

Zimbabwe's Fight Against The Ghosts of Colonialism

by Uwe Friesecke

For months now, a drumbeat has been under way to remove the government of Zimbabwe's President Robert Mugabe and his ruling party, ZANU-PF, from power in this former British colony. When the British elite doesn't like policies of some particular government, the British press usually leads a worldwide campaign to portray it as undemocratic and dictatorial. Once such a manipulation of international public opinion takes hold, political moves follow. British pressure resulted in the passage of a resolution in the European Parliament condemning Zimbabwe and calling for sanctions. A bill to the same effect is being introduced into the United States Congress. Efforts are under way to slam sanctions onto Zimbabwe from the British Commonwealth. And in the meantime, several Western governments have stopped their development cooperation and funding for projects with the government in Harare.

The campaign is also personally directed against the President. When, at the beginning of March, President Mugabe was on a visit to Brussels and Paris, he became the target of a well-organized public relations incident. A British homosexual activist tried to make a so-called citizen's arrest of President Mugabe in the Brussels Hilton Hotel, while the President, after a meeting with a Belgian government minister, was walking out to his car. Screaming, the activist tried to jump on the President first, and then in front of his car. Naturally, Mugabe's security took forceful measures, and the activist landed on the ground, which led to an outcry in the British press, which claimed that this showed how violently President Mugabe treats the opposition in Zimbabwe. If such an operation had been tried against the British Prime Minister or the U.S. President, the activist would have been shot by security personal and killed or arrested. But nothing of this sort hap-

pened. The provocateur was allowed to walk away freely. British intelligence services were undoubtedly involved in staging this incident. And one wonders, whether this is the way that the British colonial establishment is getting their belated revenge on Mugabe, for his unexpected election triumph in 1980.

During the last week of February, an *EIR* team had the occasion to visit, Zimbabwe's capital, Harare, and hold discussions with officials from the government, the ZANU-PF, journalists, and parliamentarians. It became clear, that much more fundamental strategic issues are at play in this conflict over Zimbabwe than so-called concerns for democracy on the part of the U.S. or British governments. If President Mugabe were to withdraw his troops from Congo, postpone the farmland reform by another ten years, and praise the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank as the saviors of Zimbabwe, the attacks on him would stop tomorrow.

Especially those political leaders who fought for independence alongside Mugabe, in the bush and outside the country, or sat in Rhodesian jails during the 1960s and '70s, are convinced of the strategic nature of the conflict with the former colonial power. They emphasize that if the Anglo-American powers were capable of replacing the ZANU-PF government with the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), in which the British government alone has invested £90 million, the key bastion of anti-colonialism in Southern Africa would fall. This would mean the destruction of their life's work. The sense of having fought hard against the injustices of colonialism, when Zimbabwe was still named Southern Rhodesia, is omnipresent in discussions with that older generation of political leaders in Harare, much more so than in other African countries. During a meeting, the country's



The disparity of rural life in Zimbabwe between the white commercial farmers and their black laborers. The government is trying to institute a more just system, and is being pilloried for it by the British-controlled international media. Left: grain silos at the Nichols farm, one of the largest commercial farms in the country. Right: Living quarters for farm workers, without electricity or running water.

Vice President, Joseph Msika, gave his foreign visitors a vivid description of how today's Freedom Square, in the middle of Harare, which used to be Cecil Square, in colonial times was sealed off to the black population by signs reading, "No Dogs or Natives Allowed." It was as if those signs had only been removed yesterday.

The Structures of Colonialism

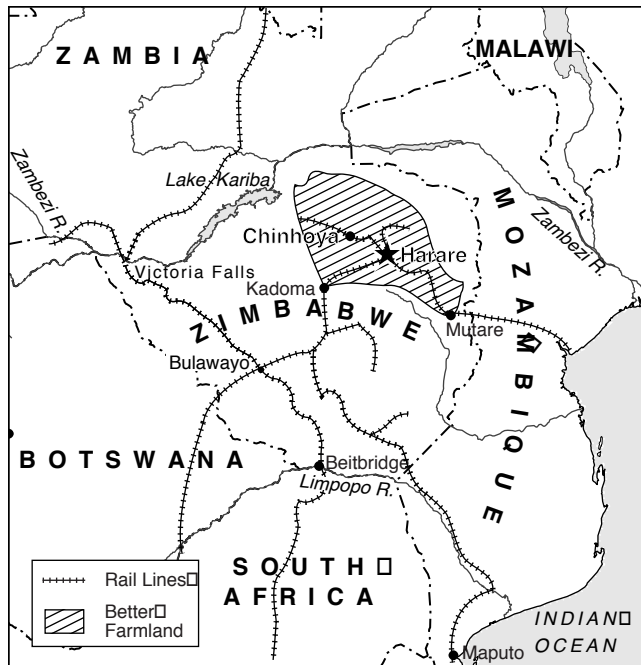
Formal colonialism ended in Zimbabwe 20 years ago, when it received independence from Britain in 1980, after a 15-year armed struggle against the white Rhodesians. It was in Rhodesia that the British colonial system survived the longest in Africa. Following World War II, the British government settled many soldiers in Rhodesia, on land that it simply stole from the black population. British colonialism in all of Southern Africa was pivoted on forcing the black population off the best land. In 1930 in Rhodesia, the British passed the Land Apportionment Act, to exclude all Africans from the best farmland, which meant from half of their own country. The Africans were confined to the poorest land, and were therefore forced into the labor market, to either work as cheap labor for white farmers, or in the mines.

In essence, this is still the structure of colonialism in Zimbabwe. Today, only about 90,000 whites live among the total of 12 million Zimbabwean citizens. Few are visible in the offices or on the streets of Harare. But, as commercial farmers, they still own the majority of the best farmland, and old colo-

nial families and businesses such as Anglo American Corp., Old Mutual Insurance Corp., or Standard Bank and Barclays Bank own almost all real estate in Harare and other cities, and are the dominant players in Zimbabwe's mining industry. The anger among political circles about the continuation of these colonial structures is certainly understandable. "Why have we fought so hard and with so many losses, if we own almost nothing 20 years later?" is a question often addressed to the foreign visitor.

Zimbabwe's farmland is divided by quality into five categories. Commercial white farmers own more than 70% of categories 1 and 2, which is the most fertile land suitable for intensive farming and livestock production. They grow tobacco, maize, wheat, cotton, sugar, fruits, vegetables, flowers, and feed for dairy farming. Large cattle herds graze on fenced-off land. The size of these commercial farms starts at 1,000 hectares and goes up to 6 to 8,000 hectares. Many families own several farms, which in some cases adds up to more than 20 or 30,000 hectares. Few black commercial farmers exist. In contrast, the majority of the black population live in communal farm areas of land categories 3, 4, and 5. There, families farm on 3-4 hectares, and their children herd the cattle on scarce common grazing land. The majority of communal farmers grow just enough for their own survival, while the commercial farmers make the profits.

A tour 120 kilometers northwest from Harare, to the town of Chinhoyi and back, shows the difference. Large fields, with



fertile red soil and fenced-off grazing land and well-fed cattle, are typical of the rich commercial farms along the road. Here, infrastructure, including irrigation, is well developed. A big farmhouse at some distance from the road, behind trees and a hedge, is typical. Near Chinhoyi, for example, 22,000 hectares of land is owned by the Nichols family. They have their own, huge grain elevator. Their children, naturally, receive their education overseas, and how much of their profit avoids taxation by the Zimbabwe state, because they keep the money in Europe or in the United States, is a matter of speculation. While they operate the farm with modern machinery, a good part of their profitability depends on cheap labor. About 3,000 of their laborers earn 2,000 Zimbabwe dollars per month, equivalent to less than US\$35. And the majority of these workers are not even permanently employed. Many have inherited these working conditions from their parents and grandparents, some of whom came from Mozambique decades ago. They are forced to live in miserable houses and have no chance of ever improving their lot.

Cheap labor is also the secret of mining in Zimbabwe. Many of the mines are small sites, either owned by foreigners or by syndicates of white commercial farmers employing only about 100 workers. One such mine is the Alaska Dolomite Mine, near Chinhoyi. A visit to the housing area shows the same poor conditions that prevail among the farm laborers. The workers' committee gathers in the shade of a tree and describes their working and living conditions. Sixty-four permanent workers are employed at the mine, along with more than 100 temporary workers, because the temporary workers can be fired without redress, and are therefore cheaper for the

management to handle. They work 48 hours a week and earn 2,200 Zimbabwe dollars a month, equivalent to US\$36, which is far less than the living costs for a family. People are only able to survive, because they can grow some of their food themselves. For heating and cooking, they receive a paraffin allowance of another 200 Zimbabwe dollars. But they need 20 liters of paraffin a month at a cost of 700 Zimbabwe dollars. They have no health care, and the nearest school is six miles away, without transportation. The houses have no electricity, because the company refuses to install it, even though there is a hotel with electricity across the street. A spokesman for the workers expresses their sadness, if not desperation, because they and their families have lived under these conditions for years, and they cannot see how things could be improved. The visitor from Europe now understands what it means, when the World Bank lists the millions of Africans who have to survive on \$1 or less per day.

On the way back from Chinhoyi, the tour leads through the communal farm area. The difference is striking. The soil is not red, but sandy. Groups of 10-20 cattle are herded along the road on short grass, because the land is overgrazed, whereas in the commercial area, the grass is lush and plentiful. There are no large fields, only small plots. The black population are numerous and live in simple huts, sometimes small brick houses. Before independence, these were the "homelands," to which the black population were confined without any infrastructure improvement. This has changed. In the last 20 years, the government has built a network of rural roads and dams, and an electricity supply grid. Fifty-five regional growth centers were constructed, each with a school, a hospital, farm supply operations, and municipal buildings. These centers developed into towns, and stimulated economic activity in the area. Government programs have raised the standard of living, especially the access to education and health services for the people living in the communal areas. But the outrageous discrepancy, by comparison with the standard of living of the white commercial farmers, remains.

The majority of Zimbabwe's agriculture still operates according to a feudal system, with rich landlords, and laborers who are essentially serfs. The political leadership around President Mugabe has decided to change this, arguing that they have waited long enough—for more than 20 years—without getting the support from the former colonial power, which it had promised to supply in the Lancaster Agreement of 1979. It is quite reasonable to insist that the British government supply the money to compensate the commercial farmers, if some of their land is taken and redistributed to black families. After all, the British colonial authorities took the land in the first place from the black population, without compensating them. ZANU-PF officials, such as the party's Secretary for Information and Publicity, the former Minister Dr. Shamyarira, or the party's Speaker of the House of Parliament, Emmerson Mnangagwa, emphasize that they do not



Heroes Acre, the cemetery which commemorates the 1966 Battle of Chinhoyi, the first battle between the liberation movement and the Rhodesian military. Author Uwe Friesecke is shown with Dr. N.M. Shamuyarira, Secretary for Information and Publicity of the ruling ZANU-PF party.

want to deny white farmers the right to stay in the country and farm. What they do want, is a reform of the feudal system, comparable to the land reform most European countries underwent during the 19th Century. If a farmer has several farms, he should give up some of the land for redistribution. If he does not use all of his land, he should give up that portion for use by resettled black farmers. The majority of the population should simply have more access to the land of the nation, and the playing field should be levelled, so that black farmers can have the same chances to start commercial farming as the whites have had since colonial times.

The old guard of political leaders of ZANU-PF has made it quite clear, that this is the issue they will either live or die over. Some white commercial farmers are realizing this, and are beginning to cooperate with the government in their local area to facilitate the resettlement program for black farmers. One hopes that this will become the majority view of the white commercial farmers in the country, otherwise an escalating confrontation between them and the government is preprogrammed.

Dismantling Colonialism in Southern Africa

Today, the government of Zimbabwe is focussing on the farm land issue. If they succeed there, they will move on to tackle the broader problem of colonial control over real estate, banking, mining, and industry, because the same problem exists there as in agriculture. The old colonial structure remains untouched. Ownership and power lie with the companies and families that are part of the structure of the British Commonwealth and the Anglo-American establishment. Their traditions and self-conception go back to the days of

Cecil Rhodes, more than 100 years ago, when the British stole the area of today's Zimbabwe and Zambia, named it Rhodesia, and used the exploitation of agriculture and minerals to build up their empire. In economic terms, this empire still exists, even though politically the African countries have become independent.

Now, 20 years after Zimbabwe's political independence, Mugabe's government is beginning to dismantle this colonial structure, starting with the land, but aiming at the economy as a whole. This is why the reaction to the Mugabe government from Britain is so hysterical. The British aristocracy, in concert with the Anglo-American establishment, sees their vital strategic interests in all of Southern Africa threatened: After all, how long can governments in South Africa, Namibia, and Botswana postpone changes, if they are successfully implemented in Zimbabwe? Therefore, the British Commonwealth and Anglo-American forces are trying to use an alliance of white farmers and dissatisfied black groups—of which there are many, thanks to the economic hardships brought on by IMF structural adjustment—supported by the so-called liberal opposition of South Africa—to topple Mugabe's government and replace it with a more conciliatory one, like former trade union leader Morgan Tsvangirai's MDC.

The ZANU-PF leadership and President Mugabe challenged the strategic plans of the old and new colonial powers in another decisive way, through their military intervention into Congo. Some 11,000 Zimbabwe troops, in alliance with Angolan and Namibian forces, stopped the advance of Ugandan and Rwandan troops, which had invaded Congo in the Summer of 1998, before they could capture Kinshasa and the

mineral-rich Katanga and Kasai provinces, and threaten the countries of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), to the south of Congo. This was not appreciated at all in London and Washington, because both the British and U.S. governments had given clandestine support to the Ugandan/Rwandan invasion.

Zimbabwe's Potential Leadership Role

What the foreign visitor to Zimbabwe realizes immediately, is the tremendous agricultural and economic potential of the country. Even as first seen during the approach by air, the rich and highly developed agricultural land, with a network of roads and dams, is impressive. But Zimbabwe has much more water than it can use right now. The Zambezi River in the north could deliver water to the dry southwest around Bulawayo, Zimbabwe's second-largest city. The engineers in the Ministry of Water Development in Harare are very confident, that if they could only realize the water projects that they already have designed, Zimbabwe's agricultural production could rise tremendously, to guarantee self-sufficiency and even more exports than today.

The country could also become a powerhouse for industrial production. It already has the largest industrial base in Sub-Saharan Africa, after South Africa, including a steel mill.

Finally, geographically, Zimbabwe is the natural infrastructure link between South Africa in the south and Congo and Eastern Africa in the north. Already Zimbabwean engineers are planning region-wide expansion of road and rail networks. For any real development of Southern and Central Africa, Zimbabwe will be a decisive factor. If it can break the colonial shackles of the past—as the government is trying to do with the land reform—and intensify the type of South-South cooperation that has developed in recent years, with the leadership of Malaysia's Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir bin Mohamad, then the country could become a pivot in Africa for replacing the collapsing world financial system with a new, just world economic order. Zimbabwe's potential thus constitutes a serious threat to the strategic interests of the modern colonialists. The British and Anglo-American elites know this, and they are acting to destroy Zimbabwe, by orchestrating what they call the Zimbabwe crisis.

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IMF, World Bank Put Zimbabwe Under Siege

by Dean Andromidas

Walking about Harare, the capital of Zimbabwe, one can hardly recognize what its colonial past was 21 years ago, before independence, when the city was still named Salisbury, after the Earl of Salisbury, and was the administrative center for the British colony of Southern Rhodesia, the namesake of British African empire builder Cecil Rhodes. But, nestled between the high-rise office buildings that seem to have eclipsed the markings of the colonial era, there stands a stately building fully restored to its turn-of-the-century glory, what appears to be one of the finest examples of British African colonial architecture. Written across its entrance-way, one can read, "Lonrho Building." Here was, no doubt, the first home of the legendary London and Rhodesia Company. The security guards there today have never heard of the colorfully infamous, late chairman, Tiny Rowland, who ushered one of Britain's best known imperial-era companies through the troubled waters of neo-imperialism. They only know the Lonrho Building as the current home of the Zimbabwean headquarters of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank. Some things never change.

For more than three years, the IMF has put Zimbabwe under siege. Make no mistake: This punishment is far worse than the United Nations sanctions that had been imposed on Ian Smith's apartheid Republic of Rhodesia in the 1960s and 1970s. The IMF and World Bank are working hand-in-glove with the British Foreign Office and the complex of Anglo-American mining and financial interests, to implement a policy of genocidal war and economic impoverishment in Africa.

Zimbabwe's "crime" was to defend itself from this onslaught. First, in 1998, it deployed its troops to defend the Democratic Republic of the Congo, preventing the Anglo-American marcher-lords, Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni and Rwandan President Paul Kagame, from conquering the D.R.C.—thus throwing a roadblock in front of the multinational mining companies, such as Barrick Gold, whose advisory board includes former U.S. President George H.W. Bush.

Its second crime was to embark on its land redistribution policy, aimed at redressing the historic inequity of the ownership of 11 million hectares of prime agricultural land by the same colonial interests against which Zimbabwe fought a bitter liberation war.

Of course, its third crime was failing to fully implement