

The noose tightens – Zimbabwe Vigil Diary: 11th January 2014

Written by Administrator

Sunday, 12 January 2014 17:57 - Last Updated Sunday, 12 January 2014 17:57

With Mugabe's return from his latest Asian holiday he will be able to celebrate his 90th birthday in some style. His office has been allocated \$206 million in Chinamasa's budget – nearly six times as much as he was given last year by Gono's stingy lawyer Tendai Biti, when he had to restrict his foreign shopping trips to less than one a month.

\$200 million or so should cover his travel costs this year – after all it is more than the combined allocations for:

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The Ministry of Industry and Commerce – \$7.4 million

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The Ministry of Energy and Power Development – £23.4 million

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The Ministry of Mines and Mining Development – \$8.6 million

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The Ministry of Agriculture, Mechanisation and Irrigation Development – \$155.2 million

(See: http://www.zimbabwesituation.com/news/zimsit_massive-jump-in-2014-budget-allocation-for-mugabe-s-office/ – Massive jump in 2014 budget allocation for Mugabe's office).

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The Industry and Commerce Minister Mike Bimha says his \$7.4 million will pay for the day to day running of his ministry but not allow him to do anything. The Vigil thought that Zanu PF promised at the elections to revive industry, particularly in Bulawayo. And, for that matter, agriculture and energy as well . . .

It must have come as sad news to Chinamasa that the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank have turned down his appeal for money to keep bankrupt Zimbabwe afloat. But he can always look East. For the starving millions in the rural areas, however, it is even sadder news that the World Food Programme has failed to meet its fundraising target for Zimbabwe (see: http://www.zimbabwesituation.com/news/zimsit_food-situation-worsens-in-zimbabwe/ – Food Situation Worsens in Zimbabwe). But judging by their miserly response to the plight of the Philippines after their devastating typhoon, the Vigil doubts that any appeal for Chinese help will be productive. Perhaps the starving should look instead to Mugabe’s \$200 million of government money. But they shouldn’t hold their breath – if indeed they have any left.

Other points

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Our attendance was buoyed by people coming from a ROHR Executive Meeting held at our local headquarters, the nearby Strand Continental.

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We were cheered to get a New Year message from Zimbabwean economist Dale Dore: ‘Well done, Vigil! Please send my best wishes to all your members who persevere so bravely, even when others have given up hope and when the future looks so bleak.’

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We were pleased to hear from the Chickenshed Theatre about a planned national tour of Vigil supporter Christopher Maphosa's biographical story 'The Rain that Washes'. Members of the Vigil who have seen it can thoroughly recommend it. The itinerary follows:

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Fri 17 & Sat 18 Jan – Ustinov Studios, Theatre Royal Bath, Sawclose, Bath BA1 1ET

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Fri 28 Feb – The Cut, New Cut, Halesworth, Suffolk IP19 8BY

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Fri 4 Apr – Seven Arts, 31A Harrogate Road, Leeds LS7 3PD

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Sat 5 Apr – Selby Town Hall, York Street, Selby, North Yorkshire, YO8 4AJ

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Sat 24, Sun 25 & Mon 26 May – Brighton Fringe Festival, Malborough Theatre, 4 Princes Street, Brighton BN2 1RD

Booking details for individual venues and future dates can be found at www.chickenshed.org.uk/whatson

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Thanks to Rose Maponga, Dumi Tutani and Aivet Phiri for arriving early to help set up.

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See below for the second part of the 2013 Zimbabwe Vigil Highlights (April – June).

Zimbabwe Vigil Highlights 2013: April – June

Saturday 6th April: Vigil founder member Ephraim Tapa, who has just returned from an undercover visit to Zimbabwe, says he believes the result of the referendum on a new constitution was rigged. Ephraim, a former leader of the Civil Service Employees Union, has not been home since he was given political asylum in the UK after being tortured and fleeing Zimbabwe in 2002. Ephraim said ZEC's report of an unprecedented high voter turnout was being disputed and its cooking of the figures was an indicator of things to come.

Wednesday 10th April: A Vigil delegation had a useful meeting with the Zimbabwe Desk at the UK Foreign Office. We told them that we expected rigged elections and Ephraim spoke of the tangible fear he detected in Zimbabwe. He predicted that disillusionment with the MDC would produce apathy during the elections. We were assured that the British government's only aim was to see free and fair elections resulting in a government of the people's choice. The Foreign Office expressed confidence in the facilitation of SADC.

Saturday 13th April: That prosecutors have now charged civil rights lawyer Beatrice Mtetwa with calling police 'cockroaches' shows an unexpected sensitivity. Mind you, the police do seem to be all over the place, scuttling away as soon as the light shines on them, only to regather in the dark. But their boss Patrick Chinamasa shows more than sensitivity. He says the UN cannot visit Zimbabwe to discuss funding the elections. To check if things are ok would, in his paranoid mind, be furthering the regime change agenda. The UN must instead just hand the money over.

Saturday 20th April: Waving a pistol at Vigil supporters, President Mugabe (played by Fungayi

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Mabhunu in our Mugabe mask) appeared outside the Zimbabwe Embassy to mark Independence Day. Carrying a poster reading '33 years in power', he was beset by Zimbabwean exiles with rival placards such as: 33 years of oppression, 33 years of looting, 33 years of lawlessness and 33 years of rigged elections. Vigil supporters signed a letter to President Zuma drawing his attention to moves underway for massive vote rigging. After the Vigil, Ephraim Tapa joined us at the bi-monthly Zimbabwe Action Forum to talk about his time in Zimbabwe. He spoke of the daily hardships of the people living the 'economy of the stomach' and how when he visited people's carefully kept homes in Harare their faces fell when he asked to use the toilet.

Saturday 27th April: We at the Vigil were glad to hear Morgan Tsvangirai insist that reforms laid out in the GPA must be implemented before the elections. But the Vigil wants him to go further and spell out that, if the reforms are not made, he will not take part.

Saturday 4th May: The scale of the challenge facing the opposition is becoming ever clearer as Zanu PF puts into action its well-practised plan to rig the vote. Eddie Cross, the MDC-T MP, says he expects a landslide victory . The Vigil can't imagine an MDC victory with: a rigged voters' roll, obstacles to voter registration, intimidation of MDC voters, corrupt electoral commission, clampdown on civil society organisations, politicised security forces, biased judges, unreformed media, refusal to allow UN scrutiny, limits on election observers and total non-co-operation with SADC.

Saturday 11th May: The British newspaper the Guardian runs a full page on Zimbabwe by David Smith reporting from Harare. He writes: 'The Zimbabwean president will retain power in this year's elections through fair means or foul; the poll will be relatively peaceful and deemed "credible" by the west; then sanctions will be lifted against Mugabe and his inner circle, ushering him back in from the cold.' The message from the Guardian is that the coming election must be accepted however flawed. The Vigil begs to disagree. We believe that SADC should stand by the Global Political Agreement it foisted on the MDC. And if it doesn't the MDC should refuse to take part in the charade.

Saturday 18th May: South Africa must 'go to hell with their treachery and leave us alone' fulminates Zanu PF politburo member Jonathan Moyo. His tirade follows the 'outrageous' remarks by South Africa's Deputy Foreign Minister Ebrahim Ebrahim who said that the MDC parties had 'a legitimate argument' in demanding further reforms before the elections.

The Vigil sent the following letter to President Zuma:

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On behalf of oppressed Zimbabweans we apologise for the insolent remarks by Zanu PF functionaries about the comments by Deputy Foreign Minister Ebrahim Ebrahim suggesting that Zanu PF should implement the GPA. We trust that South Africa will spell out to Zanu PF the consequences of a rigged election . . .

Saturday 25th May: ‘We are sorry and we pass our condolences to his family’ said MDC T MP for Mazowe Central Shepherd Mushonga. Who was the noble soul he was lamenting? None other than Elias Kanengoni, the Deputy Director of the Central Intelligence Organisation, who was sentenced to seven years in prison for the shooting of former Gweru mayor Patrick Kombayi but was pardoned by Mugabe. The late lamented was also named by MDC T as one of the people responsible for the massacre of 14 party activists at Chaona village in Chiweshe in May 2008.

The Vigil’s exasperation with this hypocrisy were prompted by a sycophantic television documentary on the Mugabe family made for the SABC by Dali Tambo, son of South African liberation hero Oliver Tambo. ‘Flowers, silver cutlery and a box of tissues adorn the spotless white tablecloth’ reports the British Guardian newspaper, which was given a preview of the programme. ‘Mum chortles’ as the first family tucks in . . . ‘

You’re very loving, you’re kind, you’re generous’, she gushes to the President . . .

Saturday 1st June: The Vigil applauds Tendai Biti’s promise that an MDC government will firmly support action on corruption. All public officials will be required to declare their assets every year. ‘Guys I have four underwear,’ he told SW Radio Africa. ‘Guys I’ve got four vests. Guys I’ve got four bras – size 46B.’ We would like to check next year if Mr Biti is still size 46B but, sadly, the Vigil doesn’t think it’s likely that the MDC will form the next government, having allowed themselves to be out-manoeuvred by Zanu PF for four years to the extent that there is no time left to ensure a level playing field for the elections that Zanu PF’s tame judges say must be held by the end of next month. The Zimbabwe Action Forum, at our fortnightly meeting after the Vigil, was told by Andy Moyse of the Zimbabwe Media Monitoring Project: ‘Zanu PF will control the elections as they have always done’.

Saturday 8th June: We disenfranchised Zimbabweans think that Zanu PF spokesman Gumbo can’t be serious in describing President Zuma’s advisor Lindiwe Zulu as ‘a mad woman’ for insisting on the promised reforms before elections. The Vigil hopes that Zuma will dismiss the decision of the aptly-named ‘con’court to order elections by the end of next month. No doubt the ‘mad woman’ will have informed him of the opinion of Deputy Chief Justice Luke Malaba that the ruling ‘defied logic’.

Saturday 15th June: We arrived at the Vigil generally pessimistic about the SADC summit in Maputo but before the day was out our lives faced transformation. ‘Good people, good, good people, it has been an incredible and unbelievable day’ Tendai Biti said on his Facebook page. ‘SADC rose to the occasion and scuttled the evil and Machiavellian machinations of the chaos faction of Zanu PF.’ Mr Biti said all President Zuma’s recommendations were adopted, including a demand that the Constitutional Court be requested to postpone elections for 14 days to enable reforms to be made. The security forces would be required to publicly affirm their commitment to the rule of law, SADC observers were to be deployed immediately and SADC representatives were to sit in JOMIC and not merely to receive reports as demanded by Zanu PF.

Tuesday 18th June: About 20 Vigil supporters attended a meeting in London at which a new film was shown ‘Beatrice Mtetwa and the rule of law’. We were happy to be introduced to Beatrice, who said the new constitution would not of itself restore the rule of law. This would require full commitment by all parties. At present the voters’ roll was in a shambles and perpetrators of political violence were still at large. Even if changes were made now there was not enough time left to affect people on the ground.

Saturday 22nd June: After a brief ray of hope from the SADC Summit in Maputo, the week since then has seen prospects of free and fair elections again dimming as Zanu PF refuses to implement agreed reforms. The Vigil learns Morgan Tsvangirai and Welshman Ncube were left kicking their heels at State House for three hours on Friday, waiting vainly for Mugabe to pitch up for a crucial meeting. What the Vigil would have liked to see from Tsvangirai and Ncube is a decision to present an ultimatum to Zanu PF and SADC: no reforms, no elections. The Vigil was joined by MDC members, as well as ROHR and Zimbabwe We Can supporters. Their signatures quickly filled pages of our newly-launched petition: ‘
Zimbabweans in the diaspora and supporters call on political parties at home not to take part in the forthcoming elections unless Zanu PF implements the reforms demanded by SADC at its summit in Maputo on 15th

June 2013. We believe that, unless these reforms are made, the results of the elections will not be credible’.

Thursday 27th June: Vigil supporters took part in a demonstration outside the Embassy to mark the fifth anniversary of the abortive presidential run-off. Centrepiece of the demonstration was a stark ‘tree of hope’ on which were hung messages wishing for free and fair and non-violent elections written on red paper roses by people who had called at our regular Saturday Vigil. The tree was then taken to Southwark Cathedral and installed there by the Sub-Dean, Canon Bruce Saunders, who led us in prayers for peace and justice in Zimbabwe.

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Saturday 29th June: Regular supporter Peter Sidindi condemned African leaders for being taken in by Mugabe's revolutionary posturing when he was exactly the opposite of a freedom fighter. Ephraim Tapa, leader of ROHR and the We Can Movement said that as from today we were without a parliament and without reforms ahead of the coming elections.

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: 50 signed the register.

EVENTS AND NOTICES:

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Zimbabwe Yes We Can meeting. Saturday 18th January from 12 noon. Venue: Strand Continental Hotel (first floor lounge), 143 Strand, London WC2R 1JA. The Strand is the same road as the Vigil. 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 big sign high above and a sign for its famous Indian restaurant at street level. It's next to a newsagent. Nearest underground: Temple (District and Circle lines) and Holborn.

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Zimbabwe Action Forum (ZAF). Saturday 18th January 2014 from 6.15 pm. Venue: Strand Continental Hotel (first floor lounge), 143 Strand, London WC2R 1JA. For directions see entry above.

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Next Swaziland Vigil. Saturday 25th January from 10 am to 1 pm outside the Swaziland High Commission, 20 Buckingham Gate, London SW1E 6LB.

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Zimbabwe Vigil Highlights 2012 can be viewed on this link: <http://www.zimvigil.co.uk/the-vigil-diary/467-vigil-highlights-2012>

Links to previous years' highlights are listed on 2012 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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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.com/pages/ROHR-Zimbabwe-Restoration-of-Human-Rights/301811392835>

Zimbabweans United for Democracy (ZUNDE). For more information about this organisation, check: www.zunde.org .