

Written by Administrator
Sunday, 19 July 2015 14:09 -

Suddenly Zimbabwe is back in the news. Having spent the last thirteen years trying vainly to persuade the world to pay attention to the unfolding agony of Zimbabwe, the Vigil is naturally pleased at the attention Zimbabwe is now attracting – though, frankly, we are at a loss to explain it.

We thought the big news of the week was the remarkable volte-face by Vice-President Mnangagwa who, on a visit to China, admitted that Zanu PF had completely screwed up and would have to rethink everything. Zimbabwe, he told Chinese television, would have to ‘bite the bullet’ and reform, admitting that the country was nearly two decades behind other countries in most respects.

Mnangagwa said Zanu PF realised it had to create an attractive investment environment and this was only part of a ‘massive reform process’. He said: You cannot say there are areas of our economy which we are happy with: infrastructure we are behind by 15-16 years, agricultural development the same, manufacturing, in fact capacity utilisation in some areas of our industry it is down to 20%, so again we have to retool by acquiring new technology and machinery so that we are competitive.’ (see: <https://www.newsday.co.zw/2015/07/15/zim-has-lost-20-yrs-mnangagwa/>).

Whether Mnangagwa will be able to see through a reform agenda is doubtful. Opposition MDC MP Eddie Cross cites the ‘link between politics and business’ that he says is holding back the Zimbabwean economy: ‘The Chief Executive of an organisation made an appointment to see the Vice President, Emmerson Mnangagwa this week. He was told to come to the office at 08.30hrs and was there on time. When he got into the office the person through whom he had made the appointment asked him if he had brought “the envelope”. The CEO said no and that he was not going to pay to see the Vice President. He waited two hours and a Secretary told

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him to go downstairs and see someone who would get him into the VP – he walked down and when he got there he decided that enough is enough and he just kept going.’ (see: <http://www.politicsweb.co.za/news-and-analysis/zimbabwe-at-the-heart-of-the-rot>).

But what has propelled Zimbabwe up the news agenda is not the nitty-gritty of Zimbabwean politics but the human drama: who is going to take over from Mugabe. The question is discussed in an article in the UK Times today by the Zimbabwean journalist Jan Raath, who believes Mnangagwa will take over but adds ‘The whole laboriously constructed succession scheme, however, could be blown away in hours. The day Mugabe dies, the entire nation may well be enveloped in an explosion of jubilation.’ (<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/opinion/columnists/article4501358.ece>).

For its part, the UK Guardian devotes a lot of space to the political prospects of renowned scholar Dr Grace (see: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jul/15/dont-mess-with-grace-mugabe-she-could-be-next-president-zimbabwe>).

In a comprehensive article in Newsweek, the American international news magazine, the Zimbabwean journalist Graham Boynton says ‘I have just spent a month travelling around Zimbabwe and, from the wilderness areas, through the rural communities, and in the major cities, the phrase that prefaces almost every conversation is "When the Old Man goes..." It will be a defining moment for the new Zimbabwe. But right now the Old Zimbabwe is clinging on by its fingertips. It is a situation that alarms David Coltart, a former Cabinet minister in the now defunct Government of National Unity (GNU). He says that since independence from white minority rule in 1980 "we have never had a situation where you've got weapons under the control of so many different entities – ZANU is fragmented, the army is fragmented, the Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO) is fragmented, the police are fragmented – and there is a

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leadership vacuum. As a country, as a people, we are at our lowest ebb.’ (See: <http://eu.ropenewsweek.com/inside-mugabes-zimbabwe-tyrant-totters-towards-decrepitude-his-country-slides-into-famine-3302120>).

Against the backdrop of the power struggle in Zanu PF comes news that Zimbabwe is the second poorest country in the world, cheated of last place by the equally well-endowed Democratic Republic of Congo (see: <http://www.newzimbabwe.com/news-23697-Zim+now+poorest+country+in+the+world/news.aspx>). Meanwhile, at the Vigil talk was about the vendors at home and the explosive situation that we do not think that even the new ‘reformed’ Mnangagwa realises he faces. The message we get from our relatives and friends is that if people lose their livelihoods they have nothing else to lose.

Other points

- Exiled Writers’ Ink is holding an event entitled ‘Sounds of Africa’ on Monday 3rd August at 7.30 pm. This will feature Zimbabwean writers Bart Wolffe and Blessing Mamvura and will be hosted by Handsen Chikowore who came to the Vigil to tell us about the event. For details see ‘Events and Notices’.
- Thanks to those who came early to help set up: Humphrey Dube, Fungisai Mupandira, Helen Rukambiro, Fungayi Mabhunu, Mavis Mutanga, Morella Gertrude Nhau, John Burke, Esther Nyambi, Ben Semwayo, Bridget Mupotsa, Euliter Mutami, Sally Mutseyami and Nobukhosi Moyo. Thanks also to Esther and Helen for looking after the front table.

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:

- **ROHR Southampton branch participates in community event.** Saturday 25th July from 12 noon – 6 pm. Venue: Pavilion on the Park, 1 Kingfisher Road, Eastleigh SO50 9LH. ROHR Southampton invites supporters to join them as branch members participate in a community event to encourage participation in grass roots sports and arts. For further enquiries contact: Sally Mutseyami (Chairperson) on 07448730581, Grace Rukure (Secretary) on 07462103397 and Edward Mukuze (Info & Publicity Officer) on 07463975108.
- **ROHR Birmingham branch general members meeting.** Saturday 25th July from 1 – 5 pm. Venue: 111-119 Bishop Street, Digbeth, Birmingham B5 6JL. For more info contact Chairperson: Thandiwe Gwarimba 07503 512308, Vice Chair: Tino Mashonganyika 07463 272078, Organising Secretary: JaneMary Mapfumo 07412 310429.
- **ROHR Reading branch hosts the Afro Cultural Fundraiser Southern Region.**
Saturday 8th
August from 1 – 11 pm. Venue:
Pakistan Community Centre, London Road, Reading RG1 3PA.
Theme: Afro cultural event interacting with other people from all corners of the world. We will be donating food purchased through our fundraising to local foodbanks. The Mayor of Reading will

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attend as well as other local leaders, performing groups from different parts of Africa and a well-known DJ. Prizes: tablet, digital camera, gift vouchers and many more. African food. For further information contact: Charles D Ndlovu 07413879590, Eric Eluwasi 07888310582, Nicodimus Muganhu 07877386792, Deborah Harry 07748723974 and Shyllette Chipangura 07828929806.

- **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.w.rohrzimbabwe.org/>
· Any other website claiming to be the official website of ROHR in no way represents us.

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

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

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

- **Exiled Writers Ink – 'Sounds of Africa'.** Monday 3rd August at 7.30 pm. Venue: Poetry Place, 22 Betterton Street, London WC2H 9BX. Featuring Zimbabwean writers Bart Wolffe and Blessing Mamvura and will be hosted by Handsen Chikowore. Tickets £5 or £3 for asylum seekers.

- **Vigil's Itai Dzamara Protest.** Saturday 8th August from 2 – 6 pm outside the Zimbabwe Embassy in London. The protest is to mark 5 months since Dzamara's abduction by the CIO.

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- **Zimbabwe Action Forum (ZAF).** Date of next meeting to be advised. ZAF meets regularly after the Vigil to discuss ways to help those back in Zimbabwe to fight oppression and achieve true democracy.

- **Zimbabwe Vigil Highlights 2014** can be viewed on this link: <http://www.zimvigil.co.uk/vigil-news/campaign-news/642-zimbabwe-vigil-highlights-2014>
. Links to previous years' highlights are listed on 2014 Highlights page.

- **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>

- SW Radio Africa's website and sound archive is being hosted on www.archive.org . Go to the 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.