

# **African Population – Growth Strangulation**

## **ZAPU**

*An article in ZAPU's Zimbabwe Review (Lusaka), II,  
1/2, Jan./Feb. 1970.*

A Family Planning Clinic has been constructed and completed in the grounds of the Harare Hospital, Salisbury. It is directed towards African family planning. The director of this project is a Mrs Spilhaus of the Family Planning Association of Rhodesia. This project has been made possible by contributions from some international 'welfare organisations', presumably at the request of the Family Planning Association of Rhodesia. It is reported that International Planned Parenthood and Oxfam plus proceeds from the Rhodesian State Lottery combined to enable the project.

This development is a culmination of years of penetration by European social workers into African family life. It started off by formation of African women's clubs to undertake home occupational activities such as sewing, knitting, cooking and hygiene in mothercraft. Clubs such as Radio Home Club, Ruwadzano (not the Church one), Women's Council, and many others, were formed in different areas of the country. In every one of them the representative of either the British Governor, the District Commissioner or some other official of the police or civil administration was the patron. These have usually been the wives of these officers. Competitions are held within and between a number of these clubs. On occasions of prize-giving the District Commissioner of the area is usually the honoured guest including some 'Madame' so-and-so from the state or bourgeois society.

Of late, since last year in fact, a training centre has been established at Domboshawa. Domboshawa is an old establishment school. It used to be the training centre for Africans in joinery and agricultural demonstration. It is most famous for producing agricultural demonstrators who move around African peasant areas (now only nominally) to teach the best methods of crop production. The regime has now and again used Domboshawa for what is called 'training' of Chiefs. The most recent highlighted activity in Domboshawa was the convening by the Rhodesian regime of a gathering of chiefs – a gathering called the Indaba – at which the chiefs were drilled in support-

ing the regime. Methods of brinkmanship were used, blackmailing the chiefs over their positions if they did not show support. It is here also where the British Minister, Bottomley, was taken to meet the chiefs and listen to their chorus in support of Smith.

All this goes to define what Domboshawa is used for by the regime. The institution is some twenty miles out of Salisbury. The next interesting use of Domboshawa by the regime was around 1966 when it came to light that women, particularly young ones, were being enticed there to undergo training in intelligence and spying for the regime. This was directed specifically against the guerrilla movement as well as expanding the internal informer system. The scheme is continuing with obvious difficulties of recruitment because, apart from chronic sell-outs, the African population in general resents and resists being exploited for the benefit of the regime.

Now women, so-called 'community development' workers, are being trained in Domboshawa. The first output of these women was fielded in January this year. There are twenty-seven of them. The basis of their selection is that they must be married and should have been members of one or more of the clubs referred to above. They are taught by a Miss Winfred Wilson. The institution of their training is government and they are outright government employees. What are they supposed to do? They are supposed to cycle around every kraal in the countryside and put themselves at the disposal of the women in the villages on family problems, particularly as regards birth.

On the surface all this exercise is so much of a welfare that it would look immoral to work against it. The fact of the matter is that the women being trained in Domboshawa are birth control agents. In another sense they are used as spies and informers to the regime of what they see in African villages, particularly on such activities as are against the regime. It is not by sheer coincidence that the opening of the Family Planning Clinic has been taking place at the same time as the fledging of the twenty-seven women for carrying out the birth control campaign. It is one co-ordinated exercise.

Why is there so much concern about introducing birth control among Africans and making it appear a grave issue of the moment? The Africans themselves have never shown any bother over the number of children they are having. On the contrary, the greatest concern in African families today is that disorganisation of African life due to enforced migration of Africans for work and settlements is depriving the African family of expansion and stability. The whole campaign suggests that a big family is an offence against life and progress and is ill motivated. The women who cycle around African homesteads are briefed to argue that to have an improved economic life and enjoy it it is necessary to exercise birth control.

The birth control campaign in Zimbabwe is objectionable, to say the least. The whole population in Rhodesia today is five million, on one hundred and fifty thousand square miles. England, which is almost half the size of Zimbabwe (Rhodesia), carries a population ten times that of Rhodesia, that is, fifty million people. The United Kingdom can easily afford to carry another twenty million people. In these terms Zimbabwe needs a much higher

birth rate to make use of all the space of the God-given land. These settler family planners and their agents are cheating African mothers into believing that, by applying birth control, there will be a greater likelihood of saving more money thus increasing the possibilities of buying better furniture, a motor car and sending the only child or two, to expensive and, of course, bourgeois types of school. This is a simple trick of making sure that any money earned by the African must be quickly and substantially returned to the British controlled banks. It is like the argument of a man who steals nine of your ten cows and then puts forward a theory of how to save milk, from one cow and how good it is to possess one cow.

It is not difficult for the Africans of Zimbabwe to understand the systematic curtailment of their economic, population and intellectual potential. Only a few years ago the regime, emphasising the pastoral life of the Africans as an excuse, shifted whole communities to arid areas. When these communities started converting these areas into vast arable land, the regime, using an economic argument of better crop production, enforced reduction of each field to about six acres, average. This was claimed to be intensive crop production. There was complete disregard of the size of the families to be maintained. African stock was also reduced to very small numbers per person. Some families were deprived of all their cattle. This was direct undermining and strangulation of the African means of subsistence. The calculated effect of this imposed poverty was to compel African males to industrial areas where they could be exploited as 'cheap labour'.

Religious missionaries initiated African education and still carry ninety per cent of African education, particularly primary education in the rural areas and also the country's secondary and teacher training institutions. The regime was, belatedly, involved in these schools through a percentage of grants and payment of teachers' salaries. Now the regime has sacked all African teachers who had not as yet taken their training course but had recognised performances all the years. This January the regime has decided to take off five per cent from the salary of African teachers teaching in missionary schools. Eight years of primary school education has been reduced to seven years, sadly enough, with a poorly constructed syllabus. Children passing to secondary schools were double the available number of places in the whole country. These children are now frustrated. Their intellectual potential is withered and their labour is at the mercy of settler employers for exploitation.

The above illustrations serve to put the birth control exercise as schemed by the Rhodesian regime in the correct context and proper perspective. After depriving the African people of their land and cattle, thus putting an economic squeeze on the Africans, the settlers are now seeking to trim and tie down the size of African families to that squeeze. There is no point in producing learned figures as to how planned African family life as part of a planned countrywide economy could increase the fortunes of Rhodesia. The economy is solely and wholly controlled by the Western capitalists and their settler agents on the spot. An African family which surrenders itself to be

trimmed to the economy of the settlers is not helping itself at all but is contributing to the fortunes of the settlers and their mother companies in Europe and the United States.

The economy of Rhodesia, like the economy of all capitalist states, rests on exploited masses. The exploiting class maintains its position through vigilance on three fronts:

- (a) the exploited masses, figure-wise, must not expand to such strength as cannot be estimated vis-a-vis the force used to suppress them;
- (b) the exploited masses must not be allowed to arm themselves at all, even with knives, stones or sticks, since their automatic retaliation is a certainty;
- (c) the exploited masses must not be paid such money or given such technical training as could enable them to develop their own capital; in short, they should always be kept at a begging level of impoverishment.

Clearly, therefore, it is for the precise purpose of maintaining the political and economic privileges of the settlers that birth control is being campaigned for among the Africans in Zimbabwe. The regime has openly expressed its worry over African population growth. On statistics available to it, African population grows at the rate of 3½ per cent. An economic expert from Pretoria, Professor Sadie, some two years ago was engaged by the regime to make an economic survey of Rhodesia and advise on its relationship to population growth. His major conclusion was that the African population was growing at a rate dangerous to the stability of the country. He advocated for swift policies on birth control among Africans. This is what we are seeing today this Domboshawa scheme of community development workers and the Family Planning Clinic built at Harare.

As pointed out earlier, the issue here is not that of understanding or otherwise the concept of a planned economy, it is the basic philosophies and principles of life involved. Why all the missionary zeal to save the Africans from the 'dangers' of big families as though it is something bordering on a sin or a disease? Africans regard humans and their association as their priority value; therefore the greater the number of humans with a closer association, the greater is the life contentment derived. The concept being fostered behind the Rhodesian birth control campaign (or so-called 'community development' under a disguise) is said to be 'improvement' of African economic welfare. It is an attempt to treat Africans to an accumulation or capitalistic concept. 'Prefer more money and more wealth than more children', is the idea. 'Find pleasure in material care and accumulation than in human care and association' is another way of putting the ideas being fostered.

The argument here is not that there is no relationship between the number of children and one's means to feed them, it is that they are not exclusive of each other. They can be mutually regenerative in the direction of increase all through.

Three technical points rule out the birth control campaign in Rhodesia: (a) the privileged economy of the settlers in Rhodesia cannot constitute a standard to draw conclusions on what population it can carry; it is an ideologically ill-constructed economy;

**(b) the vast unoccupied space of the one hundred and fifty thousand square miles of land in Rhodesia, including the farms being currently used by settlers and absentee investors and the unexploited resources of the country, impose an obligation on the Zimbabwe population to fill these spaces and enjoy these resources through an accelerated and increased birth rate;**  
**(c) it is foreign to the African family concept and was certainly not introduced on African initiative.**

**Whilst the settlers are, on the one hand, fielding this birth control campaign among Africans on the excuse of a population strained economy, they are, on the other, advertising for increased immigration from Europe which crosses, along the high seas, with tons and tons of Zimbabwe minerals being exported to feed companies in Europe, America and Japan. Who can fail to realise the whole trick in the circumstances?**

**International organisations like Oxfam and International Planned Parenthood are running a serious risk of antagonising themselves against the African population of Zimbabwe by contributing to causes which are neither approved nor initiated by the Africans. The birth control campaign in Rhodesia, as argued above, is against African valued traditions and is politically ill-motivated to the benefit of the British settler oppressors. There is no doubt that in Zimbabwe the African population will find its obligation to resist the campaign. If the African women agents who are being trained in Domboshawa for such suicidal campaigns do not take advice and stop being used against their people, they will have to face the consequences.**