

## The empty vessel – Zimbabwe Vigil Diary: 30th August 2014

Written by Administrator

Monday, 01 September 2014 07:08 - Last Updated Monday, 01 September 2014 07:08

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As Mugabe made his eleventh visit to Beijing, his famously enigmatic hosts must have found it Chinese torture to keep a straight face at the sight of the ancient cartoon dictator. 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, as well as being smart business people, have a long memory. They will remember that when Mugabe came to power in 1980 Zimbabwe's annual gross national 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 (see: Former underdogs outperform Zim – <http://www.financialgazette.co.zw/former-underdogs-outperform-zim/> ).

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.

We are fortunate in the diaspora to have ready access to a broad range of news than is not easily available at home and the Vigil thinks it has a responsibility not only to show the outside world what Zimbabwe is suffering but also to show people at home how misguided they would be to rely on Zanu PF's empty promises of a better tomorrow.

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What prompts these reflections was an eloquent article in the Zimbabwean by the economist and author Vince Musewe pleading for Zimbabweans in the diaspora to become more politically active (see: Things fall apart, the centre cannot hold – <http://www.zimbabwesituation.com/news/zimsit-m-things-fall-apart-the-centre-cannot-hold-the-zimbabwean/>

). Trying to create a coalition for change has been the Vigil's aim from its beginning 12 years ago. We are sad to say we have met with only limited success. There are many reasons for this but the chief one could be called the fissiparous tendency. Just as every Zimbabwean has a new constitution under their mattress so when two Zimbabweans gather together they will each soon want to form their own party.

The Vigil organised a conference last October reaching out to all diaspora groups to work together. But even on the most basic objective – free and fair elections – support has been disappointing. Every Zimbabwean wants to be the leader and every leader wants to be the leader forever. But Vince is surely right that the diaspora has an important role to play – and not just by the remittances of US\$412 million – probably an underestimate – sent home in the first half of this year. But if Zimbabwe is to be really helped from abroad, the diaspora must learn to work together.

All we can do at the moment is offer support. But, given the fissiparous tendency, support for what? The MDC renewal team's only achievement so far seems to have been to choose a party colour! What the Vigil would like to know is if it's true as reported that they think the 2013 election results were ok? (See: People voted Zanu PF – Mafume – [http://www.zimbabwesituation.com/news/zimsit\\_m\\_people-voted-zanu-pf-mafume-dailynews-live/](http://www.zimbabwesituation.com/news/zimsit_m_people-voted-zanu-pf-mafume-dailynews-live/)

). For our part, the Vigil is convinced the elections were rigged. We are also puzzled by their offer to work for Zanu PF.

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In the meantime, we applaud the brave youths who took to the streets for a second week to be beaten for their legitimate demand that the Mugabe regime keep its promises. And we are happy that the MDC T now agrees with us that the opposition should not to take part in elections until there are reforms.

### Other points

- Despite our complaint above about lack of support from other groups, we were pleased that Christopher Maphosa, President of Zapu UK, joined us today.
- Thanks to Ben Semwayo, Siza Ndebele, Elizabeth Mathe and Helen Rukambiro who were there at the start of the Vigil to help set up.
- A special thank you to Patricia Masambe for mending and washing our cloth banners which have remained unchanged for 12 years and read: 'No to Mugabe, No to Starvation' and 'End Murder Rape and Torture in Zimbabwe'.

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:** 22 signed the register.

**EVENTS AND NOTICES:**

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**Next Swaziland Vigil.** Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> September from 10 am to 1 pm outside the Swaziland High Commission, 20 Buckingham Gate, London SW1E 6LB.

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**ROHR Slough Branch general meeting.** Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> September from 1 – 3.30 pm. Venue: Upton Lea Community Hall, Wexham Road, Slough SL2 5JW. For further information contact Fungisai Mupandira (Organising Secretary) 07758958803, Patricia Masamba (Chair) 07708116625, Sharon Zimuto (Secretary) 07988165394.

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**Zimbabwe Action Forum (ZAF).** Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> September 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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**ROHR Executive Committee meeting.** Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> September from 12 noon. Venue: Strand Continental Hotel (first floor lounge), 143 Strand, London WC2R 1JA.

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**ROHR Central London Branch general meeting.** Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> September from 12 noon. Venue: The Theodore Bullfrog, 26-30 John Adam Street, London WC2N 6HL.

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**Zimbabwe Yes We Can meeting.** Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> September at 12 noon. Venue: The Theodore Bullfrog, 26-30 John Adam Street, London WC2N 6HL.

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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:

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/3>

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