

**ROBERT MUGABE
ON
ASPECTS OF ZIMBABWEAN FOREIGN AND
DOMESTIC POLICIES**

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This is the complete transcript of an interview given by the Prime Minister of Zimbabwe, the Hon. Robert Mugabe, on 28 January, 1981, to Jonathan Kapstein, Africa Editor for *Business Week*. Lengthy excerpts from this interview appeared in the *Business Week* issue of 16 February, 1981.

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- Q. One of the overriding questions that we are interested in, is that you have said repeatedly you will use all moral and economic means at your disposal, but not military action, to effect change in South Africa. We would like to ask therefore what your assessment of the situation is in South Africa. How do you expect South Africa to evolve?
- A. Our view is that the present situation in South Africa has deteriorated remarkably, that the oppressed masses, plus all the progressive forces there who are opposed to apartheid, are combining in their opposition against apartheid. And it is quite obvious that the situation continues to deteriorate - the number of arrests of people that are being made and the demonstrations, the strikes, and the bannings, including the bannings of newspapers - all these tell one story that the conflict situation is getting worse and worse, and there is obviously going to be open conflict, if one cannot talk of open conflict at this stage. We do not subscribe to racial policies and our experience here has taught us that the more people are racially oppressed the more they become opposed to the system that is responsible for their oppression, and continue to have opposition to the system. It continues to intensify until they pick up arms and start fighting it.

Now/...

Now we are opposed to apartheid and we combine with the progressive forces in Africa and the international community of the United Nations in offering our support for any action that is taken to overthrow apartheid. The OAU Liberation Committee has just been meeting in Arusha and meeting principally over Namibia. It has taken a decision that apartheid must now be opposed in Namibia and the hand of South Africa must be forced in the way of sanctions - comprehensive sanctions. And the African group of the OAU is very active there. We support its efforts and we would want to see definite action taken against South Africa. It is the duty of those countries that are favourably placed *vis-à-vis* South Africa because of either political or economic, or both economical and political, ties to bring pressure to bear on South Africa.

Q. Are you under pressure to provide or make available ... bases for guerilla operations?

A. We are not under pressure from anybody. We wouldn't be under pressure from anybody. The OAU doesn't impose itself on any African state in respect of support for any liberation movements. Obviously there is a subscription that we must make to the liberation fund, and each member of the OAU is duty-bound to pay that subscription. But in respect of lending bases - no, we are not under pressure. If there were any pressures, they would arise from our own considerations, entirely from our own commitment, and so there are no pressures on us.

Q. Are you considering providing that sort of support?

A. We support the liberation movements in South Africa, and we continue to do so alongside the other frontline states, on the basis of recognizing that this support goes through the liberation committee and through the OAU finally.

Q. What role do you see the major powers and their friends playing in Southern Africa? I refer to the Russians and Cubans with their involvement in Angola, and Ethiopia for that matter, and what should the American role be, and how do you view this general foreign tour on the horizon? What the Libyans are up to ... ?

A./...

- A. I think each situation must be taken in its own context, and the circumstances and factors which have yielded it must be closely analysed and some conclusion reached as to why that situation exists in the manner in which it is. In Angola there was the pressure of invasion from South Africa and South Africa never denied that it had invaded Angola when it did. So Angola was entitled to call upon its friends and allies to come to its aid. That's why the Cuban troops went to Angola - to help sustain the sovereignty of the Angolan people. It is not justification for American intervention at all. The question of Libya and Chad is a matter which the OAU is handling, and we have had an envoy from Libya ourselves to explain the situation, and we have counselled caution on this matter and counselled that the work of the OAU must be allowed to show itself. In other words the OAU is endeavouring to bring about unity in Chad and it would be in the interests of African unity, in the interests of regional unity for that matter, if Libya participated in the endeavour which the OAU group in West Africa is charged with - to bring about the necessary peace and unity in Chad. We do not hold that those two situations invite the hand of the United States, or the hand of any power whatsoever. The situation is an African one principally. We do not hold also that France is entitled to intervene by lending support to the Central African Republic because it is alleged that Libya intervened in Chad.
- Q. What should the American role be in Africa?
- A. I think this must be more the role of creating peace rather than hardening attitudes in Africa. I don't regard the American role as properly one to supply arms to any belligerent forces in Africa. I am not talking of arms for internal defence purposes which countries might need. But where there is a conflict situation, I think the big powers should refrain from siding with either side - siding with either opponent - and take stock of their position. Perhaps they should use the fact that they are influential powers to bring peace, rather than aggravate the situation which exists.

Q./...

- Q. What is your view of this long drawn out and painful Ethiopian situation in the Horn of Africa and the various conflicts - is there any resolution in sight through the OAU?
- A. The Ethiopian situation insofar as it involves the Eritreans and the government headed by Mengistu Haile Mariam is an internal situation in my opinion. True its dimensions have tended to extend beyond the borders of Ethiopia in that you have Sudan affected by the refugee population. But I note with satisfaction there have been discussions between Chairman Mengistu and the President of Sudan - Nimeiry - and some rapport has been established which should I think develop towards creating peace in that region. But in respect of relations between Ethiopia and Somalia, once again I am of the view that there shouldn't be any worsening of relations, and I think the creation of, I think, a base by the United States in Somalia is a cause for concern and makes the situation grow worse in our opinion. If there is to be peace in that region, then there shouldn't be bases created by anybody in that region. And efforts must be directed at making Ethiopia and Somalia friends rather than enemies.
- Q. Bringing foreign affairs closer to home, I am interested that the Soviet Union hasn't opened an embassy here. I am told that one of the objections is its insistence on maintaining party to party relationships with Mr Nkomo's group, as well as government to government relations, and I wondered what your views and comments were?
- A. I'm afraid that is a question you should have directed at the Soviet Union really, because we have been waiting for their gesture to seek talks with us on the establishment of an embassy here. They haven't come. We are not in the habit of inviting people to establish embassies if they don't want to. So, if they don't want to, what are we expected to do? I have had indications that they would want to send some person or persons to discuss the issue of their embassy here - of establishing an embassy - but they haven't done so.
- Q. Have you set certain conditions on them opening an embassy?

A./...

- A. No, the same conditions that we set for the United States. If the United States would want to maintain an embassy here, we would expect that they would have no relations with opposition parties. What would the purpose be - other than to support the opposition parties against the existing government? And naturally that relationship would be an irregular one, and we wouldn't contenance it. This is what we have put to the Soviet Union, but I'm sure they appreciate that that kind of relationship is unfavourable, and in a situation when they would want to establish good relations with the government, then whatever historical ties they have had with a minority party here, then those ties must be severed immediately. But I don't hold that to be the problem; there may be other problems. But they are welcome to establish an embassy here the moment they decide to do so, and do so on the same basis as everybody else.¹⁾
- Q. Turning to domestic affairs, we would like your thoughts on to what extent you are still committed to democratic centralism - to the Marxist socialist view of political organization and development versus the pluralistic political and economic model that you are at least fostering at the moment?
- A. We have a Constitution which is the basis of the present political order, political and legal order, and we do not intend to overthrow that Constitution. If we are to change it, it must be changed in the same Constitutional manner as it was brought about, and so there is no intention on our part to create a new political order that vitiates the Constitution. We hold that the present system, as long as it is workable, should continue; that we have no concern really because our party is a majority party; that there are no problems in Parliament as such, and we pass the legislation we wish to pass. There has been only one little hurdle, one little constitutional amendment that we have sought to introduce, but I am sure we are going to have the necessary majority to amend the Constitution in respect of those one or two little aspects.

But/...

1) During the week 16 - 20 February, 1981, the government of Zimbabwe agreed, in principle, to the establishment of a Russian embassy in Salisbury.

But in respect of our party, it is organised on a basis which is realistic. It is a people's movement, and takes the wishes of the people into account. We have organs of the party at various levels - branch, district and provincial levels - and the party operates on the basis of democratic centralism. We get the views of the people up, and once we have the views of the people and we decide in the Central Committee on policy, then it becomes the policy which gets down to the branches and that is recognized. It is through the Central Committee that we get policy permeating the sphere of governmental activity. What we decide as policy in the Central Committee is what we try to implement by way of governmental programmes: first, of course, by getting the imprint of Parliament onto whatever policy we have decided upon. In other words, there are two processes - the party process of policy making and then you have the Parliamentary process where we seek Parliament's authority for effecting definite programmes which espouse the policy that we will have decided upon at party level. That is the way we are operating at the moment, and I think it is serving us quite well, because we are learning at every stage, and I hope we continue to learn.

Q. Along these lines, where is Zimbabwe headed - what sort of mix is evolving? I note for example that you have reassured more white commercial farmers and the mining companies that you have no intention of nationalizing them. On the other hand you are creating a government minerals marketing agency - so what is your view?

A. It is not in the offing yet - it is not yet formulated really, but it is the idea we have. We believe that free enterprise must be regulated to some extent, that it should not be as free as to have licence to do what it likes in every respect, otherwise you have mini-governments in a situation where there should be one central authority.

What we are worried about in the mining sector is the lack of a marketing authority, a lack of a central supervisory authority. We don't know what the various enterprises - Union Carbide, the chrome mines, Lonrho, Anglo-American and so on - we don't know what they actually mine, what

their/...

their production is from year to year, other than from what they state is the fact. You see, we just accept their figures. And this goes for what they export and what they earn. We can't operate like that as a government, we have to know physically that in fact this is what is mined and this is what is exported, and this is what comes to us by way of revenue earned abroad. We have a marketing authority in the agricultural sector, and there is good co-operation between the parastatal bodies in that sector and the commercial farmers. Why shouldn't there be a similar authority in the mining sector and by whatever parastatal body we establish which operates on behalf of government? This is all we are saying, and I am surprised there is opposition to it. I'm going to see Mr W V Rickards⁺ tomorrow on this matter, but I don't see any valid basis on which they can really stand opposed to this central marketing authority.

- Q. Does this indicate any specific distrust of the multi-national pricing practices or is it just a ... ?
- A. No, it is not a question of distrust or a question of having no confidence in each other, it is just purely a question of our being in a position to know what the true facts are. Why shouldn't we see the facts for ourselves? Don't forget we have just emerged from a war situation which was compounded by a UDI with its malpractices, and just now I have been talking to the Commissioner of Police on some cases of under-invoicing, over-invoicing and investigations are continuing. There is ample evidence now that we have quite a number of malpractices taking place in the country.
- Q. On an individual or on a corporate basis?
- *A. One doesn't know whether it is a mining official who is involved - one doesn't know whether he is involved in an individual or collective capacity - whether he represents himself or represents the company.
- A. I noticed, of course, that yesterday you reached an agreement to take

over/...

+ (Head of Rio Tinto Zimbabwe)

over Rhobank from Nedbank, and I am curious to know to what extent the Bank of America was interested. I have heard from the Bank of America people that they would have loved to come into Zimbabwe, so why did you go for a local investment rather than foreign?

A. Again you have a similar situation here as we had in respect of the press, except that in respect of the press we were a little worried that you had a South African group of companies owning newspapers here and therefore dictating policy to those papers here, hence having an instrument with which to manipulate the minds of our people. There we proceeded deliberately to take over the shares and pass them on to the Mass Media Trust which we are creating.

In respect of Rhobank, this was slightly different. Nedbank which was the principal shareholder in Rhobank wanted to sell the shares and Nedbank is not a local company, it is a South African company. They were going to sell these shares to whomever they pleased and preferably to outsiders. We would want a localization of our enterprises as much as possible. They held 61% and we examined the matter and we felt - no, if our local companies can't take them over, then the State must take them over, and this was the rationale on which we based the takeover. But we are looking forward, of course, not to the State participating directly in business enterprises but indirectly through some co-operation, and I think it is in the making. We will create some machinery through which we can participate - parastatal machinery that is, which will act on behalf of the State. For now I think we take over the shares directly as the State. The United States financial institutions can participate - why can't they bring their capital and establish themselves here? There is no hindrance, no obstruction.

Q. I think my editors are curious as to why you used Nigerian funds to buy out the newspaper here, rather than, say, your own monies. Does this indicate do you think that Nigeria will be taking a more active role in Southern Africa?

A. No. It just happens that Nigeria offered upon being approached. Our Minister of Information thought of Nigeria first. He is impressed by

the/...

the manner in which Nigeria's newspapers are organized, and he appealed to the Nigerian officials for aid and aid was forthcoming - just as straight forward as that.

- Q. Given this previous discussion - do you see the private sector and specifically private foreign investment being essentially neutral as you guide the economy - or will you have to control private investment - direct it along the line you think necessary?
- A. We have put certain objectives - State objectives - before them for fulfillment jointly by the public and private sector, and we have said in respect of the private sector which we do not manage on a day-to-day basis, that they should take cognizance of the goals of the State, and some of these goals have, of course, been enunciated in various statements that we have made. But we have also insisted that, as they take cognizance of these goals it is necessary that they re-organize themselves and become localized in terms of ownership and control as much as possible - organize their labour in such a way that there is that necessary partnership between the management and the workers of the nature which makes the workers feel that they belong to the enterprise and are not foreign to it, that it is their enterprise. This means that the workers should have favourable conditions of service, as regards their pay, their pension conditions and other attributes that go with those ones. It means that there should be facilities for developing the worker either within the enterprise or outside it and that the skills must on a progressive basis continue to rise, and this is the only way in which productivity can be assured. And it also means that there should be participation of the worker in decision-making at the levels which are appropriate, and that therefore there should be this alliance between the working class and the management. Now we would want to see the work force organized on a systematic basis. There should be workers' committees in all the enterprises, so that the management knows who to approach and has the collective view of the workers. These are, in our opinion, simple objectives and we believe that taking cognizance of them will improve not

just/...

just the lot of the workers, but even the productivity of the various enterprises and the relationship between the workers and the management which is absolutely vital. These are just the few concerns that we have expressed to private enterprise, but the goals of the State have got to be taken into account. There has got to be reinvestment of the dividends as much as possible. We haven't laid down any ratios; we have left it to them to decide on that issue. The fact that their parent organizations abroad require some of the dividends to be sent abroad - that we recognize. But we also recognize that much as there is the desire to repatriate the dividends there should also be a desire to reinvest a proportion of those dividends as much as possible - and of course, to continue to expand the particular enterprises and to cause growth.

Q. So you try to strike a balance between redirecting national income without discouraging private investment?

A. This is all we are trying to do.

Q. Your view on what progress you have made in the last 9 months ... ?

A. I leave you to make the judgement. I think there is peace now. If you came here say some 11 or 12 months ago you would have found quite a tense situation here. As we held our elections, the situation was very tense - bombs being thrown everywhere, and it was a conflict situation. But after the elections, when assurances were given to the population and to the forces, there has developed a trend, a marked trend toward establishing perfect peace. We haven't achieved it yet, but we are moving in that direction. That is one achievement.

Alongside that achievement is the relationship between races - I think it is very harmonious. There may be one or two cases here and there, but by and large the whites have accepted the need for change and the fact of change. The blacks have accepted that the country doesn't just belong to the blacks alone. They must live with others as well. Anybody who would want to stay in the country is free to do so, and there

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is therefore mutual trust amongst our people. But we still have to make it deep-seated, to conscientize the people more about the need for establishing a non-racial society. And I think our economy has also shown an upward trend which speaks well of the policies we have pursued to date.

Q. My next question is a philosophical one. I have mentioned in *Business Week* of 15 December a comparison that has been suggested between you and Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore who was a socialist and a Marxist and yet he has built a thriving capitalist state in order to achieve social goals. Are these compatible? Are you similarly minded?

A. I don't know what he is trying to establish in his country apart from what I have read about. But we just take that into account and we do not have any blueprints from other societies as such. We may have ideas and definite basic principles, but their application depends entirely on our own situation. We have inherited here a capitalist society and, as I have said in the past, it would be absolutely stupid if we tried to establish a Marxist society overnight by overthrowing the infrastructure that we have inherited. You have to accept that infrastructure - let it operate, and bring about change in those areas where change is possible. And you have to build a consciousness among the people, in the hearts of the people, of the goals, socialist goals, that you would want to attain. And as you organize yourselves naturally you will, of course, be implementing policies in a socialist direction. This is all we have done. We are not trying to establish a capitalist society. We are trying to keep private enterprise at the level at which we have inherited it, and in the sector where it operates there is room for expansion. We are also progressing in a socialist direction which will be seen especially after our policies - rather our development plan - will have been formulated. I hope that after we have published our statement on economic policy,²⁾ which is awaiting the arrival of the Minister of Economic Planning - who is in Canada just now, we will agree on it in Cabinet next week and that this statement will be published.

It/...

2) The economic blueprint for long term redistribution of the nation's wealth was released by the Zimbabwean government on 25 February, 1981.

It will give the parameters on which our development plan is going to stand, and the development plan, I suppose, will start taking effect from the beginning of the new fiscal year which starts on July 1. So we believe this will give the direction of our socialist thinking and it will obviously encompass socialist programmes but without doing harm to the existing private infrastructure we have inherited.

Q. Will this American aid grant that was signed yesterday assist you in redistributing land?

A. It will assist us in developing land. We cannot use it for buying land. We cannot use Americans to buy out the British settlers here. We have to use the British loans or grants for that purpose, but we will use grants from other countries, the United States included, to develop agriculture and rural facilities and amenities. It is mainly in the rural area that we are going to concentrate our efforts in respect of grants that come to us from other countries.

Q. I imagine one of your biggest problems is the equity of land use and land distribution ... ?

A. Yes, there has been inequity in the past. There is lots of land which is not used when it is taken into account that we have less than six thousand farmers now in the commercial sector - white farmers that is - and that most of the land or half of the land in the country is in the hands of those few, then you will know the nature of the inequity that exists. And we have over seven hundred and fifty thousand peasant families - families, not the population as such, which is much more than that. (Multiply that by an average of 4 or 5 and you get the rural population.) They need land, and we have not been able to get all the land that they need, because of shortage of funds, and this is why we feel let down by Britain and the United States who talked to us about a billion and a billion and a half dollars. We haven't got that. We will not be able, therefore, to purchase the land. We will have to acquire the land

somehow/...

somehow. This is what the Minister of Lands is trying to formulate - some instrument which will enable us to acquire land.

Q. I take it though you want to keep those active white commercial farmers?

A. Oh yes, very much so, but they have enough land without the uncultivated land which is in their possession. They can give up what they are not using, but keep all that they would want to use. We don't want to disturb that - why should we? There is enough land to go round really, without our seizing the acreages they say they are using.