

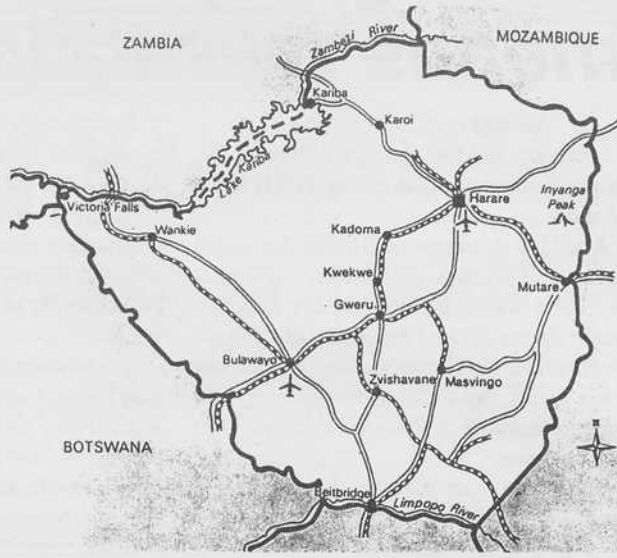
Veterans demonstrate at black summit

By Askia Muhammad
Special to the Sentinel-Voice

HARARE - Hundreds of angry Zimbabwean liberation fighters, who had been demonstrating for weeks, took their concerns over terminated veterans benefits to the African-African American Summit, July 22, nearly disrupting the opening luncheon.

The demonstrators rushed, chanted, sang and waved protest signs and banners in front of the main entrance of the Harare International Conference Center, moments before the luncheon. The day before, Zimbabwe's President Robert Mugabe appointed an 11-member commission to investigate fraudulent claims and other abuses, which have cost the government millions of dollars.

This spring, following a discovery that a number of people had falsely received compensation, the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare suspended payments and other benefits from the War Victims Compensation Fund to veterans who had been injured



in the war of liberation against the white-minority government of former British colony Rhodesia.

The government action enraged the ex-combatants.

A meeting held July 20, before the summit began, among national Politburo members, the veterans and government ministers turned nasty, according to published reports. In fact, a source told NNPA the meeting became so unruly that the officials present had to be whisked away by security forces.

Most of the 1,000 delegates attending the summit were escorted to a tent where the luncheon was being held through another Conference Center exit. After about four hours, the demonstrators peacefully dispersed. Riot-clad police reinforcements which were standing by, were not called into service.

Conference organizers declined to comment on the demonstration, calling it a local matter. Zimbabwe government officials were not available for comment at the conference.

During the luncheon however, when he was asked privately by Washington, D.C. Mayor Marion Barry about the demonstration, summit convener the Rev. Leon Sullivan said: "It's a summit. We always have them (demonstrations). We had one in Gabon (in 1993), we had one in Senegal (in 1995). It's a summit and a forum for attention."

Demonstrators sang patriotic war songs the words of which translated to: "The war that you want is here. You seem to want war, it's here." Many carried signs and banners, some of which read: "Mandela paid his fighters, why not you?"

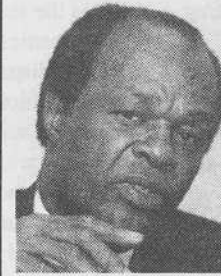
President Mugabe, considered the patron of the ex-combatants, did not meet with the protestors, but, following the demonstration, the Ministry of Public Service did begin processing payouts to genuine claimants, according to published reports.

By the close of business one day after the summit demonstration, the Ministry had passed 151 out of 562 claims for payment.

WORLD NEWS

BLACK AMERICANS RETURN TO AFRICA FOR SUMMIT

HARARE, Zimbabwe—The descendants of African slaves returned to the continent in the largest back-to-Africa pilgrimage ever as the Fourth African-African American Summit (AAAS) convened here July 22-25. Dozens of heads of state attended. "We are here and we will never be separated again," the Rev. Leon Sullivan, convener of the summit said at the official opening chaired by Presidents Diouf and Mugabe, July 23. "We have returned with something to give back to Africa." Much of the emphasis by speakers and experts throughout the summit was on finance, economic cooperation and development.



Washington, D.C. Mayor Marion Barry attended the summit.

Currently, the United States buys about 18 percent of Africa's total exports, mostly in the form of raw materials. Trade with Africa is rapidly expanding, however, experts say, although the United States enjoys a substantial trade surplus, selling higher priced manufactured goods back to the continent.

TRANSITION TO DEMOCRACY IN NIGERIA GETS A BOOST

Washington, D.C. — In keeping with its promise of returning the country to a democratically elected civilian government in 1998, the Nigerian military government has released the amended timetable for the final phase of the transition to civil rule. According to a statement issued by the Nigerian Embassy, the Provisional Ruling Council (PRC) has ratified a decree on the recent amendment of the transition timetable which scheduled the governorship and presidential elections for Aug. 1, 1998. The former timetable had scheduled the gubernatorial elections to take place in the last quarter of 1997 (October - December), while the presidential elections were to take place between July and September 1998. Under the new timetable the election of State Assembly Legislators is scheduled for Dec. 6; the election of National Assembly Legislators April 25, 1998 and the Governorship and Presidential election on Aug. 1, 1998. The swearing-in of State Governors/Assemblies and the elected President is slated for Sept. 21 and Oct. 1, 1998 respectively.

JAMAICA BECOMING THE HUB OF THE CARIBBEAN

KINGSTON — In recent years, Jamaica has become a major international trade center connecting North America, Europe and some areas of the Caribbean region. However, small farmers have been trying to take advantage of the sizable regional market. One restriction to their trade has been the inadequacy of transportation between the islands. In response, Air Jamaica has initiated plans to change the face of trade in the region. The Sangsters International Airport in Montego Bay is now a hub for the airline. This change is expected to better link the region. At present, Air Jamaica, once owned by the government but privatized three years ago, has more than 120 scheduled flights each week from London, major cities in the United States as well as the Bahamas and Grand Cayman. With the hub, which came on line on June 15, the airline has added connections to places like Antigua, Barbados, Cuba, St. Lucia and the Turks and Caicos Islands. Exporters are hailing this new move which they say will enhance intra-regional trade.

SKILLED WORKERS NEEDED IN SOUTH AFRICA

JOHANNESBURG - If it hopes to achieve the six-percent annual growth rate it is aiming for, South Africa would do well to open its doors to skilled African migrants, a new study says. In its report titled "People On the Move: A New Approach to Cross-Border Migration," the non-governmental Center for Development and Enterprise (CDE) concludes that the brain drain and perennial shortage of skills in the country means South Africa can only gain from lifting restrictions on skilled migration. "In some fields where training and education are expensive, it will be optimal for South Africa to import skills rather than to try and produce them locally," the report says. "Moreover, studies of South African development and competitiveness all stress our weakness with respect to human capital." "Economic growth requires as many skills as we can grow, hire, or import," the report says. The CDE report is one of several recent attempts to ease tensions between South Africans and foreigners.

MY VIEW

Britannia not a promised land for blacks

By Earl Ofari Hutchinson
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Rap music mixed with reggae, the smell of fried chicken and incense, Caribbean and African accents and tee-shirt hawkers greeted me as I came out of the metro station in Brixton, a district in south west London. It was well after 10 p.m. and the streets still teemed with people and activity.

For a brief moment I thought I was on a main drag in Harlem or South Central Los Angeles. The area is about as close as London comes to having an American-style ghetto.

There are differences, however. Only three percent of London's more than 300,000 West Indians and 175,000 Africans live in Brixton. They are among the 37 black and non-black ethnic groups in London. Many of whom are tightly clustered in areas the British politely call "ethnic villages," meaning that they choose to live in an area because of their cultural and ethnic preferences, not discrimination.

This is only partly true. In Lambeth Place there were bars and clubs, filled mostly with young whites, next to Caribbean restaurants filled mostly with blacks. On one corner whites hung out. Directly across from them stood blacks. On some Brixton streets the houses were badly deteriorated, littered with trash and the walls splattered with graffiti. However, on nearby streets there were neat row houses and apartments, clean streets, no graffiti, and blacks, whites and Asians freely mixed.

Blacks are not doing bad in Britain. The country has loads of anti-discrimination laws. Blacks live all over London. There is a visibly prospering black middle-class. And most days, black professionals bustle about the streets in expensive suits and designer dresses, attaché cases in tow, ears glued to cellular phones and driving fancy cars.

Add to this a government that appears committed to black political and economic empowerment. The new Labour government's prime minister dumped two decades of Tory rule.

But many blacks remember the police-sparked riots and the militant demonstrations that rocked the Brixton and Notting Hill sections of London, and other British cities from the 1960s through the mid-1980s. The riots tore away the facade of British liberalism, embarrassed the British government and exposed the racism ingrained in the Union Jack.

Despite the progress, problems still exist.

Britain has the highest rate of racial hate crimes in Western Europe. The number of reported physical assaults ranging from racial harassment to murder have tripled during the past seven years.

Many blacks complain of housing discrimination. They say that landlords and real estate agents refuse to rent and to sell to them. Some have filed lawsuits and won awards. In 1995 and 1996, black protesters forced 33 town councils in London to take legal action against white tenants who taunted, threatened and harassed black tenants.

The black unemployment rate in Britain is triple that of whites. And like in the United States, black youth are hit the hardest. They have an unemployment rate of nearly 30 percent.

While the economic and social picture for blacks in Britain is a mix of progress and despair, few blacks would argue with the slogan I saw scrawled on a shuttered store in Brixton, "Babylon is racist."

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