

Written by Administrator
Sunday, 18 May 2014 13:58 -

'Re-engagement is the only game in town' was the message from the platform at a tightly-controlled meeting on Zimbabwe held at the Royal Institute of International Affairs at Chatham House in London.

The meeting was to launch a report 'Zimbabwe's International Re-engagement: The Long Haul to Recovery' by Steve Kibble and Zanu PF apologist Knox Chitiyo. Just to make sure of things another featured speaker was Zanu PF sympathiser Dr Miles Tendi, Lecturer in African History and Politics at Oxford University.

The Vigil had already made known its negative opinion of this report (see: <http://www.zimvigil.co.uk/the-vigil-diary/584-zanu-pf-at-chatham-house--zimbabwe-vigil-diary-26th-april-2014>). So we didn't bother to apply for tickets for the event – especially as a friend of the Vigil hadn't managed to get in, even though he is a member of the Institute (at quite a cost, he notes).

But another friend of ours had better luck and reported: 'Various people in the audience brought up excellent reasons why the west's re-engagement is a bad idea. Ben Freeth was there and brought up an excellent point, but the bottom line was it doesn't matter about human rights abuses, it doesn't matter that there is no rule of law, it doesn't matter that Zanu PF is a criminal network (all points accepted by the panel) – their view was 're-engagement is the only game in town.'

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Among business leaders at the meeting was the head of Anglo-American who felt the indigenisation policy was being implemented pragmatically as shown by the fact that although they had handed over 51% of their shares, they had still maintained control of the company. The Head of Rio Tinto also managed to get into the select meeting.

Our reporter says people were allowed only one question so it was impossible to get to the nitty-gritty of anything. Zimbabwe's Ambassador to London, on the other hand, was allowed the final word on everything. (He was sitting next to the Head of Anglo and they were clearly on a very friendly basis.)

Our reporter added: 'I wanted to ask what message this sends out to other governments, and did they not think that re-engagement should be based on a moral imperative ie only when some reforms have been implemented. If you engage ahead of any reforms, the message appears to be that it doesn't matter what you do as a government, as long as you hold onto power long enough, through intimidation and rigged elections, eventually the west will come around and the west will still engage with you and throw money your way.'

The Vigil is appalled by the tenor of the meeting. Re-engage Zimbabwe? Since when has the West stopped engaging Zimbabwe? There is a full pack of western ambassadors in Harare falling over themselves to feed the starving and support the hopeless. Only this week the French Ambassador, Laurent Delahousse, said Zimbabwe had imposed sanctions upon itself through corruption, violation of people's rights and other unacceptable behaviour and should stop blaming other countries. 'Zimbabwe should adopt a culture of accountability, deal with corruption, lack of transparency in diamond deals and unclear indigenisation policy and avoid blaming the imagined Western sanctions,' he said (see:

<http://www.thezimbabwean.co/news/zimbabwe/71616/zim-sanctions-self-imposed-says.html>

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Zim sanctions 'self-imposed' says diplomat).

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Whatever Chatham House thinks, it is not up to the West to change its policy towards Zimbabwe, it is up to Zanu PF to re-engage with the donor community and stop spitting in their face. The reality is that there can be no fruitful engagement unless Mugabe goes. Any Western businessman looking to “re-engage” with Zimbabwe should look at the demand by Zanu PF MP Temba Mliswa for \$165 million for his cut in dodgy dealings with Zanu PF’s sponsor Billy Rautenbach (see: http://www.zimbabwesituation.com/news/zimsit_zanu-pf-mp-hits-out-at-rautenbach/).

Other points

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The Zimbabwe Action Forum met after the Vigil to discuss the progress of its diaspora initiative to promote change at home. It was agreed that ZAF would remain a platform for discussion embracing all views and would engage the Zimbabwe We Can Movement (ZWC), which is part of the Vigil Coalition, with a view to developing a political force. David Kadzutu said a ZWC meeting earlier in the day had set an annual membership fee of £15. It was noted that a request had been sent to the Home Secretary Theresa May asking for a meeting to discuss the treatment of Zimbabwean asylum seekers. The ZAF meeting was told that a number of MPs had offered their support.

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We were saddened to hear of the death of Vigil founder member Clifford Mahembi. Our thoughts and prayers are with his family and friends.

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Thanks to Isaac Chatikobo, Tendai Bhallphi and Helen Rukambiro who arrived early to help set up.

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For latest Vigil pictures check: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/zimbabwевigil/> . Please note: Vigil photos can only be downloaded from our Flickr website.

FOR THE RECORD: 27 signed the register.

EVENTS AND NOTICES:

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ROHR National Executive meeting. Saturday 31st May from 12 noon. Venue: Strand Continental Hotel (first floor lounge), 143 Strand, London WC2R 1JA. From the Vigil it's about a 10 minute walk, in the direction away from Trafalgar Square. The Strand Continental is situated on the south side of the Strand between Somerset House and the turn off onto Waterloo Bridge. The entrance is marked by a sign at street level. It's between a newsagent and Pizza Express. Nearest underground: Temple (District and Circle lines) and Holborn.

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Next Swaziland Vigil. Saturday 31st May from 10 am to 1 pm outside the Swaziland High Commission, 20 Buckingham Gate, London SW1E 6LB.

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Zimbabwe Action Forum (ZAF). Saturday 7th June from 6.15 pm. Venue: Strand Continental Hotel (first floor lounge), 143 Strand, London WC2R 1JA. For direction see entry above.

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ROHR Reading Branch outreach and general meeting. Saturday 24th May. Times: outreach
11 am

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5 pm

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Venue: RISC

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35-39 London St
reet,
Reading RG1 4PS

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For further enquiries contact:
Charles D Ndlovu (Organising Secretary)
07413879590

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Mary Eluwasi (Vice Organising Secretary)
07888310582

,

Nicodimus Muganhu (Chair) 07877386792

,

Shyllette Chipangura (Secretary) 07828929806.

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‘The Rain that Washes’ national tour: Sat 24, Sun 25 & Mon 26 May – Brighton Fringe
Festival, Marlborough Theatre, 4 Princes Street,
Brighton BN2 1RD.

king details can be found at

www.chickenshed.org.uk/whatsson

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Zimbabwe Yes We Can meeting. Saturday 21st June at 12 noon. Venue: The Theodore
Bullfrog, 26-30 John Adam Street, London WC2N 6HL.

Boo

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Zimbabwe Vigil Highlights 2013 can be viewed on this link: <http://www.zimvigil.co.uk/vigil-news/campaign-news/560-vigil-highlights-2013>

. Links to previous years' highlights are listed on 2013 Highlights page.

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The Restoration of Human Rights in Zimbabwe (ROHR) is the Vigil's partner organization based in Zimbabwe. ROHR grew out of the need for the Vigil to have an organization on the ground in Zimbabwe which reflected the Vigil's mission statement in a practical way. ROHR in the UK actively fundraises through membership subscriptions, events, sales etc to support the activities of ROHR in Zimbabwe. Please note that the official website of ROHR Zimbabwe is <http://www.rohrzimbabwe.org/>

. Any other website claiming to be the official website of ROHR in no way represents the views and opinions of ROHR.

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Zimbabwe Yes We Can Movement holds monthly meetings in London as the political face of ROHR and the Vigil.

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The Zimbabwe Action Forum (ZAF) meets twice a month after the Vigil to discuss ways to help those back in Zimbabwe to fight oppression and achieve true democracy

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Facebook pages:

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Vigil: <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=8157345519&ref=ts>

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ZAF: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Zimbabwe-Action-Forum-ZAF/490257051027515>

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ROHR: <https://www.facebook.co/pages/ROHR-Zimbabwe-Restoration-of-Human-Rights/301811392835>