

INTERNATIONAL REFUGEE COUNCIL OF ZAMBIA

Refugee Managing Committee

15 BOLEYN BUILDING, CAIRO ROAD, LUSAKA, ZAMBIA. P.O. BOX 2171. TELEPHONE 72344. CABLES: IRCOZ

16th September 1966.

Prof. Z.K. Matthews,
c/o Office of the Prime Minister,
P. Bag 2,
Gaberones,
Bechuanaland.

Dear Professor Matthews,

This is a note to summarise the present position of refugee work in Bechuanaland and to outline future possibilities.

Administration

The Joint Committee on the High Commission Territories controls administration at the main refugee gathering point, Francistown, and also at Lobatsi. At Mochudi, refugees are looked after by the Community Centre. The International Refugee Council of Zambia attends to administration at Kazungula.

Distribution to Bechuanaland of food supplied under the United Nations World Food Programme (Project 205) and of clothing provided by Catholic Relief Services, New York, is carried out by IRCOZ. Sub-distribution of these items is done by those responsible for the particular settlements.

Transport and Immigration

Transport from Francistown to Kazungula, and on, is run by IRCOZ. Immigration procedures are dealt with through the governments concerned by IRCOZ or by the political parties-in-exile based on Lusaka.

The Botswana Government/....

The Botswana Government

When Bechuanaland becomes independent at the end of this month it is clear that refugee work by outside organisations must be undertaken at the invitation, or with the consent of the Botswana Government.

It will be widely agreed that Bechuanaland's state of national emergency, following persistent drought, and the post-independence demands on the Government, will make it desirable for the financial and administrative burden of refugee maintenance to be carried by foreign voluntary organisations that have funds and personnel available for this type of work.

Position of existing organisations

1. Joint Committee on the High Commission Territories

With Francistown the main refugee centre, the Joint Committee has hitherto borne the lion's share of the work. But with the impending change in status of two of the High Commission territories the Committee has indicated that it is reappraising, and may disengage from, its present role. Its honorary secretary, Miss Margaret Roberts, will be looking into ways and means during a visit to Central Africa later this year.

2. International Refugee Council of Zambia

Permission to establish a settlement at Kazungula was given to IRCOZ by the Government of Bechuanaland at the beginning of February, with a proviso that the Government of Zambia should assent. The Zambian Refugee Commissioner was requested to take up the matter with his Government but the proviso has not yet been met.

With the delay in obtaining Zambia's views, the Prime Minister, Bechuanaland, intimated in July that his Government's earlier decision must be suspended.

In these circumstances it was felt that the temporary settlement at Kazungula could no longer be justifiably maintained - with its hazards to health and its high running costs (created by the inhibitions placed in the way of proper management). The

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Prime Minister's office in Gaborone was informed therefore that the settlement would be run down before the onset of the rains.

(£5,000 given by the Norwegian Refugee Council for capital costs of a proper transit camp at Kazungula has had to be set aside).

Conclusion

With the impending independence of Bechuanaland, the intended withdrawal of the Joint Committee, and the abandonment of the Kazungula project by IRCOZ, a point has been reached where a full reappraisal of refugee matters in Bechuanaland is necessary.

Future possibilities

As you will know ^a possibility for future management already canvassed is a take-over by the World Council of Churches.

To facilitate such a change-over it is suggested that as a first step the World Council of Churches be invited to indicate to existing interested organisations whether it would be prepared to undertake the task.

In the event of the World Council of Churches agreeing, bilateral discussions would presumably open between it and the Government of Botswana.

Organisations previously associated, or wishing to become associated, with refugee work in Botswana would then be in a position to offer whatever services they felt they could make available to the new Botswana refugee council. The Refugee Managing Committee of IRCOZ would recommend to its donors the transfer of its relevant financial and transport assets to the World Council of Churches

Apart from the above considerations one point may be emphasised here: there is a strong need for refugee matters to be run by a single and apolitical organisation, thus cutting out elements of competition and suspicion that can only be harmful to the refugees themselves.

I am copying this note to Miss Margaret Roberts, and to Lady Jane Willoughby (of the British Council of Aid to Refugees).

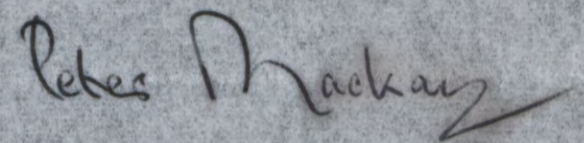
It would be/.....

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It would be very good if we could have the chance to discuss the whole matter and I wonder if there is any prospect of your being in Zambia on your way back from Botswana?

With good wishes.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Peter Mackay". The signature is written in dark ink and has a fluid, connected style.

P.J.S. Mackay