

Chimweo

30/7/78

Dear Stephanie,

I was up at 5 this morning so that we could get to the game park not long after sunrise. We left in a station wagon from a large farm being run by Carlos, a young Mozambican who years ago got into trouble for collaborating with FRELIMO while in the Portuguese army. It was a lovely journey, through forest, over a large bridge, watching the sun rise in the clear air, sweeps of mist in the hollows. The Gorongosa park was reopened to the public last year, half way between the Rhodesian border and Beira. We drove for four hours with a guide, and saw lots of animals - elephants, gazelle, impala, hippos, a crocodile and many more. We came across whole groups of lions. I got so close to them. But for me the loveliest part was the park itself, not the animals - the trees silhouetted against the sky, the streams and pools, the sudden changes from grassland to forest. It was all so tranquil. That word kept going through my mind. After lunch we lazed around a pool, talking to some Swedish cooperants about their work here. The sunset on the way home was particularly lovely - a blood red globe sinking over the forests, endless hills smiling in the pale light. We noticed rather a large number of people hitch-hiking but thought nothing special of it. When we got back to the farm, the driver's wife came rushing up to us. I heard the word 'avioes' (aircraft) and 'bombas'. Apparently that morning, not long after we left, two Mirage jets had come swooping over the farmstead, so low that they had seemed only yards away. Shortly

afterwards they heard the bombs explode in
 a nearby Zambalwe refugee camp. The smoke
 rose, and the flames zoomed past again - only
 minutes had elapsed. The farm manager was
 now at the hospital in Khomas, having helped in
 the evacuation of nearly a hundred Zambalweans.
 We drove straight to the hospital and gave
 blood. The injured were lying on stretchers all
 over the corridors. A young boy was groaning over
 and over again. We could see into the emergency
 surgery - four patients lay there ready for operation.
 A team of Rhinoceros doctors was operating - assisted
 by Mozambicans and technicians from Guinea
 Bissau, and nurses from Jamaica. Medicines come from the U.S.S.R. We were the
 first to give blood - we had often donated before,
 but never for patients lying near death only
 yards away. The Patriotic Front (Zanu) Minister of
 Health was in attendance. As I was told to
 clench my fingers tight, I formed my hand into
 a fist as a gesture towards him, and he responded
 warmly. Afterwards we helped with the loading
 of patients on to mattresses in the back of a
 huge Swedish truck. People holding drips had to
 clamber aboard as the beds were being lifted.
 The patients were being taken on a hundred
 mile journey to the Beira Hospital, and there
 just didn't seem enough blankets for the
 chilly mid-winter journey. As we left the
 hospital my friend told me that one of the
 boys had - he searched to find the right words
 in a mixture of English and Portuguese - had his
 penis blown off. Then with a sense of finality he
 used the exact phrase that had been going through
 and through my head. Well, the war continues.

— Albie
 Manica Province, Mozambique.