

Dead hand at the tiller – Zimbabwe Vigil Diary: 3rd January 2015

Written by Administrator

Sunday, 04 January 2015 11:07 -

Photolink: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/zimbabwевigil/16186657671/sizes/m/>

As the Mugabe family celebrated the festive season in Singapore many Zimbabweans wished them a long stay there – preferably a permanent one. Acting President Mnangagwa would win a few friends (rare enough) if he were to ensure this.

Not that the Vigil has any confidence in a regime led by Mnangagwa whose teeth are stained by the blood of thousands. But anything is better than Mugabe's dead hand at the tiller. And change at the top will further expose the contradiction in Zanu PF: how long can the chefs flaunt their looted wealth, their flashy clothes and cars, in the face of the impoverished who have only the delusional ZimAsset to look forward to?

On a cold and wet Saturday in London we staged a little tableau inspired by pictures of Mugabe's holiday feast in Singapore. Thanks to Fungayi Mabhunu for donning our Mugabe mask and tucking in to deep-fried Mujuru accompanied by pickled sweetmeats. Posters reading: 'Christmas in Singapore,' 'Don't come back' and 'Stay away Mugabe' were held up by Helen Rukambiro, Ishmael Makina, Paul Fusire, Tryness Ncube and Tanyaradzwa Dhundu.

In the English winter we are warmed by Tourism Minister Walter Mzembi's proposal to establish 10 family theme parks for poor civil servants and other unemployed people. They must develop

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a 'holidaying culture' in the national interest, he said. That, friends, is Zimbabwe 2015 (see: <http://www.zimbabwesituation.com/news/zimsit-m-govt-to-make-recreation-affordable/>

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Govt to make recreation affordable).

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Today's diary carries the second of a three-part summary of our 2014 diaries. They show how we have tried (unsuccessfully) to encourage European support for freedom and the rule of law in Zimbabwe. We intend to continue this struggle in 2015.

Other points

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We draw your attention to an article on the diaspora vote by Vigil supporter Dr Clifford Mashiri (<http://www.zimbabwesituation.com/news/zimsit-m-no-fresh-polls-before-diaspora-vote-is-restored/>

– No fresh polls before Diaspora Vote is restored).

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Thanks to Tryness Ncube for bringing cakes and Paul Fusire, Deborah Harry and Fungayi Mabhunu for arriving early to help us set up.

Zimbabwe Vigil Highlights May – August 2014

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The Missing link – Saturday 3rd May: A well-attended meeting of the Zimbabwe Action Forum held after the Vigil appointed an interim committee to reach out to the diaspora with a view to agreeing a common voice and liaising with progressive forces in Zimbabwe. ZAF Chair, Ephraim Tapa, said the diaspora was the missing link.

The meeting went on to discuss sending a delegation to the Home Secretary about the treatment of Zimbabweans seeking asylum.

Betraying the Future – Saturday 10th May: Everyone who wishes Zimbabwe well must be worried at indications that Zanu PF, desperate for money to keep afloat, is preparing to mortgage the country's natural resources to secure a Chinese takeaway.

We at the Vigil urge the many MDCs to at least unite on this one platform: warn China that when a democratic government comes to power any such deal will be repudiated.

Re-engagement with what? – Saturday 17th May: '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. Another featured speaker was Zanu PF sympathiser

Dr Miles Tendi, Lecturer in African History and Politics at Oxford University. A friend of the Vigil who managed to get in to the meeting reported that the panel's view was that

're-engagement is the only game in town.' Our reporter added: '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.'

A still birth – Saturday 24th May: The Vigil welcomes the belated court challenge to force the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission to release the voters' roll used in the last elections as required by the constitution. This week marked the anniversary of the signing into law of the new constitution providing for improved civil liberties. What a still birth! Zanu PF has simply refused to change laws which allow it to deny people their – now constitutional – right to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly.

EU's policy stinks – Saturday 31st May: There was speculation at the Vigil that the eagerness of the EU to offer hundreds of millions of dollars to the Zanu PF regime may be linked to reports that Mugabe is to step down soon. Mugabe is said to have been told by the Joint Operations Command to leave it to the military to manage a takeover by Mujuru's rival, Justice Minister

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Mnangagwa . Vigil supporter Dr Clifford Mashiri has appealed to the EU not to release the money to the Zanu PF regime until it allows the diaspora vote.

LOL EU – Saturday 7th June: As the EU embraces Zanu PF, the party's supporters in the UK are 'coming out' in force. Nehanda Radio displayed photos on its website taken at the launch of a new branch of Zanu PF in Bracknell, near London. The Vigil has put Nehanda Radio's photos on our flickr website and we ask people to let us know if they can identify anybody so that we can check on our database to see if any of them have come to the Vigil. If they have misrepresented themselves as human rights activists to get our support for permission to stay in the UK we would like to expose them to the Home Office and see these frauds sent back home to enjoy the paradise that Zanu PF has created.

Enter Fool Stage Left – Saturday 14th June 2014: 'Life is getting better in Zimbabwe' reads the headline over a 'review' by a former director of Britain's National Theatre Richard Eyre. 'Many Zimbabweans are now prospering'. Mr Eyre says. Harare 'utterly failed to live down to my expectations. In spite of forceful government and forced land redistribution, if you walk around the centre and the suburbs of the city you will witness no violence and encounter universal courtesy.'

Mr Eyre appears to be less than fully informed of the real situation he surveyed only from the verdant suburbs of Harare. We ask ourselves: did this theatrical giant bstride Chintingwiza? The Vigil today launched a new petition to the European Union calling for voting rights for the diaspora to be made a precondition for further re-engagement with Zanu PF.

Mugabe's EU Cheerleader – Saturday 21st June: The Zimbabwe Action Forum, meeting after the Vigil, condemned pro-Mugabe comments by the EU's Ambassador to Harare Aldo Dell'Ariccia. 'Luckily we don't have a leadership crisis in this country', he said, sounding for all the world like Mugabe's spokesman. Dell'Ariccia went on to rebuke NGOs for being confrontational and unconstructive and added 'I have the impression that you are a little bit anchored in the past where instead of seeing NGOs one perceives AGOs – anti-government organisations'. The envoy went on to condemn civil society for being critical of Zanu PF's electioneering ZimAsset plan. The meeting voted to write to Dell'Ariccia's boss Catherine Ashton suggesting that she recall him 'for re-education in diplomacy'.

'Following the rot' – Saturday 28th June: Extroverts in tight dresses and bouffant wigs tottering along the Strand in high heels: it was Gay Pride Day in London. Mugabe would have loved it. He is so taken with gays that we could imagine him tottering along the Strand after

them. A mad fancy? No madder than what is happening in Zimbabwe. Take the mad case of the 'Mujuru flies'. Secretary-General of the Progressive Teachers' Union Raymond Majongwe went to see for himself the plight of the 3,000 families displaced by the Tokwe-Mukosi floods five months ago. These desperate people have to share 36 latrines. Majongwe reports: 'There are large flies called Mai Mujuru flies which are ravaging the area'.

Home Office apologises to Vigil – Saturday 5th July: The Home Office has apologised to the Vigil for comments made by an official in a letter turning down an asylum request by a Vigil supporter. The official alleged that anyone could get a letter from the Vigil in support of their asylum claim on payment of a charge so the Vigil letter would be disregarded. We wrote to the Home Office complaining about this libellous accusation, which derived from a malicious web article, pointing out that the Home Office had admitted it was unfounded three years ago. Now, in an official letter, a Home Office manager says: 'We recognise the Zimbabwe Vigil as a UK-based pressure group representing the Zimbabwean diaspora.' It adds that officials have been reminded that they should disregard the article in assessing what weight to give to letters written by the Vigil. The Vigil was interested to see that the Zimbabwean all-white pro-Mugabe group has welcomed the EU's conciliatory policy to Zimbabwe. We wonder how they regard Mugabe's latest racist rant demanding that no white person should ever farm in Zimbabwe again, even working for a black boss.

Talks or Chaos – Saturday 12th July: The Vigil is heartened by signs that people are beginning to accept that an all-embracing national dialogue is the only way forward to prevent chaos in Zimbabwe. Zanu PF spokesman Rugare Gumbo said: 'The economic transformation that we want to achieve requires the voice of everyone, including the opposition and civic society'. For our part, we want to reach out to everyone and were happy to be invited to take part in a demonstration in Birmingham organised by MDC T in the UK to draw attention to the Zimbabwe crisis. In our view the EU is not helping by dropping its objections to the lack of reforms and rushing to embrace Mugabe.

One hand clapping – Saturday 19th July: It came as no surprise to the Vigil that the Belgian Ambassador to Harare is quoted as saying 'there is nothing amiss in Zimbabwe'. He said Belgium is pushing for the removal in November of the remaining EU sanctions imposed on Zimbabwe because of human rights abuses. Mr Johan added that the President of the World Diamond Centre based in the Belgian city of Antwerp was soon to visit Zimbabwe – an indication of the reason for Belgium's hand of friendship to Mugabe. The Vigil observes that Belgium has not been noted for supporting human rights in Africa. Indeed it was famous for cutting off a hand of anyone in the Belgian Congo who objected to being owned by King Leopold.

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Glasgow Protest – Wednesday 23rd July: A Vigil leader Fungayi Mabhunu, who is married to a Swazi, helped organise a demonstration by our sister organisation the Swaziland Vigil at the opening of the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow. He hired a minibus and picked up exiled Swazis on the way to Scotland where they protested at the attendance of David Cruiser Ngcamphalala, Minister of Sport and a former head of the Riot Police, who is accused of torturing and killing pro-democracy activists.

EU position ‘misunderstood’ – Saturday 26th July: The European Union has distanced itself from reported remarks by its Ambassador to Zimbabwe, Aldo Dell’Ariccia. Addressing a meeting in Harare last month he was quoted as saying ‘Luckily we don’t have a leadership crisis in this country’. The Vigil complained to Mr Dell’Ariccia’s boss, Catherine Ashton, and in a reply to the Vigil, the EU said: ‘We have checked the circumstances, and came to the conclusion that the words of Ambassador Dell’Ariccia have been improperly quoted’.

On another matter, the Vigil, acting at the request of Zimbabwean activists, approached the Foreign Office for further help in resourcing the means to convert a scanned copy of the 2013 voters’ roll into an electronic text document.

In reply to the Vigil the Foreign Office acknowledged the importance of the matter but said the budget for this has now run out.

Recall Ambassador –Saturday 2nd August: The Zimbabwean human rights activist Ben Freeth has written to the Vigil with information supporting our demand for the recall of EU Ambassador Aldo Dell’Ariccia because of his support for the Mugabe regime. Although the EU told us in a letter that Mr Dell’Ariccia had been misreported, Ben Freeth says he spoke to the Ambassador and he repeated that he did not believe that Zimbabwe had a leadership crisis.

The Vigil marked the anniversary of the stolen 2013 elections by staging a tableau mocking the victory banquet in Harare this week held by Mugabe for his mafia henchmen. Fungayi Mabhunu, wearing our Mugabe mask, presided at a Vigil banquet flanked by supporters wearing red devils’ masks amid posters such as:
EU sups with devil Mugabe.

A voice silenced – Saturday 9th August: This weekend marks the end of SW Radio Africa which has been broadcasting high quality journalism to Zimbabwe for thirteen years. Coming at a time when the independent press at home is facing a growing financial squeeze, the Vigil believes the loss of this voice is a tragic blow to democracy. Supporting a peaceful democratic transition is proclaimed as one of the main objectives for Zimbabwe of the UK’s Department for International Development, which must have given our country well over a billion dollars of aid

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during the lifetime of SW Radio Africa. It's a pity DFID didn't see fit to provide money to keep the radio station going as it filled the prescription for this. The Vigil is glad to hear that EU Ambassador to Harare Aldo Dell'Ariceia is returning home.

No joke – Saturday 16th August: Supporters at the Vigil beamed broadly in response to Mugabe's appeal to Zimbabweans to pretend that all is well to the SADC Summit at the Victoria Falls. Our smiles were so big we couldn't help laughing at Mugabe's request: 'We are asking you to smile and show the region that we are a hospitable people, that we can welcome visitors. Let us all smile and for just a moment forget our problems . . . albeit under the burden of sanctions.'

To underline our joy at our desperate situation we held up smiley pictures with the posters: Mugabe: 'Smile for the SADC Summit' and Mugabe: 'Smile, though your heart is breaking'. The Vigil was joined by ZAPU Secretary-General Dr Ralph Mguni, who said that Zimbabweans used to be respected around the world but they are now regarded as trash.

Zhing-zhong deal – Saturday 23rd August: As Mugabe and top ministers converged on Beijing in a desperate appeal for a financial bailout, the Vigil was alerted to indications that an illegal deal was being negotiated to rescue Zimbabwe from its economic torpor and pay the government's pressing running bills. Zanu PF's golden grail is \$27 billion to fund the fatuous ZimAsset programme for economic development which formed the centrepiece of its 2013 election campaign but – a year on – has failed to get off the ground.

The empty vessel – Saturday 30th August: As Mugabe made his thirteenth visit to Beijing, his hosts must have found it Chinese torture to keep a straight face. A 21-gun salute for the empty vessel must have been the final straw, especially knowing they were expected to fill it with gold. The Chinese will remember that when Mugabe came to power in 1980 Zimbabwe's annual gross domestic product was rather more than theirs at

US\$1,295

per head compared to China's

US\$1,061

. They will have observed in awe how he has managed to completely ruin the country so that in 2013 the GDP figures were: Zimbabwe

US\$446 and China US\$3,583

. Like clockwork, Mugabe trotted out the tired cold war rhetoric: 'Down with colonialism, imperialism and capitalism' which must have seemed rather quaint to his welcoming group of Chinese capitalists, colonialists and imperialists. If Mugabe had expected them to join his chorus he must now realise that they no longer zhing from the same zhong sheet.

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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: 15 signed the register.

EVENTS AND NOTICES:

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

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Demonstration in support of Africa Unity Square protester Itai Dzamara. Saturday 17th January. Further details:
<http://www.zimvigil.co.uk/vigil-news/campaign-news/636-occupy-unity-square-protest-zimbabw-e-embassy-london-saturday-17th-january-2015-from-2-5-pm>

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Zimbabwe Action Forum (ZAF). Saturday 17th January 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

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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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Zimbabwe Action Forum (ZAF) meets regularly after the Vigil to discuss ways to help those back in Zimbabwe to fight oppression and achieve true democracy.

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Zimbabwe meeting in Parliament. Monday 19th January from 3.30 – 6 pm. Venue: House of Commons. For information contact: Nicodimus Muganhu – 07877386792, Erick Eluwasi – 07532021348, Charles Ndlovu – 07413879590, Sally Mutseyami – 07448730581, Thandiwe Gwarumba - 07503512308

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Zimbabwe Yes We Can meeting. Saturday 31st January at 12 noon. Venue: The Theodore Bullfrog, 26-30 John Adam Street, London WC2N 6HL.

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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 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 us.

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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>

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

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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>

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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.