

# **CENTRE FOR POLICY STUDIES**

**57 Tufton Street London SW1P 3QL**

## **A Moral Duty to Act There**

**PETER OBORNE**

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### **THE AUTHOR**

PETER OBORNE IS political editor of The Spectator. He writes regularly for a number of newspapers and is a presenter for Week in Westminster (BBC Radio 4). He is the author of Alastair Campbell, New Labour and the Rise of the Media Class (Aurum Press, 1999). This pamphlet is based on his experiences during a two week journey through Zimbabwe while working on a Channel 4 documentary.

Editor's Note

The author has donated his fee for this pamphlet to charities engaged in famine relief in Zimbabwe.

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### **FOREWORD**

THERE IS MOUNTING CONCERN across all parties in Parliament about the ever-worsening situation in Zimbabwe, including the starvation of hundreds of thousands of people and the use of food aid as a political weapon by the regime. Peter Osborne's pamphlet provides a first hand

account of events in Zimbabwe and of the methods being used by Mugabe and his associates to maintain themselves in power. The response of the international community to date has been to impose token sanctions, with an apparent lack of any real desire to render them more effective by deepening and widening them.

This is a betrayal of a people on which war has been declared by its own Government and of the millions of Zimbabweans who showed exceptional courage in voting for a change of regime, despite the intimidation they suffered at the time and the retribution that has been visited on them since.

### **Lord Renwick of Clifton KCMG\***

\* Lord Renwick was one of the principal architects of the Lancaster House Agreement leading to the independence of Zimbabwe.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

If Rwanda happened again today... we would have a moral duty to act there.

Tony Blair, Labour Party Conference Speech, 2 October 2001.

THERE IS LITTLE TIME LEFT. Zimbabwe has passed through crisis into catastrophe, and gone beyond fear into terror. Her people have fallen from poverty into desperation. They have made the sordid and degrading journey from hunger into starvation: famine beckons. No more than a few months remain until this recently prosperous and law-abiding country falls over the edge and becomes a failed state. The innocent may die in their millions. Only the evil and rapacious will thrive.

Robert Mugabe, the President of Zimbabwe, is waging war on his own people. The famine that looms for 7 million Zimbabwean citizens – more than half the population – is no natural disaster.<sup>1</sup> There is indeed a drought in Southern Africa, and it is indeed causing widespread suffering. But Mugabe has taken advantage of the drought to starve and terrorise his people. The prospect of famine has handed Mugabe a new weapon. Maize is the national subsistence food. Once it has been ground down in the mills it is turned onto a porridge-like substance known to the people as 'mealie meal'. Mealie meal is as ubiquitous, and as essential for the nourishment of the population at large, as the potato was in Ireland before the great famine of 1846-47.

President Mugabe has seized control of the supply of mealie meal. He insists that it is marketed and distributed through state agencies to ensure that he can dictate who is worthy of food aid. Private operators are not permitted to procure or sell mealie meal. Generous supplies of maize exist on Zimbabwe's borders, waiting to be brought in. But this the President will not allow. His objective is to ensure that mealie meal is supplied only to the supporters of his own Zanu PF ruling party, and forbidden to the opposition. So far, through ruthless use of the state machinery, and aided and abetted by his authorised thugs, Mugabe has been successful in his objective: hence the famine.

Zimbabwe can be saved, but only if Britain and the world wake up. Given the political will, it would be easy to restore Zimbabwe to prosperity and freedom. It took 78 days to bomb Serbia into submission during the Kosovo conflict. Mugabe and his henchmen could be brought to their knees within weeks, merely by cutting off the fuel supply to this landlocked state. In particular, it is

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<sup>1</sup> A significant proportion of Zimbabwe's dams are full or nearly full. The water could have been used to irrigate sufficient crops to head off the drought.

hard to find words strong enough to condemn the indifference shown by President Mbeki to the tragedy taking place on his northern border.

Yet there is no political will to act. Too many people have accepted Robert Mugabe's own false narrative that he is fighting a post-colonial battle against racist white farmers. This claim has gained him sympathy among some neighbouring states. But above all, it has cut ice among the liberal élites in the west. For some, Mugabe's rants have provided an excuse for inertia. For Mugabe, though, they are an alibi for genocide. The white farmers are a statistical pinprick in the Zimbabwean tragedy. There were just 4,000 before the land seizures began two years ago, and less than 500 today. The victims of Mugabe's oppression are not the whites, but the black Zimbabwean people. It is reckoned that 1.5 million black Zimbabwean farm workers and their families have been flung off the land and into camps in the past 30 months. Four times that number are starving. It is for those people, and emphatically not on behalf of the whites, that the world must act. It must act with compassion. It must act with conviction. It must act today.

## CHAPTER TWO

### TERROR

I have nine degrees, but my tenth is most famous – a degree in violence.

President Mugabe.

VOTING FOR THE OPPOSITION in Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe is not like voting Tory or Liberal Democrat in Britain. It requires abnormal moral and physical courage. You become an enemy of the state. You lose your rights at law. You become vulnerable to abduction and arbitrary assault. You cannot obtain food. You and your village are liable to be starved to death. Your goods may be seized and your wife and daughters may be raped. If any of those things happen it is far better not to go to the police and complain: at best they will show no interest but more likely they will pin fresh charges on you. That is the society that Zimbabwe has become.

Two of the MPs from the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) opposition have died suspiciously in the past year.<sup>2</sup> Mtoliki Sibanda, MDC MP for Tsholotsho is now in hiding after two attempts on his life. He only survived the second because the hitmen opened fire on the wrong car.<sup>3</sup> All MPs are followed by the secret police and subject to threats. But the 50-odd MDC MPs are safer than their less well-known supporters. Mugabe and his thugs know that killing MPs gives rise to protest, even from the largely supine international community. They know that the obscure opposition activists and simple voters are much easier to terrorise.

Every MDC figure I met during my short stay in Zimbabwe had been physically attacked by Zanu PF at some stage. The guide who took us round had a recent scar on his face.<sup>4</sup> We asked him how he had come by it. He explained that he had been canvassing in a rural area before the 2000 assembly elections. One night he and his friends were sleeping in huts outside a village. They were petrol bombed, so they ran for their lives to escape. But outside Zanu PF were waiting. He was tripped up. As he fell to the ground he turned his head. It was as well that he did: his assailant was bringing down an iron bar on the back of his head. It slewed into the side of his face rather than crash into the back of his skull. Our guide reacted fast: he sprayed sand into the eyes of his assailant and ran away.

But his troubles were still not over. He checked into the hospital with a gaping wound from his cheekbone to the top of his mouth, only to be told that he needed police authority to be treated.

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<sup>2</sup> They are Learnmore Jongwe, MP for Kuwadzana, who died while in prison; and George Ndlovu, MP for Insiza who died of "food poisoning" after attending a cross-party forum of MPs.

<sup>3</sup> Reported by Thabo Kunene, BBC Zimbabwe correspondent, 11 November 2002.

<sup>4</sup> It would be dangerous to mention his name.

So he went to the police, who charged him with assault and locked him in a cell for 48 hours, his gaping wound festering all the while and untreated.

The point about this horrible little story is that it was routine, barely a matter of comment. There have been four assassination attempts on Morgan Tsvangirai, leader of the MDC, over the past two years. When I met Joel Gabbuza, the MP for Binga in the rural north of the country where the famine is at its worst, I asked him whether he had been terrorised. He described almost casually how he was intimidated, though with greater concern about the threats to his wife and children. 'I just believe it won't happen,' he said. He said he was relaxed during the day 'but when you are asleep at night you are not sure who is kicking around the house.' He told how, after this summer's presidential elections, his little family grocery store was wrecked:

They destroyed all the windows, cut off the door, got inside the shop, cut down all the shelves and smashed all the goods that were inside the shop.

## **TERROR**

Zanu PF violence and political murder has become a routine part of the culture of Zimbabwean politics. Human rights agencies record that 58 people were victims of state-approved killing in the first eight months of last year, over one a week.<sup>5</sup> That is almost certainly a gross underestimate. In many cases bodies are not found, or the murders do not come to national attention. The following story gives some grounds for believing this to be the case.

We travelled into Zimbabwe under cover as golfers. Upon reaching Bulawayo, the second largest town in Zimbabwe and an MDC stronghold, we sought to establish our credentials. The Bulawayo golf-club turned out to be depressingly like any other golf-course, well-favoured by businessmen from what remains of the town's once prosperous commercial centre. We had some difficulty getting onto the course because of a tournament. But what we learnt when we did finally get to play shows what makes Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe so special. Two weeks before there had been a blockage in the sewage system by the 17th hole. It was clogged up with dead bodies: they showed signs of torture and had been decapitated. The police arrived to collect the corpses, but otherwise showed no interest in how they came to be dumped on the course. The matter was hushed up, and not reported in the press. The bodies were found around the same time of the Insiza by-election, when there were a number of unaccountable abductions.

In these circumstances, it is surprising that anyone votes MDC, let alone that the party was able to secure the popular vote during the parliamentary elections in 2000. That result is a tribute to the courage and independence of the Zimbabwean voters. But in recent months there have been signs that the campaign of terror is working. In the rural district council elections in September 2002, harassment and intimidation meant that MDC candidates ran in only 646 out of 1,397 contested seats. These elections were of vital importance to Mugabe because of the role played by district councillors in the distribution of maize. In some cases bogus legal devices were used to declare MDC nominations out of order. Some candidates were arrested, others threatened, some had their forms torn up by Zanu PF thugs, while one person, Nikoniari Chibvamudeve, was murdered. Others were driven from their constituencies. Many were abducted on election day itself. Food was openly used to bribe – or threaten – starving voters into supporting Zanu PF.<sup>6</sup>

As terrifying as the violence during the elections was the retaliation afterwards. Zanu PF won the great majority of seats during the September elections: but the Binga district returned 16 out of 21 wards for the MDC. Retribution was dire. Three MDC families had their properties burnt down, while all donor food to starving children was suspended, resulting in around 30 child deaths from malnutrition-related illness. Government officials openly boasted that it was cut off as a

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<sup>5</sup> According to the Zimbabwe Human Rights Forum, at least 58 people were killed and 1,053 tortured in political violence between 1 January and 31 August 2002.

<sup>6</sup> See the account in *Vote Zanu PF or Starve: Zimbabwe: August to October 2002*, Physicians for Human Rights, 20 November 2002.

punishment for opposing Zanu PF. When I visited Binga in early November 2002, the Zanu PF presence in the town was menacing and cruel. An army unit, ostensibly sent to the district to clear landmines in the Zambezi Valley, was terrorising MDC areas. During our visit the army abducted and beat up a man wearing an MDC T-shirt. A local dance group cancelled a show because its routine involved a display of the open hand – the MDC symbol. When we travelled through neighbouring villages, the Tongan people who live in the district were starving. Most had not eaten a proper meal for weeks. They told us in piteous terms how Zanu PF thugs had stolen their maize, how they were being punished for the way they had voted.

## CHAPTER THREE

### STARVATION

Starvation and eventually death will occur upon party political lines in Zimbabwe.

Christian Tramsen, Physicians for Human Rights, November 2002.

IT IS ONLY FOUR YEARS since the great Nobel-prize winning economist Amartya Sen singled out Zimbabwe for praise in his book *Development as Freedom*. It was Sen who first observed that all famines are man-made. They simply do not happen in democracies, where a free press and free speech create excellent early-warning systems. His observations had a personal edge. As a young boy he lived through the terrible Bengal famine in 1943, in the last days of the British Empire in India. There has never been a famine in India since. Sen observed that:<sup>7</sup>

Democratic countries like Botswana, or India or Zimbabwe, have been entirely successful in preventing famines despite sharp declines in food output and entitlements of large sections of the population, whereas non-democratic countries have frequently experienced unprevented famines despite much more favourable food situations.

Last autumn I went to visit Sen at Trinity College, Cambridge and he sadly observed that Zimbabwe no longer qualified for the exemption he had given it four years ago. The country is no longer, except in form, a democracy. Foreign journalists are banned, so it is difficult to raise an international outcry, as happens in countries like Ethiopia. Zimbabwe has moved from democracy to dictatorship, and her people are condemned to suffer, and to die, in silence.

It is easy to identify the vehicle Robert Mugabe has chosen for the starvation of his fellow countrymen: it is called the Grain Marketing Board (GMB). Only the GMB may import, distribute or market maize. I have been to look at its massive silos in Bulawayo. From there maize is sent to approved millers, all under Zanu PF control. These millers then convert the maize to 'mealie meal', and sell it on at wholesale prices to local ward councillors. When I was in Zimbabwe in early November the wholesale price stood at ZM\$240 per 20 kilos. These councillors then organise a distribution point in each ward, selling it on to local people at a 25% mark up (in early November the price at these distribution centres was ZM\$300).<sup>8</sup>

This process is abused at every stage. The millers themselves are threatened by freelance Zanu PF thugs, who force them to sell the mealie meal at cost, and who then make giant profits by taking them onto the open market. While I was in Zimbabwe Zanu PF thugs were selling mealie meal at ZM\$1,000 or more per 20 kilos, prices far outside the pockets of ordinary people but representing a threefold profit for Zanu PF bandits. In most of the country, the only way to get hold of mealie meal is by paying these inflated prices, far beyond the pockets of ordinary people. When we were in the Beitbridge area of Southern Zimbabwe there was massive starvation. But one little shop, the River Ranch Store, was always full of mealie meal. It belonged to Kembo

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<sup>7</sup> Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom*, Oxford University Press, 1999.

<sup>8</sup> ZM\$300, depending on the exchange rate, is worth about 15p. The average wage of a working man is ZM\$7,000 a month. There is 70% unemployment.

Mohadi, the Beitbridge MP and Robert Mugabe's Home Affairs Minister. We went to have a look. It was a menacing place, full of young Zanu PF men drinking beer. But the storeroom was loaded with perhaps 500 bulging sacks of mealie meal, on sale at ZM\$900 apiece. I was told that the Minister concerned educated his daughter at a private school in Australia. This was the reverse side of starvation: a small group of gangster Ministers making a fortune out of horror.

But this kind of corruption is a side issue. The main point is how the state marketing of grain is used as a mechanism to punish Mugabe's political opponents. The mealie meal is sold only to accredited Zanu PF supporters, while it is denied to MDC voters. To return to the Beitbridge example. Two of the wards in this border town - 15 and 16 - voted MDC. Voters from these wards are not allowed to buy mealie meal, while it is readily distributed to Zanu PF voters.<sup>9</sup> Reports from all around the country confirm the same story. The state food distribution machinery has been taken over for lethal party political ends.

To make the ban yet more devastating, Mugabe has forbidden any private movement of maize. Zanu PF thugs set up roadblocks on all main routes. Anyone carrying maize will have it confiscated. Vehicles travelling from Beitbridge in the South of Zimbabwe to Victoria Falls in the north can be stopped and searched as many as a dozen times in the course of the journey. The purpose is to prevent food reaching opposition areas. In Beitbridge, notwithstanding massive starvation in the surrounding district, the Government has impounded a 132 metric tonne maize delivery brought in by the MDC. It would bring relief to tens of thousands. But as this pamphlet went to press, the maize was still there, surrounded by barbed wire, and patrolled by government guards.

Only one method of food distribution remains – at least nominally – outside the control of President Mugabe. That is through Non-Governmental-Organisations (NGOs). Around 20 operate in Zimbabwe. They are all viewed with suspicion by the Government. Some find it better just to co-operate with Zanu PF. That way they can be sure their aid gets through. But there is a price to be paid, since local militias ensure that only Zanu PF supporters get fed. NGOs which insist on overseeing distribution are often prevented from operating. This was the fate of both the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace and Save The Children while we were in Binga in early November. Both were accused - outrageously - of collaborating with the MDC.<sup>10</sup> Travelling through remote areas in the Binga district, we were told again and again by starving people that no maize had reached them from NGOs for months.<sup>11</sup> During the Insiza election last September Zanu PF bosses seized three metric tonnes of World Food Programme (WFP) maize and distributed it to their own supporters. The WFP reacted in the only way it could and suspended supplies. In poor townships in Zimbabwe's capital Harare, shoppers are denied maize unless they show Zanu PF membership cards.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> This account is based on an interview with a local businessman who tried to buy maize for his staff from a distribution point at a Beitbridge school. He told us: "We went to the mission school and saw a stockroom full to the brim with mealie meal. Round the corner was a smaller room with four adults, one wearing a Zanu PF shirt, selling mealie meal at ZM\$300. We tried to buy meal from them. They said we had to have a letter of authority from the councillor or district administrator, both Zanu PF. So we drove down to the administrator's office. The deputy was there. We asked: 'What do we have to do to get mealie meal?' He said: 'You have to have permission from the district administrator.' We said we had already asked and been denied permission. The deputy said he couldn't explain that. Then we asked why food supplies were not available in MDC wards. The deputy answered that it was discussed on the food committee and it had been decided that it was not appropriate."

<sup>10</sup> These charges are hard to understand, until one enters Mugabe's own mindset, and grasps that anything which takes place outside his own control counts as opposition activity.

<sup>11</sup> See also the eloquent reporting by Michael Dynes for The Times. Dynes reports that 'for three months the ruling Zanu-PF party has blocked food shipments into the district, in what has become the most blatant and ruthless use to food as a political weapon.' Dynes quotes the manager of the local GMB admitting that food goes only to Zanu PF supporters, saying 'We only sell to Shona speakers.' See The Times, 25 November 2002.

<sup>12</sup> See the report in The Daily News, 19 November 2002. The Daily News reported how shoppers were told 'Kuti utenge hupfu wotoona kuti wakabata chikwambo cheZanu PF' – which translates that anyone without a party card would not buy mealie meal. Stories such as this are widespread.

Government Ministers are open with their threats. Here is Abednico Ncube, the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, ranting at villagers in Matabeleland:<sup>13</sup>

As long as you value the Government of the day you will not starve, but we do not want people who vote for colonialists, and then come to us when they want food. You cannot vote for MDC and expect Zanu PF to help you...you have to vote for Zanu PF candidates... before Government starts rethinking your entitlement to this food aid.

By contrast, mealie meal is being given away free by Zanu PF in Kuwadzana ahead of the by-election arising out of the mysterious prison death of the local MDC MP Learnmore Jongwe.<sup>14</sup> Food supply has been abused for political purposes since before last summer's Presidential elections. Christian Tramsen of the courageous Physicians for Human Rights group said at a Johannesburg news conference in November that:<sup>15</sup>

If it is not possible to increase non-partisan food supplies into the country, it is our opinion that starvation and eventually death will occur upon party political lines in Zimbabwe.

There is only one thing wrong with Mr Tramsen's judgement: it already is occurring.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE LURCH TO GENOCIDE

We would be better off with only six million people, with our own people who support the liberation struggle. We don't want all these extra people.<sup>16</sup>

Didymus Mutasa, Zanu PF Organising Secretary and a member of Robert Mugabe's politburo, August 2002.

TEN YEARS AGO, in the early 1990s, Southern Africa was struck down by a drought of equal, if not greater, ferocity to today's. But Zimbabwe survived. Indeed, it fulfilled its traditional role as the 'bread-basket of Africa'. It was part of the solution, not part of the problem. Why is it different this time?

The answer lies with Robert Mugabe. The Zimbabwean President believes in killing and in the threat of force. Although Mugabe's guerrilla warfare can be justified in the context of the defeat of the illegal and insidious Ian Smith regime, it was the methods he used to consolidate his position as Zanu leader that betrayed him as a ruthless killer. It is unlikely that he would have emerged as leader of Zimbabwe but for the murder of several personal rivals with far more distinguished and

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<sup>13</sup> Reported in the Zimbabwe Standard, 21 July 2001.

<sup>14</sup> Zimbabwe Standard, 10 November 2002. Reportedly Grace Mugabe, wife of the President, is the source of the largesse. At the beginning of December, mealie meal was also being sold at cheap prices from Zanu-PF offices in the Highfield constituency, where another by-election looms. The Daily News, 6 December 2002.

<sup>15</sup> Comments reported in The Daily News, 22 November 2002. It is worth quoting the conclusions from the Physicians for Human Rights report, Vote Zanu PF or starve, at greater length:

We conclude that in the last four months, manipulation of food was directly related to elections. The threat of being deliberately starved by the Government if the opposition won votes was used to profoundly influence vulnerable rural voters in recent elections in Zimbabwe.

In all cases of problematic food distribution, those implicated in politically manipulated access to food are Zanu PF officials or supporters.

Zanu PF appears to be maintaining a situation where there is too little food in the country, by controlling all sales and imports. Too little food is serving a dual purpose: it allows political control through controlling who accesses food: it facilitates the creation of a Zanu PF dominated black market, thus enriching the Zanu PF hierarchy.

<sup>16</sup> The population of Zimbabwe is 12 million.

braver military records than his.<sup>17</sup> He would have preferred to win the bush war, and was only brought to the negotiating table at Lancaster House after pressure from fellow African leaders. He has never accepted the pluralism that the democratic institutions he inherited in Zimbabwe implied. His aim from the start has been the elimination of opposition, the establishment of personal rule and the one-party state.

On several occasions he has come close to achieving this goal. The first was in the late 1980s, in the wake of the Gukurahundi campaign in Matabeleland.<sup>18</sup> Mugabe used his notorious 5 Brigade, trained by North Korean instructors, to suppress 'internal dissent'. In practice the campaign was aimed at the power base of Zanu PF, its leader Joshua Nkomo, and its Ndebele and Lalanga supporters. To all intents and purposes 5 Brigade was an army of occupation in Matabeleland. There were massacres. Between 10,000 and 20,000 people died, as the world - and the British Government in particular - turned a blind eye. Here, for the first time, Mugabe used starvation as a tactic for political intimidation. In 1987 Nkomo capitulated, mainly to avoid further violence. Zanu PF was merged into Zanu PF. In the wake of this merger, most opposition disappeared, though a former ally of Mugabe called Edgar Tekere launched the Zimbabwe Unity Movement (ZUM), which fought the 1990 election campaign. One Zanu PF television advertisement during the campaign showed the screech of tyres, and smashing of metal in a car accident, followed by a voice warning: 'This is one way to die. Another is to vote ZUM. Don't commit suicide, vote Zanu PF and live.'<sup>19</sup>

Since then Mugabe has moved towards a one-party state. Zimbabwe today is uncannily similar to Nazi Germany in the 1930s. There is the same steady erosion of the independence of the army, the civil service and the institutions of the state. With both Zanu PF and the Nazis, there is also a parallel party organisation to be taken into consideration. This runs alongside, but always overrides, formal state institutions like the police, and the army. Hitler's brown-shirts have their own precise counterpart in Mugabe's Youth Leagues or, as they are colloquially known, the 'Green Bombers'.<sup>20</sup>

The real thugs are the young men (and some women) now being trained up in the youth camps. This is a sinister and horrible phenomenon. As I understand they are a development only of the last 18 months at most. They have been underreported and their significance not yet absorbed.<sup>21</sup>

You can see the Green Bombers in every town. In their early twenties, they wear heavy boots and combat fatigues. They are responsible for a growing proportion of the killings, rapes and gratuitous violence aimed at the MDC opposition. They are present at the road blocks, and control the illegal supply of mealie meal, making giant profits. They were reportedly in action in Bulawayo a few weeks ago, disrupting the illegal currency market. All Green Bomber violence is sanctioned by the Party. And it is no good going to the police if they burn down your house or murder your friend: the police are either complicit or, more likely, too frightened. The agencies of the state turn a blind eye.

The bravest of all the astonishing and courageous people I met during my stay in Zimbabwe was a policeman who had resisted demands from Zanu PF operatives. On one occasion he was asked to help fix the Presidential election ballot in his district. On another, he insisted on

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<sup>17</sup> In particular, Herbert Chitepo and Josiah Tongogara.

<sup>18</sup> See, for example, Martin Meredith's account in *Mugabe, Power and Plunder in Zimbabwe*, Public Affairs, 2002. This book is invaluable for an understanding of the Zimbabwe president.

<sup>19</sup> See Meredith, *op. cit.*

<sup>20</sup> It is the Green Bombers, often operating under the barely plausible title of 'war veterans' who are responsible for acts of state-sanctioned illegality in Zimbabwe. See Meredith, *op. cit.*, for an account of how Mugabe's inner circle stole enormous sums from the War Victims Compensation Fund. These days war veterans are for the most part just as much victims of Mugabe as the rest of the population.

<sup>21</sup> What follows is an account based partly on personal observation, and partly on word of mouth accounts from university students who have personal experience of them.



investigating a theft in which Zanu PF members were implicated; and on a third, he was ordered to take part in an illegal land grab. He was assaulted tortured on three separate occasions, and is now on the run. He knows that he will be killed if he is found. His wife and children have fled the country. When we met, he told me his harrowing story. He was a simple man, and I asked him what made him stand out against Mugabe, when so many of his friends had kept their heads down. Somebody had to do so, he said.

Effectively the Green Bombers form a private Zanu PF army. They are recruited simply enough. Young people wishing to go to university are required to spend six months in youth camps. There they are indoctrinated in Zanu PF ideology and taught to hate the MDC. They learn the techniques of state terrorism. They are, like Hitler's Brownshirts, told to inform against their parents and punished if they fail to do so.

For Mugabe, one target of his internal aggression is the Ndebele speaking people who are mainly based in the west of the country. Last October, Matthew Parris warned of the possibility of tribally-based genocide in Zimbabwe.<sup>22</sup> Parris' fears were based on an unsourced, anonymous document now circulating widely in Zimbabwe. I too was shown a version of it while in the country. As Parris himself asserts, it could be a fake, but somehow the reader doubts it. Fake or not may not matter: it is a blueprint for ethnic cleansing.

### **A new emphasis on tribal purity**

A new emphasis on tribal purity in Zanu PF ideology has emerged in recent years. The historical works of Aneas Chigwedere, the Education Minister, are widely taught in Zimbabwean schools and colleges. Chigwedere emphasises racial homogeneity as the key to understanding Zimbabwe's past. His message is an essential part of the propaganda system peddled by Jonathan Moyo, the Minister of Information, Robert Mugabe's Goebbels.

Moyo, a clever man and former academic, was once a critic of Mugabe. He has a shady past and he lived abroad for many years: but certain misdemeanours were forgiven him when he returned to the country three years ago in return for blind loyalty to the regime. All kinds of racial ambiguities lurk in Moyo's family background, as was the case with Goebbels: but they do not impede Moyo, any more than they impeded Goebbels, from teaching racial purity.

Members of the Government are beginning to talk the language of genocide. This is what Didymus Mutasa, Zanu PF Organising Secretary and a member of Robert Mugabe's politburo, said last August:<sup>23</sup>

We would be better off with only six million people, with our own people who support the liberation struggle. We don't want all these extra people.

The population of Zimbabwe is currently about 12 million.

Already an early form of mild genocide is under way: the constant attrition of state murder, the deliberate starvation of great masses of the people, the displacement of hundreds of thousands of farm-workers to remote and inhospitable camps. Every week, thousands of Zimbabweans drift across the border in search of food or safety. But it is undeniable that the ingredients are nearly

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<sup>22</sup> "The tribal catastrophe that awaits Zimbabwe", The Times, 26 October 2002. Parris predicted that:

The majority Mashona tribe who occupy the richer, northern part of the country centred on Harare, may soon be urged by their leader, Robert Mugabe and his Zanu governing party into a genocidal bid to take from the southern Matabele the lands which the Mashona believe were stolen from them more than a hundred years ago... the plan would be to drive the Matabele, by terror and by massacre, over the southern borders of Zimbabwe whence (in some Mashona minds) they came.

<sup>23</sup> See Christina Lamb, Sunday Telegraph, 25 August 2002.

all in place for something altogether larger and more tragic. The impending retreat of Zimbabwe to a pre-industrial economy will only hasten the danger.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### ECONOMIC COLLAPSE

The lifestyle section of the state-controlled Herald reported a tour of Chiyangwa's new mansion in Harare: 18 bedrooms, 18 lounges, two saunas, whirlpool, steam and spa baths, 15 garages and three rooftop helipads. Back in his communal village 50 miles west of Harare, Chiyangwa has built another home, the newspaper said. This one has 51 bedrooms.

Reported in The Times, 28 October 2002.

ZIMBABWE IS NOT IN ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES. It is not in decline. It is not in crisis. It is in freewheeling collapse. The IMF records an inflation rate of just over 120% last year, and predicts an absurdly precise rate of 522% in 2003. In fact Zimbabwe is now close to hyper-inflation. When we arrived in the country on 1 November 2002, the parallel exchange rate stood at ZM\$1,000 to the US\$.<sup>24</sup> Two weeks later it had sunk by more than half to \$2,600. A pint of milk when we came in cost ZM\$80. Two weeks later it cost ZM\$200.

It is hard to get petrol or diesel. The rumour of a delivery of fuel at a petrol station causes a queue to form at once. They soon stretch back for half a mile or more, and motorists are ready to sleep overnight in their vehicles to obtain fuel. Even clean water is now running out in Harare, the result of a shortage of the chemicals necessary for the water purification process. Essential foodstuffs are rarely available in the shops, though there is still a lively trade in luxury goods. There is a small but free-spending super-rich mafia class in Zimbabwe, all connected to Zanu PF. They do well out of the shortages and use the seized farms for genteel weekend retreats.

Take Phillip Chiyangwa, a former policeman and Mugabe crony:

The lifestyle section of the state-controlled Herald reported a tour of Chiyangwa's new mansion in Harare: 18 bedrooms, 18 lounges, two saunas, whirlpool, steam and spa baths, 15 garages and three rooftop helipads. Back in his communal village 50 miles west of Harare, Chiyangwa has built another home, the newspaper said. This one has 51 bedrooms.<sup>25</sup>

Gangsters flourish, and with them conspicuous consumption. But the professional middle classes upon which Zimbabwe's historic prosperity was founded are fleeing the country. In his budget speech last November, Finance Minister Herbert Murerwa revealed that 2,297 doctors and nurses had fled Zimbabwe in the first nine months of 2002, a scary 25% of the total.

The main cause of the hyper-inflation is the near destruction of the industries that used to earn hard currency: agriculture, tobacco, tourism and mining. Until three years ago Zimbabwe, alongside Brazil, was the biggest tobacco exporter in the world, producing well over 200 million kilos a year. This year Zimbabwe will be lucky to grow 75 million kilos. Maize and wheat production have suffered similar chronic falls. Both have collapsed as a result of the Zanu PF led attacks on the commercial farming centre, while tourism and mining have been hurt by mounting political instability. No modern political leader, operating within peacetime conditions, can ever have engineered such a precipitous collapse in a fundamentally prosperous economy within such a short space of time.

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<sup>24</sup> The official rate of ZM\$55 to the US\$ is a fiction. The real - or parallel - rate is set by street traders.

<sup>25</sup> See Jan Raath, "Zimbabwe's agony as Mugabe avoids crunch", The Times, 28 October 2002.

The black market exchange rate has been driven down by state entrepreneurs desperate to get hard currency to pay for oil. An additional cause has been racketeering by government ministers. Strict rules force local business to export at the official rate of ZM\$55 to the US\$, a fraction of the rate on the streets.<sup>26</sup> Zanu PF Ministers and their cronies often arbitrage the difference, creating a massive 2,500% personal profit, enriching themselves but inflicting further harm on state finances. Even official government figures in last November's budget predict that the economy will contract by over 10% this year, on top of a similar contraction in 2002. Zimbabwe now faces economic circumstances more catastrophic than the Weimar Republic in its dying days or Russia in 1917.

Violent social disturbance is in these circumstances an inevitability: the wonder is that it has not come sooner. The reaction of Zanu PF when it finally breaks out does not bear contemplation. Many people suspect that Robert Mugabe is hoping for MDC-instigated street violence, so that he can unleash the full weight of the murderous state apparatus and his trained Zanu PF thugs on his enemies. When he does that, the Matabeleland massacres of the mid-1980s may seem a mild, inconsequential affair. There is a vigorous minority body of opinion within the MDC that the time to take to the streets is now. These voices are being restrained, with growing difficulty, by the MDC leadership.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **BRITISH PARALYSIS**

I will make Africa a major personal priority and a priority for the Labour Government.

Tony Blair, speech, 25 May 2001.

Tony Blair's colleagues are trying to squash the idea that Zimbabwe should be seen as a test for the Prime Minister's assertion that Britain can play a 'pivotal role' in world affairs... it is argued that the test for Mr Blair is what he delivers elsewhere in Africa.

Financial Times, 17 January 2002.

IT IS HARD TO FIND WORDS strong enough to condemn the negligent, cowardly, posturing and hypocritical response of the British Government. The impending calamity has been obvious to any half-awake international observer of the situation for years: and most certainly since Robert Mugabe's defeat in the constitutional referendum in February 2000. That taught the Zimbabwean President just how unpopular he was, and how precarious his hold on power had become. His response was an immediate return to what he knew best: terror, open violence and intimidation.

### **Clare Short**

The agonised and hand-wringing response of the British Government can be charted in the successive pronouncements of Clare Short MP, the Secretary of State for International Development. As early as December 1997, Ms Short described the Zimbabwe situation as 'very worrying.' In December 1998 she called it 'deeply worrying.' The following March she said that developments within Zimbabwe made her feel 'very worried.' In June 2000 she still found it all 'very worrying.' And by December 2001 she revealed that she found the situation 'very worrying'. In January last year she told Today that:

In different parts of the world we see countries turn to bad leadership and bad politics, and we've seen that coming in Zimbabwe for some years, and it's a tragedy.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> On 17 December 2002, Business Day reported that US\$1 fetched ZM\$1,700 on the black market but the rate fluctuates wildly.

<sup>27</sup> Clare Short's expressions of impotent concern were all made at the despatch box of the House of Commons. Her remarks to Today were delivered on 10 January 2002. The Liberal Democrats are yet more feeble-minded than the

That is the scale of the charge against Tony Blair's New Labour Government: Ministers have seen it coming, but they have done nothing of substance to avert or even to hold back the catastrophe.

### **Hain v. Cook**

The determining moment in British policy came two years ago, as the first farm seizures occurred and Mugabe began to resort to open violence and intimidation as a means of keeping power. At this stage there seem to have been two schools of thought within the Foreign Office about how the impending calamity should be handled. Peter Hain, the Minister of State, powerfully argued that Britain should engage directly with Zimbabwe and its neighbours. Hain, who as a young activist in the 1970s masterminded the exclusion of South Africa from world sport, knew the country far better than most, and had impeccable civil rights credentials. He made a number of interventions, criticising not merely Mugabe for the murder of opposition opponents, but also implicitly the inert posture of the South African Government.

The outspoken Hain approach caused consternation among foreign officials, and in due course he was stamped on. According to one well-placed foreign office figure, Hain received a direct rebuke from Robin Cook.<sup>28</sup> Today Tony Leon, leader of South Africa's main opposition party the Democratic Alliance, says that 'Hain is the best we've seen from the British Government'.<sup>29</sup>

Robin Cook's own approach fitted in better with the languid foreign office preference for avoidance of confrontation. As the first farm expropriations went on, Cook opted for a policy of 'quiet diplomacy.' At the Africa-Europe summit in April 2000 at Cairo, relations between Britain and Zimbabwe were restored to what *The Independent* called a 'frozen kind of friendliness.' Its report of 6 April 2000 recorded that President Mugabe had agreed to halt his attacks on British leaders, while Britain had agreed to 'lower the temperature of its commentary.'

The Cairo summit set the tone for the torrid summer of 2000. In July, amid well-authenticated reports of violence, ballot-rigging and intimidation – and some lively parties at the British High Commission in Harare, which at one stage began to acquire a fin de siècle flavour – Mugabe claimed his victory in the parliamentary elections. Robin Cook, flanked by a sick-looking Peter Hain, called an impromptu press conference to put the débâcle in the best possible light. He hailed 'a triumph of the democratic spirit over the attempt to suppress it' – when, in fact the result was the opposite. For good measure Cook vaingloriously added that: "I have urged President Mugabe to respond positively to the Opposition offer to work together and accept the mood for change."

Shortly afterwards Peter Hain, to the surprise of many and the relief of some, was moved abruptly out of the Foreign Office to the Department of Trade. Hain's move came just three weeks after South Africa Foreign Affairs Minister Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma wrote a fierce letter to Robin Cook. She complained about Peter Hain's justified criticisms of the South African approach, and in particular his remarks that:<sup>30</sup>

I sometimes wonder whether the leadership of Southern Africa understands the gravity of the situation. Constructive engagement seems to have failed.

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Government. In April 2002, as Zanu PF pillaged, raped and murdered its way through Zimbabwe, Dr Jenny Tonge, their International Development Spokesperson, issued a plangent call for Britain and the Commonwealth to 'avoid acting too hastily' In a Liberal Democrat press release of 3 April 2000 she declared that 'Mugabe is a democratically elected leader and there are elections set for July.' Tonge buys the Mugabe myth wholesale. In January 2001, she urged a policy of inertia, telling MPs that Mugabe and his Government 'see us as the wicked Colonial regime.' She said that 'any action that we take will reinforce that view.'

<sup>28</sup> The Foreign Office officially denied this.

<sup>29</sup> Private interview with Tony Leon, August 2002.

<sup>30</sup> Interview with the *Sunday Independent* (South Africa), 7 January 2001.

There is reason to suspect, though hard to prove, that this letter played a part in the decision to move the outspoken Foreign Office Minister. Even if it did not, shifting Hain so soon after a critical letter from a foreign government can only have given a strong impression in Southern Africa that the British had taken note of the criticisms and that an errant Minister was being disciplined.<sup>31</sup>

## **Straw and Blair**

The 2001 General Election, and the replacement of Robin Cook by Jack Straw, changed little, except that constructive engagement faded slowly into well-meaning inertia.<sup>32</sup> During the election campaign the Prime Minister was filled by a sudden conviction that he had a destiny to save Africa. In a speech on 25 May 2001 he pronounced that:

I will make Africa a major personal priority and a priority for the Labour Government.

But Downing Street moved rapidly to make it clear that Zimbabwe, as far as Tony Blair was concerned, did not form part of the African continent. This is what Brian Groom, the well-informed Political Editor of *The Financial Times*, wrote after a high-level briefing not long afterwards:<sup>33</sup>

Tony Blair's colleagues are trying to squash the idea that Zimbabwe should be seen as a test for the Prime Minister's assertion that Britain can play a 'pivotal role' in world affairs... it is argued that the test for Mr Blair is what he delivers elsewhere in Africa.

The Prime Minister and his senior Ministers have carefully circumvented the country in their trips to the continent. The Government has not called a debate in parliament as the crisis escalated: in certain respects it was almost as if poor Zimbabwe, its brutal dictator and its suffering people do not exist.

Tony Blair told the Labour Party Conference that there would be 'no tolerance' of 'Mr Mugabe's henchmen in Zimbabwe.' This remark was so empty of meaning as to amount to deceit.<sup>34</sup> Mugabe's henchmen continued, long after the Prime Minister's remarks, to travel more at least at will round Europe and into Britain. The sanctions regime is still fragmentary and Britain did not even protest last August when Mugabe's chief of police Augustine Chihuri flouted the travel ban on named Mugabe henchmen to travel to France under cover of an Interpol meeting in Lyons. Mugabe's henchmen, and the wives and mistresses they bring with them on shopping trips, have been largely unimpeded, though the British Government finally tightened up its travel restrictions last October, more than a year after Tony Blair's remarks. Even today some of the most notorious supporters and financial backers of the Mugabe regime live in the United Kingdom.

The British Government has proved incredibly slow to act against Zimbabwe. As late as May 2001 Robin Cook was still rejecting calls for sanctions to be imposed.<sup>35</sup> It was not until February last year that Britain and the European Union agreed on targeted sanctions - travel bans and a freezing of assets that applied to 20 government officials. It took until the following July before the list was brought up to 72.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Friends of Peter Hain are doubtful that the South African letter lay behind his move. It is fair to state that there were at the time other causes of tension between Peter Hain and Robin Cook.

<sup>32</sup> In January 2002, Straw came under fire following claims that he was not up to the job, and that the Prime Minister was the effective Foreign Secretary. Straw defended himself, saying that his relative quietness was excused by the fact that he was 'ensuring that we are well developed in other areas of foreign policy, for instance over Zimbabwe and Gibraltar.' He must be taken at his word, but Straw's claim that he was paying special attention to Zimbabwe is not borne out by events.

<sup>33</sup> B. Groom, "Africa sets test of Blair's global influence", *Financial Times*, 17 January 2002. Interviewed for the author's Channel 4 documentary, Groom made clear that his sources were speaking for the Prime Minister.

<sup>34</sup> It may have been inspired by focus groups. In his notorious 'Touchstone issues' memo, published in *The Times* on 18 July 2000, the Prime Minister mused that 'on issues like Zimbabwe, we are seen as insufficiently assertive.'

<sup>35</sup> The Government's procrastination is demonstrated by the fact that the Conservatives were calling for the freezing of Mugabe's assets from April 2000.

<sup>36</sup> In fairness to Jack Straw, he had difficulty overcoming obstinate resistance from European countries like Portugal, Belgium and (to begin with) France. All of these countries had interests of their own which led them to resist any intervention in Zimbabwe at all.

New Labour was just as slow in moving for Zimbabwe to be suspended from the Commonwealth. It was not till the start of 2002 that Jack Straw started to seriously press for Zimbabwe to be suspended, finally securing his objective in March last year. The Government from the start of the present crisis has displayed a lack of urgency. It has constantly reacted too softly and too late.<sup>37</sup>

### **Baroness Amos**

A sign of the low importance attached by Tony Blair to Zimbabwe was the appointment of Baroness Amos as the Minister responsible in the aftermath of the 2001 election. She is an Under-Secretary of State, lowest of the low in ministerial terms, with no relevant experience, and made less effectual still by operating out of the House of Lords. One senior South African politician calls her 'to all intents and purposes invisible.'<sup>38</sup>

Amos gives little impression that she regards Zimbabwe as an urgent issue. Last September, as Mugabe's thugs raped, murdered, burned and looted their way through the interior, the Baroness addressed a 'World Conference and Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance' in Durban. There was much talk in her speech about the battle against racism, and a fair amount of self-laceration about British failures in this front – Oldham, Bradford, Burnley as well as the Stephen Lawrence affair. Not once did she allude to the tragedy on South Africa's own doorstep. Here is Amos, explaining Britain's Zimbabwe policy to the Foreign Affairs Committee last May:

It is important that the Committee recognises that the Government of Zimbabwe seeks to show any kind of direct criticism which is made by the British Government as a form of the ex-colonial power somehow interfering in the internal workings of Zimbabwe... [that is why] we have worked so hard to ensure that our views are represented in international fora such as the European Union and the United Nations.

Yet action through the Commonwealth and the European Union – let alone the United Nations – has come always come far too late. The respected conflict resolution organisation the International Crisis Group (ICG) concluded last summer that:<sup>39</sup>

The EU's approach to Zimbabwe has led to an unconvincing, lowest common denominator approach that in the end botched EU election observation while weakening the impact of targeted sanctions.

The ICG director and former state department adviser John Prendergast told The Times in June:<sup>40</sup>

Britain and the EU talk tough and do nothing. It's a joke.

To turn New Labour's touching faith in the European Union the central plank of British government policy towards Zimbabwe verges on criminal recklessness. Tony Blair, Baroness Amos and the British Government seem to have swallowed wholesale the narrative of Robert Mugabe that Britain has no role to play in Mugabe as the former colonial power. They have based an entire foreign policy on this treacherous and false premise. As a result the British Government has shown no will, no guts, no urgency, and no compassion. Future generations will look back in bafflement and despair at the passivity shown by Tony Blair as Zimbabwe has gone to hell. The

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<sup>37</sup> In Tony Blair's and Jack Straw's defence, they have had to face the defeatism of Foreign Office officials. Well-placed sources tell me that the move to suspend Zimbabwe was insisted on by Ministers against the advice of officials who advised that it could not be achieved.

<sup>38</sup> Her official biographical note records a background in 'equal opportunities, training and management services.' She was for two years chief executive of the Equal Opportunities Commission, and received her peerage in 1997.

<sup>39</sup> International Crisis Group Report, 29 April 2002.

<sup>40</sup> The Times, 15 June 2002

poet T. S. Eliot once observed that inaction was a form of action. If he was right, the British Government already has blood on its hands.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **WHAT MUST BE DONE?**

If Rwanda happened again today... we would have a moral duty to act there.

Tony Blair, Labour Party Conference Speech, 2 October 2001.

RWANDA IS STARTING TO HAPPEN AGAIN, this time in Zimbabwe. So far the Blair Government is doing nothing to prevent it. It is ignoring its moral duty.

It is easy to understand the problem. Taking action is complicated and difficult. There are other things - Iraq, the National Health Service, university funding - to concentrate on. There is no oil in Zimbabwe. Its strategic importance in world affairs is zero.

#### **President Mbeki**

One of the biggest problems is the failure of South African President Mbeki to take action against Mugabe.<sup>41</sup>

There is an almost exact parallel between Mbeki's situation today and President Vorster's in the 1970s. For more than a decade Ian Smith's illegitimate Rhodesian Government was able to survive thanks to South African collusion. But the moment Henry Kissinger persuaded Vorster to pull the plug Rhodesia fell. Zimbabwe is a land-locked state, and dependent on South Africa for trading links, and above all, for oil.

There is a saying in Zimbabwe that the most important person in the country is the station-master at Messina - just south of the border on the railway line from South Africa. If Zimbabwe was a human being, Messina station would be her windpipe. But South Africa shows no sign of exerting any moral let alone physical power over Zimbabwe. Indeed Mbeki is now busy undermining the NEPAD aid-for-governance deal between Africa and the West, in which Britain has placed so much faith.

So South Africa is an obstacle to a regional solution. Through her influence with the non-aligned countries, she also stands in the way of using the United Nations as a lever on Mugabe.

From retirement Nelson Mandela warns vainly against the tone his country has taken with its northern neighbour. Desmond Tutu speaks out often. Mandela and Tutu see, as Mbeki seems not to, that the ANC in its battle against apartheid fought against everything that Mugabe stands for too: racism, barbarism, murder, torture and arbitrary arrest. The MDC by contrast, upon which South Africa has turned its back, stands for everything the ANC did in its great struggle: democracy, freedom under law, human rights and a special kind of moral heroism.

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<sup>41</sup> As recently as 17 December 2002, President Mbeki made a public sign of support for the Mugabe Government. Tim Butcher of The Daily Telegraph reported on 18 December:

South Africa's ruling African National Congress yesterday effectively gave its backing to President Mugabe's regime in Zimbabwe, cheering a speech by a Zanu PF loyalist attacking "western imperialists."

President Thabo Mbeki hugged Emmerson Mnangagwa after his speech even though the Zanu PF administration secretary was once Mr Mugabe's state security chief and has been accused of gross human rights violations.

See also Zimbabwe: The Politics of National Liberation, op. cit. for a lucid explanation of South Africa's indifference.

## **Towards a policy of conviction**

There is no ready diplomatic coalition to solve the crisis in Zimbabwe. But this does not excuse Britain's failure to address the problem. There are many signs of this, including:

- the procrastination in imposing targeted sanctions and getting Zimbabwe thrown out of the councils of the Commonwealth;
- the defeatist government briefing to political editors that Tony Blair's 'mission to Africa' should not be judged on Zimbabwe;
- the failure of the British Government to call a debate in Parliament as the crisis has deepened;
- the casual and muddled handling of the England cricket team's visit to Zimbabwe for next month's World Cup;
- British readiness to undermine the integrity of the sanctions regime. A notable recent example was British connivance with the EU decision last November to move the location of the Southern African Development Community Foreign Ministers' summit from Copenhagen to Mozambique, so that Zimbabwean Ministers could attend; and,
- the decision to hand control of policy to an inexperienced Under-Secretary of State based in the House of Lords.

There is no doubt that the makers of British foreign policy are men and women of decency and good will. And it is true that finding a solution is hard. But Mugabe is destroying Zimbabwe, and killing her people. The country is on the verge of catastrophe. Britain and the international community are washing our hands of the whole dirty business.

It is true that targeted sanctions have been applied – although they have been applied too late and with too little vigour. And it is true that Zimbabwe has been suspended from the councils of the Commonwealth. But these are little more than gestures. They have eased the conscience of the West, but have done no more than irritate Mugabe. A more active and urgent approach is needed. Britain and the international community must show conviction. That would entail:

1. In November 2001, the Prime Minister stated that he would "make Africa a major personal priority and a priority for the Labour Government." His policy towards Zimbabwe should reflect that commitment. He should not pretend, as his advisers seem to, that Zimbabwe is a special case where nothing can be done. That is unacceptable.
2. Day-to-day policy for Zimbabwe should be the responsibility of a senior minister, not an inexperienced Under-Secretary of State. A special government committee should be set up to monitor the evolving crisis, ensure sanctions are enforced and hasten more serious action. The Defence, Foreign and Overseas Development Secretaries should sit on the committee and it should report to the Prime Minister.
3. Sanctions must be remorselessly pursued. They should also be extended to include two new categories. Firstly, the children of Zanu PF ministers and allies of the regime who are being educated in private schools in the west should be sent home. Secondly, the powerful business backers of Mugabe who help keep him in power by providing foreign currency should be identified. The feeling of impunity that is prevalent among Mugabe's supporters must be undermined.
4. Fuel supplies in Zimbabwe are close to zero. There is barely any petrol in Harare. The country has little foreign currency to pay for new deliveries; recently, money intended for new supplies was instead used to pay debtors who had refused to send further supplies until arrears were paid. Every effort must be made to restrict any re-supply of oil.
5. Britain should be ready to use the International Convention Against Torture to arrest Mugabe's henchmen who travel outside the country.



6. South Africa could solve the problem. If Mbeki understands that socio-economic collapse in Zimbabwe will destabilise South Africa, he would be more likely to cut off all support to Mugabe. Tony Blair and other world leaders must therefore engage directly with President Mbeki.
7. In December 2002, Tony Blair showed that he was ready to take the lead in the Middle East by calling for an international conference on Palestine. He should take a similar lead over Zimbabwe.
8. There is nothing racist about standing up for human rights and against torture, starvation and mass murder. Britain must ignore President Mugabe's rhetoric, which had such an abiding effect on Baroness Amos and her Liberal Democrat counterpart, Jenny Tonge.
9. If Mugabe is determined to prevent food reaching sections of his own population, other ways must be found of feeding them. In November 2002, Mark Bellamy, a senior adviser at the US State Department, said that America was ready to take "very intrusive interventionist measures" to ensure that food aid was delivered.<sup>42</sup> By speaking out, the State Department official has set an example that others should follow.
10. If, in the coming months, Mugabe continues to deliberately starve his own people, then the United Nations must give urgent consideration to intervening on the ground to prevent another African genocide. Failure to act would do irreparable damage to the UN's already battered reputation in Africa.

Britain has not put in even a fraction of the will put in to assembling the diplomatic coalitions against Serbia or Iraq. And yet the paradox is that, if the international will did exist, nothing would be easier than forcing Mugabe to mend his ways.

Military action should not even be necessary. As the example of Ian Smith's illegal state of Rhodesia showed, Zimbabwe is a landlocked state which cannot survive for even a small period of time without the help of its neighbours.

I was struck while travelling in Zimbabwe how close it is, even now, to prosperity and freedom. The great institutions that secure human dignity and freedom - Parliament, the judiciary, the church, a free press - are still present, though some in ever-more atrophied form. The Zimbabwean people are proud, resilient and astonishingly courageous. The infrastructure roads, lighting, water, communications - still just about works. Zimbabwe could roar back to life, freed of the Mugabe incubus.

But there is another bleak and horrible alternative. The world must wake up and wake up now. How terrible it would be if, in ten years time, another British leader were to stand up and say:

If Zimbabwe happened again today, we would have a moral duty to act there.

## **AFTERWORD**

I HAVE INCURRED some overwhelming debts while writing and researching this pamphlet: above all to a large number of immensely brave and impressive people within Zimbabwe itself who helped guide us around. Sadly it would be dangerous to name most of them. But I would like, however, to thank Paul Thempa-Nyathi, the MDC party spokesman. He was happy to speak to us on the record.

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<sup>42</sup> Interview with the Washington Post, 2 November 2002.

In South Africa, Tony Leon, Gwede Mantashe, Moeletsi Mbeki and Twanda Modassa all spoke to us at length. In Britain, many people have given up their time to help or to talk to me. They include Baroness Amos, Michael Ancram, Georgina Godwin, James Littleton, Ben Pratt, Robin Renwick and Amartya Sen. It goes without saying, however, that the views expressed here are my own.

I am particularly grateful to Channel 4 for commissioning the documentary and for giving us the chance to travel to Zimbabwe. Dorothy Byrne has been a constant source of advice and support, as has Samir Shah of Juniper Television. Juniper's Tanya Cohen, Liza Hall and Liz Seymour have all been unstintingly generous.

My producer, director, cameraman, travelling companion and friend throughout all our time in Zimbabwe was Paul Yule: this pamphlet reflects our joint experience in Zimbabwe. Finally I would like to thank my wife and children for allowing Zimbabwe to take over our life for several months.

Peter Osborne  
December 2002