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Mugabe, End of a Despot • Andy Barr

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Mugabe

I LIVED, worked and brought up my family in Zimbabwe in the 1990's, a country that I love and watched in total despair as it descended into chaos under the tyrant Robert Gabriel Mugabe. I have since been back three times, the last time 18 months ago. This is my take on the history and the present situation.

The ruling party of Zimbabwe has voted to sack Robert Mugabe as its leader and has appointed in his place the vice-president Emmerson Mnangagwa, the veteran autocrat fired two weeks before. President Mugabe, leader of ZANU PF, 93 years of age, clung to power for 37 years by a mixture of fear, bribery and intimidation in a country which once was known as the breadbasket of Africa, and ended up with not enough food to feed its own people.

How did the former liberator and freedom fighter's political life end so ignominiously and how did he hold on to power for so long? In 1964 Ian Smith, leader of the right wing, white supremacist Rhodesia Front, became Prime Minister. Smith made a Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) in 1965 to stop Britain handing the British colony of Rhodesia over to the blacks. The UDI was based on the American model except that two key phrases were omitted: (1) All men are created equal and (2) government by consent of the governed.