Briefing: 
ZANU-PF and the Ghosts of Foreign Funding

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The Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front’s NGO Act, promising to severely curtail the activities of civil society groups with a whiff of human rights or governance activities and ban foreign support for them, raises historical questions about ZANU-PF’s own path to power. A long history of ‘international nationalism’ is obliterated by the latest manifestation of ‘we are our own liberators.’ The archives reveal a complex layer of links between Zimbabwe’s nationalists and imperialists of both innocent and interested hues.

Introduction
Towards the end of 2004 the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front introduced a ‘Non-Governmental Organisation’s Bill’ to the parliamentary reading process. It will ban the foreign funding, and thus severely curtail the activities of, civil society groups involved in anything remotely approaching human rights or governance activities (funds from the direct arms of states, such as USAID and DFID, not to mention the IMF and the World Bank, which the Zimbabwean state class’s hope will come back, coins in hand, will not be stopped). 1 The bill imposes a state-appointed board of trustees over NGOs ranging from soccer clubs to HIV-AIDS advisory bodies. Zimbabweans abroad – estimated in some documents to reach twenty-five per cent of the population – will be included among those foreigners and imperialists.2 The bill went forward in spite of the fact that the parliamentary legal review committee reported that it violated the constitution on twelve counts. The report condemned it as

a cynical and comprehensive attack on the rights of the people to organize themselves in the promotion, protection, defence and advancement of their freedoms and liberties. It is a calculated attempt to all but extinguish just about all the rights and liberties contained in the constitution.3

Such legislation raises historical and hypothetical questions. Those familiar with the history of the Zimbabwean liberation war remember the extensive international support given to the nationalist movement in its various party political manifestations. They know that both ‘imperialists’ and ‘critical

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2 Solidarity Peace Trust, ‘No War in Zimbabwe: An Account of the Exodus of a Nation's People,’ November 2004
cosmopolitans’\textsuperscript{4} assisted and influenced most of these actors to some degree or another. Yet precise relationships and conditioning patterns have not been documented or delineated.\textsuperscript{5}

At the conjectural level, one is driven to wonder: why is Zimbabwe’s contemporary ruling party so concerned – paranoid might be the appropriate label, considering how ‘patriotism’ has transmogrified so quickly from nationalism into fear and loathing\textsuperscript{6} – with ‘imperialist machinations’ now? The easy answer is because ZANU-PF believes the opposition – in which it collapses the Movement for Democratic Change and a ‘hit-list’ of politically involved civil society groups including the Zimbabwe Civil Education Trust, Zimbabwe Election Support Network, Combined Harare Residents Association, Crisis in Zimbabwe, Humanistic Institute of Development Co-operation with Developing Countries, National Constitutional Assembly, Media Institute of Southern Africa, Zimbabwe Liberators Platform (a group of ex-combatants who believe the so-called ‘war vets’ who invaded land are neither genuine nor true to the legacy of the liberation war), Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights, Amani Trust, Zimbabwe NGO Human Rights Forum, Bulawayo Agenda and Women of Zimbabwe Arise,\textsuperscript{7} which it will target first – will be strangled without external support. Suffocation is necessary before the March 2005 parliamentary elections. Resorting to an Africa-centrism born on the shores of receding sovereignty ZANU-PF ideologues claim all these organisations are totting up their accounts of murder and torture and educating people on the arcane mysteries of multiparty democracy in the interests of the Blair-Bush imperialist conspiracy. It all works to the benefit of the party of tea-drinkers\textsuperscript{8} and lackeys, which must be destroyed if Zimbabwe is to retake its destiny into its own hands. ZANU-PF liberated Zimbabwe on its own, it says: so should its challengers.

A more complex answer entails burrowing deeper into history, however, and melding the conjectural and the historical. It could be that ZANU-PF itself is haunted by the ghosts of foreign funding. The party that championed the call ‘we are our own liberators’ when it ostensibly pulled itself away from the globe-trotting Joshua Nkomo with his multi-racialism and begging-bowl tactics may be having nightmares about its own historical relationships with liberals and

\textsuperscript{5} Patricia Appavoo, “The small state as donor: Canadian and Swedish development assistance policies, 1960-1976,” PhD Thesis, University of Toronto, 1989 charts Canadian and Scandinavian state aid to southern African liberation movements rather than between members of global civil society and the transitory categories of activists (i.e. from non-state to state).
\textsuperscript{7} Godfrey Marawanyika, ‘NGOs get 6-month reprieve,’ \textit{Zimbabwe Independent}, November 26 2004.
\textsuperscript{8} The notion of ‘tea-drinkers’ in Zimbabwean history is ironic, given that the many of the African members of the Capricorn Society – a multi-racial group organized by European liberals to ensure the black élite would not take the communist path – who subsequently joined the nationalist movement and ZANU were condemned as ‘tea-drinkers’ by their more militant precursors.
imperialists. This briefing illustrates evidence that could be the cause of sleepless nights for those in power under auspices other than their own, and the vitriol that accompanies such hypocrisy.

*International Nationalism: Imperialist States …*

The roots of anti-imperialism’s humourless hypocrisy lay in its untruth. The myth of self-liberation ignores scores of churches’ support (they are in this legislation’s sites too, if straying too close to Caesar’s domain). It downplays states ranging from their neighbours such as Zambia, Tanzania and Mozambique (where freedom-fighters were domiciled, trained and, if they got too precocious, imprisoned) to the Swedes, Chinese, Soviets and even the many guises of Britain and the United States. It sidelines big NGOs such as Amnesty International. It ignores the impromptu Zimbabwe Detainees’ Defence Committee, which lobbied in the mid-1970s for the ZANU leaders jailed in Lusaka for allegedly assassinating their chairman, Herbert Chitepo.⁹

The illusion of autonomous liberation for Zimbabweans is both less than a myth and more than a lie: it is (and still is, of course) an impossibility. Timothy Scarnecchia’s work¹⁰ shows none other than Robert Mugabe as the master dialectician of the myth-lie is. He was keenly aware of the dexterous manoeuvrings necessitated by the politics of ‘international nationalism’¹¹ at its advent in the early sixties. Scarnecchia’s archival digging reveals the Salisbury based American consul-general’s report on an interview with Mugabe about the vexed relationship between the trade unions and the nationalists and on foreign funding. Mugabe acknowledges in the interview that: ‘African political or labor movements in this country cannot stand on their own without financial backing from some external source … however … [one must be] capable of “riding the tiger” without “ending inside.”’

Aside from the psycho-historical resonances of the parallel with Godfrey Huggins’ image of the partnership between horse and rider, for which liberal Rhodesians are remembered, such an admission is an adroit recognition of the dependence of all ‘third world’ societies on the crumbs from western tables. Today’s discourse does not replicate such frankness. It would be better for it,

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⁹ The Catholic Institute for International Relations archives, in London, contain this committee’s correspondence. Members included Kees Maxey, Judith Acton (Todd) and Lionel Cliffe among others: ‘Anonymous Chelmsford’ donated £600.00 to its appeal. See Luise White, *The Assassination of Herbert Chitepo: Text and Politics in Zimbabwe*, (Bloomington, Cape Town and Harare: Indiana University Press, Double Storey, and Weaver), 2003, for a discursive analysis of the versions on Chitepo’s untimely demise.


because its importance lies not in the confession of the emptiness of a slogan about ‘self-reliance’ but in the question of the balance between state-to-state ‘intervention’ and sovereignty (or sovereignty in the making) and the relations between members of global civil society and their subalterns on the periphery of global capitalism. There was no discourse of ‘global civil society’ in the sixties and seventies, but this nascent social formation helped ZANU – particularly some of its leaders – reach the pinnacle of power. Many state agencies were even more important. Into the equation must go the fact that there are no such things as ‘puppets’: Al Queda’s blowback is lesson enough about how imperialist hubris quickly sours. As one long-time participant in Zimbabwe’s various struggles said about Mugabe ‘it is ironic that the man the USA created is now considered to be a “rogue”.’ It is not foreign funding per se at issue, but its effects. Labelling its recipients as on the strings of their masters is not enough, because if one goes back far enough, the strings will always be there. Perhaps only their elasticity is at issue.

The length of these cords (remember Lenin’s optimistic line that the bourgeoisie – and it could be a global entity! – might hang itself with its own rope) is revealed in the Foreign and Commonwealth files in London’s Public Records Office. There is a telegram in these files from the FCO to Accra, sent November 9, 1967. It reads, (in upper case): ‘Mrs. Sarah F. Mugabe, Ghanaian born wife of Robert Mugabe, Secretary General of Z.A.N.U., has been invited to visit Britain by the Ariel Foundation. She is to do a year’s secretarial course, and Ariel undertake to be responsible for her financially.’ It continues to say that Mrs. Mugabe could not get an entry permit until she got a letter from Ariel confirming its support. ‘In view of short notice Ariel who are well known to us has asked for our help. Please take this telegram as the confirmation required.’ Scribbles above the body of the telegram read ‘Eric, were you consulted abt. this?’ Underneath there is a flurry: ‘Would you wish to have this on one of your files? If not, it can be destroyed,’ and, in another hand, ‘can we now destroy?’ A large scrawl taking up about a fifth of the whole page notes: ‘Mr. Reiss of IRD despatched this tel. It was not cleared with us. Ariel decided on their own initiative to help Mrs. Mugabe.’ What was the Ariel Foundation? The ‘parapolitics’ website informs that 1976 Guardian story unveils the Ariel Foundation’s roots in the machinations of the Central Intelligence Organisation. Who are liberating ourselves?

A few files further on, there is a letter from the British Embassy in Washington, reporting on an earlier visit of the party chairman, Herbert Chitepo. It reads, in understated lower case type, that although the African

\[12\] Interview, Harare, September 2004.
\[14\] Cypher/Cat A – Immediate Commonwealth Office to Accra. Telno 1351. 9 November 1967 (IR 5/7/-), Confidential.
bureau at the State Department was ‘somewhat reticent’ about the not-yet-Maoist chairman’s trip, ‘we have it on good authority that he came on a United State’s Government grant.’ Apparently he ‘pressed strongly for more active American support of ZANU [emphasis mine].’ The Americans told the British that if the west did not support the new party on the block ‘the Russians will establish control over them. Thus ‘we suspect … the State Department (no doubt in conjunction with CIA) are considering’ Mr. Chitepo’s request. The letter went on to say

the State Department regard Chitepo as one of the more competent and articulate Rhodesian Africans in exile [but] admitted to … having been slightly disappointed with him – he made a good superficial impression, but there did not seem to be much substance underneath. … [He] presented his case in relatively restrained terms [to liberal Congressmen] … in contrast to his performance at the rather strange meeting in a Chinese restaurant.

The lesson for those dancing for foreign assistance might be to avoid Chinese restaurant – or that such experiences turns one to Maoism.

Nearly a decade later, the partner of one of the men accused of assassinating Herbert Chitepo received a letter from the Commonwealth Secretariat in Marlborough House responding to information handed on by a Mrs. Beryl McGovern of the United Nations Development Programme that Mutukudzi Mudzi, after having spent more than a year in prison, would like to re-enter the University of Zambia. The letter advised her that the Secretariat ‘would be very pleased to continue his award under the Commonwealth Rhodesian Scholarship Trust Fund’ and asked her to make sure that the University sent a statement of his fees directly to London. It was copied to an Ignatius Chigwendere of the Commission for Racial Justice in London.16

The British state’s thirty year rule slows down the process of tracing recent history, has not allowed more cats to come out of the hat on the relationship between states, their multilateral international representations, and the aspirants to the club.17 How would they compare with the links alleged by ZANU-PF between the MDC and its ‘masters?’

... and Innocent NGOs
Of course, foreign funding is not just state-to-state-in-the-making, and ZANU-PF is well aware of that fact. Thus its well-trodden discourse of the complicity between human rights oriented NGOs and imperialism’s pernicious desires. Its theory on

16 Commonwealth Secretariat Library, Marlborough House. RA (8) 287. 7 December 1976. In the correspondence on which this name is affixed, it is sometimes spelled Chigwendere and Chigwedere.
17 The Freedom of Information Act, soon to be implemented, should improve matters for contemporary historians and political researchers.
this collusion could rest on an empirical history of how this cog in the imperialist machine assisted today’s ruling party in the past. A 1971 letter to the FCO from Amnesty International, an NGO ZANU-PF pretends to hate, illustrated the multi-layered dynamic that Zimbabwe’s leaders know so well and would like to stop now. This note, written during the Pearce Commission’s 1971 efforts to sound out African opinions about a new constitutional twist (and led to the ‘blowback’ of Bishop Muzorewa and the United African National Council), ‘repeats’ a previous promise of ‘airfare and all other possible assistance to Messrs. Malowa, Manyonga and [the recently deceased Eddison, long time and iconoclastic Minister of Justice and Parliamentary Affairs] Zvobgo’ who, along with Lazaurus Nkala, Joshua Nkomo, and Daniel Madzimbamuto, promised to leave the country so ‘could hardly pose a threat to the security of the Rhodesian state.’ Indeed, wrote AI correspondent John Humphries, the Rhodesians seemed to be accepting the good sense of such a policy, as they had allowed a Herbert Musikavanhu to take up the good graces of a British Technical Assistance Grant to study at Gray’s Inn.

A few years later, a man kept under restriction by the Mozambicans for jumping ZANU’s leadership queue was also busy typing letters. They rest in the Catholic Institute of International Relations’ archives. The CIIR may be poised on the edge of NGO status, given that its patron has embassies around the world, but these theoretical niceties simply indicated the fuzziness of the notion of ‘global civil society,’ especially when the church enters the picture. In any case, the CIIR has a long history of committed support to the Zimbabweans’ causes.

In the mid-1970s, it played host to the impromptu committee struck to defend those previously referred to in Lusaka’s busy jails. It appears also to have offered succour to the Commission for Racial Justice, headed by the same Ignatius

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18 His daughter Irene was assisted in her nursing studies by Amnesty International, as attested by a letter of August 27, 1971, asking the FCO to facilitate the processing of a British passport so she could get to the UK through Pretoria. An FCO telegram to Pretoria a few days later confirmed that ‘entry facilities [were] issued 16 August and posted to applicant next day.’ National Archives, Public Records Office, FCO 36/766, Policy and Activities of Amnesty International in Relation to Rhodesia: demand for release of political pensions and detainees, 1968-1971, file 26 and 28.


20 The CIIR is most famous for its series From Rhodesia to Zimbabwe, on which it worked with the Patriotic Front manpower initiative, published in 1978-80. It included Roger Riddell’s Alternative to Poverty and The Land Question, Duncan Clarke’s The Unemployment Crisis, Colin Stoneman’s Skilled Labour and Future Needs, Rob Davies’ The Informal Sector, and Michael Bratton’s Beyond Community Development in 1978, John Gilmurray, Roger Riddell, and David Sanders’ The Struggle for Health and Vincent Tickner’s The Food Problem in 1979, and Roger Riddell’s Education for Employment in 1980. There have been some discussions on developing a series along the same lines for the current moment. For an excellent example of the CIIR’s current work and continued commitment, see Lloyd Sachikonye, The Situation of Commercial Farm Workers after Land Reform in Zimbabwe, Harare and London: Farm Community Trust of Zimbabwe and Catholic Institute for International Relations, 2003. note the 1970s series, and Lloyd’s piece recently
Chigwendere (albeit with different spellings of his last name) who was copied letters from the Commonwealth Secretariat.

Chigwendere was the recipient of a letter addressed from Quelimane on 11 June 1976. While the author was under Mozambican house arrest and deciding how to convince the radical young guerrillas that he was better than the other members of the old guard he was usurping,21 Robert Mugabe wrote to the director of the Commission on Racial Justice. Mugabe apologised for having ‘concluded that you were the Chigwedere referred to in the mention of the Co-ordinating Committee composition,’ and then asked him to ‘get persons of good will interested in extending assistance to our cause … assistance of a non-military type such as clothing, medical supplies and office equipment (typewriters, duplicators, etc.) … [and] blankets’ for the huge influx of recruits arriving in Mozambique. ‘This is just as important as being in the front-line firing a gun. We have to sustain the man who is doing the fighting in front of us!’

And Across the Atlantic …
Meanwhile in San Francisco, a free Eddison Jonas Mudadirwa Zvobgo was reviving ZANU’s post-Chitepo reputation with his publication of a new series of Zimbabwe News.22 Archived by the Hoover Institute’s revolution-watchers, it contains ‘Comrades Robert & Sally Mugabe, Edgar & Anne Ruvimbo Tekere’s’ request for foreign currency so the ‘host government’s’ textile factories can make uniforms, and assistance in compiling a list of drugs from a ‘doctor with tropical medicine experience.’ Donations for ‘educational purposes’ were solicited, too, best left in ‘money form’ until the ‘Camps Educational Advisory Committee’ was established.23

The propaganda from the Pacific Coast also celebrated the arrival of a new military force, uniting ZANU’s and ZAPU’s armies. Zvobgo was not sure if ‘ZILA’ was the Zimbabwean African Liberation Army or the Zimbabwean United Liberation Army (it was actually ZIPA, the Zimbabwean People’s Army), but he celebrated it for removing Ndabaningi Sithole from ZANU’s head office and reviving the struggle to its ‘full swing.’24 He printed its long list of needs for the 180 schools it hoped to build in Zimbabwe’s liberated areas. It included, among much else, 180 microscopes and typewriters, 5,000 boxes of cycolstyling stencils (‘we expect to produce most of our own textbooks’), 2,400 blackboards,

22 The post-Chitepo assassination turmoil in ZANU is reflected in the new bibliographic details of Zimbabwe News. The San Francisco edition, labelled the first, is dated January/ May 1976.
23 ‘Comrades Robert & Sally Mugabe, Edgar & Anne Ruvimbo Tekere Send Their Greetings To All ZANU Members and Supporters Around the World,’ Zimbabwe News, 1, 1, (January/May 1976), San Francisco, pp. 39, 41.
and ‘the Heinemann’s African Writers Series in multiple copies.’ Secretary for Finance Zimbabwe United Liberation Army Saul Sadza’s list was much more inclusive than Mugabe-Tekere’s. Perhaps that is one reason why the young militants were removed from the scene by the reinvented old guard – with the assistance of their Mozambican hosts – just a year after the ostensible publication of California’s Zimbabwe News.

It seems that the men who wrote and published such letters know the role of well-meaning foreigners (to quote Lenin once again, ‘useful idiots?’) in the battle to unseat authoritarian power-mongers: thus the current legislation to eliminate this source of support for those continuing that struggle. There are differences, though. This time, the opposition is inside Zimbabwe, not poised on its borders, and it consists of a much wider band of working people and intellectuals. To date, these bearers of liberation’s reignited torch have not had to rely too much on the men – and children – ‘doing the fighting in front of us.’

To be sure, they and their allies all over the world will be able to break the sanctions imposed by a new NGO Bill. But their struggles will be much more constrained, and the legislation will enable the ruling party to single out its most persistent enemies. Hopefully this will not mean that the new opposition will have to move to the strategies of those trying to contain the democratic space they are expanding so assiduously. Assuredly, no one will believe the justification for such repressive legislation. They should, however, worry about the dependence syndrome of which the aid and the authoritarianism are component parts.\(^{25}\) Perhaps, too, they should note that the Council meant to govern the NGO Act is eligible for foreign funding.\(^{26}\)

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