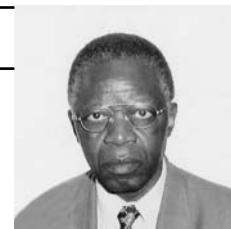


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## Interview: Dr. Simbi V. Mubako

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# Zimbabwe Acts To Resolve the Issue of Land Ownership

*Dr. Mubako is the Zimbabwe Ambassador to the United States. He was interviewed by Lawrence Freeman on May 27. (The references to “whites” refers to the British and Rhodesians who occupied Zimbabwe for 90 years.)*

**EIR:** Mr. Ambassador, there have been all kinds of attacks in the British press, against Zimbabwe President Robert Mugabe, and discussion about whether there should be an election in June. Before we get to that, could you tell our readers a little about the history of Zimbabwe? Most people may not know that Zimbabwe did not become independent until 1980, a mere 20 years ago, after almost a century of British colonial rule. So, if you could tell us a little bit about how Zimbabwe became independent, and the rise of President Mugabe, I think that would be important background information.

**Dr. Mubako:** Well, Zimbabwe was colonized by the British in 1890. They came to Zimbabwe from South Africa, then Cecil John Rhodes, and originally he was looking for minerals. But when he didn't get enough minerals, he turned to land, and began grabbing land from the Africans, and driving them off into reservations—what we call communal areas. And he took the best land for his settlers, most of the land—to the extent that, at independence, they reserved for themselves about 45% of the land, which has now been reduced to about 30% of the land, of the whole of Zimbabwe, but which constitutes about 70% of the best farming area in the country. And this land is owned by 4,500 farmers only, and many of the farmers are not, in fact, living in Zimbabwe. Some of them live in England, sit in the House of Lords, and there are rumors that even some of the ministers in Britain own land in Zimbabwe today.

**EIR:** Can you say a little bit about how Zimbabwe became independent finally, in 1980, and what kind of effort had to be waged by President Mugabe to free Zimbabwe from the British?

**Dr. Mubako:** Well, because of this inequitable distribution of land in Zimbabwe, land was always the basis for the grievances of Africans. And when the war for independence was fought, for about 20 years, between 1960 and 1980, the main issue was land—how to get land from the whites at last, to the majority of Africans, who were still grieving for having

been deprived of their land.

Everybody knew that this was a grievance, and the conference for independence in 1979—which I attended—agreed about everything but land, and it actually broke down for two days, because no settlement could be found about land.

The Africans, led by Mugabe and [Joshua] Nkomo, were demanding that the new government must have the right to acquire land and redistribute it among the landless majority. And the British and the white settlers conceded that it was necessary that some land should be given back, but they demanded that that land must be bought, not just taken. The Africans, on the other hand, argued that we would not have the money to buy, number one. And number two, it would be unjust anyway, for us to be asked to buy back our own land. We should, in fact, be asking for compensation for having been deprived of that land for 90 years; instead, we were being asked to pay. Mugabe said, that was completely unacceptable to us.

And that's way the conference had broken down.

Then came in a solution, and the solution was that the British should find the money, being the colonizer, they should find the money to pay their settlers, if they want to do that, and they could do that following the Kenya model, whereby the British government gave money to the new Kenya government, and the new Kenya government used that money to buy land. The Zimbabwe government said, if you follow that, we will accept that money, and use that money to pay for the land.

**EIR:** Did this become part of what was called the Lancaster House Constitution, that meeting that you just discussed? Was that a key feature of the new Constitution?

**Dr. Mubako:** Well, it was a key feature of the agreement. It was not necessarily written in the Constitution as such, but it was part of the agreement which led to the Constitution.

And the British themselves felt that they did not have, they could not have, enough money to pay for all that land, because the scheme of acquiring the land, and resettling Africans, was estimated to cost \$2 billion at that time, and the British felt that they could not pay that much. They didn't pay as much in Kenya, there was less land there, and they felt they couldn't do it alone.



*A clinic in Mnodo, Matabeleland, southern Zimbabwe.*

Then came the United States. President Carter offered to assist the British, and find the money to make up the \$2 billion which was required.

However, as it turned out, the conference resumed because of this promise, and the peace treaty was signed, and elections were eventually held, and Mugabe won. He was expecting that the money which had been promised would be forthcoming for him to implement the land reforms. However, as it turned out, the money from the United States never came. President Carter did not last long after the Lancaster House agreement, and President Reagan, who followed, was not interested in Zimbabwe, and never paid the money.

The British paid some money, altogether an estimated \$70 million.

**EIR:** That's \$70 million out of \$2 billion?

**Dr. Mubako:** \$70 million out of \$2 billion. And that \$70 million was paid over about 15 years.

**EIR:** About \$4-5 million a year.

**Dr. Mubako:** About \$4 million a year. And then, the British themselves stopped, and said, they are not going to pay any more. This is the source of the crisis.

Then the Zimbabwe government realized, perhaps too late—they should have realized much earlier—but then it became clear that Mugabe had been cheated, that the Africans had been cheated throughout. That neither the British government, nor the American government, intended actually to pay the \$2 billion. The British merely wanted to give the impression that they were paying, draw out the time;

perhaps, in time, Africans would forget the promise in the first place. And then they would pull out, having paid peanuts, compared to what was promised. And this is what angered the Zimbabwe government, and that is the source of the present problem.

**EIR:** Today, you have about 4,500 white, or Rhodesian farmers with British passports, owning about 70% of the land, out of a total population of 80-100,000 white British citizens in Zimbabwe. And then you have about 10-11 million Zimbabwe Africans, who own about 40% of the arable land in what you described as communal property, where I've been told that each farmer has about 10 acres. Could you tell us what led to the takeover of land in the recent year, by what are called the veterans, or the combatants of the revolutionary war? Why did they now decide that this was the time to take some action?

**Dr. Mubako:** Actually, the total population of Zimbabwe is 12.5 million, so you have about 12.5 million Africans, and about 80% of them live on the land; only a few live in towns. So you can imagine the crowding—80% of 12 million on 40% of the land. It's just an intolerable situation.

Because of the broken promises by the British, and the Americans in the background, and realizing that we're now left with the problem, the Zimbabwe government was left with the problem, of people still expecting to be resettled, expecting land, and there being no money to acquire the land with, the Zimbabwe government felt then that it was necessary to go on with the resettlement program, even without the money from Britain, or from the United States. And because

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*If the money is found, and resettlement takes place as is now envisaged, then, in fact, we could move into an area of improved agriculture, agricultural output, with many more farmers being able to produce twice as much as is produced now in Zimbabwe.*

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of that, the ex-combatants, people who had fought in the war of independence, and ordinary masses, who want land, began to help themselves. They decided to invade farms, and resettle themselves.

**EIR:** Was this supported, or encouraged, by the government, or is this something that was just thrust on the government?

**Dr. Mubako:** It was a spontaneous movement. In fact, it had started before this year. We had the problem on and off for many years. People would move onto a farm, and then the government would go there and persuade them to move out, and so on. But, this time, it was in a big way. Up to now, it's more than 1,500 farms which have been invaded, which have been occupied, and occupied by what is estimated now to be 6-7,000 people. So, it is now a countrywide, and massive movement that has taken place.

And the question was, what the government would do about it, whether the government would again go and move people out. And the government this time said, we are not going to move people out by force. People are demonstrating their frustration, and we sympathize with that. We support their views, that they must have the land, and for that reason, we're not going to send police to move them out. The government just refused. Although the courts had said that they should be moved out.

**EIR:** It was reported that there was legislation pushed through the Parliament on May 23, which now allows for the takeover of farmland, particularly 841 farms. According to reports I have—and you can correct me, sir—this is now part of the legislation of the Zimbabwe government, to take over these lands, when previously the policy had been to provide compensation, provided that it came from outside governments. What is the intent of this new legislation now to—you said, 1,500 farms were occupied; are 840 more farms going to be taken over?

**Dr. Mubako:** Yes.

**EIR:** And how is this resettlement project going to work?

**Dr. Mubako:** Well, yes, legislation has now been passed. In the past, we were governed by a Constitution which had been agreed by the Lancaster House conference, at independence, and that Constitution stipulated that, when government acquired land, it had to have the money to pay compensation.

That meant, in fact, saying that you cannot take the land unless you get money from the British, or from the Americans. Since the money was not coming from the British, or the Americans, it meant, you cannot take land. So, the government found itself without land.

Now the government has said, we have to amend that Constitution, and allow ourselves the right to take the land, without compensation, and that compensation we leave to the British to pay, if they want to pay. If they don't want to pay, then that's hard luck for the individual farmer. They should complain to the British, rather than complain to the government of Zimbabwe.

**EIR:** And my understanding is, there are criteria for which farms are taken, if you could explain that?

**Dr. Mubako:** Yes. There are indeed criteria. The government wants just the land which is underutilized. In other words, farms, parts of the farm, which are not being used by the farmer. Because the farms are too big anyway. All reports, farming reports, that I've had, even during the colonial period, stated that half, more than half of the land, which the farmers owned, was not being used. So, we'll go first of all for that underutilized land. Second, land owned by absentee landlords. In other words, people who are in England, or South Africa, Johannesburg, and so on, and who own farms, for speculative purposes, those lands will be taken. Third, the government had said that there will be a new policy, that no farmer will be allowed to own more than one farm.

So, if the farmer has more than one farm, the rest will be taken. He will only remain with one farm. Because as it is, there are some farmers—one farmer has got 11 farms; others have got five, six, and so forth.

**EIR:** And how big are these farms, in acres?

**Dr. Mubako:** In terms of acres, the average would be about 6-10,000 acres.

These are very large farms. But then, you've got some that are much larger, which are as large as 600,000 acres, with some ranches and farms and so on; very, very large. So, it will be these, which will be taken first. But the government has stressed, that none of the white farmers will actually go without land, if they want to continue in farming. Their farms will be reduced, but they will get land. Either the land they're occupying, or another farm.

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*The Zimbabwe government believes that, even today, it's still possible to defeat these forces, provided you know what they're doing. There's no doubt that the British government has always wanted to look at the Commonwealth as if it's just the British Empire by another name.*

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**EIR:** Has there been any immediate reaction from the white farmers to this new policy?

**Dr. Mubako:** Yes, there has been. On the whole, they are very hostile to it. To the extent there has been considered action by the farmers, some of the farmers, at any rate, assisted by the British and South African interests, [are trying] to get rid of the Zimbabwe government, of President Mugabe, and to put in a government which would allow them to continue as they are—that's the first line.

Second, some of them have realized that this is not viable, that this may not work, and therefore they have come to some kind of accommodation with the government. They're negotiating even now, with the government. They say they accept that some land has got to be taken, and they're ready to give up the land which the government wants. The only thing they would want, is to be assured that they will get their money, their compensation. And the Zimbabwe government has said that everybody will get compensation as to improvements which have been effected on the farms. The Zimbabwe government is prepared to pay for that.

In other words, the farmers built up a homestead, has got tractors, has got equipment, and so on.

**EIR:** So, the government will pay for those kind of improvements.

**Dr. Mubako:** That's right.

**EIR:** But won't pay for the land.

**Dr. Mubako:** But will not pay for the land itself.

**EIR:** You said that there were 1,500 farms that were occupied by the veterans, and this legislation says 841 farms; I guess that additional farms would be taken?

**Dr. Mubako:** Yes.

**EIR:** That's only 2,300 farms, and yet you're talking about resettling about 10 million people. This is a massive effort. How much land, how much money, how much infrastructure would be involved? It seems to be very large.

**Dr. Mubako:** It's still a very large effort. The estimation now, is that about \$1.2 billion will be required now. It was assessed at \$2 billion, but we have since settled some people, and now it is thought that we still need \$1.2 billion. It's a massive effort that is required. It will settle many people. But

still, there won't be enough land to go around for everybody. That will never be the case, but a lot of people will have in fact been settled by the end of the process.

The idea now is to bring order to the resettlement process, rather than allow people just to move onto the farms, and to stay on like that. The government will now be able to settle them in an orderly manner, according to the legislation which has been passed.

**EIR:** Is there a lot of land in Zimbabwe that is just not used, because there is no water, or no development of the land? Is there more land that could be brought into agricultural production?

**Dr. Mubako:** Oh, lots of it, lots of it. Zimbabwe is generally a dry country. You don't have a lot of rainfall during the whole year round. But, a lot of the land can be brought into agriculture if there is development, if you build dams.

**EIR:** Irrigation, water management?

**Dr. Mubako:** Irrigation, yes.

**EIR:** So, potentially, there could be enough land for everybody, but there's been a lack of investment in infrastructure.

**Dr. Mubako:** There has been a lack of that. If the money is found—and there are attempts now to find the money, even through the United Nations, and through many other agencies—and resettlement takes place as is now envisaged, then, in fact, we could move into an area of improved agriculture, agricultural output, with many more farmers being able to produce twice as much as is produced now in Zimbabwe.

**EIR:** One of the reports I read, is that there were just under 100 million acres of land that is arable, and could be used for production. Do you have any estimate of how much more land could be brought into production?

**Dr. Mubako:** I would think that you could double that.

But obviously, there may be a lot of development that is required. There are a number of big schemes which have already been planned, such as to the Zambezi water project, which has already been planned, to bring water from the Zambezi River, right down to the city of Bulawayo, which is about 400 miles or so.

**EIR:** What would be required to do that?



*The Kariba hydroelectric project in Kariba, southern Zimbabwe.*

**Dr. Mubako:** It's an irrigation canal; a canal would have to be built, and there would be irrigation systems throughout the 400 kilometer length, and that means a lot of land which is not now idle, would be brought under agriculture.

**EIR:** Now, if I can just shift gears a bit. There has now been a decision made by the government that there will be parliamentary elections on June 24 and 25 in Zimbabwe. And just recently, a group called the National Democratic Institute has issued a report, saying, in effect, that Zimbabwe is not in the right climate—I'm just paraphrasing—for elections. And, of course, this is the same group that is now trying to overturn yesterday's elections in Peru. What would you say that the government is going to do, to guarantee fair and free elections, and how would you respond to this report by the National Democratic Institute?

**Dr. Mubako:** Well, we read that report, and Zimbabwe has already dismissed it as completely biased—and really they did not study the situation properly in Zimbabwe. It has been dismissed by South African President Thabo Mbeki, when he was in Washington, and this Embassy has itself also dismissed it. So, many people have dismissed it out of hand, because it's obvious that you cannot say six weeks before the election, that there's no possibility of holding an election in a fair and free manner.

There are many other countries which have been in worse situations than Zimbabwe, which nevertheless were able to hold elections. If you take South Africa itself, during the first election, in 1994, there was much more serious violence there; and again, I was myself one of the observers in South Africa.

**EIR:** You were there in 1994?

**Dr. Mubako:** Before 1994. In 1992, '93, we were observing the process toward the election. Altogether, within two years leading to the elections, over 3,000 people were killed. Now, in Zimbabwe, the figure now is 24, I think—24 have been killed. Yet in South Africa, all the observers—and I was one of them—we encouraged the holding of the elections, in spite of the violence that was going on, which we knew it would be. The way to stop the violence is to have the elections. If you don't have elections, then you're encouraging the violence.

But, this commission says you shouldn't have the elections. In other words, they are in fact encouraging disorder in the country, rather than order. For that reason, really, it's clear that there was no objectivity, and it was completely biased throughout, and what they wrote seems to us could have been written here in Washington before they left. And the fact that there were black faces represented in the committee, doesn't mean anything. They were simply obeying their paymasters—in other words, the people who paid for

the trip, the people who dictated what should be written in that report.

**EIR:** At this point, is the government going ahead with the elections, and making sure that they are free and fair elections?

**Dr. Mubako:** The elections will be held, and the government has said that they will allow observers, as in other countries. Observers will not be allowed to run the elections; they are there to observe, to see what happens. And already, Southern African Development Community (SADC) observers have arrived. And I understand that the Commonwealth, the British Commonwealth observers are going to arrive also, and the European Union is also going to send observers—I understand 160 observers. So, there are going to be many, many observers.

**EIR:** One additional factor is that, in the main opposition group, the Movement for Democratic Change [MDC], are supported by a group called the Zimbabwe Democracy Trust. Now, this group, as we've reported in *EIR*, is headed by some of the more notorious British colonialists whom we've seen in the recent period, who have never given up the idea of the British Commonwealth controlling Africa; in particular, Baroness Lynda Chalker, who previously headed the Overseas Development Corporation, known as the Colonial Office of the British Commonwealth; Lord Peter Carrington, who works with Henry Kissinger in Kissinger Associates; Chester Crocker from the United States; and more lords and ladies, so to speak, are supporting the Zimbabwe Democracy Trust, essentially trying to kick out President Mugabe—you could say, overthrow President Mugabe in Zimbabwe.

Recently, there was a report that President Mugabe called this an anti-imperialist struggle in Zimbabwe. How is the government going to resist what appears to be very determined efforts by the British Commonwealth, the old colonial crowd, to use these elections to destabilize the country, and build up the movement through the MDC, to overthrow the President?

**Dr. Mubako:** Well, the Zimbabwe government is aware of all these machinations. They have been aware for quite some time, and the attitude of the Zimbabwe government is, we'll fight them in the same way as we have been fighting British colonialism and imperialism in the past. They were much stronger in the past—they even had an army, and everything, within Zimbabwe, and we were still able to defeat them. The Zimbabwe government believes that, even today, it's still possible to defeat these forces, provided you are aware of them, and you know what they're doing. There's no doubt that the British government has always wanted to look at the Commonwealth of nations as if it's just the British Empire by another name; to many of them, they would want the Commonwealth to be used as an instrument to exert British influence in what used to be the British Empire. They want

it to continue. And anyone who wants to assert their independence, as President Mugabe does, is a threat to that policy, and therefore they want to try and remove him.

But, the deciding force is, of course, the people of Zimbabwe themselves. It will be these elections that will decide that. And I believe that the people of Zimbabwe now know that the opposition groups, in particular the MDC, are being supported by these imperialist and sinister forces, and I do not believe, myself, that the people of Zimbabwe will elect them into power.

**EIR:** Now, concerning the role of the International Monetary Fund: I think there's maybe \$5 billion in external debt that Zimbabwe owes. Recently Zimbabwe was cut off from the IMF, allegedly over its support for the government of President Laurent Kabila and the sovereignty of the Congo. Is the IMF, in its monetary policies toward the country, helping to destabilize President Mugabe, is it part of this effort, or does it appear that they're helping this effort by the British against the sovereignty of Zimbabwe?

**Dr. Mubako:** Well, it should be clear that the IMF follows the policies of the major shareholders, the United States and Britain, and other big powers. And in this case, it was the British government which vetoed the renewal of the loans of the IMF last year.

**EIR:** In 1998, or 1999?

**Dr. Mubako:** In 1999. Yes. It is the British government, because they are pursuing these policies which we have mentioned against Zimbabwe, and because they are in fact backing the invaders in the Congo. They are backing Uganda and Rwanda, which are invading and wanting to overthrow the government of Kabila. And therefore, they are against Zimbabwe assisting Kabila, and foiling the invasions by Uganda and Rwanda. It's as simple as all that.

The Congo has very many minerals, and these minerals—the British and American interests want to continue exploiting these interests, particularly diamonds. The South African interests, the DeBeers company, and so on, is very closely connected to the British interests, and they would not want Kabila to endanger that control over those resources. And this is why they hate Zimbabwe—for no other reason. And for that reason, they want to cut off the aid to Zimbabwe, from the IMF, but at the same time, they encourage the IMF to give aid to Uganda and Rwanda.

**EIR:** The land issue is also a problem in other countries. In South Africa, you have the whites owning about 80% of the land. I think also Zambia.

**Dr. Mubako:** In Namibia, they own 46% of the land.

**EIR:** And I think they also own a large part of the land in Zambia, in Kenya. One of the reasons that the British may be making such a target of President Mugabe, and the nation of

Zimbabwe, is to head off a much larger effort in Africa, to take back some of this British land that they control, and they took over, essentially, when the British and Cecil Rhodes moved in at the turn of the century.

**Dr. Mubako:** Absolutely. You're quite right. The land in Zimbabwe, compared to the other interests in South Africa, and in Namibia, is in itself insignificant—what is left now is insignificant to the British. I accept that there are also lives involved.

But clearly, they're worried, that what they call the Zimbabwe contagion might affect South Africa, and Namibia, and, indeed, the Africans there have begun demonstrating in support of the movement in Zimbabwe.

**EIR:** So, it's possible that there could be a very significant uprising, or movement in southern Africa against these old British landed interests?

**Dr. Mubako:** If the demands of the Africans in Zimbabwe, and in these countries, are not met, and met urgently and quickly, you can expect that there will be an upheaval inside Africa.

**EIR:** Just to conclude, Mr. Ambassador. A lot of the questions that we've discussed, relate to the fact that there are certain imperial, colonial interests which want to control the mineral wealth in parts of Africa, that we've identified in Zimbabwe, southern Africa, but other parts of West Africa as well, to maintain their financial system. Mr. LaRouche, who is the founder of *EIR*, has said that the only way out is to provide for a new system, what he calls a New Bretton Woods system, to build upon the positive steps that were made by President Roosevelt, back in 1944, and to have a community of principle of sovereign nations, each dedicated to guaranteeing the general welfare of their citizenry. He has proposed that this new system come into being now, and one of the things he's discussed many, many times, is the need for massive investment in infrastructure: railroads, roads, electrical power, water management, irrigation for agriculture. That Africa would require billions and billions of dollars of investment credits, and that he sees this, through a New Bretton Woods system, as the only way out.

Do you support that kind of effort as a solution to the overall problems of Africa, rather than the piecemeal approaches of each country trying to survive on its own?

**Dr. Mubako:** Well, we must fight both ways. Each country has to put up its own defenses, to start with, and may be called on by others to help. But, the country itself has got to fight.

But, at the same time, we must explore the global methods which have been suggested, such as the ones you have just mentioned. It would be a very welcome idea, that the Bretton Woods institutions, as well as the United Nations, should be reviewed, so that they reflect the needs of the present-day world.

# Sino-Indian Relations Get a Big Boost

by Ramtanu Maitra

The May 28-June 3 trip to China by India's President K.R. Narayanan has not resolved all outstanding issues between the two Asian giants, but it has pushed the relationship in the right direction. The Indian President, an unabashed proponent of close Sino-Indian ties, has done well to bring to the fore the reasons that Beijing and New Delhi must create an environment in which both countries can pursue a common purpose and goal. Beijing indicated that it, too, wants to pursue the same objectives, and both countries assured each other that there would be more frequent high-level political exchanges in the near future. Beijing has indicated that Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan and Prime Minister Zhu Rongji will be visiting India in the coming months.

President Narayanan, which is to his advantage, has a personal rapport with most Chinese leaders, and Beijing made that clear as well. The 80-year-old Indian President, a member of the Foreign Service earlier in his career, was sent to Beijing in 1976 as the first ambassador to reestablish diplomatic relations between India and China (following the 1962 border war, the two had severed diplomatic relations). Later, in 1994, he visited China again, this time as Vice President. Throughout the present trip, Chinese leaders referred to him as "an old friend of China."

At the same time, instead of turning this trip into just a "homecoming," President Narayanan carried with him an important agenda, and felt free to talk about it with the Chinese leaders. Echoing the late Deng Xiaoping, builder of modern China, who said that Asia would not realize her destiny unless India and China learn to cooperate and prosper, Narayanan stated: "I hold that in the new century cooperation between India and China is a historical necessity."

The three most important issues which President Narayanan chose to impress upon the Beijing leadership were: enhancing of economic and trade relations between the two countries; seeking China's support for India's permanent membership on the UN Security Council; and expediting the resolution of the thorny issue of the Sino-Indian border delimitation. He spoke on all three issues fervently, and drew Beijing's attention.

It is recognized widely in both New Delhi and Beijing that the economic partnership between India and China must grow, to the financial and political benefit of both nations. China's overall trade amounts to almost \$340 billion—a little more than three times that of India's. But trade between the