

Written by Administrator
Sunday, 12 October 2014 12:58 -

The Vigil was represented at a charity meeting in London on a wet evening last Wednesday to hear a talk by former Education Minister David Coltart. We were sorry we had taken the trouble to go when the chairman announced he didn’t want any questions of a political nature. We made our escape as soon as decently possible – but not before being told we should be raising money for Zimbabwean charities.

People who have followed our activities for the past 12 years will know that Vigil supporters have raised thousands of dollars for struggling schools in Zimbabwe and other projects including supporting the work of pastors helping the poor in David Coltart’s own Bulawayo area. We don’t go on about this because the Vigil’s focus is political. We believe it is idle to discuss Zimbabwe’s problems without looking at the political context. To be blunt, politics is the elephant in the room. Or to offer another cliché: charity begins at home (as the recent IMF mission to Zimbabwe concluded).

Why we went to the meeting was to learn about the state of education in Zimbabwe. We would have liked to have known, for instance, what Mr Coltart’s views are on Dr Grace’s two-month PhD (and whether we can still register in time to get our doctorates in our Christmas stockings). Or why the pass rate at O and A levels has dropped. Or why, if Zimbabweans are the most literate people in Africa, we are in such a mess with our young men beating people up for a few drunken dollars or worshipping at the shrine of the Mugabes.

Are these the marks of the educated?

- About 300 pastors and their wives went to Dr Grace’s ‘children’s home’ in Mazowe to be

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told that Mugabe had been anointed by heaven: ‘ In their requests to the First Lady, the pastors said they wanted to be considered for farms and be given stands to prepare for their retirement from the ministry. In response, Grace said she will take their pleas to Mugabe as long as they joined Zanu PF and encouraged their members to buy party cards (see:

Mugabe a pastor anointed by God, wife –

<http://www.zimbabwesituation.com/news/zimsit-m-mugabe-a-pastor-anointed-by-god-wife/>

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Dr Grace told a rally in Gweru: “‘Nobody will remove me from the farm which I took. Blood will be spilt if anyone attempts to remove me from that farm . . . Women, we need land, so let us take it. Even if we don’t farm on the land, that is not a problem as long as you have it and it’s yours.’ (see: Pictures & Audio: I will spill blood – Grace – <http://www.zimbabwesituation.com/news/zimsit-m-pictures-audio-i-will-spill-blood-grace-newsday-zimbabwe/>

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At a rally in Harare she said: ‘Nobody is buying my yoghurt. Business is very bad because of sanctions. You can’t even find a person who can buy a packet of milk’ (see: <http://www.zimbabwesituation.com/news/zimsit-m-no-one-buying-my-yoghurt-grace-moans/>

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o one buying my yoghurt, Grace moans).

Mr Coltart was speaking on behalf of one of the many charities in the UK trying to help the people in Zimbabwe. This particular one is providing scholarships for children who might not otherwise achieve their full potential – a wonderful goal. But the Vigil’s task is different. As our mission statement puts it: *‘The Vigil, outside the Zimbabwe Embassy, 429 Strand, London, takes place every Saturday from 14.00 to 18.00 to protest against gross violations of human rights in Zimbabwe. The Vigil which started in October 2002 will continue until internationally-monitored, free and fair elections are held in Zimbabwe’.*

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The Vigil is not a charity. It is a protest organisation and one of our regular dispiriting experiences is to see plump linen-clad NGO people at London meetings, dozing between lunch and dinner while contemplating the plight of their valiant industry struggling for funds to pay £100,000 salaries and packages including children’s school fees, accommodation, cars and other necessary expenses . . .

As far as we are concerned these people are looking in the wrong direction. It is not for the Vigil to become a charity but for charities to confront the politics of Zimbabwe. Wake up and taste the yoghurt.

Other points

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On the Vigil’s 12th anniversary we were blessed with a warm and sunny afternoon and had a good turnout. Several people brought treats: thanks to Cephas Moswasa for the anniversary cake, Epiphania Phiri for the tin of chocolates and the ROHR Reading branch for sadza and stew.

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More than 20 people went on to a meeting of our Zimbabwe Action Forum to discuss the way forward and socialise on our anniversary.

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We were horrified to see a procession of ghoulish people with blood oozing out pass by the Vigil. But we learnt it was a demonstration by health workers drawing attention to the curse of Ebola. The Vigil notes the donation of \$32 million by emerging economic giant China to help

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deal with the epidemic in West Africa. It compares with an estimated \$1 billion from the US and several hundred million dollars from the UK. But perhaps the Chinese will build a crematorium (with Chinese workers).

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Thanks to Patricia Masamba, Mavis Chisvo and Helen Rukambiro for arriving early to help set up. Thanks also to Helen for looking after the front table during the Vigil.

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At the Vigil our new wristband proved popular. Instead of just saying ‘Mugabe must go’ it now reads ‘Mugabe must go / has gone’, hedging our bets.

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: 47 signed the register.

EVENTS AND NOTICES:

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ROHR Central London Branch general meeting. Saturday 18th October from 12 noon.
Venue: The Theodore Bullfrog, 26-30 John Adam Street, London WC2N 6HL.

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Next Swaziland Vigil. Saturday 18th October from 10 am to 1 pm outside the Swaziland High Commission, 20 Buckingham Gate, London SW1E 6LB.

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Zimbabwe Yes We Can meeting. Saturday 25th October at 12 noon. Venue: The Theodore Bullfrog, 26-30 John Adam Street, London WC2N 6HL.

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Zimbabwe Action Forum (ZAF). Saturday 1st November from 6.15 pm. 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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‘Hope for Zimbabwe’. Tuesday 4th November from 7 – 9 pm. Venue: the Royal Geographical Society, London. Hosted by the Mike Campbell Foundation with Ben Freeth, MBE, Christina Lamb, OBE, Dame Linda Dobbs (Chair). Tickets: £15. For more information, check:

<http://www.mikecampbellfoundation.com/page/events-2014>

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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

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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:

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

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

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

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SW Radio Africa’s website and sound archive is being hosted on www.archive.org . Go to their site and type in swradioafrica which will link you to snapshots of their site over the years and at the top of that page a link to their website where, under podcasts, you will find the audio.