

ZIMBABWE

THE FACTS & THE ISSUES

WHAT ARE THE REAL ISSUES?

IN Zimbabwe today there is war. At least 500 people are dying every month. What are the causes of this situation and how can peace be achieved?

The Zimbabwe Emergency Campaign Committee was formed this summer to campaign for genuine independence for the people of Zimbabwe. We believe that it is vital that British people are aware of the facts and understand the issues that are at stake.

***There must be a genuine transfer of power to the people of Zimbabwe as a whole**

The only way to ensure lasting peace is to establish a democratically elected government based on a constitution which does not give special privileges to groups or communities on the bases of their race or colour. Under the present constitution, the white minority continues to dominate the police, the armed forces, the judiciary, the civil service and other key institutions.

***Any transitional period must involve an irreversible transfer of power**

To move from the war situation in Zimbabwe today to conditions of peace will be a complex process. The arrangements must guarantee that it is irreversible. This is why it is crucial that the regime's security forces, which have for years defended white interests at the expense of the majority of the people, should be disbanded. For genuinely free and fair elections to be held, voters must have confidence that those supervising them are doing so in an objective and impartial way. For this reason, British policing of the transition is unacceptable.

***There must be no recognition of the illegal regime and no lifting of sanctions**

Any attempt to recognize the present Muzorewa-Smith regime or to lift United Nations mandatory sanctions can only lead to an escalation of the war with consequent suffering and loss of human life. The regime has made it plain that it intends to prosecute the war not only against its political opponents inside the country but also against the neighbouring front line states, with the utmost ruthlessness. It is seeking the lifting of sanctions, in the first instance, to obtain arms and military hardware on the international market in a bid to become even more destructive.

WHY IS THERE A WAR IN ZIMBABWE?

*Zimbabwe is the African name of Southern Rhodesia. The country was colonised by British settlers in the 1890s after a series of bitter wars against the African people involving widespread repression and intimidation. The settlers took the name Rhodesia from Cecil Rhodes, the British arch-imperialist who organized the colonial takeover and whose company ran the country for over thirty years.

*The white settler community has for decades enjoyed power, privilege and wealth. The good life for them, however, has been based on the seizure of African land and resources, and the systematic exploitation of African labour.

*The African people struggled for decades to end white racist rule through non-violent action. But the white minority regime refused to make even token concessions. By the early 1960s, African nationalists had reached the conclusion that they would have to prepare for armed confrontation with the regime.

WHAT IS BRITAIN'S ROLE?

*Britain's role in Southern Rhodesia has been a sordid record of appeasement to the racists. In 1923 it granted effective power to the white settlers and subsequently refused to intervene as the repressive apparatus of a white supremacist state was constructed. Again, when Ian Smith declared UDI, Britain refused to intervene, even though it had been quite prepared to use force to crush rebellions in other colonies. The settlement proposals which Britain put forward during the **Tiger** and **Fearless** talks, and again through the 1971 Smith-Home agreement, would have legitimised white settler rule.

*In short, Britain has consistently refused to recognize that it is the system of racism and economic exploitation which has to be destroyed if there is to be peace, justice and freedom for the people of Zimbabwe.

*The root causes of the war are the intransigence of the white settlers and British collaboration with the system which they are now defending. The Zimbabwean people are involved in a just struggle for national liberation and self-determination.

WHY ARE THE CONSTITUTIONAL TALKS TAKING PLACE?

The Tory party, before the British general elections in May this year, made it clear that it intended to recognise the 'internal settlement' regime of Muzorewa and Smith, and to lift sanctions. But in power the Tories have been forced to recognise that it is the liberation struggle led by the Patriotic Front which has created the current crisis for the illegal regime and its Western allies. The Patriotic Front, recognised by the Organisation of African Unity

as the sole, legitimate and authentic representative of the Zimbabwe people, cannot be ignored. The British government is also aware that to recognise the illegal regime would amount to an act of racial solidarity with Rhodesia's whites and would provoke international action against Britain. Britain has been forced to accept certain realities and to behave pragmatically. It remains true, nevertheless, that its overriding objective is to protect its own economic and strategic interests in Zimbabwe and in Southern Africa as a whole.

The constitutional proposals put forward by Britain for discussion at Lancaster House do not in themselves imply any fundamental change in the present set-up. In other words they do not guarantee a genuine transfer of power to the Zimbabwe people.

WHAT IS IT LIKE IN ZIMBABWE TODAY?

The regime has imposed a blanket of censorship so that almost the only reports reaching the outside world are those of which it approves. But it is clear that the regime is becoming increasingly desperate and more and more dependent on South African and mercenary troops for its survival. Virtually the whole of the country is under martial law. Hundreds of thousands of people are imprisoned in 'protected villages' — the regime's version of concentration camps. The security forces have destroyed homes and property, livestock and food supplies on a massive scale. Widespread starvation is imminent and thousands of refugees have fled to the towns.

There is no freedom of political activity. The prisons and detention camps are crammed full with political prisoners — at least 10,000 in all. Every Monday morning more political prisoners are executed in Salisbury prison — 28 in March this year alone.

The regime, with South African backing, has taken the war into neighbouring African states, using newly acquired Western planes and helicopters. It has attacked refugee camps to which thousands have fled to avoid the war, and has disrupted the economies of the front line states. Hundreds of women and children have been massacred in such raids into Mozambique, Zambia, Botswana and Angola.

But none of these measures has destroyed the determination of the people to push ahead with the liberation struggle. Huge areas of Zimbabwe are now under the effective control of the Patriotic Front as a result.

HASN'T THE INTERNAL SETTLEMENT BROUGHT CHANGES?

The internal settlement agreement of 3 March 1978 has manifestly failed to achieve its stated objective of bringing peace. It has not brought a transfer of power, but simply the cooption of Bishop Muzorewa and a number of other African personalities into the existing structures of the illegal regime. In reality, white power has been entrenched behind a black mask.

Since March 1978 furthermore, the Muzorewa-Smith regime has deepened its alliance with apartheid South Africa. It is well aware that South Africa's military and economic backing is essential for its survival.

WHAT IS THE ZIMBABWE EMERGENCY CAMPAIGN COMMITTEE?

ZECC was set up following the May 1979 British general election to mobilise opposition to any sell-out of the people of Zimbabwe. It comprises over 50 affiliated organisations including political parties and groups, trade unions and anti-racist organisations, student and youth groups, church organisations and solidarity organisations. It works closely with the representatives in Britain of the Patriotic Front of Zimbabwe.

ZECC's main campaigns are:-

- *No collaboration with the Salisbury regime and no recognition in any form
- *No lifting of sanctions, but their extension to include South Africa
- *Support for the Patriotic Front

WHAT CAN I DO?

- *Support the various activities being organised by ZECC during the period of the Lancaster House talks and leading up to a national demonstration on 11 November — the 14th anniversary of UDI
- *Help to publicise the real issues — such as the continuing illegal executions in Rhodesia, the political and military repression, and the regime's continuing attacks on the front line states
- *Expose the sanctions breakers, and the role of Britain's economic interests
- *Raise the issue of Zimbabwe in local anti-racist and anti-fascist organisations, and ensure that other groups in which you are involved support ZECC's activities
- *Campaign for trade union support for the Statement of Intent, in which organisations pledge to maintain UN sanctions if these are unilaterally broken by the British government
- *Support the activities of your local ZECC group — if there is none in your area try to set one up with local anti-apartheid activists

WRITE FOR DETAILS OF CURRENT ACTIVITIES TO:-

ZECC, c/o Anti-Apartheid Movement, 89 Charlotte Street, London W1P 2DQ Tel: 01-580-5311