practical questions that he had asked himself: Where could the people go, and who would move them, and how could they live without their winter gardens? But intangible problems weighed more with them than any European, however sympathetic, could have been expected to foresee. Would the souls of the dead allow the tribe to move? And what would happen to the shrines and holy places? These questions were to assume more and more importance as time went on, because the practical problems could be solved, more or less, by the District Commissioner, but the spiritual problems could only be solved, if at all, by the Tonga.

The argument went on and on all day. Beneath it, there was fear at that meeting of an unknown future in an unknown place, and there was a feeling of deep unhappiness which could hardly be expressed in words at all. Whatever happened, it was clear even then that the tribe would be split in two. To the people in cities who had decreed the dam, the Zambesi was a frontier. The people on one side belonged to Southern Rhodesia, and those on the other side to Northern Rhodesia. But to the Tonga, it had never been a frontier at all. They often crossed it, to borrow food or cut poles to build their huts, or to court new brides, or just to go to parties

or call on relations. Many families lived half on one side and half on the other. But now it seemed that each government intended to drag its own people back from the river, away into the hills, so that friends on the opposite bank would disappear and never be seen again.

And another source of unhappiness, equally deep but more difficult to define, was the thought that the river would be destroyed. The Tonga loved the river. It was not only by far the most important of the physical surroundings of their home; perhaps also, in some sense, it seemed beautiful to them. Its flow seemed as eternal and immutable as the rising and the setting of the sun, and to stop it seemed both inconceivable and wrong.

Inevitably, the meeting broke up that evening without any conclusion, but another was held a fortnight afterward. The second one lasted two days; and at the end of it the Authority had hammered out a set of twenty-four searching and sensible requests, which they addressed to the governor of the colony. It was no less than seven months before they received the governor's replies, but when they did the whole document, with the curiously stilted English of the questions and the carefully simple English of the answers, conveyed an impression of the atmosphere of African local government:

Q: That in moving people their choices shall be seriously considered before they shall be ignored and where possible their second choices shall be found.

A: I agree.

Q: That the Native Authority properties including communications, amenities, shrines and also individual personal properties shall be compensated in full.

A: All people who suffer on account of being moved will be given either money or something else appropriate.

Q: That shrines shall receive full consideration in arranging the movement of the people.

A: I agree. This is being done.

Q: That should there be any new people or businessmen who will establish themselves along the dam, the Gwembe Native Authority shall have the right to collect licenses, levies, taxes and rents from them.

A: Government will not change the law of the country; the District Commissioner is the one who will explain this law to you.

Q: That there shall be no restrictions in the agricultural methods as this will cause suspicion, misery and anxiety among our people.

A: Government will not trouble the people about their land more than is necessary, but it wants the land to be kept well so that it does not lose fertility, because it is from there that the food must come for all time.

Q: That the technical officers shall never interfere with the mode of life among the people and with the normal work of the Native Authority.

A: Government officers come to help in the proper management of the country, but have not the power to make orders; the District Commissioner and the chiefs of the country are the people who have this power.

Q: That the Native Authority shall never be obliged to help unless it wishes to do so in the actual building of the dam.

A: I agree.

Q: That the sufficient supply of food shall be given to the people who shall have to leave their gardens to open new lands during the resettlement period.

A: I agree.

Q: That every effort shall be made to remove tsetse flies in the proposed new resettlement areas.

A: I agree.

Q: That should there be any chance of the water not reaching the suggested flood line, the people who have been moved from the unflooded areas shall have the right to return to their original places.

A: I agree.

So the questions and answers went on. The Native Authority, with extraordinary shrewdness, did not ask for compensation for the land which was going to be flooded; they foresaw that one day it might be more useful to be able to claim that the surface of the lake belonged to them. When the governor's replies were received, and the members of the Authority saw that he had agreed with most of their requests, they felt satisfied. Long afterward, before a commission of inquiry, Habanyama said: "Our minds were clear then. We knew that the government was taking the move very seriously and that every aspect of the problem was being considered in the interest of our people."

But this example of democratic cooperation was rather misleading, and perhaps it gave an impression, in government circles far removed from the valley, that the Tonga had been won over and that the move would be easy. In fact, although twenty-four questions were asked and answered, far more were left unsolved. The Native Authority had accepted the move; but its members were a long way ahead of the mass of the tribe in their worldly experience, and the position of the chiefs was not quite so powerful in practice as in theory. In the early days the British had found so many chiefdoms in the valley that they had grouped them together and reduced their number to seven by promoting the major chiefs and making the minor chiefs subordinate. That helped to introduce a tidy and efficient administration, but it left the descendants of the minor chiefs more or less dissatisfied, and for each chiefdom, there were three or four pretenders to the throne. And the chiefs' power, in any case, was only secular. The priests, prophets, and witches also wielded power among the Tonga, as time was to show, and they still had to be convinced about the move.

So it remained to be seen whether the chiefs could carry their people with them. Sinazongwe was the only one who seemed to be perfectly confident. The others were probably clinging to a secret shred of hope. They had all seen or heard of government schemes which began with a burst of enthusiasm and then were abandoned through changes of policy, and it is very likely that

when they framed their questions about the move, not one of them really believed in his heart of hearts that it would ever happen.

There was one question which was asked at the meeting and often asked again, and was always very difficult to answer: What was the use of the dam? Habanyama and d'Avray, and everyone else who encountered the Tonga, came to dread this question. They could say that the dam would help to bring prosperity to the country, and that prosperity meant more schools and hospitals and roads and houses; but the Tonga had never had any of those things, or consciously wanted them, except the mission schools. And they could say that Kariba would create more jobs, and better paid jobs, in mines and factories; but the Tonga had no aspiration at all to be wage earners in cities. All they wanted was to be left where they were in the valley, and to go on living more or less as they had lived for the last fifty years; and in fact, the most honest answer to this question might have been that for the Tonga, and for a great many other rural Africans, so far ahead as anyone could foresee, the Kariba Dam was no possible use whatever.

7

THE VILLAGE

ONE HUNDRED and ninety-three villages were found to lie below the flood line on the northern side of the river, and the name of one of them was Chisamu. Chisamu was to become notorious before the exodus ended, but in these early days there was nothing to distinguish it from other villages. Events and opinions and feelings probably ran parallel courses in all the doomed villages during the next few months, and one can follow the events in Chisamu with reasonable certainty that the same things were happening up and down the valley.

Chisamu was almost in the middle of the valley, about eighty miles up the river from Kariba. It had about fifty living huts, and granaries, pens for sheep and goats, chicken coops and pigeon cotes; and 233 people lived there. It was not entirely surrounded by the forest. On the south side of it, the land sloped gently down to a level open plain nearly half a mile across. On the far side of the plain was a long low bank, on which there were some noble trees; and behind the bank, and almost hidden by it, was the river. Beyond the river, the forest began again, and over the tops of the

trees, in the blue distance, the Southern Rhodesian escarpment could be seen. When the river came down in flood, it covered the plain to within a hundred yards of the edge of the village.

All the Tonga villages were ramshackle places. The huts were easily built, and soon fell down again. For most of the year, it was more comfortable to cook and eat and even sleep in the open air, and huts were a necessity only in the heavy rains and the comparatively chilly nights of winter. So it was quite a common event, when the land in the neighborhood of a village was worked out, or the village itself became too dirty and insanitary, for bits of it to be abandoned and rebuilt somewhere else to form several smaller villages. But Chisamu, like other villages on the riverbanks themselves, was a more permanent habitation, because its people owned some of the valuable permanent gardens on the flood plain which never lost fertility. So it happened that almost everyone in Chisamu had been born there, or in the near neighborhood. Everyone in the village knew everyone else, and they were all related in the widespread, complicated kinship which is the strongest and most important bond in African life. The village, and the land, the reach of the river which lay beyond it, and the outline of the distant hills had all the values and the sentiment of home.

Home life in the village was extremely simple. Life is always simple for people who have no kind of artificial light, so that there is nothing they can do when the sun has set except dance by the light of fires, or go to bed, or simply sit and gossip. Among the Tonga, there was not even much of the ceremonial which diversifies the life of tribes which are more advanced. Birth and marriage were events which passed with very little celebration. Death was the only occasion which was elaborately observed. In many African tribes, the puberty of boys and girls is attended with rites which are sometimes fearsome, but Tonga boys grew up without any initiation, and so did Tonga girls, except that this was the age when their top front teeth were removed; it was done—though the Native Authority was trying to stop the practice—by putting

an ax against the teeth and hitting it sharply with the back of another ax.

By tradition, Tonga girls were betrothed when they were seven or eight. That was another custom the Native Authority was trying to stop—not entirely on grounds of foreign morality, but because it so often led to complications when the girls refused to marry the husbands chosen for them, but eloped with a lover instead as soon as they were old enough to find one. By the same tradition, a man who eloped with a girl had to pay damages to her father. In some parts of the valley, betrothal of children was still going on; and where it had stopped, most fathers refused to consider suitors for their daughters until they had run away with them and seduced them, because then they could claim the damages for elopement in addition to the customary payment for a bride. So in the districts where the Native Authority had most influence—and Chisamu village was one of them—it had become the usual thing to elope first and then get married afterward. Divorces, which were granted by the chiefs' courts, were very common indeed.

Apart from these family affairs, the main diversions of life in Chisamu were beer and music. Beer was brewed, by stewing corn, for every kind of party, and especially for working parties when a man wanted his neighbors to help him to build a hut or clear a patch of land; and music was provided by the drums and cowhorns at which Habanyama still excelled. Each neighborhood had an orchestra of its own. It performed mainly at funerals, and when anyone important died orchestras gathered from several neighborhoods. When the intoxicating rhythm of the drums began, the limbs of every Tonga began to twitch, and soon everyone from tottering infants to tottering old men and women joined in a shuffling dance. There was intense competition between the orchestras, and when they met, old half-forgotten war dances were revived, and the ceremonies often ended in a fight which almost everyone enjoyed. So a good funeral was the best of the Tonga's parties. The drums were also used for sending messages, and before the British came they had signaled the warnings of raids, and called the men to war.

Chisamu was in the domain of Chipepo, the young chief who still felt uncertain of his powers; and just as the chief had the same name as his domain, so the village headman had the same name as his village. Headman Chisamu was recognized by the government as the leader of the village community, and his position, like the chief's, was hereditary. But in practice, Chisamu's authority had limits—narrower limits, perhaps, than the government supposed. By far the most important activity of the village, apart from begetting children, was the planting and harvesting of corn, and that was in charge of a priest called the Sikatongo.

The people of Chisamu, like all the Tonga, had always existed on the edge of disaster: the disaster of a failure of the rains. They lived entirely on corn porridge, flavored by vegetables and fruit and sometimes by meat or fish which they boiled till it was reduced to a kind of paste; and in any year when the rain was sparse and the river failed to overflow its banks, they starved. They had plenty of sheep and goats and some cattle, but they did not eat them; the sheep and goats were a kind of currency; used in paying for brides and settling other bargains, and the cattle were used for plowing. There was a case of a woman who successfully sued for divorce on the ground that her husband was insane, because in a time of famine he had killed his ox and begun to eat it. During the last few decades, the government had never wittingly allowed any Tonga to starve to death; in the last extremity of any famine year, grain was brought into the valley for them from more plentiful districts. But the Tonga were both lazy and sensible; and the government knew they were, and even sympathized with their laziness, because no people who lived in the enervating heat of the valley could be expected to enjoy any work which could be avoided. It seemed likely that if free grain was handed out too liberally or too often, the Tonga would take less trouble to grow it themselves; and so the government's famine relief was never more than enough to keep them alive, and a shortage of rain still brought acute hunger and misery.

The duty of the Sikatongo was to make rain for the people's

gardens; and to this end he prayed and sacrificed cocks and poured libations of beer at a shrine in a little hut which was built on the grave of his ancestor, the original Sikatongo of the neighborhood. He was also in charge of seed corn, and told the people when to sow, and performed other ceremonies when they did so; and nobody in Chisamu would ever have thought of doing any cultivation before he had told them they could start. The only serious row between the Tonga and the government had been on a matter within the Sikatongo's jurisdiction. After one of the recent famines, in 1953, the government had tried to make the people grow cassava, a root vegetable which is resistant to drought and was used successfully by other tribes as an insurance against dry periods. But to the government's chagrin, the Tonga adamantly refused to grow it. Perhaps this was partly because they disliked the taste of it, but possibly a deeper reason was that the Sikatongos either would not or could not revise their forms of ritual to include it.

Thus in any matter concerning crops or land, Headman Chisamu had to defer to the Sikatongo; and there were not many matters of interest which had nothing whatever to do with crops or land. And Chisamu's authority was also subject to the wishes of the dead. The Tonga believed that when a person died, his soul should be inherited by somebody living. The inheritor of the soul was chosen by a family council during the funeral, and he also inherited some of the dead person's rights. If it was a man's soul, he might inherit the man's wives, and become responsible for his children; and if the man had daughters, the inheritor might claim a share of the price which was paid for them by their husbands when they married. Unless the soul agreed to be transferred to someone else, it would accompany him for the rest of his life, existing not inside him, but just behind his back; and when he died, he would pass it on, together with his own soul, to another inheritor. After a couple of generations, the souls were usually forgotten, and then they were thought to join the vague company of the ancient dead. But a large proportion of Tonga men and women went about with disembodied souls for ever close behind them, real though invis-

ible presences with wishes that had to be fulfilled. It was said to be rude to walk close behind a Tonga, in case one came between him and his attendant soul.

On the whole the Tonga did not try to plan their own behavior to please the souls, because they took the common-sense view that nobody could understand a soul or foresee what it would want. But if anything went wrong, if there was sickness or fire, or a mysterious death, or crops were trampled by hippos or huts knocked down by elephants, or even if a minor mishap occurred, their first thought was that somebody's soul was angry, and they called on a diviner to inquire what had annoyed it. Most commonly, the diviner found that a soul had caused the trouble because it had not been given the offerings of food and beer which were its rights, or that it had not been given them in the proper manner. But other things annoyed the souls. Perhaps the inheritor had not received a payment due to him, or perhaps he himself had done some deed which the soul did not approve; or perhaps it wanted to be transferred to another inheritor.

This firm belief in souls, like other religions in other forms of society, tended to preserve and stabilize the Tonga community; and it had a specially conservative influence, because souls were usually found to want things done in the way they were done in their own lifetime, one or two generations back, and to resent any new ideas.

Behind this belief, the Tonga had a vague conception of a supreme god. But this god had little influence on their daily lives, and nobody knew whether the Tonga had always believed in him, or whether the idea had only spread, at secondhand, from Livingstone's sermons. They were quite content with the thought that nobody could understand what god was like, or what his wishes were; so they did not try to worship him or pray to him, and only invoked the idea of god when something happened which could not be explained in any other way. There were areas of Christianity near the four missions in the valley, and scattered individuals who had been converted. But most of the Christians were the younger men

and boys who had been to the mission schools, and the missionaries themselves would have admitted that their influence had not gone very deep.

Sometimes the Tonga diviners found other causes for misfortunes, apart from the displeasure of the souls. The forest was full of malevolent ghosts, wandering souls of unknown people who had not been inherited, and they sometimes molested the living. And there were also witches, living people who cast spells to cause disaster, and who practiced arts, such as making clay images, which were astonishingly like the methods of medieval European witches. But the souls were the most important of occult influences on the Tonga. The government census of Chisamu village showed 233 people; but hundreds of other souls lived in the village, and any Tonga would have known that their wishes and opinions were important. The souls of dead Tonga, no less than the living Tonga, had to be persuaded to accept the Kariba Dam.

The peaceful changeless life of Chisamu was shattered by d'Avray and Habanyama, who drove into it in a Land-Rover one day in the dry season after the Native Authority meeting. They had come all the way up the valley from Simamba's area at the lower end, spreading the news as they went. It had only been possible to drive up the valley for the past two or three years, and it was never possible for more than a few months in the winter. At its best, it was a rough journey. Most of the distance had no track, and it was a matter of finding a way across country in four-wheel drive; but crossings had been excavated in the steep banks of the tributary streams, and by carrying ropes and spades and winches and sufficient manpower one could be fairly certain of getting through.

The arrival of several trucks at Chisamu was an event in itself, though the village was more accessible than most. It was close to the end of the road which ran down to the valley from the Boma, past the Native Authority headquarters and the Catholic Mission; and right at the end of the road, on the riverbank about a mile above Chisamu, there was another mission, which was run by the American Pilgrim Holiness Church. The people of Chisamu

were used to seeing the American missionary going up the road in his jeep; but to see strange trucks approaching the village itself, and from the opposite direction, was enough to put the whole place in a turmoil.

Headman Chisamu received the visitors, and stools were placed for them, and d'Avray asked him to collect as many of the people as he could. When the villagers had assembled, and sat down on the ground to listen, d'Avray and Habanyama began the explanation which by then was distressingly familiar to them.

They started by appealing to the men who had been out of the valley to work. Those who had been to towns had seen electric light, and they knew, or could be reminded, that the light came along wires from a power station, where coal was burned to make it. By a providential chance, a kind of link had grown up through the years between the Tonga and the power station at Bulawayo. Many of them, when they went to town, asked for jobs at the power station, because they knew other Tonga had worked there as sweepers or coal heavers, and some had actually seen the generators. Now d'Avray explained that the coal had to be dug up out of the ground, and men had to be paid to dig it; and a time might come, he said, when there would not be any more coal left. But the river could be made to run through machines to make the light, and to drive other machines. The river could be a slave which never needed wages.

While d'Avray was speaking, or listening to Habanyama, he watched the attentive, naïvely expressive faces, and felt half ashamed of the childish phrases he was using to describe a thing of such supreme importance; but he could not avoid them because there was no other way to put such abstruse ideas into the Tonga language, or to reach the minds of the men and women sitting round him.

Speaking of the river brought him to the all-important point: the great wall which would be built across the gorge far down the river, to stop the river running in its course and make it run through the machines; and the lake which would rise behind the wall—rise

over Chisamu, and over the trees and over the little hills, so that the place where the people were sitting would be far under the water.

This, he told them, would happen in three years' time, and the water would never go down again. So the people would have to move before then, and the government would help them and take care of them. He did not know yet exactly what help he could promise, but he could say that the government would find new land, and take the people to it with all their animals and property.

The meeting at Chisamu ended inconclusively. The news was so overwhelming that the people could not take it in at once, and d'Avray had to leave them to think it over, and promise to come back and answer any questions they had thought of. When he left them, he felt dissatisfied with his own explanation. Try as he might he could not really make the people visualize the dam or the lake. He himself still found it difficult, sitting there in the hot brilliant sunshine, to imagine the whole of the verdant valley, everything in sight, drowned in cold, dim, slimy depths of water, the surface far up overhead, fishes swimming where the birds were flying, and waves breaking on the hills of the escarpment. Neither he nor Habanyama had any idea how one set about building a dam 420 feet high. They both believed it could be done, because they had both lived in civilization, and people in civilization are accustomed to believing in technical possibilities which they do not understand. But the minds of the people of Chisamu had never been trained in that way. They had no past experience to give them the same unquestioning faith that engineers can really do the things that they say they can do.

When d'Avray and Habanyama left the village, they left it inevitably full of unspoken fears. They were not the fears for the fate of the community which the Native Authority had expressed; the District Commissioner had said the government would take care of the people, and the people more or less accepted the assurance. They were more personal, private fears. Everyone felt he might lose his own possessions or his own authority. The head-

man could not be certain whether he would still be headman, or whether the village, in some foreign land, would be split in pieces or merged with other villages; he foresaw that if he helped the government in the move and something went wrong, the people might turn against him. Men who had sweated to clear a patch of forest, and so been able to claim it for their own, saw all their labor wasted. Others who had inherited a winter garden by the river and hoed it and planted it every year since they were children could hardly bear to think of leaving it. Men who had built up a herd of goats by breeding and careful bargaining imagined them straying and dying on unfamiliar pastures. The Tonga had few possessions, but they valued them as highly as rich men value fortunes; a score of goats, an acre of land, some stools and cooking pots and blankets and a hoe, could represent the fulfillment of a life's ambitions.

There were even more personal fears which had nothing to do with property. Craftsmen imagined their customers dispersed and their reputations forgotten: the carvers of stools and wooden mortars who took pride in their work, and the blacksmiths who made spearheads and hoe blades and axes, the makers of drums and builders of dugout canoes. And affairs of love were overridden by the fears. A man who wanted to marry a girl would wonder whether he should build her a hut, as convention demanded, or whether she would come to him if he waited till the village was moved. A girl with a lover from beyond the river would wonder whether she should marry him and go with him to new lands on the other side, and never see her family again.

Of everyone in the village, those who had most to lose were the diviners and the Sikatongo. The diviners feared vengeance from the souls, who could only be expected to oppose such a violent change. And the priest could not be certain whether he could take his powers over the crops and rain to another district; they might fail, and he might be discredited. These men were not charlatans; they believed as firmly in their own ceremonies as the priests of other religions believe in theirs. Now, if the Sikatongo's shrine

was abandoned and left to rot below the water, it could only lead, according to his belief, to disastrous failures of crops for the village people. There had been many cases in the past when Sikatongos had moved to another district, and the souls of previous Sikotongos had stricken them with sickness and made them come back again.

But nobody can go on fearing a disaster for long if it does not happen. People in the civilized world do not live in daily fear of the hydrogen bomb, but take refuge in a hope that it will never happen; and after the first shock was over, the people of Chisamu began to do the same about the flood. For a long time after d'Avray's and Habanyama's visit, nothing happened at all, or at least nothing which the Chisamu people saw. Life settled down again to its old routine of birth and death and planting and reaping and making love. Some people, especially the older men with reputations for wisdom, began to feel a little foolish at the alarm they had shown at first, and to point out that when one came to think of it, the whole idea of stopping the river was absurd. Most of them admitted that the Europeans would probably try, but the Europeans did not know the river as the Tonga knew it; and the old men argued that if anyone thought he could stop the river by building a wall across it, it only showed he had no idea how strong the river was. Let them try, the people of Chisamu began to say; the river will push the wall over, or run round the ends of it, and the flood will never come.

8

THE DISTRICT OFFICER

FOR NEARLY two years, there was nothing to make the people of Chisamu change their minds. Then, in February, 1957, they saw Land-Rovers on the plain between the village and the river, and messengers from the Boma began to put up tents on the riverbank. Among the messengers, they saw a young European, and rumor went round that he was a District Officer who was going to live in the camp. They had always known their District Commissioners as D.C., and they soon learned that a young junior official was called D.O. There was no need for them to try to get their tongues round his name, which was Alex Smith.

During those two years, men had been recruited in thousands to work at Kariba, and the governments of Northern and Southern Rhodesia had begun to deploy their own modest forces to move the Tonga out of the valley. Although the people of Chisamu had not seen anything happening, a great deal of work had been done which they did not see. After d'Avray had broken the news in the valley, he had gone home on leave. The normal tour of duty in

the administration was two and a half years, followed by six months' leave, and few officers had the health and strength for two consecutive tours in the climate of the valley. D'Avray's health had been badly impaired by a single tour, and so a new District Commissioner had been appointed. His name was John Sugg. Four District Officers had been sent to help him with the problems of the move. Alex Smith was one of them, and the names of the others were Alan Prior, John Mousley, and John Middleton. On these five men, and another District Officer, Alan Macgregor, who joined them later, the whole of the executive responsibility for moving thirty-four thousand Tonga was to fall.

Alex Smith was just over thirty when he pitched his camp below Chisamu village, a very large tall, friendly man with a pleasantly craggy Scottish face and a slow, deliberate, and sometimes hesitant Scottish manner of speaking. He was the son of a family of fishermen from the village of Findochty on the coast of the Moray Firth, and in his early youth it had been taken for granted that he would be a fisherman himself. What had transported him to such a totally different kind of life was simply his own brains and the breaking of family traditions which was caused by the war. A short period in the Air Force had unsettled him, and he had found his vocation by the pure chance of seeing an advertisement for recruits for the Overseas Civil Service. He liked the idea of a life of adventure which would also tax whatever intelligence he possessed; so he applied for an interview, and passed it, to his own astonishment, and was given a year at Cambridge to study law and colonial history and administration. Then he was sent to Rhodesia, and finished his training by working as an assistant in several districts. As it happened, the first district he was sent to was Gwembe. He spent three months there in 1953. Everyone in the service had to speak at least one African language, and as Alex had started in Gwembe he chose to learn Tonga for his final examinations. So by the time he was thirty, instead of being a fisherman in the North Sea, he was a qualified magistrate in the Zambesi Valley and was capable, as every Dis-

trict Officer had to be, of administering the law without any day-to-day advice from anyone. Just before he left home, he married a very pretty girl from Aberdeen, and when he was posted back to the Gwembe district he took her with him.

Before he went down to the valley, Alex stayed for a few days at the Boma, and met his new senior officer John Sugg, the District Commissioner. Sugg was a man in his forties who had spent the whole of his working life in the Northern Rhodesian Civil Service, and most of it out in the wilds with more or less primitive Africans. Physically, he was what foreigners are said to imagine a typical Englishman to be, very tall and thin and wiry; but in character he had qualities of sympathy and wisdom and open-mindedness which are essential for a District Commissioner and perhaps are commoner among Englishmen than foreigners like to suppose. He was a tireless walker. In that country where walking is still the most usual means of getting from one place to another, he could walk most Africans off their feet; and even in districts where there were tracks and he could have driven a Land-Rover, he still preferred to walk—partly because it was traditional for District Commissioners to walk, and partly because he believed a District Commissioner could meet simple people on better, more level terms, as man to man, if he arrived in their villages on his feet, as they did, instead of using a mechanical vehicle which was foreign to the life of the forest and set him apart from it.

In this belief, John Sugg had already walked the length and breadth of the valley, in 1956, and in every village he had explained the same things over and over again, and answered the questions the people had thought of since d'Avray and Habanyama had been to see them. But to keep the Tonga informed of what was being done was far more than one man could accomplish; and so, when his District Officers were appointed, he sent them down to live in the valley itself, one man in each of the four chiefdoms which had to be moved. John Mousley was the first to be appointed, and he went to Sinazongwe. John Middleton went to Chief Mwemba's rugged hills at the head of the valley, Alan Prior to

Simamba's area downstream toward Kariba, and Alex Smith was sent to Chipepo in the middle reaches. Mousley took over a wooden hut which had been built in Sinazongwe some years before, but all the others had to establish camps, and each of them showed some individuality. Prior acquired some of the round portable aluminum huts called Altents, and furnished his own, so the others said, with nothing but a camp bed, a radio to hear the cricket scores, and his own magnificent hi-fi record player and collection of classical music.

All these four men were young, and had only joined the service since the war, but the traditions of the service were so strong and so obviously worthy that all its recruits were soon imbued with its ideals. These four, however, were to find very different degrees of difficulty in following their ideals, and Alex Smith at Chipepo, as things turned out, found himself with the most difficult assignment of them all.

Alex was the third to be appointed, and by the time he arrived, Sugg was able to give him a very thorough briefing, not only on the habits and the temperament of the Tonga, but also on the government's policy and the progress which had been made so far in preparation for the move; and in that briefing, had it been humanly possible to foresee it, there was already the one hard fact which was to lead Alex and the people he was to rule to an inevitable disaster.

Under the Federation's constitution, power supplies were a responsibility of the Federal Government, but native affairs remained a responsibility of the Territorial governments. Thus the Kariba Dam was a Federal project, but the work of moving the Tonga out of the way of it fell on the governments of Northern and Southern Rhodesia. Among the $224,000,000 which the Federal Government borrowed to pay for it, there were loans of $50,400,000 from Britain; and the British Government made a condition of these loans that the interests of people displaced by the lake should be safeguarded. This seemed to suggest that the Federal Government needed moral prompting from the mother country. But it would have been unjust to say that people in Salisbury, the capital of Southern

Rhodesia, where most of the work on the dam was planned, did not care what happened to the Tonga; on the contrary, everyone concerned with the dam had the Tonga on his conscience. However, there were very few people in the city who knew very much about them, and among the general public, who had never heard of them before the dam brought them into the limelight, strange stories began to circulate. It was said, as it has probably been said of other simple tribes in other countries, that the Tonga had never discovered that sexual intercourse is what produces babies; and it was said that the only work they could do when they came to town was to empty earth closets. It was very widely believed, and reported in the press, that the Tonga worshiped a river god in the form of a huge serpent which lived in the Zambesi, and that they had witch doctors who comically predicted that the serpent would be angry with the white man's wall and knock it down. In short, the Tonga became a laughingstock. But these stories told by city people about the Tonga were as far from the truth as any told by the Tonga about the city people, and sympathy for the Tonga, however sincere, could hardly cross such gulfs of misunderstanding.

In accordance with the British condition, the Federal Government agreed to finance the moving of the tribe. The cost of it was accepted as part of the cost of the dam, and in the end it would be recovered by a marginal increase in the price of electricity. But that was as far as the agreement went. The Federal Government did not intend Kariba funds to be used to improve the Tonga's lot. They would pay to move the tribe out of the way, and to compensate it for its material losses, so that it was no worse off than it had been before: no worse off, but no better. That was all that could have been expected. The people who planned and financed the dam could not have made any allowance for the human susceptibilities or religious faiths or inarticulate hopes which would be drowned when their lake began to rise. They could not even have understood them; for between the two worlds, the world of the Sikatongos and the world of the engineers and economists, the only links were still the District Commissioners and

District Officers, a handful of civilized men who seldom emerged from the forests of the valley.

The problems which the Federal project had thrust on the Territorial governments were different on the two sides of the river. In Southern Rhodesia, Africans could be compelled to move by law, but in Northern Rhodesia they could not. Although the countries were united in Federation, there were many differences of law between them, all stemming from the facts that Southern Rhodesia had far more European settlers and had been independent of the British Colonial Office since 1923. In the South, tribes had been moved before, in the process of dividing the land between African and European farmers, and it was only necessary for the governor to make a proclamation giving them twelve months' warning. But in the North, only 6 per cent of the land was either Crown property or was worked by Europeans. All the rest of the country was either Native Reserve land, on which no European had any right at all, or Native Trust land, on which European activities were allowed only if they were for the benefit of the native population. The whole of the Gwembe Valley, on the Northern Rhodesian side, was either Native Reserve or Native Trust, and the government had no power to move the Tonga out of it. It could only persuade them, in theory, to go of their own free will—though to talk of free will after the Federal Government had decided to flood the land was rather a mockery.

This was the first important point in the briefing which Alex was given by the District Commissioner. There was no legal way to compel the people to move. Alex's job was to persuade them to move, before the flood began.

The next point was the matter of compensation. Sugg and Habanyama and the chiefs had already told the people what the government was prepared to do for them, but they would have to be told again. First of all, the government had decided that to get the people out on foot, with all their property, was quite impossible; so it intended to build a track to each of the 193 villages, and to bring out everybody and everything by truck. This was not

quite such a big undertaking as it sounded. It was easy to make a track through the forest which would last for one dry season. The vegetation was sparse at that time of year, and the soil was shallow and sandy; so it was only necessary to chop down the brushwood and saplings, avoiding the larger trees, and scrape the surface level.

Some simple calculations had been made to decide how much the government should pay the Tonga out of the Federal funds, to make up for their material losses. The cost of building an average Tonga hut had been found by counting the number of poles and bundles of thatching grass each hut required, and the man-hours needed to cut and carry the poles and grass and build the hut with them. The answer was that it would cost $28.00 using employed labor at the usual rates. The government did not intend to employ men to build new huts, because nobody but the Tonga could have done it in exactly the Tonga style; but all owners of huts would get $28.00 per hut, and be left to build new ones themselves.

Compensation for the people's gardens had been worked out on the basis of the cost of clearing forest land, and it came to $14.00 a head. In addition to that, an allowance had to be made for the crops which the people would have grown in the time while they were building new huts and breaking in new land. These jobs were thought to be likely to take six months, and six months' food for a Tonga was reckoned as 250 pounds of meal, which would cost $8.75 on the open market.

On this system of assessment, the owners of huts and gardens were to receive much more than anybody else, but it averaged out at just under $28.00 per head of the population. It was not much, by European standards, to comfort a man or woman for the loss of a house and garden, but it had all been decided by a committee on which Habanyama represented the Tonga, and it had been approved by the Native Authority. At that time, African laborers at Kariba were receiving $0.05 an hour, so that if African rates of pay were regarded as fair, it could not be said that the Tonga were to be badly compensated. Anyhow, whenever Sugg had told

any Tonga of these proposals, they had seemed quite pleased with them. Alex would now have to explain the terms all over again, and make certain, so far as he could, that everyone understood them.

The final point in Alex's briefing was on a problem even more important than questions of money, and far more difficult to solve: Where were the people to go? In the vast, uninhabited spaces of Northern Rhodesia it might have been thought to be easy to find a place for a little homeless tribe, but it was not. Whenever d'Avray and Sugg had discussed this problem with the Tonga, they had found them unable to contemplate leaving the valley altogether. To have done so would have changed their whole mode of life, because the surrounding plateau was considerably cooler than the valley; but probably their reluctance had a deeper and less reasonable cause. In the old days, the valley had been a refuge from marauding tribes, and Tonga had often saved themselves by hiding among the steep hills of the escarpment; and in latter days it had been a refuge from the unwelcome changes brought by the Europeans. The Tonga still thought of it as a refuge, and were afraid to venture out with their wives and children and animals to the perilous world beyond. Nobody in the government wanted to make the move more difficult or upsetting than it had to be, and so the search for new lands had been concentrated on distant, unexplored, and uninhabited corners of the valley which would always remain above the flood line.

An aerial survey had been made of the whole of the valley. The areas of different kinds of vegetation could be seen on the photographs, and from the vegetation the quality of the soil could be deduced. Forests of mopane trees denoted a sour kind of clay which could not be made fertile except by the use of manure; and as nobody had ever persuaded the Tonga to try manure, it was hopeless for them to cultivate it. Thorn thickets, on the other hand, were signs of fertility. But aerial observations were not reliable in themselves. They had to be confirmed by agricultural specialists, who tramped through the unknown forests to explore every possible

place and analyze its soil, and by water engineers, who sunk boreholes to see whether reliable sources of water could be provided.

Where habitable areas were found, big game and tsetse fly were sometimes further problems. Elephants in particular had to be shot, until the survivors of each herd retreated into land which was not wanted for human settlement. The tsetse fly which carries the fatal disease of trypanosomiasis in cattle, and sleeping sickness in humans, infested some parts of the valley but not others. Luckily, there was no sleeping sickness in the valley, but the distribution of the fly affected the whole economy of the Tonga. Sinazongwe had areas of it, and in consequence Sinazongwe's 11,000 people only had 300 head of cattle among them; but Chipepo was comparatively free, and Chipepo's people owned 3,800 head. When the fly was found in the new lands, drastic and expensive precautions had to be taken against it. The low scrub which harbored it was cut away, and Land-Rovers and other cross-country vehicles, fitted with sprays which could throw a cloud of insecticide two hundred yards, were driven through the forest. Three years of this treatment, it was hoped, would reduce the numbers of flies so far that they would not breed.

All this work was still going on when Alex arrived, but it had gone far enough to show what was likely to happen. In the foothills behind Sinazongwe's area there was sufficient fertile land for his own 11,000 people. Up in Mwemba's area, the only land was in a few pockets of decent soil in valleys among the rocky hills; but Sinazongwe had agreed to let Mwemba's people overflow into his territory, and a few of Mwemba's people had gallantly said they would try their luck on the top of the escarpment. Down in Simamba, where only 3,000 people had to move, the whole problem was on a smaller scale and there was no serious shortage of land. Thus most of Sinazongwe's and Simamba's people would not have to move more than fifteen or twenty miles, and most of Mwemba's not more than thirty.

But Chipepo's people, to whom Alex was going, were in a much more awkward situation. Nine thousand of them were living in

sixty villages below the flood line. The foothills behind their country were already populated by the people of another chief, Munyumbwe, and there was simply not enough land there to support so many extra. On a rough reckoning, 3,000 of Chipepo's people might be able to move back a short distance into the foothills, but for the other 6,000 there was only one fertile part of the valley which was not inhabited; and that was an area called Lusitu, which was a hundred miles away, down on the bank of the river below the Kariba Gorge. Lusitu was good land, and there was plenty of it. So it was evident that Chipepo's people, whether they liked it or not, would have to be divided, and that 6,000 of them would have to move much farther than anybody else.

After his interviews with Sugg, Alex set off from the Boma with this discouraging information, and drove with his messengers and cook down the long rough winding road to the bottom of the valley. And his orders were that, without any powers of compulsion, he had to persuade the 9,000 Tonga to move—6,000 of them to a distant land which they had never heard of.

9

THE AMBUSH

ALEX SMITH chose the place for his camp, on the riverbank below Chisamu village, because it was convenient, between the end of the road a mile upstream and Chief Chipepo's own village, which was another two miles below; and also because it was beautiful, being shaded by magnificent trees along the water's edge, and because it gave at least an illusion of being cooler than the forest. In fact, the river water was too warm at that time of year to be refreshing, and nobody could bathe in it because of the crocodiles; but it looked cool, and its liquid noises sounded cool, especially at night. When the tents had been pitched, Alex had a fence of thorn brush built round them all, to discourage the hippos on their nightly expeditions from the river; and then, when everything was ready, he began with high hopes on the task of visiting all his sixty villages.

By using a Land-Rover on the road, and walking the rest of the way, he could reach almost any of the villages in a day, so that he seldom had to make a camp away from his base, and had no need of the train of carriers who usually followed officials on

their tours. He was glad to do without them, and often traveled with only one other man, his senior messenger, who was a Tonga called Mungala. In accordance with tradition, neither of them ever carried a gun.

A few years before, at home in Findochty, Alex might have been rather perturbed at the thought of long marches unarmed through big-game country; but he had grown used to it and learned, as everybody does, that most animals will leave a man alone if he leaves them alone. It was years since any of the lions in the valley had turned man-eater. The elephants, rhinoceroses, and buffaloes were dangerous and unpredictable, and travelers in the valley kept their eyes open for any signs of them. When the Tonga walked from village to village, they often carried spears, but that was more in the hope of a lucky shot at something they could eat than in self-defense. From time to time, somebody was killed. Snakes were the worst of the dangers. Cobras, puff adders, and black mambas were very common, and District Officers were supposed to carry snake-bite outfits; but most of them grew casual, and forgot. While Alex was in Chipepo, a Tonga woman was carrying her baby on her back along a forest path when a snake reared up and bit the baby, which died immediately. But that sort of tragedy was rare enough to be remarkable, and it was a fact that when one was used to the forest, walking through it was safer than walking through the traffic of a city. Alex got into the habit of tramping along, preoccupied with the Tonga's problems, and taking no notice of the forest which pressed in on each side of the path, or of the animals hidden in it. That absent-mindedness certainly added to the dangers of the forest, just as it would have added to the dangers of a busy city street; but Mungala was always close behind him, and he kept a lookout for them both.

The first person he went to see was Chief Chipepo. As a member of the Native Authority, Chipepo had already accepted the necessity to move, and he knew that most of his people would have to go to Lusitu; and Alex had been told he could rely on him to help to make the best of a bad job.

When the two men met, perhaps neither would have recognized in the other any likeness to himself, but nobody who saw them together could have missed seeing similarities beneath the white skin and the black, the Scottish and the Negroid features, the trained legal mind and the illiterate native intelligence. They were about the same age, and each of them was near the beginning of his career. Each of them regarded his own career not merely as a job, but as a lifetime's vocation, and was anxious and determined to make a good start with it. Each of them was putting up a show of confidence, but each was probably feeling in his innermost heart a little unsure and a little different. Each of them liked a joke—not always the same jokes, but the fundamental kind of humor which men of any race in the world can laugh about. Between two men of such totally different upbringing, it would be absurd to try to trace any likeness of character; but the likeness of their ages and aspirations, and the problems they were to share in the next two years, brought Alex and Chipepo as close in mutual understanding as a Scotsman and a simple Tonga could be.

On his long walks, Alex stopped and spoke to everyone he met, not only to headmen and elders at formal meetings under village trees, but to women working in gardens, and children at play, and other travelers on the forest paths. In the course of months, during his first dry season, he came to know hundreds of Tonga by sight and by name; and before very long, all of Chipepo's people knew him. Like all his predecessors, he found them charming. It was not that they had no faults—they had plenty; but even their faults were so carefree, and so unrelated to civilized morality, that Alex often found his powers of criticism were disarmed.

But in spite of the efforts of d'Avray and Habanyama and Sugg, and of Chief Chipepo, the people still only half believed in the coming flood. Whenever Alex spoke in villages, the people listened with interest, and asked him questions, and seemed to agree with what he said. When he told them that most of them would have to go to Lusitu, they showed very little concern. But when he went back for a second time to a village, the questions were always the

same, and the whole conversation went over the ground which he thought he had covered before. And as he came to understand the working of their minds, he realized that most of their agreement was mere politeness, and that they were hiding their disbelief because they were afraid to contradict him, or because they did not want to hurt his feelings. It was only by putting together chance remarks which were made by different people that he could guess what everyone was thinking. But by doing that, he came very near the truth. The people did not want to believe in the flood, so they persuaded themselves that it was not so serious as it sounded. The river had always flooded, and in years of heavy flood they had always retreated into the hills and come back when the flood subsided. They told themselves they could easily do it again. As for Lusitu, the thought of going so far distressed them so much that they refused to think of it at all, and that was the only reason why they seemed unconcerned. The people of every village were hoping that whoever else had to go to Lusitu, their own village, if the worst came to the worst, would only have to move to the neighboring hills.

This refusal to face the problem at all was part of the Tonga's general easygoing lassitude. Everyone who had worked with them in the past had noticed how little physical energy they possessed. Now, for almost the first time, they were being asked to make a mental effort, and it seemed to be beyond them. Alex began to suspect that the climate was not the only reason for their laziness. It seemed to him that every single one of them was ill.

In this, he was not far wrong. The medical treatment the Tonga had received in the past from Europeans was negligible, and they were still living in the state of chronic sickness which was general in Africa before Europeans came. But the impending move was bringing them one benefit. The government saw a risk that an epidemic of smallpox might follow the move, and so doctors were being sent through the valley, with portable aluminum dispensaries, to examine and treat and vaccinate every human being in it.

Those doctors were already at work in some parts of the valley,

and they had been shocked at what they found. The Tonga had a naturally good physique, but lack of treatment, and the climate, and their own insanitary habits, had made their health appalling. Almost all of them, it was found, had malaria and enteritis. The latter disease was spread by their custom of relieving themselves by the side of the streams from which they drank. Like most other people, they disliked being watched while they did it, and in winter, when the grass had died down, there was nowhere but the beds of the streams where they could hide. Most of them also had bilharziasis—an internal parasite carried by water snails—leprosy, hookworm, yaws, or goiter, or a combination of those diseases. Eye diseases and blindness were common. Nobody ever collected exact statistics of infant mortality, but it was certainly dreadfully high. One of the doctors who worked among them confirmed Alex's own impression when he said that a Tonga who actually had a day's good health would wonder what was wrong; and he was speaking only half in jest when he said it. The Tonga, in fact, were living a vicious circle. Malaria and malnutrition sapped their energy, and with less energy they grew less food, went hungry, and became even more susceptible to diseases. The most surprising thing was that they remained so cheerful, and the only explanation of their cheerfulness was that such terrible conditions seemed to them the normal lot of man.

During 1957 and 1958, a scientific attack was begun on the Tonga's diseases. At first, of course, the people were suspicious of the doctors and preferred their own herbalists; but in such a virgin field, apparently miraculous cures could sometimes be achieved. One of the doctors, at the very first village where he pitched his dispensary, found thirty children on the verge of death from acute malnutrition. In spite of their mothers' outcry, he packed them all into a truck and sent them to a hospital on the plateau. Two of them died, but when the rest came back, almost unrecognizably fat and healthy, the parents' gratitude was embarrassing and pathetic, and the doctor found his reputation went before him wherever he traveled. Many of the Tonga's diseases could be cured, or at least alleviated, and before the move was ended, the Tonga were coming

great distances to the dispensaries when they were ill; but to teach them habits which would not reinfect them was a much more difficult job.

Mere talking seemed to be getting Alex nowhere; yet he had to persuade the people to take a practical interest in their own salvation. To try to make them believe that something was really happening, he borrowed some color slides of the work which was in progress at Kariba, and showed them in the villages; and then he began to organize tours to Kariba itself, taking fifty or sixty men at a time to see what was going on. These outings were popular, if only for the excitement of a free motor ride of nearly three hundred miles; but it was always doubtful whether much of what the people saw sank in. Already two major roads had been driven through the forest to the gorge, and thousands of men were sweating and laboring there. Alex stood with his parties of puzzled visitors at a vantage point on the hills, from which they could see the silos of cement, the mountains of sand, the bridges and cableways and the hectic activity of men and machinery. But there was not very much of the wall itself to be seen, and Alex's explanations in the Tonga language of what the hordes of workers were doing grew more and more involved.

At about the same time, headmen from the other side of the river were also being taken on trips to Kariba, and after one expedition two of them were asked what had impressed them most. One said he would never forget the sight of a squad of soldiers they had passed on the road, because all of them were marching in step; and the other had been interested by a mechanical excavator. He wondered, as more sophisticated people have sometimes wondered, how it knew when to clench its teeth and bite the earth, and when to open them and spew out the earth again. Nobody had thought of telling him there was a man inside it, and so he naturally supposed that it had a mind of its own. The Tonga often credited Europeans with even more mechanical ingenuity than they really possessed, but there was always a certain logic in their ideas. From a Tonga point of view, it was fantastic to make a machine which

could bite the earth; and it was no more fantastic to make it so that it would know how to do its work without being told.

Sometimes, when he came back exhausted from these long excursions, Alex felt he had made a little progress, and that the men he had taken with him would go back to the villages and tell everyone that the wall had really been started. But sometimes he found himself suffering from the very same difficulty that had troubled Habanyama and d'Avray; he also found it impossible, living down there in the forest, to imagine the vastness of the impending flood, so that he not only had to persuade the Tonga, but to persuade himself, that what was happening so far away at Kariba could possibly make the water rise in Chipepo.

But the cautious optimism he sometimes let himself feel was suddenly shattered by something quite unexpected: something which seemed astonishing to him and to everyone who knew the kindly Tonga. He arranged a meeting in one of the villages—it was called Siamuzwe—and on his way to it, with several messengers, he met some of the village men. They were abusive and angry, and said they were not coming to his meeting. He asked them why, but none of them would tell him. He hesitated a moment, wondering what to do, and then walked on toward the village; and then, from the forest beside the path, a volley of stones was thrown at the messengers walking behind him.

10

THE POLITICIANS

ALEX HELD the meeting. He sat down in the village, prepared to wait all day, and he sent his messengers to tell or remind all the villagers they could find that it was against the law to refuse to come to talk to the District Officer or the Chief; and by and by the news spread round and everyone assembled sullenly.

While he waited for them, alone in the village, Alex tried to think of any possible reason for this sudden alarming outburst; and the only explanation he could imagine was that he had unwittingly offended religious feelings, that something he had done had annoyed the souls and their diviners, or that ghosts had molested the village and the blame had been put upon him. When the people had gathered round him, he reproached them soundly for their rudeness, until he could see that they were feeling ashamed, and then he began to try to talk them into their usual good humor. And in the end they began to smile again, and then they confessed what had happened. It was nothing supernatural. Two men had been in the village, and said they were sent by the African National Congress to collect subscriptions; and the two men said that if the Tonga

stayed where they were and refused to do what the District Officer told them, the government would not be able to move them from their land and the flood would never come.

Alex would have been much less surprised to hear a story of ghosts, because there had been no indication in the past two years that African politicians were taking any interest in the Tonga or the flood. And on the whole, a ghost story would have been more welcome, because the Tonga were used to ghosts, but they were not at all used to political propaganda.

At that time, Congress was much the largest African political party in Northern Rhodesia. Its leader was Harry Nkumbula, an ex-schoolteacher and a passionate nationalist, and its ultimate aim was an African government. It did not advocate violence and its official policy was to cooperate with the existing government and the Native Authorities except when they did something detrimental to African interests. Nobody in the government could therefore object to its existence. Its aims were laudable and worthy. But to Europeans, Congress had often seemed to be hopelessly muddle-headed. It was an unwieldy organization, perpetually hampered by the ignorance of its junior officials, and its opposition to the government had sometimes been so illogical that it was impossible to counter. In recent years, for example, the government had offered a free service to immunize the cattle of rural tribes against some of the diseases which had decimated them in the past. This was a purely altruistic attempt to help the Africans, but some of the primitive owners of cattle had found it difficult to understand, and had been afraid that the injection might do harm instead of good. The Congress leaders certainly knew what immunization meant, but Congress had organized opposition to the treatment and encouraged people to think that the government was acting with some sinister secret motive.

The same thing had happened when the government tried to make the Tonga grow cassava. Cassava would certainly have been a benefit to the tribe, once the prejudice against it had been overcome, and the Native Authority had been so convinced of its merits that

it made a local order instructing the people to plant it. But Congress had encouraged the people's reluctance to make the experiment, and in the end the whole scheme had had to be abandoned. These acts of Congress did nothing but harm to the Africans, and seemed to have no purpose except to annoy or discredit the government. They certainly succeeded in irritating government officials who were doing their best to be helpful.

They also greatly annoyed the Africans themselves who served on the Native Authorities; and several Authorities had found Congress such a nuisance that they banned its activities in their areas. After the cassava trouble, the Tonga Authority had done so. Since Congress regarded itself as the representative of all Africans against the Europeans, its reply to these bans was simply that the Native Authorities were mere stooges of the government, under the thumbs of the District Commissioners. But that was not true of the Tonga Authority. Certainly its members owed their positions to the existing system of government, and so had a personal stake in the country's stability. But most of the chiefs and all of the councilors were men with wills of their own, and they were quite capable of saying no to the District Commissioner.

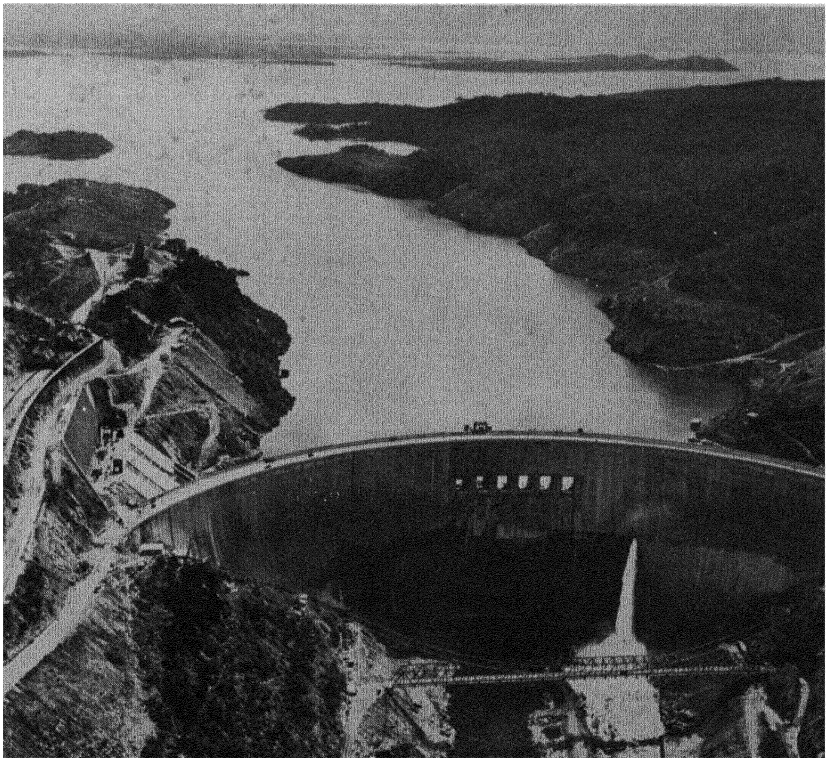
Back in 1955, soon after the decision was made to build the dam at Kariba, Harry Nkumbula had sent a petition to the Queen about the people of the Gwembe Valley. Considering it was written in the earliest days of the scheme, it was a sensible document, and it was not muddle-headed at all. It asked the Queen to appoint a commission, mostly of Africans from West Africa, to inquire whether it was really in the interests of the country to obtain the benefits of Kariba at the expense of suffering for the Tonga, and whether atomic energy could not be used instead; and whether the compensation and the new lands for the Tonga were adequate, and whether the new lands were really above the flood line. The petition reached the Queen, but the government had already made up its mind, after searching its conscience, about all the points in it; and so a brief reply was sent to Nkumbula, saying that the Queen was advised that the petitioner was not representative of the people concerned and

did not express any genuine grievances, and that the petition for a commission was not granted. Since then, so far as Alex knew, Congress had never done anything more about the Tonga.

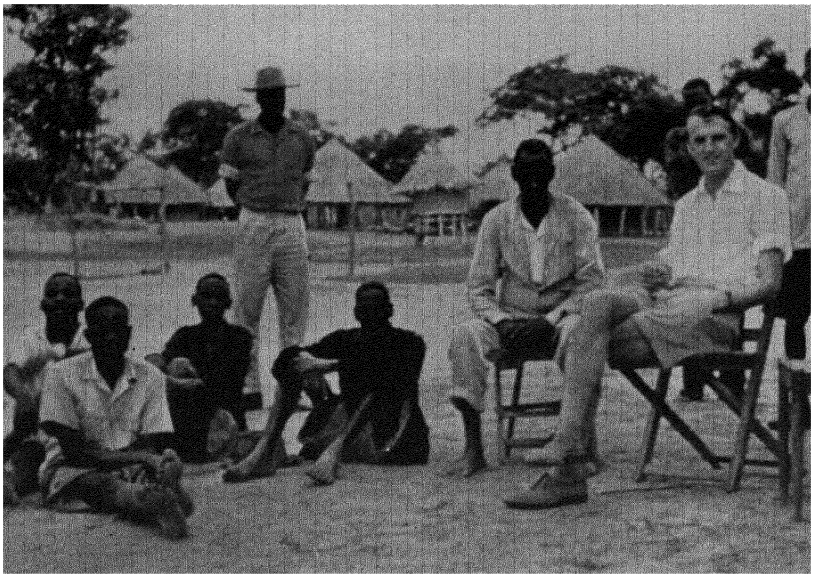
The first feeling Alex had when he heard of the two men who said they were Congress agents was the same as the feelings of the men who had tried to put through the immunization and cassava schemes: it was anger. He was angry not only because they had opposed him, but at the thought that anyone could be so irresponsible as to tell the gullible villagers that anything they could do would stop the flood. But anger was no use; what was needed was more patience. The first thing he had to do was to persuade the villagers once more to believe what he told them, and the second was to prevent any more harm by catching the culprits.

To persuade the villagers was easy. It was pathetically easy, they were so quickly swayed by anyone they thought had authority; that was why the crime of misleading them seemed so unpleasant. But while he talked them round again, he could see the disappointment in their faces and demeanor. He was destroying a genuine hope which had been sown in their minds by the lies of the visitors, and he hated to have to do it.

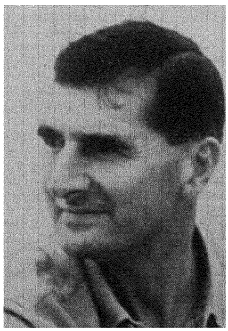
As soon as he was back in camp that night, he made plans to catch the two strangers; but that turned out to be much more difficult. They were not local men, and had no home in the district where he might have found them. In Chipepo itself, there were two thousand square miles of forest for them to hide in, and if he got close on their trail, there was nothing to stop them moving into another chief's area, or crossing the river into Southern Rhodesia. He sent out his messengers to ask in the villages, and try to find out where they had gone. They picked up the trail at once: it was only too obvious. Everywhere the two men had been, they had left the same signs of hostility to the government. In a village called Sitinkwe, the headman threatened to kill a messenger. In another, called Sianzimbwe, the headman was abusive and would not answer a summons to appear before Chief Chipepo. Alex arrested both these men. He sent Sitinkwe to prison at the Boma for his threats, and



One hundred miles away, at the foot of the valley, the dam was a menace the Tonga could not understand.



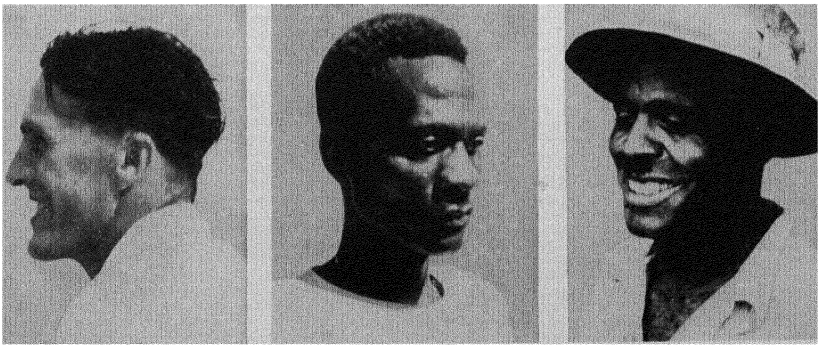
Alex Smith found that meetings to explain the dam called for inexhaustible patience.

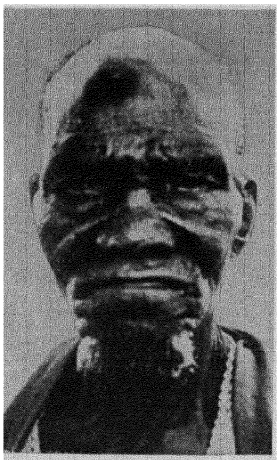


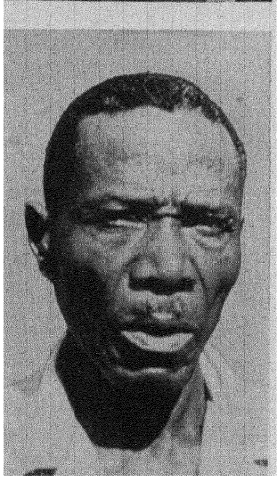
From left to right: John Sugg, District Commissioner. Alex Smith, District Officer. Chief Sinazongwe, ruler of 11,000 people and husband of seven wives. Chief Chipepo, cheerful and easygoing until his people turned against him.

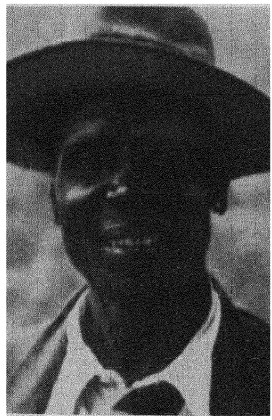
Chief Chipepo gives his own explanations of the impending flood.

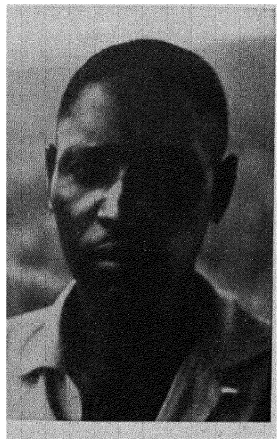












Left: Old Chief Mwemba, who was over ninety, and Chief Mwemba, aged seventy, who spoke English and had been a Methodist teacher.

Right: Headmen Sianzimbwe, whose village rioted, and Chisamu, whose village was the scene of battle.

Sianzimbwe was fined by the chief. But imprisoning and fining Tonga was no solution at all. And the two strange men had done their work so well that none of the Tonga who had heard them speak would tell Alex or his messengers where to find them.

The hunt dragged on and on for weeks with no success; and in the nights, in his camp by the river, dog-tired and hot from long days on the forest paths, Alex lay awake and restless, and wondered what he was really up against, and what the two men were really doing in the valley—or at least, what their motives were in doing it. All he had discovered was that they collected subscriptions of fifty cents each and handed out Congress membership cards in exchange, and told the subscribers that everything would be all right if they only refused to move. But which of these activities came first? Some of the Tonga had told him they thought the subscription was something they had to pay, like a tax. But most of them had been made to believe that Congress was doing something, or could do something, to stop the flood, and so they had gladly paid their money. Some people had been told that the dam would be a failure and some had been told that the whole idea was only a white man's plot to steal the Tonga's land. Yet it was quite incredible that Nkumbula or any other leaders of Congress believed they could stop the building of the dam, even if they wanted to; its foundations had been laid, and tens of millions of dollars had been spent on it. And they must know that when the dam was finished the flood would come, and the Tonga would have to go. And it was almost incredible, even after the illogical things that Congress had done in the past, that they would risk drowning the Tonga simply to spite the government.

Pondering over the mystery, Alex could find only one explanation which seemed to make any sense. Perhaps the men had come down to the valley simply to raise funds, and then discovered, after they got there, how unhappy the Tonga felt about the move. And perhaps they had found that if they made a few easy promises, they could persuade far more of the Tonga to part with fifty cents; and perhaps, with success, the promises had grown, until for the sake

of fifty cents, without any authority from their own headquarters, they were telling the Tonga anything they wanted to believe.

Nobody ever discovered the answer to this question, and it still seems likely that Alex was right, and that everything that happened afterward had a beginning in two men's cupidity. It was not only the most likely but the most charitable explanation. Anyhow, hundreds, possibly thousands, of fifty-cent "taxes" were collected from the Tonga, and nobody outside Congress ever knew what happened to the money. And in the course of a few weeks, the whole feeling of the forest was changed. Before, Alex could always be certain that anyone he saw coming along a path toward him would give him a friendly greeting, and that in any village where he stopped, the people would clap their hands, and the headman would send for two stools and everyone would be genuinely happy to see him. But now, hostility had begun to smolder, like the beginning of a forest fire, and he had to try to stamp it out by calmness and patience and reason wherever he found it, to stop it spreading and bursting into flame.

But he was confident he could do it, and when he went up to the Boma and reported to Sugg what had happened, Sugg was confident too. People who know they have right on their side are often reluctant to believe that truth will not prevail; and besides, it was unthinkable that a trained District Officer, with all the authority of the government behind him, would not be able to outwit a couple of men who appeared to be either rogues or else nearly as ignorant as the Tonga villagers themselves. But neither Alex nor Sugg had really weighed up all the circumstances which chance had combined against them. The story they had to tell the Tonga, about the wall which would stop the river, was still a story which the Tonga found incredible and desperately wanted not to believe. The Congress men's story was far more plausible and far more welcome; and, which was more important still, it fitted in with what the Sikatongos and the diviners of the souls had all been saying. The two Congress men might never have heard of the souls, but they had all the supernatural world of the Tonga on their side.

11

THE HEADMAN

IN CHISAMU village, just across the flood plain from Alex's camp, Headman Chisamu was much less confident, and could not make up his mind what to do. Ever since Habanyama and the District Commisioner had come to the village, nearly two years before, he had reluctantly believed that the government was determined to move his village, although many of his people vaguely suspected that the reason they had been given was only a made-up story.

When the District Officer had started to talk of moving all the way to Lusitu, everyone had been very much alarmed. Lusitu was a terribly foreign land. Nobody in the village had ever been there; but they knew that its nearest tribe was only distantly related to the Tonga, and used a different kind of rain shrine, so that Sikatongo might well discover that he could not control the weather, and if they went there their crops might always be failures. And there was something frightening in the very fact that the place was empty. If it was really fertile land, as the District Officer told them, then why did nobody live there? Perhaps it was haunted.

And there was another difficulty about going to Lusitu which the Europeans could not be expected to understand. The Sikatongos, faced with the difficult problem of moving the spirits of their shrines, had thought back to the time of the Matabele raids, when people had had to move to escape from massacre. In those days, it had been found possible to move a shrine by taking a branch of a holy tree at the old shrine and dragging it along the ground to form a spiritual trail to the new shrine. Up in Chief Sinazongwe's area, where the people were moving only a reasonable distance through the forest, this old practice had already been revived successfully. The branches had been tied to the backs of the trucks which were moving the villages, so that they touched the ground all the way. But it was too much to expect to lay an acceptable spiritual trail all the way to Lusitu, right out of the valley and along the high road through towns, and down into the valley again. And so they feared it would be impossible to establish new shrines in Lusitu, and the abandoned spirits would certainly be resentful.

However, in Chisamu village itself, the fear of having to go to Lusitu had passed, because the District Officer had come again and said that a place had been found for the village in the local hills. Headman Chisamu had been to see the place, and so had most of the men in the village; and it was not a bad place, although it was not so good as Chisamu because it was not on the river and had no winter gardens. Anyhow, it was not very far away, and so it was certainly better than Lusitu, and he had thought that the villagers ought to accept it.

But then the two men had come; and ever since then he had found himself in a dilemma. He had heard them going round and talking to his people, and they had come to him and made him buy a Congress card. It was rather expensive, and he could not read what was written on it, but it had a picture of a man and a word which somebody told him spelled Nkumbula. When they had gone, some of the people had been told that the move had already been stopped, and some had been told that the story of the wall was a lie, and that what the government really wanted was to give their land to

European farmers; and all of them had been told that if they refused to move, the government would give up the whole idea. And they had all been delighted to hear it.

What was a headman to do? Like everyone else, he wanted to believe the Congress men; but if he followed their lead, the District Officer and the chief would be angry, and might put him in prison. And if he followed the District Officer and made his people move, and then the Congress men turned out to be right, all his authority would be gone and the people would find another headman.

Whenever the District Officer came to the village, he felt more confident, and so did most of his people; it was reassuring to have somebody in authority to talk to. But the District Officer had other places to go to and other things to do, and whenever he went away the Congress talk began again, and so did the talk of the priests and diviners, and all the doubts returned. Once when the District Officer came to see him, the headman found he had been talked into setting his people an example, by going to the new place and starting to cut poles in the forest to build new huts. He went there with two other men, but after a few days their resolution began to falter. It seemed such a waste of time and energy when there was no sign of a flood, and they began to think what fools they would look if the flood was a false alarm. So they all went home again.

The headman was not only worried over the question of whether to move or not to move. If they moved, there were sure to be endless other difficulties, and the worst of them all, from his point of view, would be to allot the new gardens so that everyone was satisfied. People owned their gardens by so many different rights. Some men had inherited them, and some held them by virtue of having inherited souls, so that some gardens belonged strictly speaking to souls and not to living people. Some men had acquired gardens by their own hard work in clearing virgin land. And finally, some wives owned gardens which had been given to them by their husbands in the early romantic days of their married lives, and some of the husbands, in later days, had begun to regret their generosity. And there was also the question of the value of the plots. The winter

gardens which were flooded by the river were more productive than the forest gardens, but nobody could agree exactly how many acres of forest land was equivalent to one acre of silt land.

Headman Chisamu felt that the problem of being fair to everyone was beyond him. The District Officer had said the government's plan was simply to allot the land to the heads of households, according to how many people each one of them had to feed. That was a practical plan, but it took no account of the people's rights, and certainly would not please the wives who had been independent, or the men who had put their wealth into land instead of goats. So one day when the District Officer was in the village, the headman had the sensible idea of asking him to allot the new gardens himself. The District Officer agreed, and they arranged a date when he would go to the new place with all the men of the village to mark out plots for them. Chisamu knew people would still be dissatisfied; but anyhow, they would blame the District Officer, not him.

But before the day arrived, something even more disturbing happened in the village. One of his own young men, who was called Siaganka, went away for a few days; and when he came back he said he had been to the city and met the leaders of Congress, and now he was a Congress official himself; and he had a paper to prove it. Siaganka started to tell the people what to do and what not to do. It had been bad enough to have strangers in the village, giving the people confusing advice; but it was worse to have a young upstart from his own people behaving like a headman. Also, it was clearly against the law which the Native Authority had made after the trouble about cassava. The headman ought to have reported to his chief; but luckily, the District Officer acted first. Siaganka had only been home a few days when he was arrested by the District Officer's messengers and taken before the chief.

However, before he was taken away, he had said something which was new and interesting. He had said everyone must go on a certain day to the Boma, to meet an official from England; and the headman and the other elders of the village, who had nobody to give them advice except the District Officer and the chief and the

Congress men, saw a small ray of hope that a man from England might understand the whole problem and be able to tell them who was right. It was sixty miles to the Boma, but many of them made up their minds to go.

12

THE MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT

SIAGANKA WAS not the only man that Alex had arrested. Four other local young men had been to a town on the plateau with Siaganka, and as soon as they came back they all began to argue against the move, in the name of Congress. As they were local men, it was easy to find them, and he rounded them all up and handed them over to Chief Chipepo's court where they were given a month's imprisonment for illegal Congress activity. When Siaganka was arrested, he poured out a half-coherent story about a black government and a black District Commissioner, and talked about the official resistance to the move. This was the first time an official resistance had been mentioned; it was probably also the first time a Tonga had expressed any racial political feeling. And when the messengers searched him, the paper which gave him his authority was found. It was a curious document to be carried by a Tonga villager. It was written in English on Congress-headed paper, and it said:

> Bearer Siaganka is a bona fide member of the African National Congress of Northern Rhodesia. He has been sent by me to in-

form Gwembe chiefs and people to come to Gwembe Boma on the 13th April, 1957 to meet the hon. Mr. James Johnson M.P. from London. The bearer must not in any way be interfered with.

Signed, M. SIPALU, Secretary-General.

Dictated to me by the President-General, African National Congress.

The more Alex studied this message, the more remarkable it appeared. He wondered if the apparently confident order not to interfere with Siaganka had been addressed to him, and whether its author really expected him to take any notice of it. He guessed rightly that James Johnson was a Labour Member of Parliament, but he could not imagine at all what message the Labour Party wanted to give to the Tonga. And, of course, he determined to go to the meeting himself to find out.

But he never did find out. The meeting was a fiasco. Some hundreds of Tonga trekked up the steep sixty miles of dusty road to the Boma, hoping that they would hear the truth at last. James Johnson arrived from Lusaka by car; and he was accompanied by Harry Nkumbula himself and Kenneth Kaunda, who was then the second-in-command of Congress. Sugg met them in his office, and Alex was present too. There was a long discussion, cordial but evasive and inconclusive, while the crowd of Tonga squatted expectantly outside, shepherded by a couple of messengers. There was an air of unreality about it all, because British party politics could not be made to fit the circumstances. Labour traditionally supports underdogs, and it was proper enough that Labour should support Africans against anyone who oppressed them. But District Commissioners and Officers were not exclusively Tories; there were a good many left-wing intellectuals among them who would have voted Labour at home. And whatever their private political views, nobody could have been more pro-African than they were. Whoever else might have been counted as oppressors of the Tonga, Sugg and Alex refused to be cast as the villains of the piece.

But Sugg could not allow Nkumbula or Johnson to go out and

talk to the Tonga. It could not have done much harm, and might conceivably have done some good; but the Native Authority had forbidden Congress activity in the district, and Sugg was bound to uphold the Authority's orders. If Johnson had come alone, it might have been different; but as Nkumbula and Kaunda were with him, any meeting would have been illegal, and nobody could have authorized it except the Authority itself. So the visitors went away again. The Tonga were told Mr. Johnson was not going to see them after all, and they went home disconsolate and even more puzzled than ever. And Alex never discovered what Johnson had meant to say, or whether Nkumbula really intended his party members to try to persuade the Tonga not to move.

But the abortive meeting, or some other imponderable influence during the journey to the Boma, caused another swing of opinion in the village of Chisamu—another swing in a series which seemed to Alex to be as predictable now as the swings of a pendulum. Whenever he went to the village, he could talk the people into agreement, and whenever he left them alone, somebody talked them out of it again; and the same thing was happening in most of his sixty villages. Two days after the meeting at the Boma was the morning on which he was to take the men of Chisamu to their new place in the foothills, and to help them to mark out their gardens. Because he had arranged for trucks to carry them to the nearest point on the road, he went to the village early; but he found that several of the men had only come home the night before from the Boma, and that all of them were quite determined not to go with him, and not to mark out any gardens, and not to have anything to do with moving.

That started the longest and most tedious and tiring discussion Alex had had so far. He sat in Chisamu all day, going over and over the same old arguments, trying new ways to put them in the cumbersome primitive language, and pitting his own will power against the wills of the fifty or sixty men who sat round him on the ground. And while he talked, the forest pulsated in the stupefying heat, and the sun beat down on the village with sickening intensity, and the reek

of the sweat of so many bodies attracted hordes of flies. And by the evening, he had won over the village again. It was too late to start by then, and the day had been wasted, but all the men had agreed to come with him in the morning.

So, on the next day, they all went up together to the site of the new Chisamu, Alex and Chief Chipepo and Headman Chisamu and a train of village men; and they walked round and round the virgin patch of forest, pegging out gardens for each of the households in the village; and everyone was as cheerful as a Sunday-school picnic. The men were talking enthusiastically of starting cultivation. Whenever there were questions of what was fair, Alex was called upon to judge. He did not flatter himself that they thought his judgment was better than the chief's or the headman's; it was only that they needed someone, outside their own community, to blame if there were quarrels afterward. But Alex could not care about the future. The only thing that mattered was to keep them in their good-humored, optimistic frame of mind, so that the move of the village could really begin.

And so it would have begun if Alex had been able to stay in Chisamu all the time; but once they had promised to get on with the preparations he had to leave them, to see to other villages which were being equally indecisive. A week or two later, Siaganka finished his month in prison; and by the time Alex went to the village again, Siaganka had had his say, and every man in the place had changed his mind, and everything was back where it had been at the very beginning.

It was only natural that Alex's spirits began to be depressed by the Tonga's frustrating behavior. The months of the dry season passed, and he could not make any further progress; and his depression was deepened by the news, which he heard when he went to the Boma, that everywhere else in the valley the move was going well. John Mousley in Sinazongwe had seen signs of Congress opposition, but he and Chief Sinazongwe had sat on it firmly, and it had never taken hold. He also had nine thousand people to move from just over sixty villages, and he had already taken nearly six thousand

of them into the foothills at the back of their area, and settled them happily there. In Mwemba, where the peple were most primitive, John Middleton had not started the move, but the people were mentally prepared for it, and Congress did not appear to have penetrated so far. Many of the people in the remoter parts of the valley had never seen a vehicle of any kind—not even a cart—until bulldozers suddenly burst through the forests into their villages; and in each village which had moved, the moving day itself had been pathetic.

It had had to be planned on a timetable, like a military operation. The able-bodied men were to go ahead, to begin to build new huts; and then in each village, as soon as the sun had risen on the appointed day, the trucks would go in by the temporary tracks, and the villagers would be ready. But it never worked out with any military precision; it was always too human and too sad. The Tonga had no respect for time, and the villagers were never ready. In the course of the morning all the household goods would be loaded, and the stocks of corn and seed, and the doors of the huts, which were the only parts which could be salvaged, and all the odds and ends which people could not bear to leave behind although they seemed to have no possible use whatever. And the children, who enjoyed it, were hoisted into the trucks; and then somebody's goats would be found to have stampeded. And when the goats were rounded up, an old granny would have disappeared entirely. At the last moment, she had not been able to face it, and had run away to hide; and then there would be a hue and cry for granny, and she would be found and some of the search parties lost. And last of all, an old man would beg for a few minutes more, and the convoy would wait while he went and communed at a shrine which was being abandoned to the water. Then the trucks lurched away slowly, in low gear, the people looking back at what they were leaving rather than forward toward the promised land.

On the Southern Rhodesian side of the river, also, most of the move had already been accomplished, so that the far bank which Alex could see from his camp was now deserted. In some respects,

the Southern Rhodesians' problem had been simpler. There was always the legal sanction behind the move; if any of the Tonga refused to go, police could be brought in without any further ado to make them go. And on the southern side, there was far more land to choose from.

However, the Commissioner who ruled the Southern Rhodesian Tonga would have hated to use the powers of compulsion he possessed. His name was I. G. Cockroft, and he had run the district for the past ten years. His headquarters were a hundred miles away from the valley, but he had made a patrol right through it every year, sometimes using a launch on the river itself; and so in the course of time he had come to know the Tonga probably better than anyone else alive. He also was fond of them, and sympathized with them thoroughly in their trouble, and he also embarked on a course of patient explanation and persuasion.

Yet whether the legal compulsion was used or not, the mere fact that it existed changed the whole situation. Alex and his colleagues could only tell their Tonga that they would have to move because the flood was coming, and that was a reason which many of them could never be made to believe. But Cockroft could tell his people they had to move not only because of the flood but also because the law said they had to move; and that was a reason, much though they may have disliked it, which the Tonga could understand. Many Southern Rhodesians would have argued that the Tonga, and similar simple people, had never been governed in their history by anything but compulsion; and so, when they met a civilized problem which they could not possibly understand, it was kinder to tell them exactly what to do and to see that they did it, whether they seemed at the time to like it or not. These people would have said that the Northern Rhodesians' efforts at persuasion were only a piece of hypocrisy which could not do the Tonga any good. If they had known of Alex's difficulties, they might also have said that events were proving them right, because on their own side, by the end of the dry season, Cockroft had shifted 22,000 people without a casualty.

Not even the people of Chisamu could have thought by then that nothing was happening. Their friends and neighbors across the river had vanished, never to be seen again. And the fearsome mechanized assault on Kariba had begun to advance right up the valley, with appalling scenes of destruction. The Federal Government did not intend the lake to remain a mere barren reservoir. They had planned to stock it with fish, in the hope that it might become an important source of food. But in Southern Rhodesia there was a small reservoir where the same kind of forest had been flooded, and the dead trees were still standing below its surface, although they had been submerged for many years. Commercial fishing, with nets, would clearly be impossible in water which was full of standing trees, and so the government had decided to invest $5,600,000 in removing the trees of two million acres of the Gwembe Valley, before the flood began. The work was put out to contract, and the contractors devised the quickest and most efficient methods of doing it.

The speed they achieved in sheer ruin and devastation shocked even the Europeans who happened to see it. The largest caterpillar tractors ever made were shackled together in pairs with lengths of battleship anchor chain, and driven roaring through the forest on parallel courses, towing the chain in a loop behind them. The trees which were caught in the bight of the chain were dragged out of the ground, and anything else which happened to be in the way was destroyed. The width of the swath they cut, and the speed at which they drove, depended on the density of the forest. In an average area, one pair of tractors could wreck thirty acres of forest in an hour. Groves of trees which had been landmarks to people who lived nearby for as long as the oldest could remember disappeared in a matter of seconds. Behind the tractors, bulldozers pushed the wreckage into rows, and it was burned. The columns of smoke drifted over the valley, and ashes settled thickly, and at night the distant melancholy bonfires could be seen.

Some of the areas cleared were in the Chipepo district, and sometimes Alex had to change his plans, to get people out of the

way when the monstrous machines approached their villages and threatened instantaneous destruction. He hoped at first that the awful scene would convince the people that they would have to go, and he told them exactly why it was being done. He was even able to promise them that the government would teach them to fish when the lake was full, so that they could have the benefit of the new industry. But this was a doubly incredible story. The Tonga were fishermen, but they caught fish in baskets like lobster pots, or by damming creeks at the height of the floods and then scooping the fish out when the water fell. They had never used a boat any bigger than a dugout canoe; or seen a fishing net. But they knew about clearing land. They saw the vast areas of naked earth, and the camps of huts the contractors put up for their workers, in the very places which the government had told the Tonga they must leave. And these, it seemed perfectly obvious, were the new European farms and the new farmers. The Congress supporters had said the story of a lake was only a trick to steal the Tonga land, and here was proof.

By the end of the dry season, in October and November, 1957, the bottom of the valley was almost empty of humanity, except in Alex's area. Over thirty thousand Tonga had gone; but he had only succeeded in moving a few hundred of his own nine thousand people. This was the hottest time of the year in the valley. The forest stagnated in an agony of heat. Animals grew torpid and vegetation wilted, and people watched the copper sky and longed and prayed according to their fashion for the rain. And Alex suffered with them, and felt that life itself had become like a nightmare in childhood: the nightmare when everyone else has gone ahead, and only one's self is forgotten and left behind. In the camp he had set up so hopefully nine months before, he pondered alone in the suffocating nights, and asked himself how he had failed. Was it through something he had done or failed to do? Or was there something different in the people or the district of Chipepo? He would not have been at all surprised to have been relieved of his job.

By that time, John Sugg had gone on leave, and Alan Prior,

who had been District Officer in Simamba, had been promoted to succeed him. Prior knew Alex very well, and had no doubt about him. He knew he had done his best. It was a fact that Chipepo was different. The struggle to make the Tonga accept the move had been difficult everywhere, and in Chipepo it had been made more difficult by the extra fear of the extra distance to Lusitu; and it was there, where the balance was most delicate, that Congress had made its strongest effort, whether by accident or design, to upset the plans of the government.

So Alex was left in the valley to face the rainy season, and to try to retrieve the situation, still alone.

13

THE WARNING

WHEN THE first clouds blew over the valley and the first rain fell, it came as a blessing, and the Sikatongos knew their offerings were accepted. It was a pleasure just to stand out in the rain and be wet all over. The dusty ground absorbed it, and hot parched seeds began to germinate, and then overnight a new green gauze spread over the earth between the trees. Where the tractors had torn the forest down, the seeds and roots of grass were still alive, and the bare baked sand which had seemed like a desert changed itself to enormous rolling meadows. Streams which had been dry since April began to flow again. Most of the big game which had gathered near the river in the drought began to wander away to find new pastures.

But soon after the valley had suffered from excess of heat and drought, it began to suffer again, from excess of water. The rain that year was very heavy. In December and January, it poured. The earth turned to mud, and the streams to torrents. It remained so hot that merely being wet seldom became a hardship. The Tonga went about with water streaming from their naked skins, and Alex continued his journeys bareheaded, in shorts and a shirt, as he had

always traveled; for clothes were always a nuisance in the valley and he wore only enough to uphold European ideas of decency.

But the journeys grew more and more difficult. He had to wade the streams, and sometimes swim them. The clay on which the mopane forests stood made a specially slippery sticky kind of mud. Land-Rovers bogged down in it, and walking through it was exhausting. The Tonga seldom strayed far from their villages and gardens, and Alex found that the Congress men began to get less enterprising. Everything, even political subversion, was much harder work in the wet. In the past few months plenty of events had reminded Alex that only "mad dogs and Englishmen go out in the midday sun"; it took an even madder dog to go far in the rainy season.

It soon became impossible to travel up or down the riverbanks, because the tributaries were running too fast to swim, and the crocodiles were coming up them. Then the only ways out of Chipepo were either by boat, or by the road at right angles to the river, toward the escarpment. The road turned to a kind of porridge. Water cut gullies in it, and sometimes washed away whole sections; and after every heavy storm the minor rivers, which it crossed by fords, ran three feet deep and fast enough to take a Land-Rover bodily downstream. So Chipepo was often cut off from the outside world; and it was out of the question to bring trucks in or move any villages out until the rains ended, which was usually not before April.

In the past few years, in preparation for the building of Kariba, the government had put hydrographic stations on the upper waters of the Zambesi to measure the river's flow; and about the end of January, warnings began to come from stations five hundred miles away, on the Barotse plain beyond the Victoria Falls. Up there, the river flowed through enormous marshes. They were still sodden from exceptional floods the year before, and it was raining very heavily again. There was a risk that in February or March a flood would come down the river which would be worse than any that had ever been seen before.

The warnings were sent down to Alex from the Boma, and he

made journeys up and down the river to pass them on to the people who lived near the riverbanks. They thanked him for the news, but did not take very much notice. They were used to floods and had good reasons to think that they knew much more about them than he did. His own camp, on the low alluvial bank between the flood plain and the river bed, was in a dangerous position, so he moved it to higher ground; and he overhauled the boats which were kept on the river, a fast outboard dinghy and a small cabin launch. Those were all the preparations he could make. Even he was not really prepared in his mind for the cataclysmic mass of water which the Zambesi poured into the valley that season.

The river rose with unbelievable speed. Much of the river bed was enclosed by banks, as it was at Chisamu, with lower ground behind them, and when the banks were overtopped, the flood water spread more quickly than a man could run to get away from it. It flowed back up the tributaries for miles and circled behind the hills, and poured through villages which had stood where they were through living memory. Trees which seemed centuries old were washed away. On March 1st, it rose even further, by six feet more between 8:00 A.M. and midday. Most of the people waited where they were because they expected the rise to stop as it had always stopped, and then when their gardens had gone and their huts were tottering, they tried to collect their goats and their stores of grain; but some of them found the water was deeper behind them, and they had to abandon everything to save their lives. They camped on ridges just above the flood, without thinking that another rise would swamp them. Small children cried with hunger because there was nothing they could eat uncooked, and everything was too sodden to make a fire. In six days, twelve inches of rain were measured at the Boma.

Alex took out the dinghy. For many days, from dawn to night, he patrolled the river in it, steering inland when he could through the swirling brown water, among the standing trees and over the ruined fields of corn, to visit the lowest villages. Some were deserted, the huts already standing askew and the conical roofs of grass beginning

to float in the debris. In others, he ferried hundreds of people to places which looked secure. In one, he found everybody on the point of leaving, but one old man was refusing to go. His wives had tried to persuade him, and Alex tried too, but it was no use, and his wives had to wade ashore and leave him. And then, looking back after Alex had gone, they saw the old man take a goat which was left and go into his hut with it. A little later, a crocodile swam through the village, and it was attracted by the bleating of the goat; and the wives saw it go in through the door of the hut, and heard the bleating stop; and no part of their husband was ever seen again.

A mile above Chisamu, the Pilgrim Holiness Mission was surrounded. The mission ran a boys' school and a girls' school, and the American missionary, whose name was Roger Bassett, had been in the middle of moving the children to new schools he had built, fourteen miles away in the foothills. The girls had already moved, but the boys had not. Alex went to the mission in the launch, and brought 170 excited Tonga boys to drier land. At the same time, the headmistress of the girls' school, hearing that the old mission was in danger, had brought fifteen of her senior pupils down the road to help to salvage furniture. They had time only to pull out drawers full of clothes. They had expected a lift on the road, but there was no kind of vehicle on it, so they started to walk the fourteen miles carrying the drawers on their heads. Night fell, pitch black, and the rain was teeming down; and the American teacher, who had not learned the art of carrying heavy burdens of her head, fell far behind her girls, miserably aware that they were walking through elephant country.

At one moment during those hectic days, Alex left his Land-Rover by the roadside, and when he came back it was submerged; and one night, sleeping dog-tired in the camp which he had already moved to higher ground, he woke up cold and found that his camp bed, where it sagged in the middle, was in the water. Up at the Boma, the staff were worried, and several of them tried to get down the road to help, but the road was cut by torrents in many places. They took Land-Rovers through some of them, but only at

the risk of being swept away. Somebody thought of taking off the doors, so that the water could flow in at the driver's door and out at the other, and that helped to reduce the lateral force of the current. But some of the fords were impassable. A few of the Boma staff, including Alan Prior, got through by swimming, and the fifty-mile journey took them fourteen hours.

When the mission staff and the boys were out of danger, Roger Bassett joined Alex on his expeditions up the river, and helped in the rescue work. He was a very remarkable missionary. It was said that he had been a bomber pilot, and he still flew aircraft whenever he had a chance; and he was a very resourceful person, able and willing to turn his hand to anything—he had designed and built his new church and schools himself, with only the help of some Tonga who had never done anything of the kind before. When he and Alex, and Alex's messenger Mungala, were coming back late one evening from a trip up the river in the dinghy, they noticed something red in a tree which was half submerged. They crossed the main stream to try to find what it was, and were more than surprised to see a large striped umbrella. Clinging to neighboring trees were four men, two Europeans and two Africans; and Alex recognized them as surveyors who had passed his camp some weeks before.

It was rough in the middle of the river, and the dinghy was too low in the water to take any more on board; so they waved to the men in the trees to tell them they were seen, and they went down to Chisamu to fetch the motor launch. When they boarded it, they saw a black mamba which had taken refuge from the flood. It crawled into the cabin and disappeared, so rather than waste any time they left it there.

By the time they got back to the men it was almost dark. Alex throttled back the engine and held the boat, stemming the current, above the trees, and Bassett and Mungala paid out a rope with a rubber ring made fast to the end of it. Their plan, which they thought would be clear, was to haul the men one by one through the water to the boat. But one of the men caught hold of the ring and held it, and would not let go of his tree. The rope went taut,

and the boat's bow swung across the stream, and before Alex could control it, it drifted broadside into the trees. The current heeled it over; it filled with water and the engine stopped, and Bassett and Mungala were both washed overboard. Then the boat swung clear and began to drift downstream. Alex grabbed a small anchor and threw it out, and it caught on something and brought the boat head-on, fifty yards or so below the trees; and Alex saw through the driving rain that Bassett and Mungala had also caught hold of branches.

With one man in the boat and six in the trees, the only thing to be done was to bail the boat and try to dry the engine; and as Alex began this long task, he remembered the black mamba. It was an unusual predicament to be alone in the dark, insecurely moored in a water-logged boat with a snake whose bite is said to be fatal in five minutes, and he did not relish it at all. But he tried to forget the snake, and he never saw it again. By midnight he had lowered the water level and succeeded in starting the engine. He took Bassett and Mungala and two of the surveyors off their perches, but he could not find the others in the dark. He put the four men ashore at the mission, and at dawn he went back and found the other two, still alive after nearly twenty-four hours in the branches. After the whole episode was over, the resourceful Bassett told Alex he could not swim.

The flood lasted for several weeks, and on the shore there was chaos. The rain continued relentlessly, and the homeless Tonga were scattered in the forest, living in hopeless misery under shelters made of four poles and thatched with grass. Some of them begged food from villages which were still above the flood, and others went hungry except for the berries and leaves they could find in the forest. None of them seemed to have any will power left; they simply waited wherever their sudden flight had stranded them. Alex and the men who had come through from the Boma set up depots on the road, where people could have been collected and taken to shelter in villages in the foothills. But nobody could even find the people except by chance, and so very little could be done to help

them. Some of them died, and were buried hastily, and nobody ever knew what they died of—perhaps of heart failure or other diseases which were aggravated by hunger or fear or exposure. So far as Alex ever knew, nobody was actually drowned, and the stubborn man who was eaten by the crocodile was the only one whose death could certainly be attributed to the flood. But hundreds of huts were wrecked and goods were lost, and a large part of the harvest was destroyed.

All through this period of disaster, Alex thought it might have one bright side. It might be a warning to Chipepo's people of what would happen when the real flood began. Whenever he met sad groups of them in the forest, it seemed to have had this effect. All of them said they wanted to start the move as soon as the rains had ended. They all believed the flood had something to do with what Alex had told them about Kariba, and he did not try very hard to persuade them it had not. In fact, he took it for granted himself that the flood was made worse by the work on the dam. Its primary cause was the rainfall, but the foundations of the dam had partially blocked the gorge, and it seemed only common sense that any blockage at Kariba would raise the level of the water in the valley.

In March, the water reached its peak, and hung there, then started to recede; and one by one, the ruins of the villages were exposed again. The Tonga began to trek back to salvage what they could, and at that moment they all seemed ready to go to Lusitu. And possibly they would have gone, as soon as the road was open; but at the crucial moment the Congress men decided the time was ripe to raise more money by collecting subscriptions again from Chipepo's people. And from wading and swimming in the infested Zambesi water, Alex caught the unpleasant disease called bilharziasis, and had to be taken away to hospital.

14

THE RIOT

THIS TIME, even more of the people were led to believe that the Congress party subscription was a tax they had to pay. And now, it was not only collected by two outsiders; at least half a dozen young men of Chipepo itself had been to the Congress headquarters, or said they had been, and were demanding fifty cents and handing out Congress receipts. All the old arguments against moving were revived, and especially against moving to Lusitu, and a new one was added, so convincing and yet so absurd that it was impossible to answer. The people knew that Lusitu was down the river. Now somebody pointed out that water flows downhill, and the argument quickly spread that if Chipepo was going to be flooded, as the government said, then obviously Lusitu would be flooded too. This piece of logic was repeated with so much conviction, as if the government had been stupid or careless not to have thought of it, that it was quite ineffective to answer that Chipepo was above the dam and Lusitu was below it.

The flood had also played into the hands of the people who had been saying that the dam would never work. Down at Kariba,

it had caused disaster. Engineers and their African laborers risked their lives again and again to save what they could from the wreckage; and it was said that the engineers, who had read in the local papers the quite untrue reports that the Tonga believed in a river god, were beginning themselves to be superstitious about his anger. Work on the dam was delayed for months, and rumors of what had happened spread up the valley and reached Chipepo. It was only too easy for the wise men and the Sikatongos and Congress men to shake their heads and say, "I told you so."

So the chaotic results of the flood in Chipepo had no lasting effect on the minds of Chipepo's people. As soon as the worst of their suffering was over, they seemed to forget the impression it had made on them. But the Europeans who had seen the suffering could not possibly forget it.

While Alex had been contending with the daily problems of the flood, Alan Prior had had to worry in addition with problems of policy and law; as the new District Commissioner, he was now responsible for everything that happened in the area. Hitherto, some people in the higher circles of government had argued that if the Chipepo people could not be persuaded to move, they should simply be left where they were till the lake began to rise and compelled them to move. Prior had never been satisfied with this negative policy; he had always thought a hurried move at the last minute, in the face of the rising water, would be dangerous. Now the chaos of the natural flood had convinced him he was right, and had also provided him with a powerful argument. With only a partial blockage at Kariba, the flood had been bad enough; but by the next rainy season the gorge would be closed completely, and if the rains were heavy again, the rise would be faster still. At best, the six thousand people would lose their property and animals and find themselves hungry and homeless again at a time when the road might be cut and the government might be powerless to help them. And at worst, a great many of them, especially the sick and the lame and the blind, and the old people and the children might be drowned. Government by consent was still the

ideal, but it seemed to Prior, and of course to Alex too, to be irresponsible to let people run into so much danger simply because they were ignorant and misled.

Prior pressed this argument with his seniors, and won some agreement; and he had a practical suggestion to make. On the whole, the Tonga were law-abiding people, and he believed that if there was a law which said that they had to move, as there was in Southern Rhodesia, there was still a chance that they might obey it. The government would certainly not have agreed to change the law of the country to suit this local problem; but an Order in Council existed which empowered a Native Authority, "for good cause shown," to order the removal of a native from his land. Prior thought the Tonga Native Authority ought to use this power to order the move to Lusitu.

With this in his mind, he decided to take all the members of the Authority down to Chipepo, so that they could see for themselves what was happening. Soon after Alex had been taken to hospital, and before the flood had completely receded, they all set forth, the chairman and the seven chiefs and Habanyama and the junior councilors, and Prior went with them. They traveled in relays in the launch Alex had used, and held meetings all over the area; and in the end, they spoke to almost everyone involved in the move to Lusitu.

This party comprised all the secular power the Tonga had ever known, but not even the persuasion of all their chiefs could make any change in the stubborn opinions of the people. Chief Chipepo made eloquent, impassioned speeches, and he was supported by the other chiefs, and by Habanyama, and by their chairman, who was an elder of the tribe; but the results were shocking, and without any precedent in the history of the Tonga. The chiefs explained that they had accepted the move on behalf of the people, and they said they were convinced that everything the government said was true and that the arguments of the Congress men were lies. But the people openly refused to believe them, and at every meeting there were a few young men who asked irrelevant, disrespectful questions. The journey only served to prove one thing: for the

present, at least, the Kariba project had alienated Chipepo's people not only from the government but also from their own hereditary chiefs, and left them leaderless, at the mercy of any upstart.

It was a sad situation, and saddest perhaps of all for Habanyama and Chipepo. Habanyama could certainly have won high office in the city, if he had not decided to stay in the valley and use his talents for the benefit of his own tribe. Intelligence and integrity had compelled him to support the government, and now the same qualities had made him suffer mistrust and insults from the people he had been born among. And the young chief was in the same dilemma, except that he could not have risen any higher than he was. Mere common sense had fitted him to be a chief, but now, when his career was hardly started, the use of his common sense was making him hated and despised. Yet both of them refused to compromise, and still remained loyal to what they knew was right.

After the journey, the Authority held a meeting to listen to Prior's proposal that they should make an order and put some legal power behind the move. At first, they were very reluctant to do it. They agreed that something would have to be done, and they agreed that if the move was law the people might accept it; but they argued that the government had started the whole trouble by allowing the dam to be built, and therefore the government ought to take the responsibility of making the law. The discussion lasted for five hours, and ranged over most of the theory and ethics of central and local government. By the end of it, the members had accepted Prior's explanation that this was something the Native Authority could do but the government could not do, and they approved an order which he had drafted. The draft was sent to law officers of the government to be put into legal language. When it came back, it started with six separate paragraphs which each began with the words "*And whereas,*" and then it came to the crux of the matter:

> *Now therefore, in exercise* of the powers conferred by the said Article 43 the *Gwembe Tonga Native Authority* hereby orders

the removal of all the people living in the villages and places named in the Schedule to the Order from such villages and places into the said area known as the Lusitu. Done by the Gwembe Tonga Native Authority this seventeenth day of May 1958.

In a set of rules appended to the order, the Authority set maximum penalties of $28 or three months in prison for anyone who disobeyed the order or incited anyone else to do so. The order was signed by all the seven chiefs, and the rules were confirmed by the Provincial Commissioner, Prior's superior officer, as being designed for peace, good order, and welfare of the Africans in the district. Finally, they were approved by the governor himself, and the order was promulgated by notices and announcements throughout Chipepo. Prior waited then to see what would happen.

For all its formal language, the order was not much more than a legal bluff. Nobody wanted to fine the Tonga $28 each or send them to prison: all that anybody wanted was to send them to Lusitu and pay them $28 for going. And clearly, if all of them defied the order and still refused to move, the whole six thousand could never be taken to court and the order could not possibly be enforced. It would have been much more effective and practical if it had authorized Prior to take the people straight to Lusitu, using whatever compulsion was needed, and keep them there; but he did not think either the government or the Native Authority would have agreed if he had asked for such drastic powers.

After a month, Alex returned to the fray; and by then Prior had decided to change his tactics. So far, they had always assumed that the villages to move first should be those by the river which would be flooded first. But it was there that resistance was strongest. Ten or fifteen miles back in the forest, in villages which would only just be in the lake, the people were not so vigorous in their opposition, perhaps because they had no permanent riverside gardens; and so Prior told Alex to try to move them first in the hope that one move would set an example and others would follow.

This plan went fairly well. By the beginning of May, the road

had been mended, and it was possible to take trucks into the valley and, by a roundabout route, to drive from Chipepo to Lusitu. Alex and the chief called in the headmen of five villages to discuss the details of the move, and on May 12th these more peaceful people began to go. By the end of the month, 650 people had been taken to Lusitu with all their property and begun to build their huts and plan their gardens there; and they found, as everyone had told them, that the soil was good and the water from the boreholes was sufficient.

Encouraged by this success, Alex made plans for the next five villages, and sent messages to ask the headmen to come to see him and the chief. Among this group was a village called Sianzimbwe, and Headman Sianzimbwe sent back a message to say he would not come. The chief sent his own messengers to summon the headman to appear before him; under native law he had the right to summon any of his people to his court. But the headman refused the summons. To give the headman another chance, Alex sent six of his messengers, with careful instructions to explain to the headman that if he did not come he would be breaking the native law, and that such disrespect to the chief could not possibly be allowed. These messengers found the headman surrounded by a group of other men, and he still refused to come; and they were told that if they or the District Officer came again, they would be killed.

Anyone whose authority is continuously defied knows that a time will come when he must finally assert it, or lose it forever. Alex had known it must come, and he knew this was it. If Sianzimbwe was allowed to defy the chief and the government, it might be the end of the rule of law. But if he and his villagers really meant their threats, Alex and the chief could not do very much to enforce the law; between them, they had less than a dozen men, and not a single weapon of any kind. It was a crucial moment, and before he did anything he reported to Prior. Prior came down from the Boma at once, bringing another dozen messengers, and he agreed that the time had come. The village of Sianzimbwe could be reached by a track, and that evening Prior drove into it

with Alex and the chief in a Land-Rover, followed by twenty messengers in a truck.

Sianzimbwe was sitting in front of his hut, with a small group of his villagers. Prior got out, and they exchanged the greetings which were demanded by unalterable custom. Prior spoke a different African language, and was not very fluent in Tonga, so he used his head messenger as interpreter. He said that the headman had been called three times to attend before the chief and the District Officer, and that he was obliged by law to attend. Was it true that he had refused? And if so, why had he refused?

"Yes, I refused," the headman said truculently. "And I shall always refuse. They want to talk about going to Lusitu. I am not interested. I am not going to Lusitu, and I will not talk about it."

"You must talk about it," Prior said. "The law says you must attend before the District Officer and the chief. If you refuse, the chief will have a case against you."

"I am not interested in what the chief will do. He is not our chief. The chief has tried to sell our land."

Prior tried again and again, but the headman was defiant; he would not obey the chief.

"Then you must be arrested," Prior said at last, and he turned to a messenger and said, "Arrest that man."

The messenger stepped forward, and the headman jumped to his feet and began to shout and struggle. Dozens of men came out of the village huts and started throwing stones. Two men ran close with big stones in their hands. The head messenger called to his men to help him stop them. A stone crashed through a window of the truck, the din of shouting rose, and spears and sticks and axes began to fly through the air. Alex and Prior stood in the middle of the uproar, at first more astonished than alarmed. None of the messengers had anything to defend himself, not even a stick. It would have been useless and wrong to tell them to fight back—and besides, to use violence was totally against every principle of a District Commissioner, even in reply to violence. So Prior shouted to get all his men away before they were badly hurt.

He could not make himself heard. But there was not much need—they were using their own common sense. Alex had a glimpse of the chief's court clerk running full speed to the forest, and of the chief looking terrified, and then of the driver of the truck making off on his feet; and then the messengers on the outskirts of the fracas began to melt away among the trees. Prior, Alex, the chief, the head messenger, and three or four others who were nursing cuts and bruises, piled hastily into the Land-Rover, abandoning the truck, and drove away with such few shreds of dignity as they could muster; and the headman was left behind.

They reached the camp, and one by one the messengers came in till all of them were found to be present and not very seriously injured. That relieved the immediate anxiety of Prior and Alex, because it had looked as though murder might be done. But as Alex's nerves calmed down from the fright and excitement, he knew that his work had come to an ultimate failure. He did not know whether he was to blame or not, but he had failed; in his small area, the ideals and traditions of the administration had finally broken down. He could not govern any longer by prestige alone. Prior would have to ask for help from outside, and he would have to rely on force or the threat of force. It was a very bitter moment.

15

THE DRUMS

PRIOR AGREED that the gloves were off at last. He went up to the Boma and reported to his superiors in town. The next day a platoon of armed mobile police arrived for duty, and he took them straight down to Chipepo.

These police were Africans under British officers, and they were very highly trained and very efficient. They carried tear gas, shotguns, rifles, and automatics; but they never expected or wanted to have to use them. In the past twenty years there had been one or two industrial troubles which had ended in riots in the Northern Rhodesian copper mines; but never, since law had been brought to the country, had the police used their weapons among the country tribes. On the rare occasions when trouble had been brewing, the police had prevented it simply by being there and letting themselves be seen; and Prior and Alex, and the police themselves, were sure this would work with Sianzimbwe.

The police pitched their tents alongside Alex's camp on the river, where everyone in Chisamu and everyone who passed along the riverbank could see it. The officers were friendly and sympa-

thetic, but Alex hated to have them there with their military customs. His camp had been his home more than anywhere else for over a year. He was a very unmilitary person by inclination, and he had run the camp as informally as it could be. Most of the year had been lonely, but the camp had nearly always been a haven where he could be himself, and relax from the tension in the villages. Now the policemen's drill, and their bugle calls, and their shouted words of command put an end to the homely atmosphere of the place, and reminded him day and night, like salt in the wound of his self-esteem, that the police were there only because he had not been able to finish the job without them. And worse still, perhaps, was the feeling that Chipepo's people were still his own protégés and in many ways his friends, and that, however badly they behaved, he ought to be looking after them rather than threatening them.

But the drill and the bugles and formality were part of the technique of the police. The people of Chisamu watched and listened from the other side of the flood plain, and news of what was happening in the camp certainly spread through Chipepo; and within forty-eight hours it had its effect. A message came from Headman Sianzimbwe that he would like to speak to the District Commissioner if he would come to the village alone.

Prior made ready to go. Knowing the Tonga, he was sure the headman was going to agree to move, but wanted to try to do it without losing face. Prior was ready to accept that. It was no use being vindictive. If Sianzimbwe would go to Lusitu at once, that was really all that mattered, and it might be much better for both sides to pretend that the riot had never happened.

But among their modern conveniences, the police had a radio telephone; and just before Prior started, he spoke to a senior official in town and told him what he was going to do. To his surprise, the official told him not on any account to go to the village alone.

Prior and Alex felt rebellious at this order, as men on the spot often do when decisions are made in headquarters far away. They could not see any reason for it. Was the government afraid, like

the headman, of losing face? Or did it think Prior would be in danger? Either way, they were sure the order was wrong. But it had been so emphatic that Prior could not possibly disregard it.

The next day, he was called on the radio by the head of the Department of Native Affairs, and then, to his further surprise, he found himself talking to the governor. The governor told him the order had been mistaken; Prior was to use his own judgment. But by then it was too late. A second message had come from Sianzimbwe: he did not want to see Prior or anyone else. And the envoy who brought the message had said that over a hundred men had met in the village with spears and were ready to fight against anyone who went there. An opportunity had been lost which might perhaps have turned the whole tide of events.

Prior and Alex embarked then on a kind of diplomatic siege. Now that so many more men were involved, they could not offer a compromise; they had been pushed into the position, like other governments, of demanding unconditional surrender. They sent messages to tell the people in the village they could not succeed in defying the force of law. The police were there to see that law was obeyed. The people who had been in the riot must be prosecuted for their offense, and it would be much better if they gave themselves up, so that the police would not have to come to fetch them.

Chief Chipepo called on his uncle, the old retired chief, and asked him for his support, and the two of them went to the village —which was a brave thing to do—and held a meeting which passed off peacefully. Then Habanyama came down from the Native Authority headquarters, and he and both the chiefs went and carried the argument further. And slowly the persuasion, with the presence of the police to back it up, began to take effect. The assembled spearmen lost their enthusiasm and began to go home, and ten days after the riot the headman sent another messenger. He and his villagers were sorry. If the District Commissioner would come, he could take them away. But he must come without any messengers or police.

So Prior got in a truck, with the old chief and Habanyama, and nobody else, and drove to Sianzimbwe. There they found the headman repentant, and twenty men of the village who all said they had taken part in the riot. They all climbed into the truck, and Prior drove them away. They were taken to the Boma. As Prior and Alex were the only magistrates in the district, and both of them and the chief had been in the riot themselves, an independent magistrate was brought to try the case, and he sent the whole party to prison. So the sad affair of Sianzimbwe ended; and the police, who had done their job without even going near the place, struck their tents and went away again.

Nevertheless, it was a most unsatisfactory ending. A fortnight had been wasted, and time was getting desperately short. It was the middle of June. The dam was due to be closed in November, and if the rains started then, as they normally did, at least half of Chipepo would be under water by the end of the year.

Alex had given up hope. He knew the temper of the people, and he was perfectly certain by then that neither he nor anybody else could possibly persuade them to cooperate and move within the next six months. The Native Authority order had come too late, and had not impressed them at all; they had called the bluff, and there was nothing he could do about it. It seemed simply absurd to him that he or the chief could arrest a man who refused to move, and put him in handcuffs and charge him and send him to prison, but that they could not legally send him by force to Lusitu. He told Prior that he could see only two alternatives: either the police would have to be brought in again, in much greater force, with powers to take people under arrest to Lusitu and keep them there—or else the Tonga would still be where they were when the flood began.

Prior did not need to be told, but he knew more of the other side of the problem. As District Commissioner, he found himself halfway between two extremes of opinion: that of the junior officer on the spot, who saw the problem from the practical point of view, and that of the seniors in the government, who saw its

theoretical implications. Many of his seniors still thought it would be wrong to use force to make the people move. Nobody doubted that it would be in the interest of the people, but it was so completely against the basic principles of modern colonial policy. Prior himself shared Alex's opinion. He went back to the Boma determined to persuade the government to give him further powers; and Alex was left in Chipepo, alone again.

Alex was sure that something horrible was going to happen soon, but he did not know what. The forest which he had come to know so well had now become grim with the threat of impending disaster. It was permeated by distrust and suspicion, and the kind of senseless hatred which animals show when they are brought to bay. And this sense of impending disaster gave new emphasis to Alex's nightmare knowledge that the dam was already towering over the valley, and that everything he could see was doomed to darkness and death and decay. The earth where he put down his foot would be turned to slime; the trees would come into leaf once more, and the leaves would rot on them before they fell; the animals which could not run away would drown, and great bubbles of stinking gas would rise and burst. Sometimes, in the sunshine and the hot still air, he felt as if he were drowning.

There was physical danger in the forest by then. The chief, and Alex's messengers, had been threatened, and secondhand messages came to him of threats to kill him too. He took to sending his messengers out in groups, but as for himself, he never believed that the Tonga who had been so kind to him would really do him any harm; he still felt fond of them, and desperately sorry for them.

So he went on, as well as he could, with the routine administration of the area. His attempts at persuading people to move had become quite futile; and in fact they were even harmful, because the more he went on with them, without taking any more definite action, the more confident the Congress men became that they had the government on the run. It still remained a total mystery what the Congress men were trying to achieve, or what they had been told, or thought they had been told, on their visits to the Congress

headquarters. Perhaps in the drunkenness of unaccustomed power, they themselves had forgotten what they had meant to do. So they began to terrorize everyone who had shown any signs of willingness to move. A headman who had been to Lusitu, and started to prepare his village site, was threatened with death. The 650 people who had moved there earlier in the year were told to go back, and in fear they abandoned the work they had done and set off to walk the hundred-mile journey, carrying their babies and the sick who could not walk, and begging food. As the Congress men grew bolder, their threats and defiance spread to all the other activities of the government and the Native Authority. Men working on roads were told to stop. The teachers in the mission schools began a new school term, and no children came to their classes; and the parents said they had all been told that if they let their children go to school, the government would seize them and take them away to Lusitu and they would never come home again.

Alex traveled round to bring the census up to date, so that compensation could be paid correctly. The normal way of making a census was to assemble all the people of a group of villages, and census taking could be a cheerful party. But now the men assembled with spears and knobkerries, and Alex often found himself in a crowd of fifty or a hundred armed and excited men. At all these meetings, he encountered the Congress men, whom he knew quite well by sight and name. He would have arrested them if he could, but he had lost the power to do it. If he had tried, with his half-dozen unarmed messengers, the result would have been another riot, but worse.

The authority of Chief Chipepo had also completely broken down. In normal times his court was full of people who wanted to make petitions, or ask him to settle their disputes or grant them divorces, and of minor malefactors waiting for his sentence. But now, on the days when the court was open, he sat alone, disconsolate in the empty courthouse, and nobody came. He had tried to help the government over Kariba, and in consequence he had lost his power and his friends and went in fear for his life among his

own people, and the whole of his world seemed to him to have fallen in ruins.

Only one thing worse could have happened in the valley in July and August, and that was bloodshed; and while Alex and the chief struggled on from day to day to prevent that or avoid it, Alan Prior fretted at the Boma over his task of persuading the government to take some stronger action. Gradually, he won his point; but even when action had been agreed, there was a legal difficulty. The laws of Northern Rhodesia had been conscientiously designed to protect Africans against enforced removal, so that they could enjoy security of tenure of land which they owned by their tribal customs. It was difficult to reverse this intention of the law. But at length it was found that the Tonga Native Authority could legally give the government the very power it lacked. The government could not authorize its own civil servants or police to move anyone by force, but the Native Authority could.

In August, therefore, Prior asked the chairman of the Authority to convene an extraordinary meeting; and when the chiefs had been assembled he explained this peculiar situation to them.

Habanyama spoke after Prior. He said the lawlessness in Chipepo had worried him very much. He thought it might spread to other areas, and then the whole district might fall into chaos. It must be checked before it went any further, and Chipepo's people must be moved by force. Each of the seven chiefs spoke in his turn, and each of them agreed with emphasis. The meeting unanimously approved amendments to its previous order. It authorized the officers of the administration, or the police or the messengers to "conduct and regulate the orderly carrying out of the said removal." It gave them power to remove any person who refused to move when he was ordered; and finally, in case the people who were moved should try to come back again, it took the unprecedented step of authorizing the government to destroy the villages as soon as they were empty.

With these powers, Prior saw some hope of a final solution. He would have been very sorry to use them, but he did not believe

he would have to; he thought the presence of the police, if there were enough of them, might make the people change their minds, as it had at Sianzimbwe, and as it always had throughout the country. He reported the Authority's decision, and things began to move quickly. The governor held a meeting in Lusaka. John Sugg had returned from leave, and had been appointed Provincial Commissioner of the Southern Province of the country, which included the Gwembe district, so that he was once again Prior's immediate superior; and the governor told him to go to Chipepo himself to take charge of the situation. He also instructed three platoons of police to move in. And so, the day after the meeting, Alex's solitary camp became the scene of busy activity again.

This time he was glad to see the police, having made up his mind that he could not do anything more without them. And he was more than glad to see Prior and Sugg. Between them, they had been his seniors since the beginning of the whole affair, so he knew them well; and he had had more than enough of solitude.

Sugg's instructions from the governor were very firm: he was first to visit all the twenty villages that were nearest to the river and had to be moved most urgently, and explain that the move was law, and that the police were there to see that the law was obeyed. The police were to show themselves, but until the explanation had been given, no force should be used. The governor, like everybody else, had high hopes that no force would ever have to be used.

On August 29th, the day after the police arrived, Sugg and Prior and Alex set off on this final tour of explanation with two platoons of police in trucks, and they went to Chisamu village first because it was nearest.

The village was curiously quiet. Alex had half expected a noisy and hostile reception, but he had never seen the place with so few people in it, and the quietness was faintly eerie. The police got out of their trucks, and fell in and formed fours and marched round the village. The messengers found a few women and children, who came forward, some timidly and some with sullen faces.

"Where are the men?" Alex asked them, and one old lady re-

plied that all the men had gone to drink beer at another village.

Perhaps this was true. The Tonga often had beer parties, and sometimes at inconvenient moments. When their beer was brewed, they had to drink it quickly before it went sour, and if someone had done a big brew a few days before, not even the arrival of three platoons of police on the riverbank might have stopped them from going to drink it. And yet it hardly seemed to have the ring of truth. Would every single man and boy have been invited? The old lady's answer might well have been the first thing she could think of to satisfy the curiosity of three Europeans. The men might have seen Sugg's party coming across the flood plain, and simply be hiding, in the huts or the forest, as the people had hidden before the riot at Sianzimbwe.

"We might as well carry on," Sugg said; and the head messenger, in a very loud voice, began to read to the little crowd of women the Tonga translation of a statement which Prior had prepared.

"You all know about the Kariba project," it began. "You have been told that the lake will start rising at the end of this year. You have been told many times that it is in your own interests to move before then, and that Government wishes you to do this. You know that there is no good land available nearby, and that the only available place for you to move to is Lusitu.

"You have been told all the facts about this matter on many occasions, and you know that the Native Authority has agreed with the Lusitu plan, and fully supports it. Some people have raised objections to this move, and have caused trouble about it. Time is, however, now getting short, and the Native Authority has therefore made a law to compel people to move to Lusitu.

"The Government is quite satisfied that the Lusitu plan is in your best interests, and now intends to carry out this move without delay. Those who resist will be moved by force, using the police you see here today. The police will stay here till the move is finished.

"One village will be moved at a time. The people will be given warning to pack their things, and will then move in government

lorries. It will be in their own interests for them to cooperate with government staff during the move. Anybody who obstructs the move will be prosecuted. When people have moved from a village the huts will be destroyed."

This long message was received in utter silence. When it was finished, the police embarked in their trucks again, and Sugg and the others got into their Land-Rovers. And as they drove away, they heard from the village behind them the beat of drums. Alex stopped to listen, and the sound was taken up in other villages. For the first time in the twentieth century, the Tonga drums of war were being sounded.

16

THE DECLARATION OF WAR

NONE OF the party had ever heard war drums beaten in earnest—possibly there was nobody still alive in Northern Rhodesia who had heard it—and they did not understand exactly what it meant until the day was nearly over.

The next village where Sugg intended to make his announcement was five or six miles downstream, and they drove there in convoy: Sugg, Prior, and Alex in the front of the first Land-Rover, with Chief Chipepo, his uncle the old retired chief, and the head messenger Chimputu in the back, and the police in a second Land-Rover and several trucks behind. At a thickly wooded part of the track, they met a group of men, and as they drove on toward them the men began to shout and dance and brandish spears. Prior was driving, and he stopped, and everyone got out. Other men came darting from the bushes. Looking round, Alex saw that the forest was full of them, and they were not the Chisamu men. It looked like an ambush. Sugg and Prior consulted the officer in charge of the police, and he disembarked his men and formed them up on

each side of the convoy, facing outward toward the spearmen in the trees. In that formation, the convoy moved slowly on. The spearmen retreated. Just before the village, the track crossed a more open stretch of ground; and there, in a single line to right and left, were over a hundred men, all armed with spears, shouting and dancing in menacing attitudes. Sugg had never seen such a sight in all his twenty-five years in the service. Prior, remembering Sianzimbwe, thought the spearmen were working up their nerve for an attack. Alex immediately recognized men whom he knew quite well, and was horrified at this final change in their demeanor, this relapse into savagery.

The convoy stopped, and the police spread out to face the hostile line. There was a loud hailer in the police Land-Rover, and Prior put Chimputu at the microphone; and sentence by sentence, on Prior's instruction, the head messenger spoke to the spearmen. His voice, ten times life-size, bellowed in Tonga across the open glade. He said they must stop their warlike behavior. There would not be any war. The D.C. and the D.O. had not come to fight them. They had come to meet them in the village and tell them certain things. And he added on his own initiative: "We have an honorable man who sees over us; put down your spears and hear what he has to say, because he has been sent by Government."

He went on talking for a long time, but it had no effect except that half a dozen men who seemed to be leaders—though none of them were headmen—came forward from the rank and tried to shout him down. At this, the three officers all went forward too, till they were in shouting distance, and tried to make the leaders listen to reason, or let the headmen come forward, or let all the people come closer so that they could talk. Sometimes the rank of men began to drift toward the center, so that they could hear what was being said, but the spokesmen ordered them back to their extended line. Slowly the two small groups approached each other, till they could talk in almost normal tones in spite of the noise of shouting and singing which still continued. The attitude of the Tonga group seemed to grow less aggressive. Alex knew them all,

because they had all been involved in previous Congress incidents. Among them, Chimputu saw his own brother's son, who had the unusual name of Flower, and he called out in tones of extreme distress, "Flower, my nephew, listen to my words." But nobody would listen, and nobody would offer any coherent answer.

For two hours, the lines of men faced each other, the Tonga with their spears, gesticulating, dancing, and shouting old threats of war which they had used, generations before, to encourage themselves against the Matabele; the police with their scientific weapons, stolid and sternly disciplined. And in the middle, between the lines, the fruitless argument went on. But it was leading nowhere, and in the end Sugg had to admit defeat, and give up his intention of entering the village; and he told the whole convoy to withdraw and go back to camp.

In the afternoon, they all went out again to try the villages upstream. But to go that way, they had to pass close to Chisamu, and the scene there had totally changed since the morning. Beside the village, there was one conspicuous tree, and a great crowd of men had gathered round it. When these men saw the convoy coming, they also spread out in a line, and they charged toward the trucks, shouting and waving their spears. Sugg and the others jumped hastily out of the Land-Rover and signaled the police behind them, and the police deployed at the double and the spearmen halted. Prior again called up the police Land-Rover, and drove forward with Chimputu and the loud hailer; and this time, on Prior's direction, Chimputu read out a form of riot proclamation, commanding the men in the name of the Queen to disperse in peace. But they replied by shouting abuse and insults. Prior saw that Chimputu, who understood much better than he did what the men were shouting, was looking very worried. He was far from unworried himself. But what could be done? There was only a simple choice: either tell the police to force the spearmen to disperse, or else retreat again. Neither Sugg nor Prior wanted to start a fight, although the police would have won it very quickly; and the

governor's orders about the use of the police had been specific. So the convoy retreated to camp.

Later in the day, Alex traveled some distance alone with his own head messenger, Mugala. He met a party of men coming down toward the river, and recognized them. They were a gang who had been mending the road for the Native Authority. They looked very guilty, and he asked them where they were going. "To the war," they said.

Then, on another track, he met a solitary man whom he knew very well. He was an old man, and his name was Kachasa, but Alex liked to call him Davy Crockett because he wore a skin cap with a tail. He was an amiable fellow, full of fun, and this had been a friendly joke between them. It was perhaps a one-sided joke, because Kachasa could never have understood it, but it had seemed to please him that the D.O. had a special name for him. Alex stopped and leaned out of the window of the Land-Rover.

"Greetings, Davy," he said. "Where are you off to?"

"To the war," the old man said, politely taking off the skin cap and holding it in his hand.

"To the war?" Alex said. "But you're too old for that sort of foolishness."

"Oh, no," the old man replied. "When the drums call us to war, we all have to go."

"But who is the war against?" Alex asked him.

"You, I suppose," the old man said, with a very disarming chuckle; and they both went on their ways.

And that indeed was what was happening. Chipepo's people had declared war on the government, or, to be more precise, a few young hotheads had declared war on their behalf, and sent out the ancient signal of alarm; and now all the men in the district, even old innocents like Davy Crockett, were bound for Chisamu village where the drums had first been sounded, and they were carrying all the weapons they possessed—spears, axes, knobkerries, and shields, and a few muzzle-loaders which dated back to the ivory-trading days of the nineteenth century and could still

be loaded, with homemade gunpowder and lumps of metal cut to size by blacksmiths. Back in the camp that night, as dusk began to fall, Alex and his colleagues looked out across the plain at a spectacle which had not been seen since the Matabele wars. On the slope in front of Chisamu, the Tonga were gathered, four or five hundred strong, singing, dancing, and making mock attacks on one another, or squatting in groups with their spears stacked up beside them; and now and again a shout of welcome could be heard as new groups joined the throng.

When it was dark, Sugg, Prior, Alex, and the two senior police officers met to discuss what they should do; and throughout their discussion the beating of drums and blowing of horns could be heard across the plain. Each of them, in the back of his mind, was wondering whether the camp would be attacked that night. The three men who knew the peaceful Tonga could hardly believe they would attack. But they had to admit that twenty-four hours before, it would have been just as hard to believe that they would assemble armed for war. And each of them also was recollecting what he had read of the days of tribal warfare. In those days, when tribes could not win by force of arms, they tried to win by ruthless trickery, and victories were followed by bloodthirsty massacres. Now that the Tonga had sounded their drums, and succeeded in making the police retreat to camp, and worked themselves into a state of mad excitement, there was really no knowing what half-forgotten ferocious stratagems might come into their minds again, or what the souls—or the Congress men—might tell them they ought to do. Of course, the police had made their dispositions for defense, and if an attack was made they would certainly defeat it, although they seemed to be outnumbered five to one; but in a battle in the dark the slaughter might be awful.

Everyone at that conference agreed that if the Tonga did not attack, the police should disperse them early in the morning. That also might cause some casualties, but everyone felt at that moment that the longer the mob was allowed to defy the law, the more recklessly confident it would be. There still seemed a chance that

a mere show of determination by the police or, at the worst, some tear gas or some shots above the Tonga's heads might scatter them and make them go home again.

That plan was not what the governor had ordered, and so Sugg reported by radio what had happened and what he proposed to do. Later in the evening the governor called him in person, and refused to approve the plan. His view was exactly the opposite: that if the men at Chisamu were left alone, they would slowly lose heart as they had at Sianzimbwe. He told Sugg to ignore the Chisamu crowd, and continue to visit the other villages. He was to take part of the police force with him, so that they could show their strength, but to leave enough behind to defend the camp. No force was to be used unless the Tonga really attacked. He promised reinforcements of two more platoons of police in two days' time.

Nobody slept very well in the camp that night, and Alex slept less than most, because the police gave their orders by bugle, and even in his Air Force days he had never been much good at telling which bugle call was which. That night, with his nerves on edge, he jumped out of his skin whenever a bugle sounded. It happened first when he was going to bed and had taken off his shorts and put one leg in his pajama trousers. After the bugle call there was a rush of footsteps round his tent, and he hurriedly dressed again and took a small automatic pistol which somebody had insisted on giving him—it was the first and only weapon he ever carried in the valley—and he went outside prepared for anything. The bugle had in fact sounded "Stand to," and the police had manned the camp perimeter. But this was a false alarm. One of the guards had met a hippopotamus in the dark. Later in the night, Alex was awakened by the bugle, and this time the alarm was real. A group of Tonga had approached the camp. But they disappeared again, and the order was given to stand down. After that, Alex fell soundly asleep for a while, and when the bugle sounded for the third time he was out of the tent before he knew what he was doing. There were not many people about, and he saw that the

guards were looking surprised as he dashed for his post in his pajamas with his pistol in his hand. It was dawn, and the bugle had sounded reveille.

During the next four days, Sugg carried out the orders of the governor, by touring with one platoon of police to the twenty nearest villages while the remaining platoons faced the Tonga across the Chisamu plain. Here and there, he found halfhearted road blocks, but otherwise nobody tried to stop him. There was hardly anybody left, outside Chisamu. Some of the villages were totally deserted. In some, he found a few women and children. They listened to his announcement, and watched the police marching round and round their huts. They were not unfriendly, but they were frightened and quite bewildered; it seemed that their men, like men throughout history, had gone to war without consulting them. In any of these places, it would have been possible to have packed all the grain into sacks, and rounded up the goats, and bundled the whole equipment of the village into trucks and driven it, with or without the women, to Lusitu. But that not only seemed a mean thing to do, it would also have laid the government open to heaven knew what charges of theft and abduction. One could not take a herd of goats without a herdsman, or dump a family's year's supply of food untended on the ground; and whatever the men were doing, Sugg drew the line at taking away their wives and children.

At Chisamu, there was a constant series of alarms. Early on the first morning, the Tonga charged across the plain toward the camp, several hundred yelling men in a single line abreast. The police stood to, and when the spearmen saw them the line began to waver, and lost its impetus, and stopped, and the charge became a kind of demonstration, with fierce shouts and threatening gestures; and then the men gathered in groups, and began to retreat toward Chisamu. For everyone who had seen them coming, this had been a frightening spectacle. It was worst of all, perhaps, for the young chief, who had taken refuge in the camp. The police and the Europeans knew that in daylight the Tonga did not stand a chance,

and the Europeans were frightened less by the Tonga than by the fearful prospect of having to open fire. But Chipepo did not know much about the power of the guns. On the other hand, he had heard enough threats on his life in the past few weeks to know what would happen to him if the camp was overrun.

Several more of these abortive attacks were made in the next few days. In between them, the police drilled on the plain, and the Tonga watched them from a distance, and then began to drill themselves. They marched and countermarched in single file, carrying their spears like rifles on their shoulders, and instructors marched at the sides of the columns like sergeants or platoon commanders. Sometimes it looked like a parody, but perhaps they did it to convince themselves, or even to convince the police, that they were as good as any other soldiers. While they were marching, they sang. It was difficult to hear any words in what they sang, or to distinguish any tune, and only one refrain from their songs of war was ever recognized. The pathos of the words of it, sung by the deluded Tonga, was lost on the people who heard it at the time. They were singing, "We are Harry Nkumbula's men, and this is how we fight."

In spite of all the Tonga's warlike attitudes, Alex believed he could still go and speak to the men he had known so long. Sugg was quite willing to let him try, but neither of them had any taste for false heroics; so the first time he tried it, he went with a police officer in the police Land-Rover. That had two comforting advantages over his own. It was armored—not heavily, but enough to stop anything that might be thrown at it—and it had the loud hailer, so that he could talk to the people from well beyond spear range. They drove across the no man's land of the plain, and cruised up and down in front of the crowd. Alex told the people again and again that it was unlawful to gather there with weapons, and that they must go home and obey the Native Authority orders, or there was sure to be serious trouble. Most of them took no notice of him at all.

The next day, after another night disturbed by the drums and

horns of the Tonga and the bugles of the police, Prior took a turn with the loud hailer. Alex's speeches had been impromptu, but Prior had prepared a formal statement which was read for him in Tonga.

"'You have all seen the police that have been here for some days,'" he said. "'Many more police have arrived this morning. All these police will stay here till you return to your villages, and until you agree to move to Lusitu. You cannot stay here because the waters of the Kariba Lake will soon start to rise. Government has decided that you must move to Lusitu, and the Native Authority has made a law about the move.

"'The police are here to help in the enforcement of this law. The moves will start soon, and you must all return to your villages and be ready to pack up your things. Some of the police will be visiting other parts of Chipepo today. They are not going to take any action at Chisamu at present.'"

Again, the people took no notice of the Land-Rover driving up and down the plain, or of the voice which blared out of it; and that was not surprising, because the statement was so vague. The only thing which might have impressed the people was a definite threat of what would happen if they insisted on staying where they were, and Prior could not tell them what would happen because he did not know. The government, faced with this unprecedented situation, had not decided what it was going to do.

On the day after that, Sugg used the loud hailer to make a veiled threat. "Sooner or later," his statement ended, "the police will have to see that the law is obeyed. You cannot do anything against the police who have many guns which they will have to use if you continue in your foolishness. The Provincial Commission is willing to talk to headmen if you would like this."

This announcement did provoke one or two men in the crowd to answer. Alex, who had read it out in Tonga, heard them shouting that nothing would ever make them move.

During these four days, while the rival forces were poised in a perilous equilibrium on the plain, messages also passed from the

Tonga to the representatives of the government. Some came in letters to Alex, which were brought to the camp by emissaries, but most of them were nailed to trees between the village and the camp. Some were written on paper, and some were painted on flattened sheets of corrugated iron, and all of them were in English. Alex and the police took them down when they found them, and made a collection of them:

Congress

We shall die in our land we don't want to be moved if you destroy one headman's village we shall do what we like.

Congress

We don't want to be removed to Lusitu or to any place. We will not go home until you dismiss your army of policemen.

We will not fight with weapons but with words.

These messages, superficially so reasonable and so pathetic, only proved yet again that even at this eleventh hour the Tonga still believed it was a matter for discussion whether they should leave their land or not. They had still not understood that the flood was quite inevitable, and even the Congress men, who had been to the city to talk about it and must have known, had either forgotten this one inescapable fact, or else were deceiving the rest of the Tonga with utter callousness. Among the other notices there were several which simply said "One Man One Vote," and this parrot cry of African nationalism had perhaps never looked so forlorn as when it was nailed to trees in Tonga country.

At the end of the four days, Sugg had to admit that the Tonga strategy, crazy though it was, had been perfectly successful and had defeated the government's plan for forcing the move to Lusitu. He could not risk moving the empty villages, and while the government's policy prevented him using the police in any active role, he could not move the army at Chisamu. And so, after all his painstaking journeys round the deserted countryside, he reluctantly had to report again in much the same terms that he had used before:

nothing could be done at all till the Tonga at Chisamu were forced to go home again.

But even then the heads of government could not be persuaded. In their city offices, it was easier perhaps to keep a balanced view than in the beleaguered camp on the Zambesi. Whether they were right or wrong, they could not overlook two basic premises. First, the Tonga were not really to blame for their lawlessness. The blame lay with the Congress men, or still further back, with the decision to build Kariba. And second, although the Native Authority order had legalized the use of force, force in these circumstances was still repugnant to the principles and ideals of modern colonial government.

A meeting was held in town, between the governor and the heads of the administration, and there it was decided that the Secretary for Native Affairs, who was the permanent head of the whole department and Sugg's superior officer, should go to Chipepo to judge the situation for himself. Accordingly, he set off before dawn the next morning on the road to Gwembe. The police in the camp sent an escort to bring him through the last few miles toward the river, because the track passed close to Chisamu.

The Secretary's name was G. S. Jones, and of course he was well experienced with rural Africans; and it took Sugg and Prior and Alex a mere matter of hours to convince him that they were right. They took him with a small armed escort ten miles up the river and five miles down. The villages were still deserted, except for one, where Jones met and talked to a dozen men who had taken time off from the army at Chisamu and gone home to have some beer. They said, like everyone else, that they would never agree to move. And on this journey, Jones noticed, with a tactical eye, that if trucks were sent to the villages while the men were still armed and assembled, the winding track, with thick forest on each side of it, would be perfectly suited for an ambush. In fact, the trucks would have to pass within sight of Chisamu, and at the very point where the Tonga crowd could see the track there was a sandy gully which a truck could only cross dead slow in low gear.

In discussion that evening, Jones and all the others agreed that the logical thing was to move Chisamu village first. That could be done, they thought, by putting a cordon of police round the village to keep the spearmen out of it. The messengers would begin to pack up the village property. The village people would see what was happening, and if any of them showed any signs of wanting to help they could be let through the cordon, leaving their spears outside.

Late that night, Jones told the senior officer of the police that this plan was approved, subject only to the sanction of the governor. The next morning, Jones returned to town and Sugg went with him. Prior, Alex, and the police waited for the final order. But thirty-six hours later, Sugg came back to say that the governor had not agreed, but was coming in person, with full ceremony and a military band, to see if he could make the Tonga move.

17

THE GOVERNOR

TO THE SCENE of matters of life and death, the governor's visit brought an element of the purest fantasy. In retrospect, it is only too easy to see the fantasy and not the serious purpose of the visit. The governor, Sir Arthur Benson, was no mere figurehead. He had been a District Commissioner himself in Northern Rhodesia, and then he had worked in Uganda and Nigeria. Now, the ultimate responsibility was his for anything that happened in Chipepo. He was determined not to use force against the Tonga until every other possibility had been tried; and everything had been tried, except a ceremonial visit by the representative of the Queen. So he thought it his duty to try that as a last resort. He knew perfectly well that he had a very small chance of succeeding, and a very good chance of making himself look foolish; and nobody can deny that it takes a special kind of courage for anyone as exalted as a colonial governor to take a deliberate risk of losing his dignity.

From Alex's humble point of view, the news added a final touch to the dreamlike quality of the past few days. In the camp where

for a year he had lived and worked and worried all alone, in primitive conditions which had sometimes sunk into squalor, there were now two hundred policemen and there was soon to be music and formality, and he had been joined by a rising succession of seniors: Prior, Sugg, Jones, and now His Excellency. He began to worry, on top of his real worries, about tidying up his camp, and what he should wear, and problems of etiquette.

The governor was due to arrive at four o'clock on Saturday, the 6th of September. Early in the morning, Sugg sent Alex up to the Boma, first to make sure that the ants had not eaten his Colonial Civil Service uniform, which was stored there, and then to meet the governor on the road and bring him down into the valley. Then Sugg went out with the loud hailer to tell the Tonga that the governor was coming. This time, their answers were clearly audible. Some said it was all a trick to get them close together, so that the police could shoot them; and others said that it would not be the governor at all, but some old European farmer dressed up to look like him.

At two o'clock the band of the 1st Northern Rhodesian Regiment arrived in trucks, and were safely escorted past Chisamu to the camp. By four, a ceremonial guard of honor was drawn up with the band behind it, and a Union Jack on a temporary flagpole, halfway between the village and the camp; and Sugg, Prior, and the senior officer of police were waiting in some anxiety. A quarter of an hour passed, and no sign of Alex and the governor was seen. Then a party of fifty Tonga came in sight, a mile away downstream, marching toward Chisamu, and singing as they came. They were seen from the village, and greeted with jubilation by the assembly there. A hundred armed men dashed out to meet them, and they all made a procession which marched round and round on the plain before the village. Then the procession broke up into the most violent demonstration which had yet been seen, of ferocious attacks against imaginary enemies. For another half hour, while the demonstration gradually subsided, Sugg and the others were left to wonder what it all signified and what had happened to the governor.

At five o'clock the car was sighted, approaching the village with the police Land-Rover which had been sent to meet it. And to everyone's astonishment and concern, it did not approach the guard of honor, but stopped near the first of the groups of Tonga; and the governor and Alex and the governor's private secretary were seen to get out and walk, all by themselves, into the middle of the crowd of spearmen.

All the way down the sixty-mile road from the Boma, the governor had been asking Alex shrewd questions about the Tonga, and toward the end of the journey he said: "Now tell me your frank opinion. Do you think you and I could talk to these people alone?"

This was a very difficult question. Alex had always believed he could go among the Tonga without any harm, and he still believed it; but his belief had been considerably shaken in the last few days, and he had not yet put it to the test. He tried to avoid a direct answer.

"I don't think the police would like it, sir," he said.

But the governor insisted. He said that Alex knew Chipepo's people better than anyone. He wanted an honest answer, and in the end he made Alex give it.

"Well, personally, sir," Alex said unwillingly, "I think their resentment is mostly against the police. I don't think they'd do me any harm if I was alone. Or you, sir." He had not seen the bloodthirsty demonstration of hand-to-hand fighting which was going on at Chisamu at that moment.

"Well, let's try it and see," the governor said. And when they came to Chisamu and saw the spearmen, he stopped the car and got out with his private secretary, and told the police of the escort to stay where they were; and Alex followed him, miserably wondering whether he was right, and precisely what would happen if he was wrong. The governor seemed to be perfectly unworried, although he was staking his life on Alex's uncertain judgment.

But his boldness was successful. The same Tonga who had performed the mock massacre ten minutes before were sitting on the ground to rest from their exertions, with their spears stacked up

beside them. Seeing three of the enemy walking toward them, clearly unarmed, they seemed to be uncertain what to do, and so they did nothing, but simply sat where they were—in Tonga custom, it is rude to stand up before a chief. The governor walked into the middle of the nearest group and said: "Greetings. I am the governor. I have been told that something is troubling your hearts, and I have come to find out what it is." And with Alex interpreting, he told them that on the next day, when the sun was so high, he would hold an indaba. (Indaba is a Zulu word which is understood all over that part of the world to mean a formal meeting.) They should all come to his indaba, he said, to tell him what was troubling them, and why they were assembled with their spears. In the meantime, he had brought his band, and it would play for them.

Here and there, as they walked through the squatting crowd, Alex saw headmen and other elders, and he pointed them out, and the governor shook hands with them affably. It was noticeable that the older men were still instinctively polite, and smiled when the governor made jokes. The young men were more sullen, and tried not to answer when they were spoken to. But nobody reached for a spear.

The governor walked to half a dozen separate groups and had the same conversation; and then, to the intense relief not only of Alex and the private secretary, but also of Sugg and Prior who were watching from the plain, and most of all perhaps of the superintendent of police with his impotent guard of honor, he walked back to his car, and drove down to the plain, and inspected the guard and complimented its commander as if nothing had happened at all.

By that time it was nearly sunset, and he ordered the regimental band to march up to the foot of the slope by the village and carry out the ceremony of retreat. He himself walked over to the edge of the village, taking Sugg, Prior, Alex, and the superintendent with him; and there he joined a large group of spearmen, appearing to have nothing on his mind except the pleasure of listening to the band with them.

So far, the whole of his remarkable and courageous performance had certainly taken the wind out of everybody's sails, the Tonga and the police and the administration alike. Once again, thanks to him, they were on speaking terms.

After dark, Alex put on his best shirt to be ready to dine with the governor. When he went out of his tent, he found the band assembled outside the perimeter of the camp, and the bandmaster stepped smartly forward and asked him, "Are you ready, sir?"

"What for?" Alex said.

"For dinner music, sir," the bandmaster replied.

The governor was having a bath, but Alex was tempted by the whimsical thought of commanding musicians in the heart of the Gwembe Valley.

"Yes, quite ready," he said, and he sat down in a camp chair all alone; and the band struck up a selection from comic opera.

A full-dress indaba is a very impressive occasion, but like all other ceremonies its success depends on the willingness of the spectators to be impressed.

On the morning of September 7th, the governor turned out in white uniform, with his plumed hat and his sword, and Sugg, Prior, Alex, and the private secretary did the same. Alex's uniform was in tolerable order, but he could not find the frog which supported his sword. So he borrowed a bandage from a medicine chest, and put it over his shoulder underneath his tunic, and suspended the sword from that. But unluckily he had chosen a crepe bandage, and all through the solemn hours which followed, he was aware that the bandage was stretching longer and longer, and the hilt of the sword was sagging nearer and nearer to the ground.

Almost everybody, black or white, who had been trying to move the Chipepo people attended the indaba: the governor and the three administrative officers, young chief Chipepo and the old chief, the superintendent of police, Hezekiah Habanyama, the governor's private secretary, the messengers headed by Chimputu and Mugala, and the regimental band. The police were left in camp. An interpreter had been brought from the Boma, and Alex was instructed

to make verbatim notes of what was said. He found that this was quite easy to do, because the conversation, between the governor and his people, interpreted from English to Tonga and back again, was very slow.

A row of chairs was set under a very big tree at the foot of the slope—the people had firmly refused to have the indaba in the village. Sugg and Prior went there in advance, and formally received the governor. He inspected a guard of honor of messengers, the band played a royal salute, and he and all his officers took their seats. All that was lacking then was an audience. Hundreds of Tonga with spears had been watching these proceedings, in a semicircle of groups on the slope above, but all of them were far beyond speaking range. Chimputu was dispatched to ask them to come nearer so that they could hear the governor's words. After a time eight men, including Headman Chisamu, approached and stood in a nervous group about forty yards away. The rest took two or three steps forward, and then stood still again.

"Good morning," His Excellency said, and Chisamu's group answered him, "Good morning."

"I have come to talk to you and to hear your words," the governor said. "It would be good for all of us if you came nearer."

Somebody answered from the Tonga group: "We can hear very well from here."

"But I do not think my interpreter can hear you very clearly," the governor said. "It will be a good thing if you come closer."

Chisamu and the other seven men edged a little closer, but stopped in the shade of a tree, still thirty yards away.

"Is it perhaps that you fear that I and my people might play some trick on you?" the governor asked.

"Yes, we fear a trick," they said.

The governor offered to send some of his people to sit with the spearmen as hostages. They said they would consult their elders, but nothing seemed to happen, so he made his offer more specific. "This is my son, who is my private secretary," he said. "He will now go and sit over there till our meeting is finished."

Private secretary must have been hard to translate into Tonga,

but son would have been understood in the metaphorical sense in which he meant it. The secretary, with an air of confidence which seemed to Alex to be more than a little forced, stood up and walked to a distant group of spearmen. A messenger followed him, carrying a chair for him so that he should not lose dignity by sitting on the ground; a chair or a stool was a fundamental sign of rank among the Tonga. Many of the spearmen swore at the messenger and told him to go away, but he carried on and placed the chair and the secretary sat down on it. At that, confused argument broke out among Chisamu's group, and at last the interpreter said they did not want the secretary.

"Do you want my son to return here to us?" the governor said.

"We will be happy if that is done," they replied. "We do not wish to come closer."

So the governor told the secretary to come back, and the messenger marched out and collected the chair and carried it back again, this time in dead silence.

It took about twenty minutes to lure the Tonga to a reasonable speaking distance. At last, the governor moved back with all his officials to the very edge of the shade of his tree, so that Chisamu's group could dare to come into the edge of the shade on the far side of it. By then, the group had grown. Before the end, there were thirty or thirty-five men in it, and another fifty or so were under other trees, near enough to hear most of what was said. And then the governor said, "Let us begin."

He started by telling them who he was. The Queen, he said, had sent him to Northern Rhodesia to be her ears and eyes and mouth, to see and hear things and report them to her, and to say things which would be her words. She had told him to look after all the people of Northern Rhodesia and do everything that was right for their welfare. Now he had heard that there was trouble in Chipepo, and he had come to hear what it was so that he could consider it and decide what was to be done. "I do not know why you are frightened," he said. "If people are frightened it is difficult for me to get to know the facts."

"The police are here," a spokesman said, "and they have come to make war on us."

"The police are my police," the governor said. "There will be no war here while I am here. If any war starts then it will be you who will start it. These words I speak are the Queen's words. I repeat, there will be no war today. There will be no tricks today. If there are any tricks they will be your tricks. Think well now and tell me later if you wish to speak to me and tell me what is the trouble. I have finished."

There was a pause, and then one of the men whom Alex knew as a Congress tax collector said: "We have heard your words. If you do not want war, then when you go you must take your police with you. There is trouble in this place."

"Who will speak?" the governor said. "Chisamu?"

"Yes," the headman said. "These people assembled here have come for war because they have heard that there is trouble here. On Friday last week police entered my village with guns, cursing and frightening our women. They burned houses and destroyed grain bins. We menfolk were most of us away in another village at a beer-drink. People at the beer-drink said they had heard that the police had stolen three drums from another village. The people were very frightened and there was much talk, and we all came back to my village to see. I do not know why the police are here. Perhaps the governor will tell me. People are afraid that the police have come to shoot them. All these are the things I have heard, though some of the things I have myself not seen. We fear that there is war."

"Yes, we fear that there is war," one of the Congress men added. "The governor has asked these people to come, these police. Or is he not aware that they are here? Was he not told? We think the governor knows of this. It will be all right if he takes them away."

"The police who are here are my police," the governor said, "and they have come here because I told them to come here. The Chief tells the people what to do. The people do not tell the Chief what to do. I tell my police what to do. I speak to Chisamu. Where are these burned houses? Where are these destroyed grain bins? You

have heard this thing from women. Do we listen carefully to what the bird singing in the bush is saying? Do we think there is truth in words that are spoken at a beer-drink? I ask you now to take me, me alone, and show me one burned house or one destroyed grain bin."

"No houses have been burned," Chisamu said, "and no grain bins destroyed. We feared that the police would destroy them."

"Yes," another man said, "the police said they had come to burn houses and grain bins. We have heard that we are to be resettled. Does the governor know about resettlement?"

At last, this brought the conversation to the point, and the governor explained once more, at length and in very simple words, the whole of the story of Kariba. At the end of it he said: "Perhaps there is another question you will ask me. Why does the governor not agree to let us stay here until the water comes, and then to move away? I cannot agree to that because of the Queen's words. The Queen has told me to look after *all* her people—not only the young and able men. The water is likely to rise very quickly this year. You are strong young men, and you can escape, but what about your grandmothers and your young children? They cannot run quickly. Can I tell the Queen that old people and young children have been drowned? So I have decided that you must move before the river comes up. If you agree to obey what the Native Authority and the Queen have said, I will remove the police now."

"Where should we move?" the people said. "Where to?"

"You are asking a question to which you know the answer," the governor said. "You know very well where you will move to."

"How do we know that the water will not enter Lusitu?" someone shouted.

"The water will not come up in Lusitu," the governor said. "It is below the dam. The high hills will prevent water going there."

Another of the Congress men joined in and said: "But the Native Authority agreed that the dam should be built, and did they inform people about Kariba? Did the people agree that the dam was to be built?"

"The Native Authority were not consulted before the decision to build Kariba was taken," the governor said.

"Then we will stay on our God-given land, water or not," the man replied. "How can this be decided without our agreeing?"

"In big matters like this, little people are not consulted," the governor said. "This is a very big matter. In big matters the Queen does not consult small men."

"We will stay here, and when the water comes we will move away from it."

"I will not allow you to kill your grandmothers or your young children. If any person dies because you refuse to move, it will be the same as if you had taken an ax and killed them."

"If a man kills himself, that is suicide and no case comes to anybody."

"If a man kills himself that is suicide, and no one can bring a case against him because he is dead. But if a man kills his grandmother because he is obstinate, then it is the same as murder, and if a man commits murder then he can be hanged. I am not prepared to allow this to happen."

This argument really reached the crux of the matter. Even the Congress men seemed to have admitted, for the moment at least, that the dam was really going to make the water rise; but they insisted that they should stay where they were, to see that it really happened, and then, if it did, to move back to the hills as they had always moved in the past. The governor was adamant in sticking to the government's policy that they must move before the flood began, but in the end he made a new suggestion.

"I want you to consider this," he said. "I will ask you a question. Will you agree that all of you here shall stay here until the water comes up, but you will agree to let me take all the old women and the other women and all the children to Lusitu now?"

But several people, all at once, said emphatically that they would not agree with that. Then after a pause, while they all talked among themselves, he said:

"I have another thing to tell you. If all the headmen whose

villages have to move will come to me and tell me they will move, then I will take my police away. But I will do so only if the headmen say so."

One of the Congress men started to speak, but the governor stopped him, saying: "This is not a question for any man except the headmen. I will hear this from Chisamu and other headmen only."

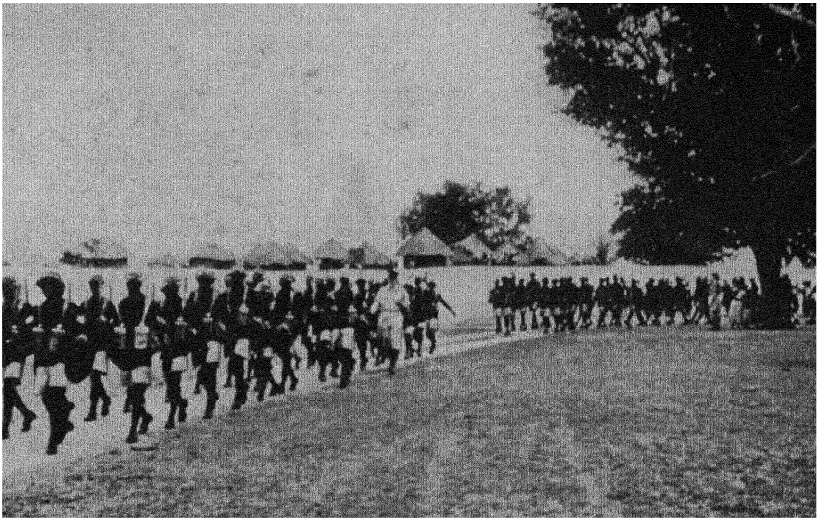
There was another pause, and then another Congress man said: "We will not go to Lusitu. When the water comes up we will move away."

"Chisamu," the governor said, "I say this to you: Shameful things are happening in your village. When I came here no one came to greet the governor. The governor had to go to the people. When he met the people there were no greetings. Those are shameful things. . . . Am I to report this to the Queen?"

"The governor arrives in the midst of trouble," Chisamu said. "Until we knew better and had heard your words today, you were considered an enemy."

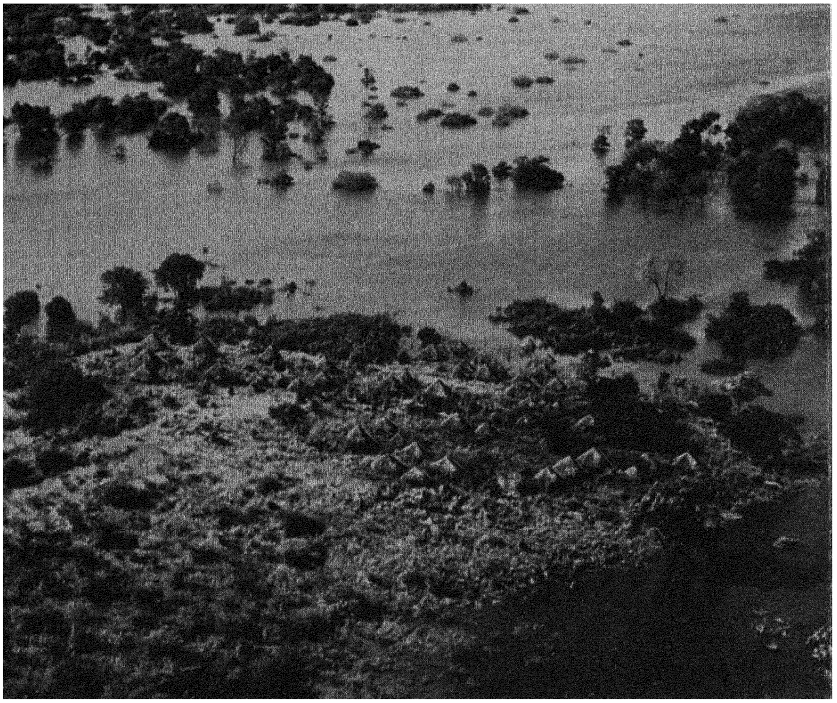
"I have heard your words," the governor said. "I say this to you, Chisamu. Go now and tell all the other headmen my words, and let them think about my words. When they are ready to reply to my words you can send a message to me and perhaps we may have another talk this evening. If I do not hear from you today, I will hold another meeting tomorrow morning. This meeting is finished. Stay well."

The governor rose and walked slowly to his car, and all his attendants followed him back to camp. It had to be admitted, when they came to talk it over, that the indaba had not achieved very much. It did seem to have reawakened, among a few older men like Chisamu, the feelings of man-to-man respect for the British which had been a lifelong tradition in the valley; but Alex had also achieved that many times in the last few months, and it had never lasted long. The indaba had brought the brash young Congress men into open argument, but it had not shown whether they had any positive policy, anything more to advocate than a mere stubborn refusal to move in the face of all common sense. Chisamu's stories





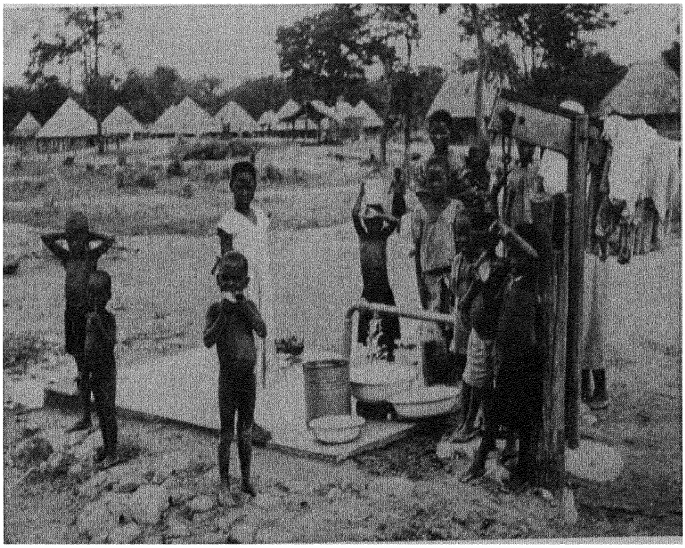
Above: On the plain before Chisamu village, police marched past the Indaba tree and (*below*) the armed Tonga marched with spears in imitation.



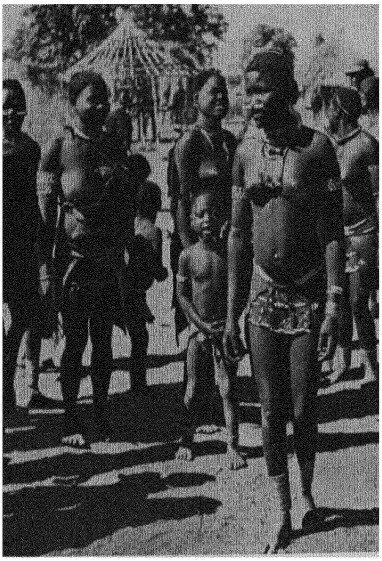
Above: When the dam was closed, the water crept inexorably round it.
Below: A deserted village waiting for the flood.







Above: In Chisamu, on the day of the battle, District Messengers loaded the people's crops and property. *Below:* In the new villages, far from the river, the village pumps became meeting places.





Above: Before the move, Tonga girls in the dress they had worn since Livingstone's day. *Below:* A few months after the move, at a baby show run by the District Commissioner.

of burned huts and stolen drums had shown how rumors could spread and be believed; for the first of these stories had probably grown from the Native Authority's order that villages could be destroyed when the people had moved, while the second story had no germ of truth at all.

The only hopeful result of the whole long argument was in the governor's final instructions to Chisamu. That had left the issue clear-cut between the headmen and the Congress men, between established authority and senseless anarchy. Now it was up to the headmen to reassert their authority, and if they could not do it, there was nothing more that anyone could do.

During that afternoon, whenever Alex and the others looked anxiously from the camp across the plain, they saw large groups of men below the village, and sometimes individuals could be seen, gesticulating as if they were making speeches. Clearly, arguments were going on, and the Tonga were divided. While there was anything left to argue about, there was still a ray of hope. But the governor waited all the afternoon and evening for a message from Chisamu, and nothing came. Night fell, and passed; and that night there were no more sounds of drums or horns or jubilation from the village.

The next morning the governor went, as he had promised, to hold a second meeting; but even before it started, Alex had given up hope of a peaceful settlement. When the governor took his place, beneath the same tree as before, nobody came forward from the mass of people who were watching from the slope. Head messenger Chimputu was sent to say that the governor was ready, and after a while Headman Chisamu and two of the Congress men arrived with three other men. The governor greeted them, and asked Chisamu to send one man to call some more to the meeting. There was another long delay. Alex saw that men with spears were spreading out to surround the place of the meeting at a distance. Somebody was organizing them to take up positions ready for attack. Then two more village headmen, whose names were Mazulu and Namukungulu, came forward unwillingly, followed by half a

dozen others, and with this meager audience, fifteen men from the hundreds who were watching silently, the governor began.

"Chisamu," he said, "I asked you yesterday to tell all the people my words. I hope you have told them those words, and I have come here today to hear what your answer is."

"Yes," Chisamu said. "As the governor advised me I went and spoke to all headmen, but they feared to come because the governor arrived in the middle of war."

"Yesterday I asked you to think of many things which I had spoken," the governor said. "Today I want to know the answers."

"The people are gathered here because they do not want to go to Lusitu," Chisamu said. "We cannot be resettled by force. We are still working out our own ideas of resettlement. When the water comes up we will move away from it."

The governor asked if anyone else had any more words to say, but they replied that they had spoken; so he said: "I told you yesterday and you have all heard that the Native Authority had made an order, that it was brought to me, and that I had agreed with it. The Queen has agreed that I can move the people now, so that the young babies and the old people do not drown in the water. These then are the Queen's words: 'You will begin to move now.' Do you refuse these words? You must think carefully before you answer. Do you refuse these words?"

"To reply is difficult," Headman Mazulu said. "We will not move. Let the water come up and kill us."

And Headman Namukungulu added: "When the Queen decided to close the Zambesi River, she decided to kill everybody. If the Queen wishes to kill us, we cannot run away."

"Those are foolish words," the governor said. "These are the Queen's words: 'So that you shall not suffer you will move now before the water starts to rise.' "

"The governor says my words are foolish because I am black," Namukungulu said.

"These too are foolish words," the governor said. "The Queen has many people, many black people and many white people. Some

of the white people are wise and some are foolish. So also some of the black people are wise and some are foolish. But the Queen makes no distinction between white or black or wise or foolish. To the Queen all these people are her people."

This argument threatened to lead into a side issue, but the governor brought the discussion back to the point.

"I have an easy question for you," he said. "Do you refuse the Queen's words?"

One of the Congress men answered, "We refuse them."

"This is a shameful thing," the governor said. "Chisamu, much shame has happened at your village. Shall I report to the Queen these shameful things?"

But Chisamu did not answer. Namukungulu said, "We refuse the Queen's words because we want to stay here."

Then the governor slowly read out in the name of the Queen the relevant parts of the Native Authority's order, and gave a formal instruction to the three headmen to go back to their villages and to start moving that day.

"Do you understand these words?" he asked.

"We do not understand," Namukungulu said.

The governor repeated the order and his instruction.

"Now, Namukungulu, do you understand these words?"

"No," Namukungulu said. "I do not understand because I do not believe we are to be removed because of the floods."

Alex's heart sank. The argument was back exactly where it had been a year before, and all the patient labor of trying to reassure the Tonga had been wasted. And looking up, he saw that the spearmen had formed two-thirds of a circle round the place, each man standing motionless, a hundred yards away, with his weapons in his hand.

The governor persisted, but the refusal was adamant. Then he tried to shame them, saying that never since he came to Rhodesia twenty-six years before had he seen such shameful things. But two men got up and began to walk away. Another began a rambling discourse, too fast for the interpreter to follow. The governor let it

continue till its rising tone seemed likely to break up the meeting in confusion, and then he called: "Quiet. I asked all people whether they wished to talk before and all said 'No.' Now I speak only to the headmen."

Then Headman Mazulu said, "We are frightened that the troops may move into our villages."

"The Queen's words must be obeyed," the governor said. "If they are not obeyed, it will be necessary to enforce them."

At that, all the men rose up, shouting together, waving their arms and gesticulating to the groups on the slope behind and the ring of spearmen. Insults and threats were shouted back. The fifteen men who had been at the meeting walked away, and the tumult grew. The governor sat still and silent for about two minutes. Then he said:

"I think that ends our business. Perhaps we should move also."

18

THE BATTLE

TWO DAYS later, early in the morning, the police were prepared for action. The governor had gone, and so had his regimental band; but before he left, he had agreed that every possible alternative had been tried, and he had approved the plan Sugg had proposed a week before: to cordon off Chisamu village and move it first of all. Accordingly, Alex had been sent to the village to serve a notice of removal on Headman Chisamu. After two attempts, he had not been able to find the headman, and none of the village people would accept the notice, so he had nailed it to the tree where the indaba had been held. It was written in English and Tonga and signed by Prior, and it said:

> To headman Chisamu and all villagers of Chisamu. In terms of the Gwembe Tonga (Removal) Rules 1958 and of the Removal Order made by the Gwembe Tonga Native Authority on the 27th August 1958, as read with the Gwembe Tonga Removal Amendment Rules 1958, I hereby order you to move from your present village today and proceed to the Lusitu resettlement area.

When the superintendent of police drove past the tree a little later, this notice had been taken down and a new one put up in reply:

> Hey. This land is ours given by God. You are from away. All that you wrote is vanity you should remove those Native Authority people and the Chief it is true we don't want to move. Shame on you. By Committee.

The superintendent had drawn up a detailed operation order for putting the cordon round the village. He had 160 men to carry it out, besides the officers and the Boma messengers. Thirty were armed with riot guns which fired tear-gas shells, thirty with rifles, seventy-five with shotguns and Number 4 shot, and the rest with batons and shields and tear-gas grenades. The officers carried automatics or submachine guns, and the messengers, for the first time, had also been given batons. The opposition was far greater in numbers, but armed, so far as was known, with nothing but the weapons of the Iron Age—spears, axes, clubs, and shields.

In the operation order, the object was defined as to move the headman and people of Chisamu village and their possessions to Lusitu, by force if necessary. The order was strict about the use of force. No more would be used than was needed. All constables would be taught to say "Bikansi masumu kani," which was Tonga for "Put down your spears." If armed spearmen menaced the police, tear gas would be used first, and if that did not stop them shotguns would be aimed at their knees. Rifles would only be used as a last resort, and only on orders from the command.

But the order also said that what it called "disarmed males" should not be allowed to escape, but should be arrested and handcuffed in pairs and impounded in a barbed-wire enclosure in the camp. Of course, all the men at Chisamu were already liable to arrest for taking part in an armed assembly and disobeying the Native Authority order; and of course it was the normal job of the police to arrest people who broke the law. But the order to arrest as many as possible suggested the use of more force than the move

to Lusitu required, and it was not really in accordance with the object of the operation. Indeed, if the police succeeded in carrying out this part of the order and arrested all the men at Chisamu, there would not be many men left in Chipepo's district who would be moved to Lusitu. But nobody worried much about this apparent contradiction, because everybody was certain that "Bikansi masumu kani" would be enough, and that the Tonga would give up as soon as they saw that the police meant business.

At eight o'clock on the morning of September 10th, Alex set off in the police Land-Rover for the far side of Chisamu village, together with Sugg, the superintendent, and head messenger Mungala. None of these four men liked what he was doing. Alex's feelings were a mixture of extremes. He had been the first to be convinced, some months before, that the police were the only people who would ever move his Tonga. But he was still sickened by the thought of threatening such simple folk with guns. He could not manage to think of the Tonga as enemies. He felt resentment against the dozen or so who were guilty of misleading all the rest; but they were far outnumbered by the hundreds of courteous friendly men he knew—humorous old men like Davy Crockett, easygoing and not very clever men like Headman Chisamu, serious, saintly men like some of the Sikatongos—and of course by the women, who were not to blame at all, and by their charming children. Toward them all, he had a feeling not of enmity but of guilt. He could not forget that if his own powers of persuasion had been stronger, this desperate situation would never have come to pass, and it made no difference that the powers of persuasion would have had to be superhuman.

Behind the Land-Rover, as it drove across the plain and passed the village, there were two troop-carrying trucks, each loaded with a platoon of police. At the same time, three other platoons were driving out on the other side of the village. Empty trucks were waiting at the camp, ready to come to the village as soon as the cordon was completed, so that the loading of the villagers' property could begin. A doctor had been summoned from the hospital a hundred

miles away, and he also was waiting, with orderlies and an ambulance.

As Sugg and Alex passed the village, they saw the Tonga army still gathered on the slope. There had been more beating of drums and singing in the night, but now it was quiet.

The Tonga saw the trucks. But every morning, at about that time, squads of police had been out in trucks to gather firewood, so the Tonga thought they were doing that again, and they did not take any notice.

Headman Chisamu was sitting outside his hut with his wives and some of his children, and he also saw the trucks go past. But he did not know what had been written on the paper which had been nailed to the tree. People had told him about it, but the people who told him could not read, nor could he, and the paper had been taken away by the Congress men. Some of them could read, but he did not like to ask them. And the Congress men were still saying that if the people were strong the government would be weak, and nobody would ever have to move. So he also thought the police were going for firewood, even when he saw the trucks stop in the trees beyond the village and the policemen begin to get out.

And then Chisamu saw more police in the woods to the west, and he stood up, puzzled and alarmed. There was a bang, and a puff of smoke appeared in the sky. Some men rushed through the village carrying spears. His wives gathered up the children and ran between the huts toward the forest, and he ran into his hut and cowered there, and heard shouts and hurrying feet; and then, to his horror, he heard the sound of guns.

The bang was a Very pistol which the superintendent fired when his men were deployed and ready. On that signal they started to advance toward the village. Sugg and Alex drove forward with them in the Land-Rover. They had nothing to do till the police had established the cordon.

But before they even came to the edge of the village a crowd of Tonga came running through it and charged toward them, shouting, in a ragged line, and every one of them had a shield on his left

arm, a bundle of spears in his left hand, and one spear in his right hand poised to throw. Sugg thought: I must read the Riot Act; and he got out of the truck to do it, but there was no time for such formalities. They came on fast. At fifty yards the platoon commander ordered tear gas, and the riot guns opened up. The shells burst at the feet of the spearmen and the smoke swirled up, but they came on through it, and Sugg saw spears come flying through the air. He was much too surprised to be frightened. In all his twenty-five years, nothing like it had ever happened, and he had never dreamed the Tonga would be so foolish or so brave.

The police had halted. Well within spear range, the platoon commander told one constable to use his shotgun. The superintendent saw the man the constable was aiming at. He raised his arm, and the spear throw and the shot were simultaneous. The man stopped in his tracks, stood for a second or two, and then ran back to the shelter of the huts, and some of the others ran back with him. But others came on, more shotguns opened fire, and the two head-on advances became a melee among the huts and trees. The Tonga were running here and there, flinging their spears and hiding behind the huts, the policemen dodging out of the way of spears when they saw them coming. From the other sides of the villages also, gunfire could be heard, and Sugg saw the next platoon on the right falling back before a charge.

The superintendent saw it too, and he ran over toward the platoon to steady it. Not even he had ever seen an attack with spears before. He reached the platoon in time to see a mob of Tonga rush it and break through its ranks and run into the woods behind it.

Beyond those woods, a platoon's troop carrier had been parked and its African driver had been left in charge of it all alone. His name was Constable Machisa, and he had a rifle and fifty rounds of ammunition and nothing else. He heard the shooting, and then a crowd of men burst out of the trees and charged toward him. He tried to shout, "Bikan'si masumu kani," but Tonga was a foreign language to him, and they took no heed but threw some spears toward him. Alone there with his truck, he fired off all the rounds in

his magazine, but he remembered to aim at the feet of the men, and they scattered and ran, and he did not see any of them fall. He loaded again and shot at two more groups which seemed to be coming to attack him. He picked up six spears which had been thrown at him and carefully put them in his truck. And then he saw women and children running, coming out of the forest, looking apprehensively up and down the track where he was standing, and crossing it into the forest on the other side. The forest was full of people running away from Chisamu.

Young Chief Chipepo had been left in the camp and had not been given any part to play. The threats and insults and tension of the past months had come to a terrible climax, and when he heard the shooting he was very frightened—so frightened that he climbed right down the riverbank, perhaps with some thought that if his own people won the day and overran the camp, he might jump into the water and chance the crocodiles.

Alex stayed in the Land-Rover. Sugg had gone to join the superintendent and taken Mungala with him, so Alex was alone; and he was so horrified at what was happening that he was on the edge of breaking down. He could not see very much, only the smoke billowing from the tear-gas shells and the Tonga running across his restricted view, and once a man in the act of throwing a spear. But beside him a short-wave radio blared out reports from other platoons of attacks and countermeasures. The police were advancing slowly but inexorably through the village. He also drove slowly down to the middle of it, and then he saw Sugg and the superintendent at the top of the slope overlooking the plain, and he drove on and got out and joined them.

Down below was the place where the Tonga had assembled, and beyond it the indaba tree and the wide plain and the camp on the riverbank. Now the police were spread out in a loose line across the plain, and scattered Tonga were milling round, and just at the foot of the slope a group of fifty or sixty was moving toward the river. The police were close on their heels, yelling in unison, "Bikansi masumu kani." Some of the Tonga put up their hands. All

of them seemed to be going to surrender. Then Alex saw among them one man who had painted his shield in white and red, and he recognized the most troublesome of all the Congress men; and that man, with his shouts and warlike gestures, seemed to be urging the others to carry on the fight. Alex had a momentary feeling of pure rage, and wished he had a gun to shoot the man. And suddenly all fifty men wheeled like a frightened flock of sheep and leveled their spears and charged back toward the village, directly at the line of police. The police opened fire but they could not stop the rush. Almost at hand-to-hand distance, the police line broke and the Tonga ran through the break and straight on across the slope and into the trees beyond. The superintendent blew a whistle and shouted an order to cease fire. And Alex saw a body face downward and looked again: and beside the head, and trampled in the dust, he saw the skin cap, which he had always thought was funny. Old Davy Crockett, who had gone to the war so gaily, was dead.

The cordon was thrown round the village, the men facing outward toward the forest. Alex and Sugg and Prior drove round it with the superintendent. The young European officers of the police seemed shaken by what they had done; the African constables were more impassive. At one place a few Tonga were still threatening the cordon from the woods, and at another two Tonga were seen in the bushes with muzzle-loaders; but most of the five hundred warriors had fled. The ground was littered with spears; nobody could tell how many had been thrown in anger and how many dropped in haste. Police were taking dead and wounded to the camp. Outside the village, a small batch of prisoners had been rounded up. The huts themselves appeared to be deserted.

At that moment, none of the three administrative officers had any time to regret the past or plan the future, because the object of the operation had still to be achieved, and their own part it in had still to be begun. Prior went down to the camp to bring up the trucks which were waiting, and he also found a few women and two men of Chisamu who came willingly to help in the packing. It went

without saying that Headman Chisamu's own property should be the first to be moved, and Prior took a party of messengers to begin the distasteful job. One of them went into the hut; and there was the headman, hiding under his bed. They brought him out into the daylight, a very frightened and repentant man. Prior told him there was nothing more to be frightened of. There was no more fighting. All they were going to do was to pack up the village and move it, and the headman had better help; and so he did. The messengers went from hut to hut, taking out the pots and pans and blankets, and the pestles and mortars and stools, and loading them into the trucks with as much care as they could in the circumstances. The grain bins were broken open, and the grain was packed in sacks. Police who could be spared from the defenses came to help, and during the morning fifty women and children crept out of the forest again and asked to be allowed to pack their own possessions. Some of them also volunteered to go to find their men and bring them home. By the late afternoon, fifteen five-ton trucks had been loaded and sent off in a convoy to Lusitu. Some of the empty huts were burned, in accordance with the Native Authority order; but this seemed vindictive, and it soon became clear that it was quite unnecessary. None of the people who went to Lusitu would ever come back again.

Down in the camp, the doctor and his orderlies were busy. He himself had watched most of the engagement, and what he had seen and heard had made him expect enormous casualties. But they were very much less than he had feared. Six Tonga were brought in dead, and sixteen wounded. The wounded were given first-aid treatment and sent off, within an hour, on the hundred-mile journey to hospital. Two of them died on the way. The survivors found themselves, within a single morning, transported from one world to another, attended by nurses and put into beds with springs and mattresses and sheets. Almost all the wounded had been hit by shotguns, and it was certain that many more had escaped and were still in hiding somewhere in the forest.

During the morning, post-mortems were done on the dead, and

they were buried in the afternoon. Three had been shot by rifles or the automatics of the officers, one had been killed by a baton blow, and the others by shotgun fire. None of the Congress men was among these dead or wounded.

Nor among the casualties were there any policemen; and in fact not a single policeman had been hurt, except one who had some shotgun pellets in his wrist from the gun of one of his own companions. When the police themselves heard this news they were astonished, and naturally glad; but they were also acutely embarrassed. Police are always subject to criticism, especially in Africa, and they expected at once to be accused of shooting when they were not in any danger. But in fact, nobody ever criticized them for what they did that day. It may well have been that some of the Tonga's charges were not attacks at all, but only panic. But nobody who saw the charges coming could have known that at the crucial moment, and it is never part of the duty of policemen to let themselves be killed. So many spears had been thrown that it seemed extraordinary that none had found a mark. But spears are not like bullets, it is possible to dodge them. Perhaps many of them had been thrown at random. Certainly some of the Tonga were affected by the tear gas, and could not possibly have taken careful aim. And perhaps, after so many years of peace, the Tonga were simply not very good at throwing spears.

The camp that night was very solemn. All the Europeans in it were searching their hearts and consciences, and asking themselves what more they could have done to avert this last disaster. Each of the three who had been there longest, Sugg, Prior, and Alex, could remember decisions or acts, either their own or those of others, which seemed mistakes in retrospect. But each of them, even in this mood of self-criticism, knew he had done his best from day to day to uphold the tradition he had inherited. The truth was that the intrusion of industry into the valley had overwhelmed tradition. Kariba, the Tonga's innocence, the Congress intervention, and the ideal of government by consent: with those four initial causes, the battle at Chisamu had been inevitable. If Kariba had never been built, if the

Tonga had had more worldly wisdom, if Congress had refrained from adding its own confusion, or if the government had taken earlier the dictatorial powers it despised—then eight harmless men might not have been lying dead.

19

THE ANIMALS

FOR FOUR MONTHS the drowning valley was empty of all humanity. The next men who went to the place where Chisamu had been, and crossed it in boats above the huts and trees, had nothing to do with the Tonga. They were game rangers. A totally unexpected flood of publicity had burst on the Gwembe Valley.

It had always been obvious, to anyone who knew the valley, that when the lake began to rise a great number of the lesser hills and tracts of rising ground would be surrounded by the water, and would remain as temporary islands until they were submerged. And it was also obvious, to anyone who happened to think about it, that some of the animals in the valley would be marooned on the islands and would probably starve or drown. But nothing had been done about it. The Europeans in the valley had been far too concerned in rescuing the Tonga to worry about the animals; and if the Tonga had thought about it at all, they would only have been distressed to think that so much good food would be wasted.

Even in the cities of Rhodesia, nobody had regarded this as a

very serious matter. Animals in Rhodesia were controlled by the game departments of the two governments, which employed about a dozen European game rangers and some African guards. In game reserves it was their job to protect the animals; but in some other areas in Southern Rhodesia it was their job to slaughter them, in order to control the spread of tsetse fly. In the twelve years before the flood began, the Southern Rhodesian Government had killed a third of a million head of game in tsetse-fly control, and the Africans had killed an enormous but unknown number for food. Whatever happened in the Gwembe Valley, only a minute fraction of this quantity of sizable animals was likely to die; and so, if one thought of the animals without sentiment, as statistics, the flood could not be regarded as a very important incident. Indeed, some Rhodesians argued that if a great tract of big-game country had to be destroyed, the balance of nature would be less disturbed if the game it supported were destroyed as well.

In any case, there was nothing that anyone could do. The best maps of the valley showed only contours rather vaguely at intervals of twenty-five feet, and nobody knew how fast the lake would rise; so it was quite impossible to foretell either where or when the islands would be formed. And since nothing of the kind had ever happened before, nobody knew how many or which of the animals would save themselves by swimming.

But there was one thing which might have been foreseen: that by doing nothing, however good the reason, the governments were heading for world-wide criticism. The fate of the fifty thousand Tonga had hardly caused a ripple in the world's newspapers; the fate of a few thousand animals was to cause a storm.

As soon as the lake began to fill, four game rangers pitched camp at Kariba, and started to make sorties up the lake in outboard motor boats, to try to find out, as a matter of interest, what the animals were doing. By any ordinary standards of seamanship, their expeditions were dangerous in the extreme. By then, the water was full of floating logs and debris, and trees still standing with their tops below the surface. To reach the land, the men had to force their

boats through the branches of broad belts of drowning trees, till open water was far out of sight behind them. These trees were full of billions of crawling things which were seeking refuge: snakes would drop off them when they were shaken by the boats; and crocodiles were feasting in the shallows. If all went well, the men found indeterminate swampy shores, where the tepid water gurgled among the undergrowth; but even while they moored the boats the water crept on and on. The shores they explored one day had vanished by the next.

They could see that the forests, and the deserted gardens and villages of the Tonga, were teeming with animals; but while the rains were falling and the water was rising fast, they could seldom discover which parts of the shores were islands or which of the animals still had a way of escape. Nevertheless, compassion rather than reason began to guide the rangers. Here and there, they found baboons or monkeys stranded in the treetops. Baboons are counted as vermin in Rhodesia, because they are so destructive in the Africans' gardens, and a reward of $0.35 is paid by government agents for a baboon's tail. But the rangers could not bring themselves to leave them where they were, to drown or starve. They began to catch them, with their bare hands, at the risk of their own lives, and to set them free on the mainland to take their chance with the first man they met who wanted the bounty.

It was three months after the dam had been closed, in February, 1959, that the public outcry started; and the reluctant rangers found that they were a much bigger story than the building of the dam itself. A Rhodesian journalist had heard what they were doing, and invented the title Operation Noah; and soon, in the camp at Kariba, the rangers were far outnumbered by journalists and cameramen and commentators from all over the world who wanted to go with them on their expeditions. Societies for the preservation of wildlife, or prevention of cruelty, became quite properly concerned about Kariba, and less responsible animal lovers in Britain and America rose up in arms against the Rhodesian governments for making inadequate preparations to save the animals. A British country maga-

zine called the *Field* turned aside from fox-hunting to quote Genesis and mentioned negligence, thoughtlessness, hypocrisy, and lack of elementary decency, and to say that one of the world's great heritages of wildlife faced extinction. Appeals were launched for money and volunteers and boats. The Southern Rhodesian Government, which knew how deadly dangerous the lake had now become, took fright at the prospect of having it full of amateur rescue parties which themselves might very soon have needed rescue, and it declined all help; but the Northern Rhodesian Government accepted some of the money which had been collected and set up a camp for its rangers on the road which had led from the Boma down to the river at Chisamu.

A routine statement from the Southern Rhodesian Game Department, in the middle of all the excitement, revealed that the south shore of the lake, where most of the rescued animals were being landed, adjoined a tsetse-fly area, and that during the rainy season, while the rangers on the lake had rescued three hundred animals from islands, government hunters sixty miles away had slaughtered more than two thousand. But nobody took much notice of that report. At the same time hunters in Sinazongwe and Lusitu were clearing the Tonga's new lands of lions and elephants and every other kind of marauding animal, both to protect the new gardens and to help to feed the people.

The thought of animals suffering lingering deaths on the islands had caused genuine distress, especially in countries far away, but the prophecies proved to have been exaggerated. In April, when the rains ended and the water rose more slowly, the rangers began to discover at last what had really happened. They found that almost all the larger animals, and all the carnivores, had made their own escape. Less than half a dozen elephants and rhinoceroses and buffaloes were found on islands; and the elephants were near enough to the mainland to be able to swim when they wanted to do so. The lions had gone, although the valley had always had plenty of them, and so had most of the large kind of antelope. But there were still a number of smaller antelope, and such creatures as wart hogs,

porcupines, ant bears, bush pigs, baboons, and monkeys. All these, and many still smaller animals, evidently lacked the instinct to swim when they found themselves surrounded; and from April till the rains began again, the rangers and their African assistants worked hard to round them up and ferry them to the mainland.

These men were impelled by the highest motives. To catch African animals in the mass was a problem nobody had ever had to try to solve before, and it needed stamina and ingenuity and courage. Sometimes it led to breathlessly exciting hunts: hunts which ended, for the hunters, not in the remorse of a kill, but in the satisfaction of having saved a life. Yet there was always a shade of doubt about the work the rangers did so admirably. Some animals, like the wart hogs, seemed to take their capture quite phlegmatically, and to be made angry by it rather than afraid; but others, like the antelope, driven into a net and trussed up by humans and put in a motorboat, seemed to suffer, perhaps for a couple of hours, all the terror of imminent death. Some people who watched the hunting thought a sudden bullet would have been kinder.

Very few of the Tonga had a chance to watch it. Those who heard of it were totally mystified. Most of the animals being rescued with such evident trouble and expense were kinds which they had killed and eaten whenever they could since time immemorial. There was no law against eating them. Nobody had ever suggested it was wrong. The government hunters had even been willing to help when the Tonga were hungry. And some of the rescued animals were pests in destroying crops. The common sense of some of the Tonga suggested to them that they should hang around the places where the animals were released, so that they could catch them again while they were still confused and frightened. So far as they could see, this would save everyone a lot of trouble; but it was not allowed. The Tonga understood that there was something special, in the eyes of the Europeans, about the animals on the islands; but nobody ever explained to them what it was.

It was lucky that very few of the Tonga read newspapers. The

few who could and did were puzzled and hurt to find that the fate of the animals in the valley seemed to have caused so much more concern, in the world of the Europeans, than the fate of the human beings.

20

THE EXODUS

NOBODY COULD right the wrong; all that anyone could do was patch the damage. That looked as though it might be the work of years. It seemed, in the remorseful aftermath of battle, that the Tonga's trust in District Commissioners and District Officers, which had rested on fifty years of patient toil, must have been shattered in a single hour of violence. But it would have to be restored. The people could be moved to Lusitu by force—there was no more doubt about that; but when they were there, force could not be used to make them happy. The next few years, whatever happened, were sure to be a difficult time for them. They would have to learn very quickly to live on closer terms with the civilized world, and while they were doing it they would need friendship and cooperation even more than they had needed them before.

This was a specially personal problem for Alex. Thinking that evening of the ruin of all the work he had tried to do, he could see only a long uphill struggle in front of him. Perhaps, he thought, he would never succeed. Perhaps the Tonga would never trust him

again. He wondered whether it would be better for them if he asked to be sent to another district, or if he was sent without asking, so that Chipepo's people could start again with another District Officer. But Scottish fishermen are very stubborn people. That way out would have been too easy, and he would never have won back his own self-respect if he had taken it. Besides, he still felt he had one qualification: he still knew Chipepo's people better than any other European, and he was still very fond of them. So even in the deepest gloom of that miserable day, he remained determined to go to Lusitu with them and live with them there.

But in the meantime there were immediate problems to be solved; and the most urgent of them was to find the wounded men who were hiding, and try to persuade them to come in for medical treatment. All the Europeans in the camp, Sugg, Prior, Alex, the police officers and the doctor and his senior assistant, went out to search the forest and the neighboring villages in the evening of the day of the battle, and on the days after it. At first, it seemed only common sense to use the police Land-Rovers with their protected windows, and to take an armed policeman, in case of trouble. But that led to very little success. Here and there, small groups of men and women were found, but they were frightened and would not say if they knew of any wounded.

But the men were not carrying spears; and on the second day the doctor and his assistant each went out alone in his own Land-Rover, which had a red cross on the side of it. Then the people, seeing one man unarmed, began to bring the wounded out of hiding; and when a few had been treated and sent back to their families, the word went round, and men began to come in and ask for treatment. In the end, over thirty cases of shotgun wounds were treated. There were certainly many more who had minor wounds—a few long-range pellets in their skins—but they looked after themselves. If anyone had been dead or dying in the forest, the vultures would have gathered; but no vultures were seen, and at the end of four days the doctor was satisfied that all the serious cases had been found.

At the same time, Prior and Alex dispensed with their escorts of police, and began to travel again in their own Land-Rovers, with nobody but their own head messengers, and they also found that when they were alone the people would let them approach and would speak to them. They told the people not to be frightened, that there was no more war and that they should all go home and get ready to move to Lusitu; and most of them said they would do as they were told.

By the third day, Prior and Alex were both finding assemblies in the villages, headmen who sent for stools, people who were anxious to hear the latest news of what was happening, even people who would tell their own exciting stories of the battle, rather as Londoners told their own bomb stories after the Second World War. Everywhere, the two men explained that nothing was going to happen now, except that the trucks would come to each village in turn to move it; and if everyone helped, they said, the whole thing would soon be over. And everywhere, they found an astonishing eagerness to agree, to begin to move, to get to work at Lusitu without wasting any more time. In some of the villages, people had packed their own property in bundles long before the trucks could come to move it.

Prior and Alex saw this total change of heart with surprise and joy. At first, they could hardly believe it, and they searched for an explanation. It was quite a long time before they understood that, for once, the Tonga had been much more logical than they had been themselves. The Tonga knew they had done wrong. They had made war on the government and lost; and they had expected stern punishment. And of course it was in fact a crime, and everyone who had been at Chisamu could have been given a prison sentence—if either the government, or Sugg as the senior magistrate, had thought of bringing charges against them. But nobody seriously thought of it at all. One Commissioner in the valley—it was Cockroft, on the other side of the river—once said that he governed the Tonga by Valley Law; and he defined Valley Law as one-quarter law and three-quarters common sense. This was clearly a case for

common sense; strict law could not apply to it at all. So many Tonga had broken so many laws that all the courts in the land could hardly have tried them; and—which was more important still—nobody could find it in his heart to blame the criminals. So the government never brought charges against them, not even against the Congress men; and as soon as the Tonga understood that they were to be forgiven, they did all that they possibly could to make amends. Within ten days of the battle, two thousand people had been taken to Lusitu with their property and their grain and animals, and all of them helped willingly with the move.

Of all the surprising things which the Tonga had done, their sudden return to sanity and kindliness and courtesy seemed the most surprising. But it was characteristic of them, and perhaps of all unspoiled Africans, to admit when they were wrong, and quickly to forgive anyone who wronged them. They felt no grudge against the government; Alex's fear for the future was unfounded. They soon began to tell him they knew they had been foolish to listen to the words of the Congress men. It was no wonder, they said, that the government had had to shoot at them. They were simply glad that the whole thing was over. Their only bitterness was against the Congress men who had misled them; but they soon forgave them too, and the men who had briefly tasted such intoxicating power sank back to their status as ordinary villagers, and contentedly went to Lusitu with the rest.

Young Chief Chipepo was stricter than the government. He charged about forty people with offenses against the native customary law, and fined them up to $14 or sent them to prison. He gave Headman Chisamu three months. Prior and Alex thought that was rather hard, but the headman pleaded guilty. They did not interfere, because short of injustice it was up to the chief to re-establish his authority in the way he thought best. And his method worked. At Lusitu, the people accepted his leadership again almost as though nothing had ever happened. Indeed, the resolution and consistency he had shown rather enhanced his status, and set him a little above and apart from his people, as a chief should always

be; and very soon his court was full of petitioners again, and people sat on the ground before him with the respect which was his due.

Six weeks after the battle, by the end of October, the very last of the Tonga had gone from the bed of the lake. In early December the last gap in the dam at Kariba was closed. At the end of the year, the village of Chisamu, the site of the camp, the plain and the indaba tree and the graves of the men who were dead, had all disappeared below the water, for ever.

21

THE PROMISED LAND

THE TONGA'S exodus was ended, but the story will not be ended for many years.

Alex Smith lived with Chipepo's people in Lusitu for a year, till he was due for leave, and Alan Prior remained the District Commissioner until he also went on leave and thence to another district; and their relations with the Tonga were as cordial as they had always been. When they left, other officers took over, with the same tradition and the same energetic interest in the Tonga's welfare.

Everything that a government can do on a meager budget is being done. Demonstration gardens have been planted, to try to teach the Tonga more sensible methods of agriculture, and to try to find cash crops which they can grow. The hilly land has been plowed in ridge contours to guard against erosion. In Sinazongwe, an irrigated garden has grown a prodigious crop of pawpaws, bananas, oranges, lemons, and vegetables, and shown that the remains of the valley could be made prolific if only money could be found for irrigation. Cooperative markets have been organized, and Tonga are

being taught to run them. Enterprising Tonga have been given loans to set themselves up as farmers. More schools have been built than the Tonga ever had before, and most of the Tonga are now within reach of dispensaries and hospitals.

Much more could be done with more money. But the only thing which ought to be done is to help the Tonga to help themselves. It would be quite easy, but quite mistaken, to turn them into a tribe which lives on charity.

But whatever is done, and whatever the Tonga do, their new land will not be enough to support them all for ever, and some of them will have to find new occupations. Chipepo's people, who caused the trouble, will be better off than most, because Lusitu is very fertile. But Mwemba's people at the head of the valley, who moved without giving any trouble at all, will always be short of land. The best hope for them is fishing. Some are being taught to fish with nets, and some to build boats, and the rising lake is being stocked with fish. If they can master this unfamiliar craft, they may have a future better than the past. But they will be up against strong competition. The Federal Government invested so much money in clearing the trees from the lake that it is bound to insist that the fishing shall be done efficiently. If the Tonga cannot manage it, there will be strong pressure to hand it over to somebody else who can—even though the bed of the lake still belongs to the Tonga.

The payment of compensation, small though it was, has pitched the Tonga headlong into the use of money for buying and selling, instead of the use of goats. Several hundred thousand dollars were shared among them. They had to save most of it to buy grain until the new land was bearing, but some was left over. Where there is money, traders follow, and shops have sprung up to tempt them. The young women have met Europeans and people of other tribes, and realized that their nakedness is unusual, and bought themselves cotton frocks and headsquares and sandals; and some of them look charming in them. And having discovered the delights of shopping, they have thought of new ways of making pocket money. When they brewed beer in the old days, they simply invited all their

neighbours to drink it, but now they have hit on the idea of selling it. The men, who had always had it free, do not approve at all, but they have found they have to pay, or else go thirsty.

The change to money will certainly upset the whole of the Tonga's social system. It may slowly put an end to polygamy. In the old days, the more wives a man could acquire, by making the customary payments to their fathers, the richer he eventually became, because his wives worked for him and their needs were very humble. But when a man's wives need frocks and shoes, and other things which they see in shop windows, they become a financial liability, instead of an investment.

The story of the Tonga leaves two mysteries unsolved. The first is the mystery of why the African National Congress led Chipepo's people to oppose the move. At a court of inquiry afterward, Harry Nkumbula, the leader of Congress, denied that he had ever given orders to oppose it. But at the time, the Tonga converts to Congress certainly thought they were acting on orders from headquarters. At the inquiry, when two of them were questioned, they contradicted themselves so often and seemed so stupid that nobody could discover what had happened. If they had tried to bargain with the government for better compensation, there would have been some sense in it, but they never did. It seems likely that the whole thing started for the sake of a few more subscriptions of fifty cents, and that the final lunatic orders were issued somewhere in the dim half-sophisticated middle ranks of the party, by men who sincerely but foolishly thought that any opposition to any government action must be in the interests of Africans, whatever the circumstances.

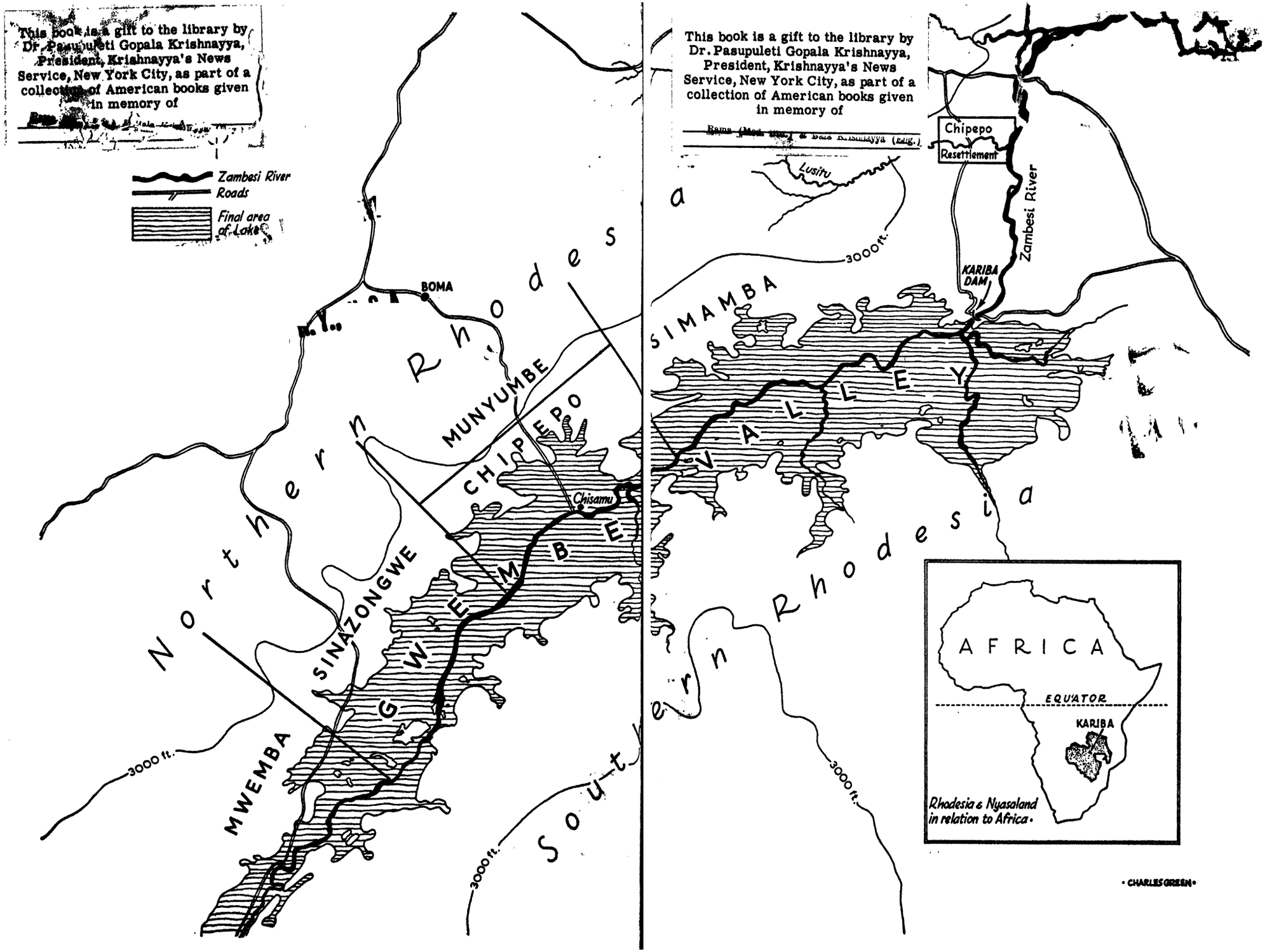
The other mystery is on a different plane. In December, 1959, the second rainy season after the move, a violent epidemic struck several villages in Lusitu. Fifty-one people died, and all of them were children and young women. European doctors and specialists could not discover the cause of it, even though the Tonga agreed to post-mortems; it seemed to be an unknown kind of poison. The government called in an expert on African customs, but after the most exhaustive inquiries no explanation whatever could be found.

The people abandoned the afflicted villages and came for protection and reassurance to the District Officer's camp, and the epidemic died out. If it was poison, why did it affect young women and children only? Was it witchcraft? Is Lusitu haunted? Are the souls of dead Tonga angry about the move? Nobody who knows the Tonga would laugh at these possibilities.

The spiritual and moral effects of the building of the dam are still impossible to foresee. In the areas of Chief Mwemba and Chief Sinazongwe, where the Sikatongos towed branches of holy trees behind the trucks which moved them, new shrines have been established and the ancient ceremonies are still observed. But Chipepo's people have not made new shrines in Lusitu. No European knows why; perhaps they do not even know themselves. It may be because the distance was too great for a spiritual trail to be laid, or that there are shrines of foreign tribes in the neighborhood; or it may be that the people have already lost their faith.

If this is so, and their old religion has been broken by Kariba, perhaps they will turn more readily than before to Christianity; but perhaps they will change from old pagan beliefs to a new pagan disbelief. It can hardly be expected that their primeval innocence will survive in their new surroundings. Perhaps, when it goes, they will also lose their charm and courtesy, and learn brash urban manners and the vices of civilization. Their world will never be the same again, and nobody yet can tell whether their story will have a happy ending.

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