

Prison Diary

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Wednesday 8th May. Into everybody's life a little rain must fall. I'm now in the authoritative position of being able to confirm that Mwali's has been burnt because Talent, Lovemore, David, Chom's and I are currently residing in prison accused of the crime. I must say that it's been a fascinating 2 week exploration of the Zimbabwe police court and prison system.

Shortly after penning those lines on the 27th April I received a call from Maggie to say that the guys at the MDC office had been arrested. When we reopened the office after my last arrest I promised them that if the shit hit the fan I'd be there with them. So I phoned the Tapiwa (lawyer) and Rocky briefed them of the situation, collected my toilet paper ID and went off to find a policeman. On arrival at the office I was met by Constable Towenezwa (one of the ZRP who assaulted me last time) & a uniformed ZRP who informed me that I was required for an interview at the police station. When I inquired what it was about I was informed "we will not tell you until you are there & if you do not come we will arrest you". I went to the garage & phoned Tapiwa again (I'm getting quite good at phoning lawyers) & told him what was happening & he confirmed that they had the power to arrest me. I then went outside, told the ZRP that I would not answer any questions unless a lawyer was present & if they wanted to they could arrest me. Surprise, surprise they arrested me on the spot & told me to drive them to the police station. I refused - I'm not a chauffer, never have never will be. We then spent the next 30 min loitering around the garage waiting for police transport. Eventually a decrepit blue Mazda B1800 arrives with 3 civilians in the front & civilian registration. I'm told to get in the back. When I ask for the ID of the civilian who gets out of the Mazda, he tells me that he is my younger brother. No points for figuring out that it's CIO. So I tell him that I'm absolutely positive that my father had nothing to do with his mother and refuse to get into anything but official police transport, not some pirate taxi rented by CIO. By this time we have a large and appreciative audience of Saturday morning village people so the CIO piss off & eventually the ZRP land rover comes to collect me.

On arrival at the police station my 4 co-accused & about 6 others are all sitting behind the charge desk being processed. I ask what we are being charged with but the police refuse to answer so I join the rest & start taking of belts, jackets, shoes etc. to be processed. I also tell every body to relax - there's lawyers on the way. When I sign my clothes in I see we are being charged under POSA, Public Order and Security Act, (Mugabe's draconian catch all law passed at the time of the elections). While I'm signing my possessions in the PISI officer, Constable M....., even goes so far as to cover up the charge with his hand, next to where I sign. While we are being charged my favourite friend Inspector Chagugudzo arrives. When I ask him what we are being charged with he says "you will be told when I am ready" swami arsehole.

We are then marched off to the cell which is crowded with other people on the same charge. For the rest of the day we wait as more people arrive, pulled out of bars, beds and some just off the street. By evening there are 23 of us. I'm glad I decided to come as one of the young MDC guards actually wet himself in the charge office, so now it's a matter of trying to reassure everybody that things are under control and not to talk until the lawyers arrive. It doesn't take much intelligence to figure that there must be 1 or 2 CIO plants in the cell so we spend most of the time slagging off the ZRP & CIO for fun and waiting for food that never comes.

The first evening is truly interesting. 23 people settle down on the concrete with 10 blankets in a cell that measures 2.4m by 4.2m. One corner is occupied by a somewhat smelly open squat latrine of about 1m by 1m which nobody wants to get too close to. Everybody is trying to sleep with their heads against the wall but from the hips down we are one huddled mass of humanity each trying to find a position of comfort. Ha Ha! Question; if you put one single bed blanket on the concrete floor and one on top how any people can you fit between. Answer; a

lot more, than into a VW beetle. The secret is to get into the centre of the blanket. The poor buggers on the edges keep having to fight for their share in the centre. You at least have a degree of warmth. Not comfort, just warmth. You've heard about synchronised swimming well let me tell you about synchronised sleeping. You all lie spooned to the left and it doesn't matter how sore your hips and ribcage is from the concrete floor you can't turn over until every body else does. Why don't people sit or stand? Because the only open place is the squat latrine, so go figure. We are all in our own private hell when at about midnight the army/police start spraying water through the windows (just bars, no glass) with a hose pipe. There has to be at least one policeman involved because shortly before it happened the cell yard gate opens, which is where the tap is to which the hosepipe was connected. Only the ZRP has the authority and keys to get in there. Now there's a giant stampede to try and keep the blankets and ourselves dry, but of course there is actually nowhere to hide except behind each other. After 15-20min they wander off and the cell is left ankle deep in water. To varying degrees everything is wet, ranging from sopping to just wet. The 1st step is to take the wettest blanket and use it to mop the floor, squeezing it out over the latrine. Once the floor is sort of dry we take our clothes and remaining blanket and squeeze them as dry as possible. Now we get back into our damp cloths and spend the rest of the night huddled under the wet blankets in the faint hope that a combination of body heat and breathing will dry them out, some hope! It's rather like a sauna but not as much fun and no heat. What can I say - a delightful evening was had by one and all?

Sunday 28th April. At about 11-12am we are let out of the cell for the 1st time and are presented with a communal pot of sadza and kapenta to eat. The sadza is cold, full of ants and looks like it was made the previous day. It's also been adulterated by sugar to hide the taste of something else (my cellmates are very unhappy with this). The kapenta (dried fish was probably thrown into warm water for 2mins to cook and is also cold and full of ants. I take one look at this lot and decide to go on hunger strike. This might seem a great price to pay for the cause but as always I have an ulterior motive (remember I've been in the cells before and know what's coming). I defy you to sit on an open squat latrine with a stomach full of sadza, no toilet paper in front of 22 other people and maintain a shred of human dignity. They had confiscated my toilet paper when we where processed. Hunger strike was the easiest decision I ever made. After 15 min in the yard we where put back in the cell again.

Everyone starts talking and during the course of the day people start to unite. The main topic of conversation is politics ZRP & CIO. The majority of the conversation is in Shona & occasionally I pick up something I understand. When I'm asked for an opinion I express it otherwise I keep quiet. There is a lot of resentment about the mass arrest & I do my bit to stir it, as I've said people have been hauled in from all over and been abused for no reason.

I try to explain that we are now playing a game. ZRP & CIO are used to acting with impunity, arresting and intimidating people who don't know their rights. Brigit is now complicating their life by calling in the lawyers & the press. She's good at it, knows who to talk to and badgers people until they surrender and do what she wants in the hope that she will go away. Anyway by getting other people involved we are slowly moving control out of their hands and into the courts so everyone should just remain calm. Birgit is seen arriving through the window in the cell door at about 4pm. The lawyers go into the police station and Birgit brings food to us (that is dinner time in the cell) we are let out and she distributes food through the fence as best as possible. Birgit briefs me in whispers that she got the Daily News to print the story on Monday. While Birgit is at the cell the lawyers depart in a hurry, Tapiwa has been unable to come so Birgit has badgered the Mutare office until they have subcontracted 2 other lawyers to come from Mutare, and they have just left her at the police station without wheels. After 15min of eating (everyone except me), it's back to the cell for another night of synchronised sleeping. As yet none of us have been interviewed by the ZRP, CIO.

One message I try to drive home is that when people start being interviewed, everything said in the cell will be used. The 3rd person interviewed will be told that the 1st & 2nd person have accused him of doing this & saying that. If they just shut up & demand a lawyer everything will be fine but if they start making counter accusations then everyone's life is complicated. I have a fairly good idea by this time that the MDC security and I are the main targets (just because I'm paranoid doesn't mean they are not out to get me).

Sunday night about 10pm the army/guards start flooding the cell again, this time using buckets. The 1st bucket to come through the window is pure urine followed by about 4 or 5 of water. We have someone on watch so the reaction is better and not as many clothes and blankets are wet. We even had the worst blanket designated for mopping up. So after an hour of cleaning up its back to sleep, yeah sure!

Monday morning 29th April. Birgit arrives with breakfast (bread and milk) and is well and truly pissed off. The 2 lawyers high tailed it out yesterday being chased off by a gun wielding Mwali & Inspector Chagugudzo leaving her stranded at the police station. She eventually managed to get hold of Rocky & George from the club and they come to collect her. When Birgit gets back to the club the 2 lawyers are at the bar having a drink to quell their shaking nerves. Birgit told them exactly what she thought of them in very uncomplimentary language. They were obviously not the "A" team so it was back to square one. I figure that this is not news that the others need to hear so I keep quiet about it. Birgit is doing the best she can. It has to be understood that the cell yard is small and there is only Birgit and a couple of wives on the other side of the fence. The rest of the spectators are army and police standing around heckling, throwing insults and trying to intimidate us and the women, so communication is difficult to say the least. Anyway Birgit will be visiting 3 times a day at meals from now on so there is communication with the outside world.

During the course of the day they slowly start taking people out for "interviews". What a lovely euphemism for physical and verbal assault. Until there are only 8 of us left in the late afternoon. At about 4pm Birgit arrives with Tapiwa the "A" team lawyer. Tapiwa is also handling my assault charge and doesn't take shit from anyone, including CIO. Tapiwa comes up with 2 CID from Chipinge who seem to be in charge of the case & asks how everything is. I tell Tapiwa that we have not been told what we are charged with, we have been denied access to yesterday's lawyers (he knows it was his "B" team that did a runner on us yesterday) and I'm on hunger strike. We also tell him about the water & urine in the cell at night & although we have made complaints nothing has been done. We tell CID that we will not make any statements unless Tapiwa is present. Tapiwa tells CID that he will be back the following day to take our warned & cautioned statements.

After Tapiwa leaves they bring back 11 of our cell mates from interviews. 4 have been released during the course of the day. Most have been beaten and CIO, CID wants to know what MDC security and I have been talking about in the cell. That night everyone starts singing in the cell. I think they're hymns and they harmonize beautifully. At about 10pm we received the expected shower (thankfully only water this time) but again somebody is on watch so damage is kept to a minimum. But this time everyone starts shouting insults at the people who are throwing the water. It doesn't do any good but it does help let off steam. There are still only 10 blankets for 19 people, actually 9 because one of them has to be used as a mop.

Tuesday morning 30th April. Let out for breakfast and the usual audience is there to heckle. They are somewhat taken aback when they receive a barrage of Shona telling them to fuck off. These are not the broken prisoners that they expected. The 11 who were brought back to the cell last night are released so now there are 8 of us left. At about 10am Tapiwa arrives and they start to take our statements. It's at this time that we find out we are all accused of burning down a house (well actually 2 doors of a house) in Ngangu and causing \$220,000 of damage (expensive doors). It doesn't take much to figure out that this is Mwali's house and we all act suitably aggrieved. CID spends the rest of the day taking 5 statements. God, you think my "hunt & peck" typing is bad, you should see these fools. Tapiwa is obviously experienced with this sort of inefficiency. He's brought a National Geographic to read. We can't go to court on Wednesday because it's a public holiday 1st May, so Tapiwa informs the CID that as of 12am Wednesday our 96 hours are up so he will be suing the police for illegal detention as well as assault and torture.

On our return to the cell at 5pm we are introduced to our new cellmate who is in for attempted rape. His name is Isaiah Benzi. He claims he's 17. The police say he's 18 and the collective opinion of the cell is that he can't be a day over 13 years of age. He's 4-foot high, weighs

30kgs which is mostly stomach supported on spindly legs. He still has that squeaky voice that boys have when their balls drop at puberty. He's a Chimani street kid. Yes, in our effort to maintain the high standards set by Harare we have introduced street kids to Chimani as well. Isn't it hell keeping up with the Jones? Isaiah is clever in a street kid survival fashion but is not playing with a full deck of cards. His mother is dead, his father is a witch doctor who has abandoned him because his stepmother doesn't like him, so he has to fend for himself. It's his 1st night in the cell and he is silent and very wary of us. By the way, I neglected to mention that there is no light in the cell, so when the sun goes down it's lights out. We try to tell him about the water and when we tell him to get up he must do so and come to us, but he's very wary. So we all settle down for the evening. Regular as clockwork, 10pm the 1st bucket of water comes through the window. I make a grab for Isaiah and get thoroughly drenched for my efforts. He just freezes. One can only assume that he thinks it's another bunch of adults trying to give him a hard time. By the time the 3rd bucket comes through the window he figures out that we are not the enemy and has come over to take shelter behind us. After the normal clean up he huddles down with us to get some sleep.

Wednesday 1st May. Let out for breakfast. By now Isaiah realizes that we are on his side and he gives the spectators and police a telling off about the water incident the previous night in truly glorious fashion. We share our breakfast with him and return to the cell. He becomes more open during the course of the day, his method of survival in the adult world is to have a fast & entertaining mouth and he keeps everyone in stitches of laughter with his antics. We are left alone for the day, the tedium being broken by Birgit's visits at mealtime. After lunch Talent started to sing and the rest joined in. His range and harmony is very good. The singing goes on for about 2 hours. Talent is a big sod of 24 with 2 wives he married on the same day. The older one was pregnant and the younger one under age. He was going to get sued for both of them so decided to take the easy way out and marry them both, big mistake! Sufficient to say he regards the cell as a welcome break. At dinner I get into a swearing session with an army Corporal who is trying to intimidate Birgit outside the yard fence. He's one of the ones who have been watering us at night. After Birgit leaves he threatens to kill me and bury me in the local Heroes Acre and I tell him that he will go with me. After I finish, Isaiah starts on him and this cracks everyone up except the Cpl. As we go back into the cell we see him pulling the hose pipe through the fence. At about 10 pm I'm on watch and I see this hose pipe come through the bars so grab the end and we start pulling it into the cell. There is much tugging and swearing on the other end but to no avail the pipe is now our property and a good night's sleep lies ahead of us.

Thursday 2nd May. In the morning the ZRP driver is confused. His hosepipe which normally resides in the yard has been stolen. When Insp Chagugudzo comes up to inspect at breakfast we walk out with the hose, all sweetness and light trying to be as helpful as possible. We appreciate that he has only been in the village a short time but if he wants to install a shower in the cell he should really get hold of Mr Matutu. He's more expensive than the rest of the builders but far more reliable than these fools from the army who do crap work and then run away with your money. He was pissed off but could do nothing. We are then transported thru to Chipinge court in handcuffs so we all give the MDC wave as we go thru the village. When we get to Chipinge we are put in the cells behind the court and at 3pm we eventually get called to court for bail hearing.

The P.P. opposes bail saying that we are dangerous criminals with previous charges and he is scared that if we are let out we will try to intimidate Mwali. Our lawyer demands bail, points out that the P.P. case is full of shit and we are being persecuted because we are MDC. The Magistrate says she will make a written decision and postpones the hearing until Monday 6th of May, so it's back to the cells for us. At about 6pm we are transported through to Chipinge prison in handcuffs with the rest of the remand prisoners. While we are on the truck a prison guard reaches over and starts to hit Talent, David, Lovemore & Chom's. I am left alone. He's ZANU (PF) no shit! When we get to prison we go through to reception where we all take off our clothes to hand them in then stand around naked for 10min while they issue us prison clothes. I use the term "clothes" loosely. The red shirt I am issued with has a neck line, hemline and some arm holes connected with arbitrary pieces of material. The khaki shorts are even worse, more notable for what they display than what they conceal. We are also given 3 blankets each then marched through to the cell block. As we march into the cell block the

same guard who hit the guys on the truck lays into me with a rubber truncheon. 2 weeks later I still have some lovely bruises on my back and arse from the incident. We are then given sadza and swill, 30 seconds to eat it & marched off to the cells for the night.

Friday 3rd May. This is the 1st in a long line of days. Prison routine doesn't vary for those on remand. It's endless tedium interrupted by occasional bouts of boredom. We get up in the morning and fold our blankets on the floor where we sleep, yes its back to sleeping on concrete, leave the cells at 6.30am to be counted then back while the convicts get breakfast, then out for our breakfast - a cup of tea and a slice of bread with the tiniest touch of margarine on it. The prison obviously believes in the principles of homeopathy - less is more. The tea is tasteless but depending whether your cup is dipped into the top or the bottom of the bin you either get a cup of mostly liquid or a cup of mostly leaves. This is followed by a quick shower under one of the 2 remaining taps in the toilet block. The showers, toilets and urinal no longer work (don't think they have worked in years) so we use the basin taps which is relatively easy because the basins were discarded a long time ago. Then cleaning the cells toilets (the toilets are flushed out twice a day with buckets of water, the idea of having plenty of roughage in my diet does nothing for me) and yard. Then lie around the yard until inspection at 10pm. Inspection is meant to be when the prisoners give complaints and make requests to the duty officer, but you quickly learn that it's a waste of time and everything is forgotten the minute he turns his back. Then at 11am you get lunch which is a large plate of sadza and a spoon full of vegetables, mostly rape. Then its back to the cell until 2pm, out into the yard until 4pm when dinner is served. This meal is sadza & water. Technically the water is meat, but only every 5th person gets a piece of meat (boiled pork) about the size of a match box. The rest get water with a film of fat on top. After dinner it's back into the cells until the morning. Your choice of activity is walk, sit, sleep or talk. Because I don't speak Shona my conversations were limited unless someone was talking to me directly. About the only constructive thing I managed to do was catch up on my tan. Talent and the guys quickly found friends old and new.

Friday morning they were fairly depressed about our continued detention but are hoping for Monday morning. It falls on me to become the pessimist and try and convince everyone that we will be here for much longer while CID & CIO play games. In prison, if you are constantly hoping for short term results & being constantly disappointed, then depression can set in very easily so I'm anxious not to let them get their hopes up too high.

In the morning we all get a haircut. Talent is pissed because he's been growing dreadlocks "Henry Olunga" style for a while and is about to lose them. The style is uniform, as close to the scalp as you can get with a blunt pair of scissors. Believe me Vidal Sassoon has a lot to learn from the inmate who cut our hair. We are then taken thru to reception to be registered. Isaiah has been transferred with us. We are all asked names, addresses, ages etc. When they come to Isaiah he still claims to be 17 and gives his DOB as June 85. The deck Sgt knows it's illegal to keep juveniles in detention with adults so has a dilemma. No problem, he tells the clerk to put down his DOB as June 84. Isaiah is now officially 18 years old & all problems are solved. God you talk about Alice in Wonderland.

The 5 of us have sort of adopted Isaiah. He's a Chimani street kid so we might as well look after him. Birgit has brought him in slippers (all shoes are confiscated when you enter) so we are bare foot until Sunday when she manages to bring us all some slippers as well as tooth brush, towel and soap. He also shares whatever food Brigit brings us every day. It's actually quite a good reward system because he's a dirty little bugger and has to wash his clothes, blankets or teeth before he gets his share. We have also dragged him off to the dispensary to get the sores on his legs sorted out. If he would only stop picking the scab the bloody things would heal. Its amazing how easily kids adapt. By Sunday he's running around talking to murderers & rapists completely at home in his new environment, but if he stays in here too long he will get lost in the cracks and end up being shuttled from one institution to another. After seeing our heads shaved on Friday afternoon, Birgit arrives on Sunday with her head shaved in solidarity. This cheers everyone up, especially Talent. Sunday is also ration day when we each receive a bar of blue soap about $\frac{3}{4}$ of the size of 20 cigarettes and 2 rolls of toilet paper per cell - to be divided by the cell whatever the number. We also receive a lesson in prison economics. A share of toilet paper is worth 4 twists of tobacco. The inside of the

toilet roll is kept by the cell playing card maker and packs of cards are sold for 4 twists each. One twist of tobacco slipped to the cooks will yield an extra piece of meat at dinner (about the size of a matchbox or an extra slice of bread or cup of tea at breakfast). Tobacco also purchases drugs and scalpel blades from the dispensary or decent pants or shirts from other prisoners - one cigarette per item. Soap is also collected by the cell and sold to the guards. 10 bars with a value of \$400 buys a packet of tobacco valued \$25. A full roll of toilet paper valued \$80 buys ½ packet of tobacco \$12.50. You can tell there are no economists amongst the prisoners. Scalpel blades are used for shaving, cutting playing cards and splitting match sticks lengthways so that you can double the number of matches you have. If someone has a cigarette but no matches and you have a match, you are entitled to 2 draws of his cigarette. With cigarettes I buy surgical masks from the dispensary. The dust and mites from the blankets give me an allergy at night so the mask helps me sleep; it also gives you an element of protection from prisoners with TB. Tobacco is the money that makes the prison function and every body wants some regardless of whether they smoke or not.

Monday 6th May. We are taken back to the magistrate's court to hear the bail application decision. When we eventually see her she tells us that she has postponed the decision until the 14th of May so we hang around the court cells all day before returning to the prison in the evening.

Personal note: I set myself a new personal record on Sunday the 5th of May. It's 8 days since my arrest on the 27th of April and the first time I've been to the toilet. Having enriched the world with that valuable nugget of information we can move on. My campaign of getting in the Chimani authorities' faces is obviously working. I'm collecting some fairly prestigious enemies. I wonder what I will be arrested for next. The fact that I'm innocent of all charges is immaterial but they do my street credibility no end of good. Prison is a fascinating place and there's lots to learn. For one thing you can tell it's a prison farm by the amount of animals you see and the pets you are allowed to keep. You've heard of "ant farms", let me tell you about "lice farms". The blankets and clothes that you are issued with act as a breeding pen for these beasts of noble breeding and heritage. You quickly learn to wash everything on a daily basis. It doesn't kill them, merely reduces the numbers, only the fit survive. You then spend about an hour each day going through the seams of your clothes and blankets crushing the survivors between your thumbnails. That they continue to survive and multiply in this harsh regime is testimony to their breeding and survival instincts. The cockroaches in the dining hall are a site to put fear into the bravest of hunters. Everywhere you look there are trophy specimens and naturally they compete with you for your food. Eating standing up is a good idea. It doesn't stop them trying to crawl up your legs but it does prolong the time it takes to get to your plate. When these things shed their skins you can use them as shoes.

There are about 240 prisoners here & in the remand cell we average 14 per cell. The number fluctuates up and down. I've had no problems with the inmates. The food and cigarettes that Birgit bring we share as wide as possible. The 1st night I spent in the cell with the other 4 but the 2nd night my cell was changed, presumably I'm considered a bad influence. In a weird way I've picked up my own personal body guard. After 2 nights in my new cell my cellmates realized that we were trying to help people as much as possible. Thereafter, wherever I went, there was someone from the cell in the vicinity and when other prisoners came up to ask for cigarettes etc they were quietly asked to move on. The guards tell me that theft amongst the inmates is a constant problem. I can't get worked up about carrying my towel, soap, food etc around so I leave it in the cell. So somebody sits near the cell door when it's open to keep an eye on things & at meal time he collects my things (prison officers are not above suspicion) and returns them to my area after we've eaten. I was however pick pocketed twice in the dining hall. I started eating again the last 2 days at Chimani. I mostly rely on the food that Birgit brings but still take my portion at meal times to share with other people. In case anyone thinks that my aversion to prison food is purely personal, Talent says he eats in order not to be hungry and most of my cellmates say they would divorce their wives if they were presented this at home. Actually the word they used was kill.

Wednesday 8th May. There are some things I'm prepared to do for the cause once, but they will not be repeated. Today is the 8th May, 12 days after my arrest. Morgan who has designated himself as my personal sidekick and is also the cell shaver has decided that I need

a shave so I give him a cigarette and off he goes to find the necessary equipment. He comes back with a scalpel blade and we soap up with cold water. Little do I realise that this is very definitely a second-hand blade (seriously second-hand). He starts with my sideburn. By the time he's actually severed the hair the skin that supports the hair is below the level of my chin. The exercise takes the longest 30min of my life, never again!

There are 14 people in the cell with a core of 9 on long term remand. Bernard is in for tearing up Mugabe's posters over the election and I'm pissed off with MDC because he's still in here. So I'm trying to organise bail. He's a youth member from Chipinge South. Alliance, Morgan, Elias & Elvis are all in for public violence. One thing you learn in jail is that not everyone in prison is a criminal. People get picked up in bar brawls and other stupid offences that could be solved with a simple fine but because they have no money or access to their relatives (the prison guards do their best to ensure that there is no communication with the outside world, despite the fact that it is a right of prisoners on remand) they end up playing the remand game and are shuttled into court every 2 weeks. The case is postponed and it's back to jail again. One poor sod, Pango, who's a bit slow and has a hearing problem, stole a dead cow. He's been there for 16 months without a trial. Then there are the mental cases. Out of the 62 people on remand at least 8 are not playing with a full deck. They range from the simple minded to the patently insane. Their parents drop them off at police stations or the police pick them up for miscellaneous offences. The court remands them until they see a doctor in Harare who never arrives and they end up in jail for God knows how long, but everyone is happy because they are off the streets. Wonder is our official nut, but at least he's quiet. Bongo 2 cells down is a raver of note and requires 3 Prozac and 3 sleeping pills every night to quieten him down. Mental cases create their own rules in prison and for the most part are left alone by the guards unless they create a disturbance. If any lawyer ever takes the prison service to court and sues them he will make an absolute fortune.

Prison officers are from all over the political spectrum but the MDC are reluctant to be so openly for fear of losing their jobs. You can pick up definite vibes by the way you are treated. Yesterday I eventually won the paper war and was given prison paper to write on. From day 1 I've been demanding paper for correspondence. It's never a problem but it's always tomorrow, so I had a set to with the duty Sgt at inspection. He's ZANU (PF) and told me I was a prisoner and he would deny or give me paper as he wished. I reminded him that I was convicted of nothing and he should read the prison act. If he couldn't read he should bring it to me and I would read it for him. Eventually in the late afternoon I was brought 2 sheets of paper after 8 days of badgering. So I've written a business letter to Doug, which they will destroy and we can put a case together later for denying me my rights. The paper I am writing on at the moment is an exercise book brought in by Birgit. She brought 4 in yesterday which were promptly confiscated, but being unable to count they missed one, so I'm writing this under the blankets. My normal weight is +/-69kgs. When I booked into Chipinge jail after 6 days in Chimani I was down to 62kgs & I'm still going down. I can recommend jail to those with a weight problem. Its funny, 15 years ago when I started climbing the mountains with Doug I thought that I still had an army body and just needed a sleeping bag. After 2 mountain trips I decided "sod this for a game of soldiers" and started investing heavily in mattresses. Surprise after 13 nights on the concrete floor with just a blanket underneath I'm learning to get a good night's sleep again. Its still hell on the hips & ribcage but I'm learning to sleep on my back. With only 3 blankets the big choice is whether or not to use 1 as a pillow. The last 2 nights have been particularly cold with winter coming on so it's no pillow tonight. The only thing that is still disconcerting is the lice crawling around with you under the blanket at night and the light which stays on all night. Yes this cell has a functioning light bulb.

In the evening the prisoners normally play cards, which is illegal. The cards are made out of the inside of toilet rolls and there is a resident card maker amongst the prisoners. You can buy a new pack for 4 cigarettes once the guards catch you playing and confiscate the old pack. In the absence of cards they tell stories. The first time the cards were taken Bernard gave us a rendition of Sydney Sheldon's "The other side of midnight". This was in Shona and took two nights and was done from memory. There were smidgens of English so I could sort of follow the plot. The second time the cards were confiscated Alliance took the floor and gave his version of "Gulliver's Travels" as written by Charles Dickens. This really perked up my ears. The plot line is as follows. Gulliver is a Polish drug lord who wants to marry the

King's daughter, a nubile 14 year old. But he has to pay *lobola*, which he doesn't have, so he decides to steal 30 truck loads of gold from the mafia in Las Vegas. This went on for 4 hours. There are not many occasions that I regret not understanding Shona but this was definitely one of them.

Yesterday I had a visit from Ben Bentham the Anglican priest in Chipinge. He brought some food and we had a chat. The visit was much appreciated. Prison visits are a strange affair; you go into a small room with an even smaller window opening onto the outside of the cellblock. The visitor and the guard then stand outside the window. This is not conducive for conversation at the best of times but with the guard right in your face scared that you will give away state secrets or tell someone how bad it actually is, conversation becomes a very stilted affair.

One real pillar of strength through the last weeks has been Birgit. Her constant visits with food, cigarettes and information about the outside world and what people are doing to help us has boosted everyone's moral. In Chimani she visited 3 times a day and in Chipinge once a day. She's puts up with endless bullshit and intimidation and still carries on. She also picks up the guys' wives and relatives from all over the country and brings them through to visit. The guys are magnificent in their fortitude. I think that CIO is going to regret throwing them in jail. Prior to this I was of the opinion that we needed to bring down some hardcore from Harare to teach people to stand up for their rights. I don't think that it's a problem any more. We are moulding our own hardcore right here in jail. They've been here and know that they can survive. They are now genuine political prisoners. This is turning into a badge of honour and they are no longer frightened. Birgit and I have spoken and with the ZRP closing the bottle store down 3 days after I was arrested and Loren unwilling to continue the lease she is going to hand over the whole premises to the MDC as an office and really get in people's faces. I also have some ideas on what I would like to see the office accomplish so I will be speaking to Roy when I get out.

Friday 10th May. Had a very encouraging visit from Arnold (lawyer) today. He says that there is a 90% chance of us getting out on Tuesday 14th. Everybody's spirits are lifted except me. First rule, never trust a lawyer. Question; what do you call 5000 lawyers at the bottom of the ocean? Answer: A good start. Now that I've caught up with my diary we can just go day by day.

3 new prisoners today and one released so it's up to 16 tonight (still not as cramped as Chimani). 1 ZANU (PF) youth with a big black eye, very unsure of himself and subdued in this MDC environment. Another mental case, thank God he's the quiet and simple type and a policeman accused of fraud (now there's a thing). The water system broke down this afternoon, I hope it's fixed by tomorrow. The thought of the toilets not being flushed tomorrow with buckets is not a prospect I look forward to. This morning was very entertaining. The prison 2IC came for an early inspection very concerned about our welfare, trying to solve as many problems as possible (the ones that his staff have been ignoring all week). It turns out we are to be inspected by the Assistant Commissioner of Prisons Manicland at 12pm and he wants us to be all sweetness and light when the V.I.P. arrives so he can make a good impression. We are all lined up for inspection in the yard when said dignitary arrives. As if on cue, the mental patients all break out into howling and antics causing the maximum amount of havoc and embarrassment so we are all hurriedly herded off into our cells. It's amazing they have just enough sanity to know when to create the maximum impact. In honour of his visit they raised the standard of the food from pig swill to pig slops. I'll leave the world to figure out the difference.

Spent an interesting hour this afternoon hunting lice in the seams of my clothes, killed some really fine specimens. Thank god I washed them before the water system collapsed. When you wash your clothes you have to run around in a blanket until they are dry. One of the high points of my visit was the lecture given to all prisoners on the second day by the prison doctor about the crime of homosexuality and the evils of masturbation rendered in broken English for my benefit. Not to be missed!

Saturday 11th May. Took a dump, had a shower, went on another hunting safari for lice. While I was out of the cell today someone went through my blankets and read this diary. I must find a new place to hide it. The problem is you either trust everyone and get caught, or no-one and get paranoid. At the moment the worst they can do is confiscate them but I would really like to smuggle them out with me. Composing and writing them is one of the things that has kept me sane. Last night I didn't sleep well. I kept on thinking of how positive Arnold was but I don't want to raise my hopes so I spent most of the night convincing myself that I would be here for another 6 months. The one thing I want to do when I get out is turn part of the new MDC office into a community law centre, similar to what the Americans did during the civil rights movement of the 60's. I'm sure that we can raise funds from the community and get additional funding from foreign donors. The police & govt have been trampling on people's basic human rights for too long. We have to show people that the law is a tool for them to use.

Sunday 12th May. Experienced the true horror of prison today, Sunday church service. We escaped it last week but the hand of fate would not spare us today. We started off with a bible reading by one of the officers (no minister). This was capped by 2 mental patients, Bongo the son of a Chipinge profit and his sidekick getting up and praying for us for what seemed eternity. Fortunately it was all in Shona and I could sleep through most of it. One of the prison guards woke me from my reverie wanting to know why I was not participating after all it was my people who brought the bible to Africa. I made it very clear that I come from a long line of atheists and bastards, neither I nor my ancestors have ever inflicted the bible on anyone. I then tried to get back to sleep but the singing and dancing woke me up again. This was at least entertaining and far better than everyone singing along with a tape recorder at St. Georges in Chimani. Church was followed by the obligatory louse hunt and then we were at last issued with our prison numbers. Chom's 545/02. David 543/02. Lovemore 547/02. Talent 548/02, & Isaiah 549/02. Then finally in the afternoon we were issued with our ration of toilet paper and soap and supplies of tobacco which the remand prisoners with money in their prison accounts can buy from the staff canteen. This is a prelude to another evening of frenzied gambling. On returning to the cell everyone starts wrapping their tobacco up in twists of toilet paper, enough in each twist for one cigarette. If the previous Sunday is anything to go by no one will walk away while they are winning so instead of having 3 or 4 winners and the same quantity of losers they will carry on until one man has won everything which he will then sell back to them at interest leaving them indebted until the following Sunday.

Had an interesting talk with the ZANU (PF) youth with the black eye. I pointed out our group who were MDC and the fact that we had lawyers, visitors, food and people working for us on the outside. He had been intimidating people for money and now that he was in prison where was ZANU (PF) to support him now. It left him a bit bitter and twisted with lots to think about. Roy came to visit this afternoon but the guards wouldn't let him in. Never the less we could see him through the cell windows and it gave the guys a tremendous boost in morale and increased their stature with everyone in the prison. Even the guards were slightly in awe.

Monday 13th May. Had a visit from Birgit this morning, she's very optimistic about tomorrow's hearing, she even has Audrey from the Africa desk of Amnesty International working our case. I'm still happily pessimistic. She's also had a call from Andy & Allen in London last week. It's amazing how news travels. A worrying development happened last night. Isaiah was transferred from Talent's cell which is for ordinary remandees, to the D class remand which is for murderers, rapists and armed robbers. Conditions there are a lot harsher. The inmates sleep without clothes in the cells and only have limited contact with the rest of the remandees. I've asked Birgit to see a lawyer today to see what can be done. She also promised to sort out bail for 3 guys that I've been trying to get out for the last 2 weeks. I haven't spoken to them because in prison you try not to give anyone false hope.

An interesting thing about this place is the absence of time. There are no watches or clocks in prison so if the consensus is that it is after 9pm then the time is PAST NINE or if it's close to 10pm then it's TO TEN. It's a weird system but seems to work. The one thing that is apparent is that we offer the children of Zimbabwe an education and then no means to exercise it except through poverty or crime. The number of young people in jail under the age of 25 who have never had a formal job is amazing and most of them are in for stupid petty crimes and brawls. But give them a few years and I'm sure that we can turn them into hardened criminals.

It's a hell of an indictment of the society that we live in. One thing that you will never teach prisoners is compassion. They all deplore the beatings that they receive personally, yet line up to cheer and laugh when it's someone else's turn. At breakfast this morning I had a set to with one of the guards. He tried to slap Isaiah around so I confronted him and said if he wanted to prove he was a man he should try me instead. I thought I was in for big problems but surprisingly he backed down and left Isaiah alone.

On a purely personal front I feel like I've taken the first steps on some inevitable road of confrontation with the government. Whether things will peter out or escalate after this I have no idea but I am determined not to back down. The one thing I am confident of is my ability to handle prison. I no longer fear that and I'm sure that I have the ability to make trouble wherever I go.

Good new Bernard, Elvis & Tokmore are leaving tonight on bail. Birgit obviously managed to sort them out. My decision to help them and believe in their cases might be wrong but the important thing is that 240 prisoner know that MDC said that they would try to help and did. Well now we wait with baited breath to see what our hearing brings tomorrow.

Tuesday 14th May. FREE AT LAST. Went through to court at 8am, hearing was at 10am, there was a long written judgement on the bail application and for most of it I didn't think that we were going to be released. We ended up with \$10,000 bail each, instructions not to intimidate Mwali and having to report to Chipinge police station on the last Friday of every month. Birgit, Roy and everyone else were at the hearing. Bail was paid at 10:30 am but they would not release us until we had cleared with the prison, so we were transported back at 5:30 pm and eventually cleared at 7pm, those remaining hours were longer than the preceding 20 days combined. A hot bath and comfortable bed were heaven.