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Zimbabwe: The Revolution Continues

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The coming elections in Zimbabwe are no mere referendum on the leadership of the coalition government. Instead, the decision before Zimbabweans is a clear one: continue on the revolutionary path of Mugabe and ZANU-PF or follow Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai's MDC-T and their pro-US, neoliberal economic agenda.

While much of Africa has been turned into a chaotic, war-ravaged continent stuck in the destructive cycles of violence, terrorism, and dependence on imperial powers, Zimbabwe has managed to maintain the fierce independence and commitment to revolution espoused by President Mugabe stretching all the way back to the post-colonial liberation struggle. However, in order to fully understand the sustained campaign of destabilization and subversion by the Western imperialist ruling class, one must first examine the policies of Mugabe and ZANU-PF that have earned them the ire of Washington and London.

Mugabe's "Crimes"

Robert Mugabe and his ZANU-PF party emerged from the post-independence conflict as the dominant political party in Zimbabwe, promising to finally address the most pressing issues facing black Zimbabweans who, despite making up the vast majority of the population, continued to be mostly landless, while the white, landowning class maintained their grip on the most arable land. This gross disparity in land ownership, a vestige of the colonial system,

became one of the primary needs that the new leadership intended to address. However, the terms of the negotiated settlement of the war of liberation in 1979, known as the Lancaster House Agreement, essentially allowed the white farmers to retain their land if they chose to do so under the “willing buyer, willing seller” principle.

This system continued until 2000 when President Mugabe shifted the policy to a “fast track” land program that sought to unseat white privilege and restore ethnic balance to land ownership. It was precisely this policy shift that earned Mugabe the ire of the imperial powers, particularly the British, which then sought to punish Mugabe and the people of Zimbabwe by instituting crippling sanctions that destroyed the Zimbabwean economy. However, this only strengthened the resolve of ZANU-PF, teaching them a number of important lessons. As Francis Chitsike of Midlands State University in Zimbabwe points out:

What the Zimbabwean government learnt from its own experience is that in an agriculturally based economy, no development program will succeed if people are not given access to land. Equitable access to means of production is vital to the success of any development program. There is a direct link between poverty reduction and land reform, and issues of poverty reduction cannot be tackled without addressing issues of land reform.ⁱ

After twenty years of playing by the rules set forth by the British, Mugabe and ZANU-PF realized that in order to achieve the true goals of the revolution (poverty reduction, land redistribution, expanded social services, etc.), they would have to reinvent the country, not simply reform it gradually. And so, ZANU-PF adopted as its slogan “Land is the economy and the economy is land” in order to underscore the government’s commitment to true land redistribution. The results of the fast track land program are impossible to ignore. In a new book entitled *Zimbabwe Takes Back Its Land*, the authors explain how:

In the biggest land reform in Africa, 6,000 white farmers have been replaced by 245,000 Zimbabwean farmers. These are primarily ordinary poor people who have become more productive farmers. The change was inevitably disruptive at first, but production is increasing rapidly. Agricultural production is now returning to the 1990s level, and resettled farmers already grow 40% of the country’s tobacco and 49% of its maize.ⁱⁱ

This incredible accomplishment of land redistribution has far-reaching implications for the people of Zimbabwe. Not only are they finally able to enjoy the fruits of their revolution, but they have charted a course of self-sufficiency that allows the country and its elected officials to be less dependent on foreign powers, giving them a greater degree of autonomy in political and economic matters. However, the significance of the land redistribution goes much further than simply its impact on the people of Zimbabwe. The successful redistribution of land provides a “dangerous” model for other African nations still struggling with the legacy of colonial rule.

Although land remains at the center of the continued revolution, there are other key economic issues which Mugabe and ZANU-PF have addressed in ways that are antithetical to the exploitative goals of Western corporations and their government servants. Perhaps one of the most shocking to financiers and capitalists in the West was the decision to nationalize the mining sector, as the government took majority stakes in most mining companies operating in the

country. Naturally, this was yet another slap in the face to corporate interests that saw in Zimbabwe yet another African cash cow to be milked dry. The imperialist mentality in Africa views the resources as belonging to white Europeans and Americans rather than the people of Africa. This fundamental divide is what distinguishes Mugabe and ZANU-PF from many other leaders in Africa who, at every turn, grovel at the feet of their former oppressors.

Perhaps the central principle in Mugabe and ZANU-PF's economic program is "indigenisation". This process of reclaiming the economic destiny of the country for the people of Zimbabwe has been difficult, even problematic at times, but has been successful. Not only has the government moved to nationalize the mining sector, it has expanded the program to include banks and other important businesses.

Although this process has been mocked by so-called "experts" in the West, the reality is that the program has been a resounding success, not only economically, but also with the people. As Saviour Kasukewere, Minister of Youth Development, Indigenisation and Empowerment noted in 2011:

This is an imperative we cannot avoid...they [foreign corporations] have been having it too good for too long...if they think by closing a mine they are affecting us, tough luck. Closing a mine doesn't change anything...Brazil is coming, India is coming...what we have a problem with, is companies with a colonial ownership structure."ⁱⁱⁱ

Kasukewere here articulates perhaps the most important point of all: that the revolution in Zimbabwe is not merely cosmetic, but rather is a decades-long process of unwinding the structures of colonial control – the very imperialist infrastructure which to this day forms the foundation of white capitalist domination of Africa.

Unlike nearly every other African country, Zimbabwe does not play host to US military bases or any AFRICOM presence. No military "advisors" have entrenched themselves in the armed forces as they have throughout the continent. There is no US drone base as in Niger, Djibouti and elsewhere. Zimbabwe has maintained a steady, if somewhat fragile, peace since independence, choosing to maintain support for independent African nations such as Libya while it was free under the leadership of Muammar Qaddafi, and Eritrea which, like Zimbabwe, is vilified by Western imperialists for its unwillingness to be made part of the imperial system. Essentially then, Zimbabwe has in nearly every way asserted its independence from the US-UK sphere.

Naturally though, the imperial powers do not sit idly by and allow this to happen. They have their counter-revolution in Zimbabwe, led and embodied by Morgan Tsvangirai and the MDC-T.

Tsvangirai, the MDC-T, and the Subversion of Zimbabwe

The Movement for Democratic Change (MDC-T) led by current Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai is no mere opposition party. Rather, they are the Zimbabwean face of neoliberal capitalism and continued subservience to corporate-imperial power. Although Tsvangirai's party shrouds itself in the flag of anti-corruption and "sustainable development", the truth is that these

are merely the rhetorical cover for rolling back the gains made by the people of Zimbabwe under the leadership of Mugabe and ZANU-PF.

Despite the obvious need, and overwhelming support, for the land redistribution programs of the last decade, Tsvangirai and his Western puppet party came out against the program and squarely on the side of the entrenched white landowners. In 2011, as the land redistribution and indigenization programs were beginning to take root, Tsvangirai stated publicly that, “We don’t support grabbing property and seizing companies. We support a process of willing seller, willing buyer.” This revealing statement illustrates clearly the degree to which Tsvangirai and MDC-T represent the interests of the British and the imperial-corporate powers who themselves created the “willing seller, willing buyer” concept in the Lancaster House Agreement. Essentially then, when Tsvangirai speaks it is the voice of London, Washington and Wall St.

However, this ideological connection is merely the tip of the iceberg when it comes to Tsvangirai and his relations with the West. A 2010 leaked cable, published by WikiLeaks^{iv}, revealed that Tsvangirai collaborated with President Obama and the US establishment against the interests of Zimbabwe and the people. The document^v “showed that he [Tsvangirai] had had been privately urging Washington to maintain sanctions against Harare, while taking the opposite position in public.” This revelation, though certainly not a surprise to many in Zimbabwe and ZANU-PF, reveals the degree to which Tsvangirai and the MDC-T is, for all intents and purposes, a US front group masquerading as political opposition. Of course, were this the only example of the relationship, the case against Tsvangirai would be incomplete. Rather, one must examine the role of US intelligence in shaping the entire agenda of the MDC-T.

Earlier this month, the Zimbabwe Herald reported that:

MDC-T has reportedly invited three Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) agents to attend its policy conference set for [Friday May 17, 2013] as part of last ditch efforts to formulate an appealing election manifesto...the Herald is reliably informed that the three CIA agents were also behind MDC-T’s security policy document titled ‘Policy Discussion Papers – Security Sector Cluster: 1. Defence and National Security, 2. Home Affairs’ [in which] MDC-T announces plans to fire all serving security chiefs...and hire what is termed senior police staff from Western countries to instill ‘professionalism’ in the force.^{vi}

The intimate relationship between the MDC-T and US intelligence illustrates the degree to which Tsvangirai is not merely compromised but, in many ways, an outright agent of the United States and the other imperial powers. The MDC-T would seek to transform Zimbabwe into little more than another compliant African client state where the needs of the poor majority would be trumped by the power of the wealthy minority serving the needs of multinational corporations.

The WikiLeaks cables also reveal how the United States has been actively working and preparing for regime change in Zimbabwe. Former US Ambassador to Zimbabwe Christopher Dell wrote that:

Our policy is working and it’s helping drive changes here. What is required is simply the grit, determination and focus to see this through. Then, when the changes finally come we must be

ready to move quickly to help consolidate the new dispensation...He [Mr. Tsvangirai] is the indispensable element for regime change, but possibly an albatross around their necks once in power.^{vii}

The cables show the intimate working relationship that exists between the so-called opposition and their Western backers. Although this is no secret in Zimbabwe, it comes as news to many in the West who have been thoroughly propagandized to believe that the MDC-T and Tsvangirai represent substantive change and a move toward increased democracy. On the contrary, the MDC-T is the quintessential counter-revolutionary movement specifically designed to destroy the tremendous gains made by ZANU-PF and Mugabe since liberation.

What's Next?

Zimbabwe's immediate future is going to be shaped by the impending national elections. Naturally, ZANU-PF and MDC-T will be vying for the leadership mantle in what will be a hotly contested election. That being said, we are seeing the usual forces of "soft power" aligning themselves in preparation for a major destabilization effort around the elections. As we saw most recently in Venezuela, disputing elections is one of the favorite tactics of the imperialist ruling class, allowing them and their minions to engage in protracted subversion of democratic institutions in order to foment civil unrest and thereby delegitimize the elected government.

One well known organ of imperialist propaganda is the George Soros-funded International Crisis Group which recently issued a report entitled "Zimbabwe: Election Scenarios", laying out in great detail the various ways in which the United States and its allies and clients must intervene in the elections. In particular, the report states that:

The pervasive fear of violence and actual intimidation contradicts rhetorical commitments to peace. A reasonably free vote is still possible, but so too are deferred or disputed polls, or even a military intervention. The international community seems ready to back the Southern African Development Community (SADC), which must work with GPA partners to define and enforce "red lines" for a credible vote...That the elections are likely to be tense and see some violence and intimidation is clear; what is not yet clear is the nature of the violence, its extent, and the response it will generate.^{viii}

To the layman, such a description might seem innocuous – a paper outlining the possible outcome of the election. However, even a cursory examination of recent similar episodes in Venezuela, Iran, and elsewhere shows that "disputed elections" are the favorite tool of subversion by the imperial powers which use NGOs such as the International Crisis Group as their unofficial mouthpieces. When the ICG speaks, it is with the voice of US intelligence and the ruling class.

If the experience of Venezuela is any indication, we are likely to see violence in the streets should MDC-T lose the election, particularly if the margin of victory is small. As with Capriles and the US-funded opposition in Venezuela, the creation of violence in the streets is merely a trick employed for the purposes of destabilizing the government in a time of transition, with the

goal of creating enough chaos to delegitimize the rule of the victors. And so, ZANU-PF and the Zimbabwean people must remain vigilant as the country heads into these all-important elections

Zimbabwe has come a long way since the official end of the liberation struggle. As years have passed, the nation and its people have been transformed from servants to masters, dependent children to independent and free human beings. In that same time, the former masters have attempted to employ countless strategies to continue their exploitation and domination of the resources and the people. Because of the leadership of Mugabe and ZANU-PF, as well as the determination of the Zimbabwean people, Zimbabwe has metamorphosed into the envy of Africa. Of course, there are very real problems in the country, with wealth not nearly approaching that of other African states that have remained loyal to the imperial system. However, when wealth is concentrated in the hands of a kleptocratic ruling elite, is that really wealth? Looking at Zimbabwe, we see a true model for Africa: an independent path to progress and equitable development. It is for this reason that the imperial powers look to destroy all that has been built in Zimbabwe...and for this same reason, we must stand to defend her.