

Class Struggle & Resistance in Zimbabwe



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Revolutionaries, resistance and crisis in Zimbabwe

His Excellency Comrade Robert:
How Mugabe's ZANU clique rose to power

Zimbabwean socialists: "No to a government of national unity!
Only united mass action will defeat Mugabe!"

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Class struggle and Resistance in Zimbabwe

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The Links vision

Links – International Journal of Socialist Renewal - is a journal for the post Cold War left; a journal that rejects the Stalinist distortion of the socialist project; a journal that takes into account ecological questions; a journal that is taking steps to bring together the forces for socialism in the world today; a journal that aspires to unite Marxists from different political traditions because it discusses openly and constructively.

Inspired by the unfolding socialist revolution in Venezuela, *Links* is also a journal for 'Socialism of the 21st Century' and the discussions and debates flowing from that powerful example of socialist renewal.

Links seeks to promote the international exchange of information, experiences of struggle, theoretical analysis and views on strategies and tactics within the international left.

Links is a forum for open and constructive dialogue between active socialists from different political traditions. It seeks to bring together those in the international left opposed to neo-liberal economic and social policies, and to promote the renewal of the socialist movement in the wake of the collapse of the bureaucratic model of 'actually existing socialism' in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

Links is not oriented to academic Marxists, as many existing theoretical journals are, although it does have academics among its contributors. Its main contributors and readers are active socialists; those involved in the day-to-day struggles and especially in the vital tasks of building organisations and parties.

Links does not present a single line. It is pluralist, open and very much a discussion forum. There is no regular editorial, but there are certain parameters set by an editorial board.

Links develops and marks out the space for genuine socialism.

It hopes to bring together active socialists from different countries and political viewpoints, but united in our conviction of the need for: fundamental social change; a democratic, non-

authoritarian socialism; and a socialism that's green, feminist and anti-racist.

Links carries discussion and debate pieces, soliciting original articles from contributing editors and supporting parties, and from anyone who wishes to contribute constructively to the debates. It reprints documents and discussion pieces from different parties, as well as relevant articles from other journals.

While an English-language journal, we also need input from non-English-speaking countries, so that *Links* can reflect and participate in the debates taking place among left forces around the world. Where possible, we translate and publish important documents and articles from the socialist press in non-English speaking countries.

We invite your ideas, contributions and support for *Links* to succeed as a real discussion forum for the renewal of the socialist project around the world. Please send letters, articles and documents to links@dsp.org.au

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Revolutionaries, resistance and crisis in Zimbabwe

Munyaradzi Gwisai

In the last six years, the working masses of Zimbabwe have waged massive struggles that have shaken to the roots the post-colonial authoritarian state and its vicious neo-liberal agenda, which has caused immense suffering to the ordinary people. The struggles mirror similar events that have swept aside entrenched regimes in other periphery capitalist states like Indonesia, Serbia, Malawi and Zambia.

The struggles in Zimbabwe raise fundamental questions about the possibilities of socialist revolutions in periphery capitalist societies. The working-class resistance against the ZANU-PF government has gone further and deeper than most on the continent, giving rise to a political movement, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), that in recent elections nearly defeated one of the continent's most entrenched and violent ruling classes, forcing it to beat a major retreat from its neo-liberal agenda. But the subsequent transformation of such a movement into a right-wing neo-liberal force also raises important questions for the working class.

How events will unfold remains unclear and will depend on a number of factors. Objectively, these include the extent to which the economic crisis continues to deepen, the resilience of the ruling party and the development of the emerging international anti-capitalist struggle. Also important will be whether working-class rank and file militants will develop a sufficiently strong and

1 Munyaradzi Gwisai is a leader of the International Socialist Organisation of Zimbabwe and a member of parliament. This article is extracted from Leo Zeilig (ed.), *Class Struggle and Resistance in Africa*, New Clarion Press, Cheltenham, UK, 2002, which can be purchased for £15.95, including shipping. For readers in Africa, there is a special discounted price of £12.95, including shipping. Order from New Clarion Press, 5 Church Row, Gretton, Cheltenham GL54 5HG, UK, or on line from Amazon.

independent ideological and organisational alternative to the current labour bureaucracy, who are holding back the movement.

Events in Zimbabwe assume further importance not only because it is an important capitalist state in Africa, but also by its connection to South Africa, the biggest and most important centre of global capitalism on the continent. Zimbabwe is South Africa's biggest trading partner on the continent, and the two share similar colonial traditions. South Africa has the continent's biggest and historically most militant working class, of whom at least one million are Zimbabwean migrant workers. Revolts in the two most important states in the region could signal immense possibilities for working class struggles in southern and central Africa.

Uneven Zimbabwe

One of the reasons the resistance of the Zimbabwean working class has been much deeper than in many other African countries is because it is based on a comparatively much more developed industrial base.

Unlike most African countries, the manufacturing sector produces a wide range of consumer goods, intermediate products and a significant range of capital goods in sub-sectors like engineering, chemicals and transport. Manufacturing is the highest contributor to GDP, comprising about 24.8 per cent in 1990, which is about two to three times that of an average African country. The manufacturing work force contributes 16.5 per cent of formal employment and seventeen to twenty per cent of total export revenue. The manufacturing sector is well connected to other sectors of the economy, including one of the biggest and most diversified agricultural sectors in Africa. Agriculture contributes fourteen per cent to GDP (the second largest), twenty-five per cent to formal employment and 34.5 per cent to total exports. Similar developments are also exhibited in the mining, service and financial sectors.

But this impressive base was developed on an uneven, unequal and racist platform that has only accentuated with time. The economy has highly skewed ownership characteristics. Seventy-five per cent of manufactured output comes from Harare and Bulawayo, where sixty per cent of the urban population is concentrated. Sixty per cent of

industrial activity is in foreign hands, whilst about 4000 white farmers (fewer than 0.1 per cent of the population) control nearly seventy per cent of the most productive land. With seventy-six per cent of the population categorised as living below the official poverty line, Zimbabwe has been ranked amongst the five most unequal societies in the world.

The necessity to protect such an uneven base resulted in the emergence of one of the most authoritarian state structures in the British Empire. Indeed, from 1890 to 1923 the country was under the "company rule" of the arch-imperialist Cecil John Rhodes' British South Africa Company. Thereafter under minority settler rule, this repressive structure continued to expand, climaxing in the Rhodesia Front state of the 1960s and 1970s, where "the repressive instruments of the settler colonial state were perfected ... it was an era of a racially founded police state."² This repressive structure remained substantially intact after independence, but disguised as "populist authoritarianism",³ in which the working classes, ethnic minorities and opposition parties continued to suffer repression such as the Matabeleland massacres of the early 1980s.

Primitive accumulation and early struggles

After the defeat of the anti-colonial uprising or *Chimurenga* in 1896-98, the next forty years marked the development of the new capitalist state through a process of "primitive accumulation". The natives were politically disenfranchised and brutally dispossessed of independent means of production—mainly land and cattle—and turned into wage slaves. Peasants were forced to pay colonial taxes.

From the start, the new order faced resistance from the peasantry and new working class. But such resistance, like the 1912 Wankie Colliery strike and the Shamva Mine strikes of the 1920s, were isolated and divided and quickly crushed. The only serious attempt at building organised structures was the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union (ICU), formed in 1927 by migrant workers who had been

inspired by a similar organisation in South Africa. But the ICU floundered during the Great Depression in the 1930s, a victim not only of immense state harassment but also of the very nature of an economy based on an unskilled and semi-migrant pre-industrial proletariat.

The section of the working class that could have provided leadership was the white workers, most of whom had come from South Africa and Britain and were familiar with proletarian organisations and struggles. In 1916 railway workers formed the Rhodesia Railway Workers' Union, while the Rhodesia Mine and General Workers' Association was formed in 1919, both of which led some spectacularly successful strikes in the early 1920s and provided the basis of the Rhodesia Labour Party.

Under the pressure of the Great Depression of the 1930s, white settler capital reorganised under the Reform Party government, which pursued a racist state capitalist intervention in the economy, enabling the subsidy and protection of weak and peripheral petty bourgeois capital and labour, in what was dubbed "socialism for whites". Under the 1934 Industrial Conciliation Act, the white working class was coopted as junior partners in this racist social contract, being granted the right to form trade unions and to bargain collectively, but surrendering their rights to independence and to take strike action.

Henceforth it became one of the strongest bulwarks for the racist colonial state, a position which was particularly welcomed by both domestic and international capital. The new prime minister, Godfrey Huggins, stated:

The European in this country can be likened to an island of white in a sea of black ... with the artisan and the tradesman forming the shores and the professional classes the highlands in the centre. Is the native to be allowed to erode away the shores and gradually attack the highlands? To permit this would mean that the leaven of civilization would be removed from the country, and the black man would inevitably revert to a barbarism worse than before.⁴

2 N. Tengende, "Workers, students and the struggles for democracy: state-civil society relations in Zimbabwe", Ph.D. dissertation, Roskilde University, 1994, p. 60.

3 *ibid.*

4 B. Raftopoulos and I. Phimister (eds), *Keep on Knocking: A history of the labour movement in Zimbabwe, 1890-1997*,

However, there was a possibility of developing an independent socialist movement through the fledgling Southern Rhodesia Communist Party, which had been formed from radical elements in the Rhodesia Labour Party, and those who had been associated with the South African Communist Party and the Communist Party of Great Britain. But at that time Russia was pushing "Popular Front" unity of all classes, which in Rhodesia meant unity with the white liberals. The price the party had to pay for this unity was to stop the work it had begun with the emerging black working class, as this was deemed antagonistic towards the increasingly racist white labour force. This ultimately destroyed the party, as it divorced it from a real working-class base.

Parallel to this was the emergence of organisations representing the emerging black petty bourgeoisie, whose agenda was limited to putting pressure on the colonial state to grant more opportunities to certain black Rhodesians. One of the leading organisations was the Southern Rhodesian African National Congress, formed in the 1930s, but until the emergence of the struggles of the black working class in the late 1940s it remained small and largely irrelevant, looking to white reformists for direction and leadership.

Emergence of the industrial proletariat and modern resistance

From the late 1930s to the 1960s, Rhodesia underwent rapid industrialisation on the basis of state capitalist policies driven by war demand, an expanded European market and the federation with Zambia and Malawi. For instance, using an index of 100 for 1939, gross manufacturing output rose to 470 by 1953 with annual growth rates of 11.7 per cent. By 1950 the total black work force had more than trebled to reach 469,000, of whom about half were industrial workers concentrated in Bulawayo and Harare, working and living under very harsh conditions without the right to organise in trade unions or political organisations. Accommodation and health facilities were completely inadequate. Settler policy remained mired in an ideology that viewed black workers at best as a pre-industrial, semi-migrant force that would eventually retreat to

Baobab Books/ZCTU/Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Harare, pp. 33-45.

its rural hinterland, and at worst as unwanted vagrants in the white man's growing cities.

Such conditions bred massive struggles, starting with the 1945 railway workers' strikes, but the most decisive being the April 1948 general strike. Two months before the strike, meetings called by various organisations, which only a year earlier had attracted fewer than 200 people, were now attracting thousands of people in Bulawayo and Harare. These meetings united the various strata of the urban masses across national, ethnic and gender lines. For instance, police spies at the meetings reported:

Several mass meetings were convened at Bulawayo by the Bulawayo Federation of African Workers' Union ... and the African Workers' Voice Association between the 16th March and the 6th April at which signs were manifested that Bulawayo Africans were losing faith in their leaders' handling of affairs. The mood at these mass meetings was developing ugly characteristics and strike action was being called for.⁵

On 13 April a mass meeting in Bulawayo, attended by more than 40,000 people, triggered the general strike. Despite the frantic efforts of the black and white middle-class leaders and advisers of the organisations that had called the meeting, "the mob . refused to listen to the leaders" and shouted: "We are not going to work. Chia! Chia! [Strike! Strike!] The leaders are cowards; they have taken our money; we must strike. We don't want leaders who are afraid. We are not going back to work. We want to strike."⁶

The strike that erupted the following morning was marked by intense militancy as tens of thousands of black workers struck to protest at poor wages and to demand a living national wage and better living conditions. Within days the strike had spread nationally, supported by militant pickets and demonstrations and engulfing even the most backward sections, including farm workers, domestic workers, the unemployed and housewives.

5 I. Phimister, *Wangi Kolia: Coal, capital and labour in colonial Zimbabwe, 1894-1954*, Baobab Books, Harare, 1994, p. 64.

6 Quoted in A. Astrow, *Zimbabwe: A revolution that lost its way?*, Zed Books, London, 1983, p. 21

The colonial state was able to suppress the strike only by use of unprecedented force, including soldiers, and as a result of the betrayal of the middle-class leaders of the movement like Burombo who lied that the government had agreed to the minimum wage. Nevertheless, the government was forced to grant significant concessions, including a national minimum wage and recognition of black trade unions.

The 1948 revolt laid the basis for the development of the first viable working-class organisations, starting with the Southern Rhodesia Trade Union Congress (SRTUC), formed in 1954 and led by Joshua Nkomo. In 1957 the first real nationalist party, the African National Congress (ANC), was formed: a working-class-based mass movement that took most of its leaders from the labour movement, with Nkomo as president.

The *Zhii* strike movement of 1960-61 accelerated working-class struggles. At a time when most of Africa was achieving independence, the black middle-class leadership led by Nkomo accepted the state's offer of black elections in fifteen out of sixty-five parliamentary seats. But at an SRTUC congress in March 1961, workers rejected this, instead going for massive strikes, in which they also called for a new minimum wage and release of all political detainees.

The strikes were brutally suppressed, leading to twenty-three deaths and the arrest of the leaders of the National Democratic Party (the successor to the banned ANC). Such was the impact of the working-class movement that the colonial state could survive only by transforming itself into a fascist police state led by the Rhodesia Front, which in 1965 made a unilateral declaration of independence. But even then, it is quite probable that the colonial state could have been defeated had it not been for the leadership of the movement, who instead of leading the rising class sought but failed to attain liberal imperial intervention on their behalf by the UK's Labour government. A section of the radical intelligentsia headed by Ndabaningi Sithole and Robert Mugabe broke with Nkomo in 1963 to form the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU).

From the 1970s, the centre of the anti-colonial movement shifted from the working class to a peasant-based guerrilla movement led by radical

middle-class intellectuals whose ideology mixed radical nationalism with Maoist and Stalinist ideas. It is this movement which led to independence in 1980.

The seeds of the working-class failure to sustain leadership of a movement it had started were sown in 1948. While the general strike offered a major threat to the Rhodesian state, the absence of revolutionary leadership to provide direction led the working class to look to the African middle class for leadership. Such ideological immaturity was exploited by radical members of the middle class, who by identifying with the strike were able to ride its wave to political eminence. One of the most notable examples was Benjamin Burombo, a small shop owner who joined the strike and then rose to the leadership of the movement on the back of his radical but opportunistic oratory. Far from being the heroic leader of the strike, recent research has now revealed that Burombo was actually a scab who tried to cash in on the strike, but whose "militant" transformation in support of the strike made him its mythical leader.⁷

Another example was Joshua Nkomo, the railway's first black graduate, who was employed to set up a social welfare department to prevent working-class action like the 1945 railway strike. Yet he rose to become the leader of the political movement that arose from the strike. Ironically, Nkomo's rise to become the most eminent nationalist of his period also reflected the very rich traditions of 1948—that a member of an ethnic minority could rise to such a position reflects the unifying power of working-class struggles.

A second key factor was the response of the colonial ruling class. Shaken by the power of the strike, the ruling class reorganised in the early 1950s when, under a banner of liberal enlightenment, it sought, for its own ends, to foster a black reformist leadership to neutralise the rising working class movement. In the words of Prime Minister Huggins:

What we are witnessing here is nothing new, it has already happened in Europe. We are witnessing the emergence of a proletariat, and in this country it

7 B. Raftopoulos, "The labour movement in Zimbabwe", in *Keep on Knocking*, op.cit., pp. 69-70.

happens to be black ... We shall never be able to do much with these people until we have established a native middle class.⁸

The economy, which grew rapidly in the context of the postwar "long boom", made available relative increases in the previously ultra-low wages of black industrial workers, and minor breaches were made in the colour bar that had generally prevented the training and advancement of skilled black workers. The centrepiece of this new liberal paradigm was the 1959 Industrial Conciliation Act, which created "multiracial" trade unions including the black trade union leaders, although in reality control remained with white labour, militant class action like strikes was prohibited and "economism" was entrenched.

Forced to recognise the existence of black labour by the sheer force of class struggle, colonial capital "gave in" in a way that was designed to protect its real class interests by granting a few crumbs to the emerging black "aristocracy", hoping that this group would become the immediate police of a rising black industrial population. This process was accelerated and aided after 1958 by international capital and right-wing union bodies, particularly the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) and the African American Labour Centre, both right-wing bodies of US imperialism in the Cold War.

Some unions split and maintained links with the nationalist parties, such as the Southern Rhodesia African Trade Union Congress, which was aligned to the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU). But one by one the subsequent federations succumbed to "economism"—by which trade union activity is limited only to "economic" issues—under a variety of pressures, including the repressive state machinery. After 1965, more political unions were savagely repressed under such legislation as the Law and Order Maintenance Act and the Emergency Powers Act, whereby hundreds of trade unionists were jailed for illegal strikes or receiving or associating with "unlawful organizations" like the nationalist parties or the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU). The split in the nationalist

movement between ZAPU and ZANU, which was increasingly "tribalist", also took its toll on the remnants of the political trade unions. Such trade unions were of secondary importance in the 1970s, in reality ceasing to be real trade unions but rather the labour wings of the guerrilla movement. The decline in working-class struggle is shown by the decrease in the number of strikes, from 138 in 1965 to only nineteen in 1971.

In such a state and under the severe repression of the Smith regime, the working class had become to all intents and purposes irrelevant to a struggle that it had initiated.

The 1980-81 explosions: pains of rebirth

In the two years after independence in 1980, the working class exploded in a manner that had last been seen in 1948. There were an estimated 200 strikes, in virtually every sector of the economy. The main demand was for higher wages in response to the attacks on workers under the Rhodesian state from the mid-1970s onwards. But there were also other issues, such as racism and the cumbersome and anti-working-class dispute settlement machinery. The strikes completely bypassed the old unions, with new institutions, the enterprise-based "workers' committees" emerging spontaneously to lead the strikes, whose impact was such that the April 1980 strikes wiped out the export surplus for May, exports declining by ten per cent. They have been described as "one of the most severe industrial relations crises in the history of the country".

The strikes, together with the spontaneous peasant invasions of white commercial farms that also occurred at the time, forced the new black government to introduce the most far-going reforms since the 1930s, significantly expanding the benefits of state capitalism to the black masses, in areas like education, health, employment laws and agrarian reform. Thus in education the number of primary schools doubled, while secondary school enrolment jumped from 66,000 in 1979 to nearly 150,000 by 1981. An extensive primary health care system was set up, which by 1990 had resulted in a reduction of infant mortality rates by sixteen per cent, while nearly 18,000 peasant families were resettled in the first three years. The Minimum Wages Act and Employment Act repealed some of the most obnoxious and racist of the colonial employment

⁸ Government of Zimbabwe, Ministry of Labour Manpower Planning and Social Welfare, *Labour and Economy: Report of the National Trade Unions Survey*, Zimbabwe, 1984, Vol. 1, p. 16.

laws and guaranteed a national minimum wage which saw real wages rise in 1980-81 to the highest ever.

The new regime attempted to use such reforms to consolidate its hegemony by falsely proclaiming them to be "socialism". But the truth of the new regime was contained in Mugabe's Reconciliation Speech at independence, in which he assured white capital that its property and privileges would not be touched. In reality the regime, like the Huggins one before it, sought, under the guise of patriotic appeals to development and reconciliation, to construct a "social contract" of state, capital and labour whose main aim was the stabilisation and growth of capitalism.

Indeed, when the concessions and appeals to "patriotism" failed to quell the workers' rising militancy, the new black government responded in a similar manner to the settler regimes. This response was a combination of repression using the same laws and machinery that had been used by the colonial regime and measures aimed at fostering and coopting a labour bureaucracy to weaken a rank-and-file workers' movement. Prime Minister Robert Mugabe denounced striking teachers and nurses as people with unrevolutionary minds, "who had never experienced the real hardships of the struggle for independence". Striking workers were soon being arrested, detained or beaten by riot police under the Emergency Powers Act and the Law and Order Maintenance Act, the very cornerstone of colonial legislation introduced in the 1960s to smash working-class nationalist militancy.

In 1981, the state, despite the opposition of the old unions, succeeded in imposing a unified national labour centre, the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU), staffed by its own supporters like president Alfred Makwarimba and general secretary Albert Mugabe, the brother of the prime minister. Thus the ZCTU president denounced striking workers: "This country needs a disciplined work force to encourage development—we are not going to achieve anything by going on strike, no matter how genuine our grievance."⁹

⁹ *The Herald*, October 31, 1981, quoted in E. Chikweche, "History of the Zimbabwe labour movement, 1980-1990", LLBS Hons dissertation, University of Zimbabwe, 1991, p. 14.

But the new labour aristocracy of the ZCTU was never able to fulfil its master's mandate, for a number of reasons beginning with its ostentatious corruption and the alienation of its leadership from rank-and-file workers, a situation made worse by the virtual replacement of collective bargaining by the statutory minimum wages. By the end of 1984 there was widespread disillusionment with the existing group in charge of the Congress, leading to its removal by the government in 1985 as the state realised it could achieve its original goal of "social partnership" with the more professional but hitherto marginalised old unions, who by then had shown that they were more than willing to work with the new state, more so with the 1987 Unity Agreement. It is from such unions that most of the officials in the 1985 interim leadership and those subsequently elected at the 1988 congress, were drawn. These included Jeffrey Mutandare (president) and Morgan Tsvangirai (general secretary) from the Associated Mine Workers of Zimbabwe and others like G. Sibanda, L. Matombo and C. Gwiyo from the railways, telecommunications and banking sectors.

'Social partnership' and the labour aristocracy

The new "social partnership" was formalised in the Labour Relations Act of 1985. Under the act, registered unions were granted monopolistic rights to collective bargaining and representation, including a union dues check-off system, under the act's "one industry, one union" provisions, while the workers' committees were formally subordinated to the unions, thus addressing one of the main grievances of the labour bureaucracy. Job security was improved by subjecting dismissals to state approval. While strengthening the central unions, the act firmly restricted independent rank-and-file activity. It effectively outlawed all strikes and prohibited the use of union funds for political purposes, while the state reserved immense powers to interfere in internal union affairs, including supervision and regulation of elections, union dues and the registration of unions.

Under this "enabling" environment, the unions began to grow, with Tsvangirai overseeing the professionalisation of the ZCTU, including the creation of ZCTU regions and districts. Similar processes took place in a number of affiliates of the ZCTU. Thus while the policies of the new state had facilitated such growth, they also undermined the

emergence of a militant rank-and-file-based union movement as was happening in South Africa (COSATU) by ensuring the continuity of the old conformist union leadership by shielding it from the rank-and-file movement which had emerged in the early 1980s.

However, for a brief period between 1988 and 1992, there was a radical leftward shift in key sections of the labour bureaucracy, reflecting the tension created by the regime's adoption of free market policies from 1988, including neo-liberal amendments to the Labour Relations Act allowing for easier dismissal of workers. Important also was the influence of Stalinist intellectuals at the University of Zimbabwe like K. Makamure and S. Ghutto, whose sense of betrayal following ZANU's neo-liberal shift was shared by some union leaders. The 1991 May Day celebrations were organised under the themes and banners, "Employers liberated, workers sacrificed" and "Are we going to make 1991 the Year of the World Bank Storm?" The labour bureaucracy developed growing ties with radicalising university students, hundreds of whom attended the May Day rallies. When the University of Zimbabwe was closed in October 1989 with the arrest of student leaders, the ZCTU general secretary, Tsvangirai, denounced the closure in very strong terms and was himself detained.

In the 1990 elections, the growing autonomy of the ZCTU was demonstrated by its refusal to endorse ZANU-PF, while many workers tacitly supported a new breakaway party, Edgar Tekere's Zimbabwe Unity Movement. Thus this role of Stalinism, limited as it was due to its character of focusing on the labour leadership as opposed to the rank and file, demonstrated the fundamental importance of socialist intervention in the working class. However, this shift to the left lasted only until 1992. Thereafter, after the global demise of Stalinism and under the growing influence of Western reformist trade unions and NGOs, the labour bureaucracy returned to its previous conformist reformist positions, calling for a "social contract" involving the state, capital and labour in the implementation of the IMF-supported Economic Structural Adjustment Program (ESAP). This new ideological position of the labour bureaucracy, aiming to offset the worst effects of structural adjustment rather than opposing it outright, was captured in the ZCTU's

"Beyond ESAP" policy document. The term "comrade" was quietly replaced with "brother" and "sister".

The storm clouds gather: the failure of neo-liberalism and social partnership

But the long-term stability of the "social contract" or the Reconciliation paradigm depended on the ability of the post-colonial state to guarantee improving working and living conditions for the black masses, as the colonial state had done for the white workers and petty bourgeoisie. And in turn the state premised its ability to do so on a deepening of state capitalist policies. But therein lay the ultimate weakness, for the state of local and international capital had changed, and such policies were now being replaced at a global level by neo-liberalism, aimed at resuscitating capitalism after the deep crisis of the 1970s. The ascendancy of political figures advocating this new ideology in the UK and USA accelerated this approach, arguing for privatisation, tax cuts for businesses, the deregulation of the labour market and an end to market-distorting state subsidies of health and education.

After 1990 as the economy stagnated, and led by Bernard Chidzero, the Zimbabwean ruling elites, without any democratic consultation, adopted this neo-liberal agenda, which it christened the Economic Structural Adjustment Program. ESAP was supposed to bring prosperity within five years. Mugabe was lauded in the West as a statesman and given all sorts of awards.

But the prosperity never materialised. In fact, during ESAP economic performance actually worsened: whereas annual economic growth averaged five per cent in non-drought years in the 1980s, in the 1990s it averaged less than two per cent. Export earnings declined by 10.7 per cent in 1991, while the share of manufacturing in GDP declined by 14.2 per cent, with more than 50,000 jobs lost. Real wages declined as the consumer price index rose massively. According to the Consumer Council of Zimbabwe, a quasi-official body, "Prospects of getting the promised cake from ESAP are bleak as consumers continue to suffer severely from the so called temporary shocks of the programme which appear to be permanent".

Under this growing crisis, the middle classes and sections of the working class began to stir, as shown by the increasing strikes and demonstrations by professional groups like teachers, nurses and doctors from the mid-1990s onwards and the university students from earlier on. As long as these remained isolated struggles, the regime and the ruling classes remained relatively safe. But their actions pointed to the future, and clearly things could not remain the same for long. The growing economic crisis and poverty were radicalising ever increasing numbers of the working masses despite the efforts of the labour bureaucracy to keep them down under the *de facto* social contract. Things were bound to explode sooner or later, as shown by the December 1995 riots in Harare against police brutality. And explode they did, starting in 1996, setting the working-class movement on an unprecedented path of development.

The government workers' general strike of 1996

For about three weeks starting in August 1996, tens of thousands of government workers went on a nationwide general strike in protest against poor working conditions. The strike had been started spontaneously by nurses and doctors despite attempts to stop it by the leaders of the public sector unions such as the Public Service Association and the Zimbabwe Nurses' Association.

After some tough negotiations, the strike ended with the striking workers receiving a significant pay increase, bonuses, reinstatement of the 7000 strikers who had been dismissed and promises of a new harmonised labour act that would cover all workers and give recognition to the public sector unions. However, health sector workers, especially the nurses, were not happy with the compromise and resumed the strike in November, continuing until February 1997. Now isolated, they were ultimately defeated, but not before they had inspired masses of workers in the private sector generally, including forcing the ZCTU to call a half-hearted general strike in solidarity.

The government workers' strike was a watershed, shattering the social partnership paradigm of the 1990s, drawing on the militant traditions of 1980-81 and 1948 and developing new ones. The first significant element was size. While the 20,000 striking workers in 1995 were the highest number

since 1980-81, these were completely dwarfed by the more than 235,000 strikers in 1996. As in the 1948 general strike, the key driving force was the mass meetings of thousands of workers such as in Harare at Africa Unity Square. Such meetings radicalised the workers, leading to increasingly political demands such as cutting the size of the government, providing adequate resources in hospitals and enacting a new harmonised labour law. The meetings made the leaders accountable and became organising platforms from which flying pickets were sent daily to government offices to persuade those who had gone back to rejoin the strike.

But the 1996 general strike represented two major new developments. First, for the first time, a radical rank and file emerged to become the *de facto* leadership of the movement, drawing up a radical program uniting all workers. This was the eleven-person strike committee, the United Civil Servants Negotiation Committee, which was elected on the second day of the strike from militants among the strikers, including doctors and nurses. The government was forced to negotiate with the strike committee, although in the end the official leaders wormed their way back in, striking a compromise deal that eventually ended the strike. The result was the persecution of members of this committee, who initially lost their jobs and careers, only to be reinstated after a long legal battle.

The election of the strike committee and the militant conduct of the strike were closely tied to the second key development: the intervention of a revolutionary socialist group, the International Socialist Organisation (ISO), a very small Trotskyist organisation affiliated to the Tony Cliff-founded International Socialist Tendency. ISO was formed as a student study circle at the University of Zimbabwe in 1989 and by 1996 had developed a core based on the principles of focusing on workers' self-activity as opposed to the Stalinist approach of focusing on the union officials. The 1996 strike was its first intervention in a real mass workers' struggle, after its sterling role in the December 1995 anti-police brutality demonstration. The role of the group has been consistently and deliberately ignored by bourgeois historians and political commentators, although a cursory look at the newspapers of the period clearly reveals its role.

From the second day of the strike, the small ISO contingent, which included students from the Harare Polytechnic, joined the workers at Africa Unity Square, Harare Hospital and in Bulawayo to give solidarity messages. The ISO issued a small leaflet calling for an indefinite strike, broader demands and the election of a strike committee. These ideas were adopted by the workers, and ISO members became a key part of the strike in Harare and Bulawayo, conferring with the strike committee on the way forward.

Recognition of the key role of the ISO in the strike came from two opposing sources. The government daily, the *Herald*, ran a comment on the strike calling on workers to dissociate themselves from "groups which were bent on transforming their legitimate strike into some Bolshevik revolution". At the same time, the ISO's slogan, *Shinga Mushandi Shinga! Qina Msebenzi Qina!* (Worker, be resolute! Fight on!) became the official slogan of the striking workers. In the 1997 strikes, this slogan spread to the private sector workers and became the official slogan of the ZCTU itself, much to the chagrin of the union leaders, who despised its origins.

The 1996 strike was decisive. The single largest component of the class had risen up across craft and regional lines to take on a hitherto feared state-and scored a victory. The strike signalled the re-emergence of the working class as the leading agent of political and democratic transformation in periphery capitalist societies, just as it showed the critical role of socialist intervention in class struggle. It was the great dress rehearsal for the struggles that exploded in the next few years.

The explosion of 1997

The year 1997 was to witness the largest number of strikes and demonstrations in the history of Zimbabwe. Workers, students and even the previously marginalised war veterans and peasants came out in protest against the massive fall in their living standards which resulted from a continuing economic crisis, accelerated by the reforms of the 1990s. Every sector of the economy was hit as recalcitrant employers, used to years of docile unions, initially refused to budge but subsequently bowed down. Unlike the 1980 strikes, those in 1997 were industry-wide, involving the unions in

industries like construction, clothing and catering, and even in the agricultural sector. In 1997 there were fifty-five recorded strikes involving more than 1,073,000 workers.

These strikes inspired other sections of the oppressed to revolt. Students staged the first ever nationwide demonstrations under the leadership of the Zimbabwe National Students Union. For the first time since 1980, landless peasants and war veterans invaded white farms, and for some time resisted efforts by the police and government to evict them. Also inspired by the struggles erupting around them were the hitherto marginalised and now destitute former guerrillas, who too started demonstrations demanding pensions and denouncing corruption in government. They too were brutally suppressed, but they became key in delegitimising the post-colonial ruling class.

Reeling from massive pressure from below, in November 1997 Mugabe's government gave in to the war veterans' demands, awarding them a lump sum and pensions to be financed by ordinary people through a newly introduced five per cent "War Veterans Levy" and a 2.5 per cent increases in sales tax. A section of the ZCTU leadership, led by Tsvangirai, like Burombo before them, realised that unless they abandoned their class-collaborationist strategy and embraced the revolts, they too would be swept aside by the rising tide. After nationwide ZCTU mass meetings, labour forums, at which the demand for action was overwhelming, the labour leaders called for a two-day national strike, starting on December 9, 1997. The strike became

...the largest and most successful strike since independence—and probably since the national strikes of 1948. Almost all businesses and workplaces shut, involving more than one million workers, management, informal sector entrepreneurs and civil servants. In most cities, there were large demonstrations supported by a broad range of civic and professional organizations.¹⁰

When the police violently stopped workers from assembling at Africa Unity Square, now the traditional assembly point of striking workers, there were riots that left the city centre a ghost town.

¹⁰ *Socialist Worker*, February 1998.

Running scared, the ZCTU leaders, Morgan Tsvangirai and Gibson Sibanda, called off the strike, stating that the action would resume in January when workers returned to work from the annual Christmas holiday.

In early January 1998, as the ZCTU leaders prevaricated on calling for action, housewives in one of Harare's poorest suburbs started demonstrating against increases in bread prices. The riots quickly spread to the unemployed and workers in Harare and other towns, despite the disassociation of the ZCTU leaders from the protests. The ISO leaflet entitled "Todya Marara Here?" ("Do they want us to eat dirt?") was quickly adopted by the rioting masses, leading to the arrest and harassment of leading ISO members in Harare and Bulawayo as the organisers of the riots. There was another highly successful stayaway on March 2-3, 1998, to protest the retention of the sales tax increases and rising cost of living. Another stayaway shortly thereafter was averted when the bosses and government quickly conceded to the workers' demand for a twenty per cent cost of living adjustment. At the May Day rallies, workers endorsed a five-day stayaway to protest the rapidly deteriorating living conditions.

These revolts represented a massive development of the class. As the crisis deepened, the working class had grown immensely in militancy and consciousness, forcing the reluctant leadership into action it would rather have avoided. The militancy reflected the emergence of the young and educated post-1980 workers, who had suffered the most from the neo-liberal agenda through casualised, low paying jobs. Inspired by recent struggles like the 1996 strike, such workers enthusiastically supported the ZCTU stayaways and increasingly coalesced around the workers' committees, turning them into radicalised organisational instruments, not just against the state and the bosses, but also potentially against the reformist leadership of the untransformed unions—a process which, however, in 1997-98 was slowed down when such leaders half-heartedly accepted the strikes, thereby buying time.

The second significance of the 1997-98 revolts was their impact on the ruling political elite. One of the most entrenched and violent ruling elites in Africa was forced to retreat before the power of the working-class-led revolts. Aware of the fate of

earlier African regimes, Mugabe, with significant opposition from the political neo-liberals of his own party centred on Eddison Zvobgo, conducted a partial economic and ideological retreat from ESAP. Instead, ideologically, Mugabe adopted an increasingly anti-imperialist and racist rhetoric centred on the land issue and, with the support of war veterans leader Chenjerai Hunzvi, threatened to acquire the largest ever number of farms for resettlement. It was in this context, attempting to breathe new life into a pseudo-radical "Third Worldism", that the regime sent Zimbabwean troops into the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 1998.

However, Mugabe faced resistance to this leftward lurch not only from within ZANU-PF, but from local and international capital. The value of the Zimbabwean dollar crashed by seventy-five per cent in November 1998, and subsequently in October 1999, with the suspension of IMF and World Bank loans, which in turn massively accelerated the economic crisis. A campaign for Mugabe's international isolation was instituted. Although Mugabe came under increasing pressure to return to neo-liberal policies, such was the impact of the revolt from below that he had no alternative but to make concessions to this movement.

Formation of the Movement for Democratic Change

Reflecting the growing consciousness of the class, economic demands were soon complemented by increasing demands from many workers, especially at the labour forums, for the ZCTU to take on the regime politically by leading the formation of a workers party, as had happened in Zambia. Given its economist ancestry, this was initially opposed by the leadership, but by the end of 1998 pressure not only from worker militants but also from the increasingly radicalised professional and intellectual middle classes made them make a sharp U-turn. These classes, after years of futile attempts to build viable opposition parties, now recognised the indispensable strategic importance of organised labour in any viable challenge against ZANU-PF, although they were opposed to the idea of a labour party, preferring a "broad-based party", which they could dominate. In February 1999, the ZCTU convened a National Working People's Convention. This established the Movement for Democratic Change, which on September 11 was officially

launched as a political party, and which in June 2000 came close to defeating ZANU-PF in the parliamentary elections.

The period between March and September 1999 was a bustle of activity among the working class. MDC committees were built in the factories, usually around the most militant members of the workers' committees. Meetings were convened in the towns by the ZCTU regions, which had been the engine of the stayaways, and now acted as the *de facto* MDC provincial structures—the party was routinely referred to as a "labour party".

But there were already signs that the dominance of the MDC by the working class would be contested. The February 1999 convention was dominated by the liberal middle-class intelligentsia. In contrast, the ISO was barred from attending. Instead of the "labour party" called for by the worker militants, a popular front "movement" was set up. As the ISO warned, the declaration adopted was "a very dangerous document that will perpetuate the suffering of workers and the poor . It is in fact a clever cover up for the drafters' intention of continuing with ESAP should they get into power."¹¹

At the launch of the MDC in September 1999, this class direction became clearer. Without any involvement of its regional structures, the labour bureaucracy imposed an "interim" national executive drawn largely from the neo-liberal middle classes, especially from the National Constituent Assembly (NCA) and the disbanded Forum Party. The rank-and-file unionists who had built the movement were marginalised. The inaugural congress in January 2000, through patently undemocratic manoeuvres, ensured the confirmation of this leadership and adoption of a manifesto in which IMF neo-liberal policies were the centrepiece, together with reactionary right-wing positions on land.

By the June 2000 elections, the neo-liberal takeover of the party was complete, with the union bureaucracy itself now marginalised. Trade unionists composed fewer than twenty per cent of the parliamentary candidates, most of whom, including party president Morgan Tsvangirai, were

in unsafe rural constituencies, which they lost. Nevertheless, following the 2000 referendum victory, the MDC won nearly half of the contested seats, sweeping the board in the urban centres where the working class was strong. ZANU-PF achieved a narrow victory thanks to its violent and intimidatory rural campaign, but also due to Mugabe's opportunistic manoeuvres to outflank the MDC on its left, especially on the land question.

While the MDC had been propelled nearly into power by the working class, the character of the party by the 2000 elections was patently rabid anti-working class neo-liberal. How had this happened?

The relative ease with which a movement with so much potential was turned into a neo-liberal popular front lay in the historical and continuing weakness of the working-class movement, and the lack of a significant socialist movement. While the 1997-98 mass actions had rocked Mugabe and generated the first significant challenge to his rule in twenty years, they had not developed into an independent rank-and-file movement that could challenge the stranglehold of a reformist labour bureaucracy. Under pressure from below, the bureaucracy had participated in and endorsed the mass actions, gaining significant moral authority in the process. However, it remained prone to vacillation and fundamentally untransformed, as shown by its cancellation of the second day of the December 1997 strike. Threatened by the workers' growing radicalisation and vulnerable to state repression, including the 1998 ban on strikes, and attempts to ban the ZCTU, the bureaucracy sought to rein in the workers. From March 1998, they shifted from strike-based demonstrations to "peaceful stayaways" in which workers were told to stay at home. This reduced the militancy and impact of the action, individualised workers and made them vulnerable to intimidation; it also prevented the mass gatherings that had been the basis for pressure on the union bureaucracy, reducing its accountability. In late 1998 and early 1999, the ZCTU chiefs unilaterally cancelled two major stayaway actions.

Their sudden support for the formation of the MDC should be understood in this context. In late 1998, they argued that militant stayaways were no longer useful, if not counter-productive, enabling Mugabe to declare a state of emergency. Instead, what was needed was a political party to fight the 2000

11 *Socialist Worker*, May-June 1999.

elections. These ideas appealed to many workers, and this partly accounts for the growth of reformist parliamentary illusions and the subsequent decline of militant struggles in the period 1999-2000.

The second key factor in the right-wing takeover of a rising working-class movement in Zimbabwe, as elsewhere, lay in the role of the middle-class intelligentsia. The neo-liberal agenda had been imposed in Zimbabwe, as throughout most of the periphery societies, through authoritarian regimes such as Africa's one party state regimes, Latin America's military juntas and Eastern Europe's Stalinist dictatorships. In such societies, the distinction between economics and politics becomes razor thin. Thus the revolts that emerged against the worsening conditions of the masses as a result of the deepening economic crisis of neo-liberal capitalism inevitably assumed a political form—democratic struggles against the authoritarian superstructure that had imposed the neo-liberal framework in the first place. At that stage the forces of global neo-liberalism, cognisant of the revolutionary potential of the emerging struggles, were forced to abandon the old authoritarian forms of domination of the periphery, and instead assume a more democratic face with which they would be able to intervene and neutralise the rising movement. The groups to whom their cynical appeals to bourgeois democratic values like rule of law, human rights, and good governance appealed most were the middle-class intelligentsia who were being radicalised under the impact of the crisis. But in the absence of a rival ideological alternative, given the ignominious demise of "communism" and the accompanying bourgeois triumphalism of this period, many of these groups got into bed with global neo-liberalist forces without interrogating the true nature of their partner. In any case the massive dowry, thinly disguised bribes, that global neo-liberalism poured into their civic groups, academia, "independent media" and churches were too much for most to resist.

And thus from Poland to Serbia to Zambia to Zimbabwe, these middle classes became the midwives who delivered the militant and rising but trusting and ideologically immature working-class movement into the arms of the neo-liberal forces.

In Zimbabwe the critical middle-class body which negotiated the neo-liberal take over of the rising

workers movement was the NCA. The NCA had been formed in 1997 as a vehicle for mobilising the middle classes around the demand for a new constitution, and was financed and mentored by German and Scandinavian social democratic foundations and unions. Tsvangirai's nominal leadership of the NCA placed its middle-class leaders in a uniquely powerful position to take control of the political party that emerged under his leadership. Their role in the MDC gave the new party respectability in the eyes of international financial organisations, which could now write off Mugabe, who had previously done their bidding but who no longer had the authority to impose their reforms. Just ahead of the 2000 elections, the IMF, World Bank and Western bank loans were suspended, accelerating the economic crisis.

Neo-liberalism, the MDC and the ISO experience

What was the role of the International Socialist Organization in this? Given the growing neo-liberal takeover of the MDC, what was the role of ISO, one of whose leading members was actually a member of parliament. Was this participation an act of opportunism or would remaining outside have been an act of "left-wing infantilism"? Many groups will be confronted by similar questions as the crisis of neo-liberalism grows globally.

To remain outside and criticise a party that represented a rising working-class movement and had a massive following in the class risked being identified with a hated neo-liberal regime and condemning us to irrelevance if not death from "ultraleftism". On the other hand, entrisism risked "right-wing liquidationism" such as that of the SACP in the ANC or splits when the time to end entrisism arrived. After intense internal debate centred on the principles developed by Lenin in "*Left-Wing" Communism-An Infantile Disorder*, it was resolved to go for "entrisism" based on two interrelated principles. First, Lenin's argument for entrisism based on the non-negotiable principle of absolute freedom of expression to ruthlessly expose the bankruptcy of the ideas and leadership of the party, which we did by opposing to the party's neo-liberal manifesto our own alternative anti-neo-liberal "Action Programme", especially on the land question, and producing *Socialist Worker*. Second, organisational autonomy based on Trotsky's united front principle, whereby we resisted the party

leadership's attempts to disband us, but instead we constantly sought to use the party's platforms, including the parliamentary seat, to relate to and recruit rank-and-file militants. We did this with relative success among the party's rank-and-file militants in the two biggest provinces, Harare and Bulawayo, and, most critically, by building rank-and-file industrial committees in the industrial areas surrounding our constituency, which provided us with our first real roots in the working class. Both these groups subsequently played a critical role in defending us from the party leadership who wanted to expel us as the relationship between the ISO and the party leadership, fanned by the media, deteriorated massively as a result of our attacks on the increasingly right-wing nature of the party. The central idea is that in time, with the benefit of experience after the betrayals of a centrist government, the masses will be able to identify with the earlier communist propaganda, thus raising a contradiction between the centrist leaders and their base and creating real opportunities for growth of the revolutionary organisation.

However, in December 2000, the MDC leadership unilaterally cancelled a popular and long-awaited mass action to remove Mugabe, which was modelled on the Serbian revolts that had brought down Slobodan Milosevic. This was due to pressure from local and international capitalists, who feared the radicalising effect of such an action on the masses.¹² Disillusionment among ordinary members of the MDC, which had developed from the failure of its parliamentary representatives to raise their bread-and-butter concerns, crystallised around this decision. The ISO concluded that this event marked the decisive break of the MDC leadership with its mass base. However, because of the importance of the 2002 presidential elections, which still fostered reformist illusions in workers, it was resolved that the initial break could not be made by the ISO, but an accelerated ideological offensive was to be

12 This was publicly disclosed by one of the party's leading ideologues. David Coltart stated that one of the reasons the mass action had been called off was that "the international community pleaded with us to hold off on the use of mass action, promising at the same time that if we backed off, they would do all they could to increase pressure on Mugabe". D. Coltart, "Some words of encouragement", *Opinion*, December 16, 2000, MDC web site: <<http://www.mdczimbabwe.com>>.

launched against the MDC leadership, a decision that was a decisive factor in a subsequent little split to hit the ISO in August, as some of the older members, now comfortable in the MDC, couldn't stomach this. In February 2001, Gwisai presented a summarised ISO perspective paper to an MDC leadership seminar, which laid the blame for the party's declining fortunes on the "hijacking of the party by the bourgeoisie, marginalisation of workers, adoption of neo-liberal positions and cowardly failure to physically confront the Mugabe regime and bosses". It warned, "It is ... imperative that the party moves much more leftward than it has been in order to relink to its base, in order to win the presidential elections". On land, it argued, "This is central to Mugabe's campaign, and if he distributes the 5 million hectares of land using chiefs ... with the war vets as their police officers, he could actually get the majority of peasants on his side, who are the majority of voters, and just scrape through in 2002". It argued that to avoid this, the MDC "must adopt a more radical land position than Mugabe".

This was followed, on May Day 2001, by ISO support for factory invasions by war veterans, but combined with a call on workers to take similar actions themselves, to stop retrenchments and win better conditions.

The response, unsurprisingly, was a series of personalised attacks on Gwisai and the ISO by both the media and MDC politicians. For example, the leading independent *Daily News* declared:

Few people will dispute the assertion that the MDC Member of Parliament for Highfield, Munyaradzi Gwisai ... has simply gone much too far ... a leaflet published by his anachronistic ISO and distributed on May Day trashes any need to uphold the rule of law saying "the rule of law does not give people food" ... of greater concern is the fact that here is a parliamentarian—and a lawyer at that—openly inciting citizens to disobey the very laws for which he is paid to help make [sic]. On the record of his utterances, the man has no business being in Parliament. Nor does he have any business being in

the legal fraternity either. He should be expelled from both bodies ...¹³

However, workers were reported offering support:

Expelling the controversial MDC legislator, Munyaradzi Gwisai, will be tantamount to killing the messiah, a snap survey by *The Observer* has revealed ... "Gwisai is not talking of imagined imbalances and he is correct. No sane Zimbabwean can dispute that. If MDC expel him they will be confirming that the party has been hijacked by the bourgeoisie from workers," said a civil servant .. Ms Jane Murefu, a mother of two and resident of Highfield, said if Gwisai was to be pushed out of the party she would follow him as he had shown all the traits of a determined revolutionary. "Gwisai has kept a lot of people with confidence that the MDC had their interests and if they push him out they would be creating confusion and people will desert the party," she added.¹⁴

The ISO was unable to stop the ultimate neo-liberal takeover of the MDC fundamentally because it lacked the necessary size and penetration of the working class to offer a sufficient counterweight to the might of local and international neo-liberal forces, vindicating Trotsky's imperative that the revolutionary party has to be built before the revolutionary explosions occur. While no doubt now after the elections, no reason exists for the ISO to remain a day longer in the MDC, it is true that the limited influence it exerted, its survival and growth, doubling its size in the period in question, probably vindicated the entrism. A powerful reflection of this was found in the presidential elections results. Compared to the 2000 elections, the MDC's vote in virtually all urban areas stagnated or declined, as for instance the more than five per cent declines in the bourgeois constituencies of MDC stalwarts like Tendai Biti, Welshman Ncube and Dave Coltart. Yet despite the decision of the ISO not to campaign for Tsvangirai in the elections, in Highfield, represented by Gwisai, the MDC share increased by 9.1 per cent, rising from 73 per cent to 82.1 per

13 "Is Gwisai becoming a rebel without a cause?", Comment, *Daily News*, May 8, 2001.

14 "Gwisai's expulsion—a dangerous move", *Observer*, May 24, 2001. This is a small weekly in Mutare, Zimbabwe's third largest city.

cent, which was by far the best performing constituency of the MDC outside Chipinge South, where the MDC swallowed a smaller opposition party. Of course the entrism was not easy, as shown by the split in July 2001. But overall the experience laid the basis for a possible breakthrough to grow into a sizeable socialist organisation with sufficient roots in the working class to be in a much stronger position to lead the working class in confronting the beast, the fire next time and storming the heavens.

Conclusion

As I write, the results of the 2002 presidential elections have just been announced and Mugabe declared the winner after receiving 1,685,212, or 56.2 per cent, of the votes compared to Tsvangirai's 42 per cent share or 1,258,401.

Thus, for now, one of the main aspirations of the movement that started around 1996 with so much promise has ended in a massive electoral defeat that brought much sadness to the urban areas. What went wrong?

The MDC and its local and Western allies have alleged electoral fraud and massive intimidation for the defeat and have refused to recognise the results, with the West imposing sanctions and calling for fresh elections.

While violence was real in the elections, especially in the rural areas, such violence had been anticipated, Brian Raftapoulos, a key liberal of civic society and strong associate of the MDC, warning in mid-2000, "... the MDC must face the prospect of a violent presidential election", a thing which the MDC dismally failed to do, relying on a belief that "change is in the air".

Making the violence potent and delivering Mugabe victory were two factors that we had warned of in the 2001 perspective paper, namely the ideological and strategic crisis of the MDC, centred on its massive shift to right-wing neo-liberalism, and on the other hand Mugabe's partial economic and ideological retreat from neo-liberalism to assume "a nationalist, racist, pan-Africanist and anti-imperialist one, centred around the land question". As we then warned:

That Mugabe's strategy has worked and could work around the presidential elections has in no small measure been helped by the wrong tactics and

strategies adopted by the middle classes who now dominate our party. Their obvious pro west, pro commercial farmer, pro IMF positions were a godsend gift to Mugabe. The MDC could only have dealt with Mugabe by outflanking on the left on bread and butter issues ...

Thus in the end Mugabe's delivery on land and radical rhetoric separated the urban poor from the rural poor, ensuring him victory. Mugabe's share compared to 2000 increased by 7.9 per cent while the MDC declined by 5.1 per cent, with Mugabe's key gains in rural areas where voter turnout also increased significantly, including in the MDC Matebeleland strongholds and seven semi-rural MDC constituencies.

On the other hand, the MDC, arising from an anti-IMF working-class movement, moved to the right to the alarm of most of its supporters. As the crisis deepened and parliamentary reformism failed to deliver and the masses called for mass action, the MDC leadership dithered and eventually rejected the Serbian route, opting for Western pressure, the courts and winning the elections. Their allies in the trade unions, especially the ZCTU, followed suit, with all militant action frowned on as potentially threatening an election they increasingly believed they would win. So the working classes were massively demobilised and disillusioned as they continued to suffer under a growing crisis. Not surprisingly, apathy in the urban areas in the elections ran at more than 50 per cent.

This is a key reason why the massive revolts that had been predicted against a stolen election have failed to materialise. The roar of the 1997 lion had, by March 2002, been reduced to less than a kitten's meow, as the three-day stayaway called by the ZCTU to protest the results was a disastrous failure.

But neither the win by Mugabe nor the deceptive post-election calm means the end of the crisis in Zimbabwe. The economic crisis is extremely severe, including massive food shortages. The polarisation of the Mugabe state from its bourgeois base is deep and growing, for the global neo-liberal forces cannot allow Mugabe's precedent to stand, given the massive threat that this would mean for the key centre of capitalism on the continent, South Africa.

It must be remembered that, while Mugabe is an intelligent and ruthless operator, capable of

sophisticated tactical shifts and the wrongfooting of his opponents, he and the ZANU-PF are not immune from the tensions arising from the economic crisis, to which they have no solutions. The ZANU-PF remains a party dominated by the black national bourgeoisie, who, in the context of the weak private capitalism prevalent in peripheral states like Zimbabwe, have sought to use the state, like their white colonial predecessors, as a channel for accumulation. This gives ZANU-PF a contradictory relationship with the free market tendencies dominant in the international economy: it resists the forced reduction of its capacity to develop economic policies that enable its own state-based accumulation, but at the same time greedily eyes the potential gains it can make from privatisation. Opposed to them are the lower structures of the party, especially those around the reactivated and radicalised war veterans, whose underlying aspirations are clearly similar to those of the working class, namely anti-neo-liberalism. As the economic/political crisis worsens, under Western pressure, these tensions can only grow, and should the former side prevail, rapprochement with capital remains a distinct possibility.

The central elements of such rapprochement might be some cooption of the MDC as a junior partner in a massively neo-liberal government of national unity, together with some constitutional reforms allowing for the eventual graceful retirement of Mugabe and his replacement by a figure more acceptable to the West. It is to drive towards such a result that the West is maintaining and increasing pressure on Mugabe, who has already shown an inclination to drop his cynical anti-imperialist posture of the election campaign period by stating in his victory speech that the neo-liberal-based, New Millennium Economic Recovery Program would be the basis of his economic policies.

On the other hand, the deepening of the neo-liberal agenda by a Mugabe government, especially without the cooption of the MDC as a junior partner and acquiescence of the West, would mean the acceleration of the climax of the crisis in revolts bigger than those of 1997-98 and similar to those seen recently in Argentina.

Thus Mugabe has no open solution to the growing crisis. Neither is the MDC's position any better. Rapprochement with ZANU-PF, as is favoured by

most of its leadership, would amount to a kiss of death, while its right-wing degeneration has gone too far for it to be anything other than a rapidly declining rump of an electoral force.

The MDC's electoral defeat marks the beginning of the end of the illusions in the neo-liberal middle-class and labour bureaucrat opportunists who hijacked the rising movement of 1997-98 into a reformist parliamentary channel, which has now reached a dead end. Their demise is likely whether because they compromise with the autocratic regime or because they withdraw into their shells to enjoy the loot from the bosses, the West, or their parliamentary or municipal positions. This defeat of the neo-liberal reformist route in the context of a growing crisis means the return of struggles to finalise the unfinished business of 1997, to smash dictatorship and neo-liberal capitalism. Herein lies the most fundamental question confronting the Zimbabwean working class and socialist movement today: the issue of leadership. Under the pressure of the growing crisis, with socialist intervention, will rank-and-file union activists break through the suffocating grip of the old union bureaucracy? Can the post-independence generation, which is educated, casualised and extremely militant, create its own leadership and mobilise other section of the oppressed such as the war veterans, peasants, students and unemployed, as it did in 1997-98, joining such struggles with other struggles in the region, critically with those of South Africa? The process has begun in some unions, but at a very slow and hesitant pace, stifled by the ZCTU leaders. Alternatively, the movement could be coopted and neutralised by the new splinter unions being created by ZANU-PF via the war veteran-dominated Zimbabwe Federation of Trade Unions, just as the workers' committee movement was in 1980-81.

As the history of Zimbabweans has shown, unless there is substantial socialist intervention in the rising working-class movement, it remains vulnerable to cooption by its class enemies and may prove unable to fulfil its potential. Such intervention is critical in giving the movement appropriate organisational and ideological direction. It can help generalise the experience of the class, acting as its memory bank, sharing the lessons of 1948, 1980-81 and 1997-98. It can demonstrate the connection between the individual struggles of the different

sections of the oppressed, and show that these are neither accidental nor confined to Zimbabwe, but are the inevitable consequence of an international system that is based on unplanned production for the maximisation of profit, and not human need. It can argue for the need to construct a working-class-led, anti-neo-liberal united front to smash this system, and can demonstrate it in the concrete circumstances of struggle.

To play such a role, the experience of the ISO shows the need to construct sizeable socialist organisations sufficiently rooted in the class. To achieve this in the twenty-first century requires a radical reorientation to meet the new challenges we face. Socialists must turn outwards to lead and to learn from the emerging movement, and from amongst their varied experiences. They must leave behind the legacy of sectarian practices based on toy "internationals", personality cults, undemocratic structures and practices and unprincipled splits and expulsions. Revolutionaries must appreciate that a theoretical understanding of the nature of the period, and the strategies necessary to relate to it, is only the first step on a long journey. For without experience and the willingness to learn from it, even some of the best movements have failed the real test of their times. Given the demise of Stalinism and the great opportunities opened by the growing global anti-capitalism movement, it would be a terrible crime to continue with old practices that divide and demobilise the international revolutionary movement at a time when its potential has never been greater, nor its task more urgent.

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His Excellency Comrade Robert: How Mugabe's ZANU clique rose to power

Stephen O'Brien¹⁵

Towards the end of 1975 a movement of young radicals organised in the Zimbabwe People's Army (ZIPA) took charge of Zimbabwe's liberation war. ZIPA's fusion of inclusive politics, transformational vision and military aggression dealt crippling blows to the white supremacist regime of Ian Smith. However, its success also paved the way for a faction of conservative nationalists led by Robert Mugabe to wrest control of the liberation movement for themselves.

The fact that Mugabe, a former rural school teacher, and his cronies would become the ruling capitalist elite of Zimbabwe by crushing a movement of young *Chavista*-style revolutionaries doesn't sit well with their anti-imperialist self-image.

The ZIPA cadre emerged from the wave of young people who, experiencing oppression and discrimination in Rhodesia, decided to become liberation fighters in early 1970s. Unlike many of the first generation of fighters, they volunteered to join the respective military wings of the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) and the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU)¹⁶

In 1975, key nationalist leaders -- such as Robert Mugabe, Joshua Nkomo, Ndabiginini Sithole, Jason Moyo, Herbert Chitepo, Abel Muzorewa, James

Chikerema and Josiah Tongogara -- had become entangled in factional rivalry and long-running and fruitless peace talks with the Smith regime. The young recruits who would shortly form ZIPA sought to reinvigorate the struggle as the war stalled and as the old leaders became marginalised.

A group of ZANU officers based at training camps in Tanzania consulted widely among the liberation forces. They approached President Julius Nyerere of Tanzania and Samora Machel, soon to be president of newly liberated and independent Mozambique, for support to restart the war against Smith. Both Machel and Nyerere had initially supported peace negotiations and the resulting ceasefire with Rhodesia, but by October 1975 had lost patience with the whole process, and listened with sympathy to the ideas of the young officers.

ZIPA formed

The ZANU officers also sought unity with ZAPU, the long-standing rival organisation from which ZANU had split in 1963. ZAPU agreed and in November 1975 ZIPA was formed with a combined High Command composed of equal numbers from both ZAPU and ZANU. The alliance with ZAPU disintegrated after a few months partly because ZAPU leader Joshua Nkomo had continued to negotiate with Smith. Nevertheless, it was an important attempt at unity which defied the prevailing trend of division.

ZIPA's nominal head was Rex Nhongo (later known as Solomon Mujuru he would become head of the Zimbabwe Army under Mugabe), but strategic and tactical leadership came to be held by his young deputy, Wilfred Mhanda.

Wilfred Mhanda

Mhanda had been a typical recruit to ZANU and its military wing, the Zimbabwe National Liberation Army (ZANLA). He had been involved in school protests and on leaving his studies helped form a ZANU support group. Like many who were to become part of ZIPA, Mhanda had been influenced by the youth radicalisation of the 1960s. In 1971, with the special branch in pursuit, Mhanda's group skipped the border into Botswana and joined ZANLA. He took the war name of Dzinashé Machingura. He was later sent for training in China and progressed through the ranks to become a

15 Stephen O'Brien is a member of the Democratic Socialist Perspective, a Marxist tendency within the Socialist Alliance of Australia. He writes on Zimbabwean politics for *Green Left Weekly*.

16 Up until the early 1970s nationalists had to forcibly conscript Zimbabwean youth to fight against Smith. See Chung, F. (2006) *Re-living the second Chirumenga. Memories from Zimbabwe's liberation struggle*. Stockholm: The Nordic Africa Institute in cooperation with Weaver Press, p. 77

military instructor, political commissar, commander of the Mgagao camp in Tanzania and then member of the High Command.¹⁷

ZIPA theory, tactics

Theory influenced ZIPA's tactics. Its fighters were not regarded as cannon fodder, lines of retreat and supply were secured, counter-offensives anticipated and strategic reserves made ready. Senior ZIPA commanders visited the front. ZIPA's aims went beyond winning democracy, to the revolutionary transformation of Rhodesia's social and economic relations. The previous conception of the old-guard nationalists had tended to regard armed struggle as a means to apply pressure for external intervention to end White minority rule.

The Zimbabwe People's Army relocated its troops from Tanzania to Mozambique and in January 1976, 1000 guerrillas crossed into Rhodesia. The entire eastern border of Rhodesia became a war zone as the guerrillas launched coordinated and well-planned attacks on mines, farms and communication routes, such as the new railway line to South Africa.

ZIPA established Wampoa College to help institute its vision and ran Marxist-inspired courses in military instruction and mass mobilisation for its fighters. It educated its cadre against the sexual abuse of women and sought to win the support of the Zimbabwean peasantry through persuasion rather than coercion.

Historian David Moore's study of ZIPA notes: "The students made their political education directly relevant to the struggle, so that Marxism could better direct the war of liberation."¹⁸ ZIPA's political approach led to it becoming known as the *Vashandi*, a word which means worker in the Shona language, but which, according to Mhanda, took on a broader meaning as the revolutionary front of workers, students and peasants.

Smith's regime reeled under the offensive. Repression was intensified, "psychopathic"

counter-insurgency units such as the Selous Scouts were deployed, so called "protected villages" intensified control over the population and raids were launched against refugee camps in neighbouring countries. Rhodesia was forced to borrow 26 helicopters from apartheid South Africa, and in order to deploy 60% more troops increased the military call-up for whites. In his memoirs, Ken Flower, head of the Central Intelligence Organisation under Smith (and later under Mugabe), recalls that by July 1976 "Rhodesia was beginning to lose the war."¹⁹

Geneva talks

Concerned about the growing influence of the young Marxists in Zimbabwe, Henry Kissinger, the United States' Secretary of State, sought to resume the dormant negotiations by organising a round of talks in Geneva in October 1976.

The legal basis for the talks centred around Rhodesia's technical status as a British colony. Rhodesia had made a Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) in 1965, partly to quell the nascent nationalist movement and to forestall any British demand that "legal" independence include guarantees for equal rights for the black majority.

Kissinger's proposals centered around a supposed timetable for a transition to black majority rule (these days they say "road map") with the intention that the talks would provide an opportunity to sideline or eliminate the radicals.

ZIPA was opposed to negotiations. On numerous occasions, especially after Portuguese colonialism collapsed in 1974 and Frelimo started to take control of Mozambique, Smith had used talks to exploit divisions and ideological confusion in the nationalists' ranks.

ZIPA leaders were also wary of the old leadership. When Samora Machel pressed them to nominate the political leader with whom they most closely identified, in a decision which was to have fateful consequences, they nominated Robert Mugabe. In his struggle to depose the ZANU president

17 Mhanda, W. (2007) *Interview with Wilfred Mhanda by Stephen O'Brien August 2007*. Harare

18 Moore, D. (1990) *The Contradictory construction of hegemony in Zimbabwe: Politics, ideology and class in the formation of a new African State*. PhD dissertation York University, Toronto. p. 335.

19 Flower, K. (1987) *Serving secretly. An intelligence chief on record: Rhodesia into Zimbabwe 1964-1981*. London: John Murray. p. 131. Flower also admits that the Selous Scouts attracted "psychopathic killers", p. 124.

Ndanbiginini Sithole, Mugabe was careful to identify with the guerillas, unlike Sithole who unsuccessfully attempted to place them under his control. This influenced the ZIPA leaders and they thought that, although they did not support Mugabe, they could work with him.

Disunity had long plagued the nationalist movement. When ZANU had split from ZAPU in 1963 the acrimony turned violent in the townships at a certain point and Smith's police stood by while it took its course. Since then, guerilla revolts against what were perceived to be incompetent leaders, such as ZAPU's *March 11 Movement* (1971) and ZANU's Nhari Rebellion (1974-1975), had been brutally suppressed.

It was during the fallout from the Nhari rebellion that Herbert Chitepo, the ZANU chair, was assassinated in Lusaka, the capital of Zambia. In response, Kenneth Kaunda, the Zambian president, who had hosted the liberation forces in Zambia, banned Zimbabwean nationalist organisations and detained hundred of their leaders and supporters, including Josiah Tongogara, the ZANU military commander.

However, so that they could attend the Geneva talks, these leaders were subsequently released along with Mugabe, who had also been in detention. Mugabe had fled from Rhodesia to Mozambique in April 1975 after his release from ten years in Smith's jails to participate in an earlier round of talks. Mozambique, along with other pro-liberation states, had initially regarded Mugabe with suspicion because of his opposition to Sithole and had placed him in open detention.

Other nationalist delegates to Geneva included Nkomo and Bishop Abel Muzorewa of the Rhodesian based United African National Congress. The ZIPA commanders treated the whole Geneva negotiations with suspicion and issued a statement which declared: "None of the Zimbabwe delegations there represents ZIPA".²⁰

Mhanda, who was in effect the central ZIPA figure, explains that ZIPA members regarded many of the old leaders as being out of touch. They thought that leaders such as Mugabe and Nkomo, having been in

20 Moore, D. (1990) p. 359

jail for many years, did not fully understand changes brought about by the youth radicalisation and the Vietnam War. Where the older generation was motivated by a desire to force negotiations that would usher in "one man one vote", the ZIPA comrades were "fighting for the total transformation of the Zimbabwean society".²¹

Marxist ideas

Some of the young radicals had experienced and even sought out Marxist ideas during their training. Mhanda describes the delight he and a group of comrades felt when they discovered Marxist classics in the library at their training camp in Tanzania.²² Making the most of the opportunity they ran study classes on Marxist-Leninist philosophy, polemics and historical materialism. In contrast, while a few of the old guard had encountered communists, and even Trotskyists in South Africa,²³ many of them had little direct experience with Marxism. The socialist tradition in Rhodesia was fleeting. During its brief existence, the Rhodesian Communist Party had been a tiny white enclave.

Britain was anxious that the ZIPA commanders attend Geneva, and thus be away from their troops. Recent research in British archives has revealed that Britain offered an interest-free loan of £15 million to Machel's government to ensure that the "young men" controlling Mugabe attended Geneva".²⁴

Heavily dependent on the support of Machel for access to the supply lines and infiltration routes through Mozambique, the ZIPA leadership had little choice but to attend.

In Geneva, ZIPA unsuccessfully tried to unite the various nationalist delegations. They sought to create a united front against Smith and demand that the racists unconditionally surrender power.

21 Moore, D. (1990) p. 309

22 Julius Nyerere, the then leader of Tanzania, had close ties to China and pursued a Tanzanian version of socialism.

23 For example See Nyagumbo, M. (1980) *With the people*. Salisbury: The Graham Company. p. 78-86 and Bhebe, N. (2004) *Simon Vengai Muzenda and the struggle for and liberation of Zimbabwe*. Gweru, Zimbabwe: Mambo Press, p. 49-68

24 Moore, D. (2008) "Today's imperialists were those who nurtured Mugabe", *Sunday Independent*, 20 January.

However, the various nationalist delegations were incapable of uniting and rejected this proposal.

Mugabe, for his part, allied with the recently released military chief Tongogara, and Solomon Mujuru. The nominal head of ZIPA, Mujuru had never really shared the strategic vision of his deputy political commissar Mhanda. He also blocked with ZAPU's Joshua Nkomo and his deputy Jason Moyo to create the Patriotic Front. This helped strengthen Mugabe against the right (Abel Muzorewa and Ndanbiginini Sithole) and against the left, the increasingly politically independent ZIPA.

Historian David Moore has suggested that Mugabe was not really committed to the talks at Geneva as he first needed to deal with ZIPA and gain control the army before he entered serious negotiations. The talks adjourned indefinitely just before Christmas 1976.²⁵

ZIPA suppressed

After the collapse of the talks, the ZIPA leaders were sidelined into undertaking solidarity duties in Europe. Mugabe, Tongogara and Mujuru rushed back to Mozambique. In January 1977, with Machel's support they started to impose their control. The radio and print media were taken over, Wampoa closed and ZIPA officers placed under arrest. When Mhanda and the rest of the ZIPA delegation returned from Geneva they were faced with a changed reality. Mhanda and other leaders who refused to be co-opted joined their comrades in prison.

Prosecution of the war took second place while Mugabe continued to impose control. *Pawns*, a novel about the war by Charles Samupindi, describes the new atmosphere:

*The Vashandi, the young kids as ...[Tongogara] ...calls them, are now all safely behind bars in Frelimo prisons in Beira. But, he says, some of them are still among us. Some may be with us here at the parade. He wants to know who they are. Things are never the same again.*²⁶

25 Moore (1990) p. 361 suggests that Mugabe deliberately stalled as Geneva as he needed to deal with ZIPA and gain control the army before he entered serious negotiations with Smith.

26 Samupindi, C. (1992) *Pawns*. Harare: Baobab Books, p. 97.

Until at least August 1977, there were mass denunciations, torture and beatings. Three-hundred junior *Vashandi* were executed.²⁷

When Machel enquired what had happened to the prosecution of the war, Mugabe was evasive and avoided Machel's suggestion that the jailed leaders be allowed to fight.

With its most experienced commanders out of action, ZANLA failed to learn from previous lessons and Smith launched another devastating attack on the camps in Mozambique. On November 23, 1977, the ZANU base at Chimoio in Mozambique was razed leaving more than 1200 casualties.

After the suppression of the radicals, the old leaders maintained, and even stepped up, the left discourse popularised by ZIPA.

Mugabe `lays the line`

In August 1977, Mugabe felt strong enough to call a special ZANU congress and have himself appointed party president. In his congress speech, later published as ``Comrade Mugabe Lays the Line'', Mugabe made it clear that henceforth the ``given leadership'' was in control.²⁸

The trappings of a personality cult started to emerge. One of his biographers writes that in his Maputo office, Mugabe's ``subalterns ...would click their heels or stamp a foot to attention when they went to see him''.²⁹ Party documents were now embellished with the slogan ``Forward with Comrade President Robert Mugabe''.³⁰

Undisciplined habits among ZANU apparatchiks, which had been a factor in the Nhari rebellion, re-emerged. Machel had to complain to Mugabe about the ``heavy drinking and the womanising that some

27 The figure of 300 executions is cited by Astrow, A. (1983) *Zimbabwe, a revolution that lost its way?* London; Totowa, N.J.: Zed Press, p. 107. For more information on the suppression of ZIPA see Moore (1990) p. 367 and Nhongo-Simbanegavi (2000) *For Better or Worse: Women and Zanla in Zimbabwe's Liberation Struggle*. Harare : Weaver Press, p. 102.

28 Moore, D. (1990) p. 400

29 Smith, D., Simpson, C., & Davies, I. (1981) *Mugabe*. Salisbury: Pioneer Head, p. 99

30 Nhongo-Simbanegavi, J. (2000) p. 202

senior ZANU men indulged in at the capital's nightspots, like the Polana Hotel'.³¹

Discipline weakened as the preoccupation with 'dissidents' meant that there was inadequate ideological and military training. Sexual abuse became common and even pro-ZANU historians mention the 'rampant raping' carried out by senior commanders.³² During 1977 to 1979 some observers even expressed concerns that the deterioration of the guerillas' behaviour in certain areas could cause a 'collapse of rural support'.³³

Astute leadership was especially needed when the political situation became confused. Smith took advantage of the disunity of the nationalists. He cut a deal with the conservative wing of the nationalists, represented by Ndabiginini Sithole, James Chikerema and Bishop Abel Muzorewa, to establish the puppet state of Rhodesia-Zimbabwe under nominal black majority rule.

Known as the 'internal settlement', the pact prolonged white domination by two more bloody years. During this time both Sithole and Muzorewa set up their own armies and fought ZANU and ZAPU, while white Rhodesians and mercenaries, especially in the Selous Scouts, massacred at will while masquerading as guerillas.

However, the weight of popular discontent, international pressure and ZANU and ZAPU's military pressure eventually forced Smith, on behalf of the tiny white minority, to return to the negotiating table.

In December 1979, at the Lancaster House talks in Britain, Smith finally surrendered. In the elections held for the black seats the following February, ZANU won 57 seats, ZAPU 20 and Muzorewa's United African National Council, three. While the end of white political domination was achieved, the

radical transformation as conceived by ZIPA certainly wasn't.

Origins of ZANU elitism

While ZANU formally adopted 'Marxism-Leninism-Mao TseTung thought' at its 1977 Chimoio Congress, this left talk 'was ultimately a disguise for classically authoritarian nationalism'.³⁴

This orientation can be traced back to the intellectual formation of many members of the 1950s and 1960s generation of nationalists. At this time the vast mass of the people was restricted to the rural areas and had little access to education. A significant number of the first nationalists were educated at church and colonial schools which had been designed to create a tiny educated layer who would 'lead' the black masses on behalf of the white minority. They later found work in intellectual occupations such as teachers (Mugabe), preachers (Sithole and Muzorewa), journalists, clerks, social workers and trade union officials (Nkomo).

Many of them adopted the view that their role, and that of the black middle class, 'was to aid the government in its 'civilizing' programmes of development and industrialisation'.³⁵ This was reflected in the fact that trade union officials and the educated elite played an ambivalent role in such popular struggles as the general strike in 1948, the bus boycotts of 1956 and the mass protests which thwarted the undemocratic Anglo-Rhodesian settlement proposals of 1971.

Mugabe himself had been involved in the liberal multi-class and multi-race organisation, the Capricorn Society.³⁶ He only joined a nationalist party in 1960 when he was 36 years old, after having worked and studied abroad. Mugabe maintained his liberal contacts and could call on them to support his wife while in exile in Britain and petition the British government to grant her residency.

31 Smith, D., Simpson, C., & Davies, I. (1981) p. 106

32 See Bhebe, N. (2004) p. 224, Chung, (2006) p. 125-128. For women's testimonies see Musengezi, C. (Ed.) (2000) *Women of resilience. The voices of women ex-combatants*. Harare: Zimbabwe Women Writers and Nhongo-Simbanegavi, (2000) and Tekere, E. (2007) *A lifetime of struggle*. Harare: SAPES Trust, p. 94.

33 Kriger, N. J. (2002) *Zimbabwe's guerilla war peasant voices*. Harare : Baobab Books. p. 128.

34 Bond, P. (1998) *Uneven Zimbabwe A study of finance, development and underdevelopment* (PDF version) Trenton: Africa World Press, p. 339.

35 Moore, D. (1990) p. 124

36 Smith, D., Simpson, C., & Davies, I. (1981) p. 18

Despite its numerical strength, at least half a million by 1948, the organised working class did not play a central role in the later stages of the liberation struggle.³⁷ As a result, there was no significant social counterweight to the educated intellectuals who came to dominate the leadership of the struggle.

Disunity and rivalry was common among the middle-class nationalists. By the time the young ZIPA radicals arrived on the scene the divisions in the nationalist ranks were deep. Divisions existed between those who had been in jail, those who had fled into neighbouring countries to direct the guerilla war, such as Chitepo and Moyo, younger party members who had studied abroad and the generally more conservative Rhodesia-based nationalists, such as Muzorewa, who had remained ‘‘legal’’ and largely out of jail.

Differences were reflected in questions of tactics, such as when and how to apply military pressure and to what extent outside powers be allowed to broker talks. Opposition to white rule was one of the few things that they had in common, and even that was negotiable for some.

ZANU in power

Lacking a complete military victory, and subject to pressure from their war-weary allies, in particular Mozambique and Zambia, the nationalists made significant and arguably generous concessions during the Lancaster House negotiations. Responsibility was accepted for paying the foreign debt the Smith regime had accumulated buying arms and mercenaries in contravention of UN sanctions. Even today Zimbabwe continues to accept and pay debts for which it has no moral obligation.

After independence, rather than being dismantled and transformed, the white state was merely taken over as it was. The first government included former supporters of Smith who were willing to help apply many of the same economic policies.

One of their first acts was to demobilise the ZANU committees and support groups, which had helped the party organise the rural population. The new government suppressed a spontaneous strike wave unleashed by an increasingly confident working class.

Mugabe broke the Patriotic Front, his nominal alliance with Nkomo, shortly before the 1980 election and both ZANU and ZAPU went to the vote separately. The split with ZAPU was to have dire consequences.

Ex-ZAPU members were increasingly purged from senior positions in the army and from government ministries. The army, having been retrained by British military officers, ‘‘embraced the ideas, training, organisation and forms of force of the Rhodesian settler army’’.³⁸ It had absolute loyalty to Mugabe above all and regardless of any constitutional and democratic considerations.

A separate brigade, the Fifth, composed exclusively of Shona speakers and ZANU veterans, was established and trained by North Korea. The Fifth Brigade was to unleash a brutal war of terror on Ndebele people, who were assumed to be ZAPU supporters and therefore dissidents. In what became known as *Gukurahundi*, between 1983 and 1985, at least 5000 people died in the Matabeleland and Midlands regions of Zimbabwe. At Nkomo’s funeral in 1999, Mugabe himself was to refer to the experience as a ‘‘moment of madness’’.

A paternalistic and authoritarian state kept the popular classes in their place. Significant spending on education and health in the early years of the government was matched by corporatist trade union structures. The cities were also kept under control and thousands of urban dwellers and squatters were regularly evicted from black townships. In the rural areas land reform was forever promised but not delivered, while rural wages were kept low to subsidise cheap food, and therefore lower wages, for the cities. As one commentator observed

37 Low wages, import substitution industries and sanctions busting during UDI helped further develop railways, mines, light manufacturing and agricultural processing and contribute to the growth of the working class.

38 Campbell, H. (2003) *Reclaiming Zimbabwe: The exhaustion of the patriarchal model of liberation*. Trenton, NJ. Asmara, Eritrea: Africa World Press. p. 273

poverty was structural; all the post-independence state did was 'humanise' it'.³⁹

By 1987, with the popular classes under control, ZAPU severely weakened, the old-time allies conveniently dead or purged (Tongogara had died in an accident on the eve of independence)⁴⁰ and with the armed forces and police under his control, Mugabe changed the constitution and appointed himself executive president.

With an increasing orientation to international capital, the country slipped further into corruption and debt. Nonetheless, ZANU continued to pretend that it sought 'to establish a socialist society in Zimbabwe on the guidance of Marxist-Leninist principles'.⁴¹

People started to realise that the fruits of the liberation struggle had been appropriated. In *Echoing Silences*, by Alexander Kanengoni, a war veteran suffering post-traumatic stress disorder has a dream in which Chitepo and Jason Moyo are discussing how the struggle has lost its way and wondering 'how the politics, wealth and the economy of the entire country was slowly becoming synonymous with the names of less than a dozen people'.⁴²

Exhausted nationalism?

The *Vashandi*, according to Moore, had 'hoped that full electoral freedom would enable them to mount a

radical challenge to Mugabe's empty nationalism'.⁴³ However, the patterns and tools of political repression, established with the suppression of ZIPA, were too well entrenched to make this a possibility.

The detained ZIPA members were only released from detention in Mozambique, and allowed to return to Zimbabwe, after independence. When former ZIPAs publicly advocated unity with ZAPU, they were promptly arrested again, and only freed on the intervention of Nkomo.

Mhanda was warned that his presence in Zimbabwe was dangerous and he was obliged to spend several years studying in Europe. The ZIPA movement was effectively dispersed. In 2000, along with other ex-combatants, Mhanda helped form the Zimbabwe Liberators' Platform to organise and fight for the rights of the country's genuine war veterans.

Mugabe had proven to be apt in suppressing the threat from the left and employing the language of people such as Mhanda's 'to practice the worst of Third World socialism – and then the worst of Third World neo-liberalism'⁴⁴ essentially to allow his cronies to enrich themselves with the 'privileges and subsidies that white exploiters had enjoyed'.⁴⁵

However, even before the end of the first decade of independence, it was clear that Mugabe's version of patriarchal nationalism had exhausted any progressive content and the first steps towards a political break between the people and the ZANU elite were developing.

Once again it was young people, university students who had grown up under independence, supported by a new general secretary of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions, Morgan Tsvangirai, who began to challenge the dominant system of inequality and repression and open up a new phase in Zimbabwe's still unresolved struggle for national liberation.

39 Tandon, Y. (2001) Trade unions and labour in the agricultural sector in Zimbabwe. In B. Raftopolous & L. Sachikonye (Eds.) *Striking back: The labour movement and the post-colonial state in Zimbabwe 1980-2000* (pp. 221-249) Harare: Weaver Press, p. 229.

40 Maurice Nyagumbo, Enos Nkala and Edgar Tekere, who had supported Mugabe in deposing Sithole, all fell out with Mugabe. Tekere (2007) p. 84, a key Mugabe henchman, was to later admit that ZIPA was 'absolutely correct'. In 1978 a group of ZANU 'radicals', lead by Henry Hamadziripi and Rugare Gumbo, appearing to have had second thoughts about ZIPA, unsuccessfully tried to challenge the ZANU leadership. After being sentenced to death by ZANU they were detained by Mozambique.

41 The ZANU (PF) and PF ZAPU Agreement. Appendix 1. Cited in Sibanda, E. M. (2005) *The Zimbabwe African People's Union 1961-1987. A political history of insurgency in Southern Rhodesia*. Trenton: Africa World Press.

42 Kanengoni, A. (2001) *Echoing silences*. Harare: Boabab Books. p. 87

43 Moore, D. (2001) How Mugabe came to power. *London Review of Books*, 5 April, p. 23.

44 Moore, D. (2001) p. 23.

45 Campbell, H. (2003) p. 272.

“No to a government of national unity! Only united mass action will defeat Mugabe!”

International Socialist Organisation of Zimbabwe

June 23, 2008 -- After the publication of the original article (see below), Movement for Democratic Change presidential candidate Morgan Tsvangirai held a press conference at which he issued a statement to the effect that the MDC is pulling out of the presidential run-off election because conditions for a free and fair election do not exist, [due to the] the massive violence against his party and civic society. The press conference followed the disruption of his final rally in Harare by ZANU-PF vigilantes on June 22. Tsvangirai stated that the MDC was to carry out further consultations and would announce the details of the way forward.

We welcome the position taken by the MDC, and initial reports indicate that this position has been accepted by MDC and civic society activists and supporters.

However, this decision needs to be followed by quick and concrete steps on the way forward, based on a united-front and mass-action strategy, as indicated [in the earlier article below]. We are [aware] that sections of the bourgeoisie, the Rhodesian right wing and the imperialist West will not be happy with this decision, seeing it as a premature surrender and may even put pressure on the MDC to rescind the decision.

Taking advantage of the USA's presidency of the UN Security Council this month, they might want to see a few more bodies in the streets ahead of the election to justify their likely escalation of siege of the Mugabe regime. But the MDC must resist this. Its activists and supporters, as well as those in civic society, desperately need breathing space to retreat in order, reorganise and begin the fightback. To wait for a sure defeat come June 27 will make it that much more difficult to mobilise the necessary

program of civil disobedience, mass action and delegitimisation of the regime. Indeed, the economic situation in the coming few weeks is going to see us descend to the parameters of hell as the West and big business escalate pressure on the regime, economically and politically, to force it into a neoliberal power-sharing government of national unity (GNU) deal with the opposition.

This has put the regime in a quagmire but it is likely to continue with its sham election to gain legitimacy. Legally, it may invoke provisions of the electoral laws which stipulate that withdrawal can be no later than 21 days before the election and that in any case standing in the run-off is by law for the top two contesting candidates. The key therefore is to launch an immediate political program of delegitimisation of the run-off election, locally, regionally and internationally.

Regroupment of civic groups and the establishment of the united front of resistance of the opposition and civic society has therefore now assumed paramount importance. This is more so because of the massive likely pressure on the MDC to now enter negotiations for a government of national unity from South African president Thabo Mbeki, the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the UN and the capitalist and imperialist forces. This is no solution for working people and must be resolutely rejected.

But given the MDC's history of prevarication and the strong influence of capitalist elites within its leadership, it may not surprise if it ends up capitulating again. The lessons from Kenya are that united, resolute and autonomous activities and mobilisation by a united front of civic society can stop this and embolden the more radical sections of the opposition to fight rather than capitulate to the regime.

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Precarious security situation – reign of terror

June 20, 2008 -- As the nation gears up for the presidential run-off election on June 27, the regime of Zimbabwe president Robert Mugabe has unleashed a reign of terror across the country. The level of violence and political intimidation now far exceeds that of before the 2000 elections. The

economic collapse is severe and unprecedented. Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe governor Gideon Gono's floating of the Zimbabwe dollar has led to its collapse to ZW\$6 billion to US\$1, and inflation now at more than 2 million per cent, with prices going up twice a week. The Zimbabwe people are truly suffering.

Since May 1 there have been arbitrary arrests of civic leaders, starting with the two-week detention of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Union's president and secretary general. Fourteen WOZA [Women of Zimbabwe Arise] leaders were detained for nearly a month for protesting the delay in releasing the election results. Two of their leaders, Jenni Williams and Magodonga Mahlangu, remain detained in Chikurubi Prison. Also arrested and harassed are church, student and NGO leaders and teachers.

NGOs and social movements have effectively been closed down by the regime, despite assertions to the contrary. Over the past week, state agents have moved door to door at NGO offices, forcing them to close or confiscating computers and files. [There have been raids] on the offices of ZimRights, the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA), Zimbabwe national Students' Union (ZINASU), Padare/Enkundleni/Men's Forum on Gender (Padare), Bulawayo Agenda, the Crisis Coalition, the Combined Harare Residents' Association (CHRA) and the International Socialist Organisation (ISO). Humanitarian NGOs providing food relief, medicines and support to HIV-AIDS patients have been particularly hit.

ZANU-PF bases have been set up in townships where MDC and civic groups activists are being forced to attend night vigils and/or assaulted. Several of our ISO members from Mbare, Sunningdale, Epworth and Chitungwiza have had their houses raided, forcing them to flee while others have been brutally assaulted. Tec Bara, the ISO Harare gender coordinator and Zimbabwe Social Forum national deputy convenor for gender, is currently hospitalised after being brutally assaulted at her home. Three of our Mutare comrades were also assaulted and brutalised. A Women Coalition's hostel in Kambuzuma housing fleeing women and their children was raided and people forced to flee. In Budiriro, the national deputy leader of the "war veterans", Joseph

Chinotimba has turned an HIV-AIDS clinic into a war chamber.

The MDC is receiving the brunt of the attacks. Tsvangirai has been repeatedly arrested, his rallies banned and campaign buses and vehicles impounded. The MDC is totally blacked-out from the state-controlled daily newspapers, radio stations and TV, while under Operation *Dzikisai Madhishi*, people are being forced to remove satellite dishes from their homes. Detained MDC secretary general Tendai Biti faces treason charges, carrying the death penalty. This past week in Harare, the wife of the MDC mayor-elect of Harare was abducted and killed, houses in townships fire-bombed with four people killed, and 20 houses in the Chipinge rural village of NCA chairperson Lovemore Madhuku were torched. The attorney general has said no bail will be granted to those facing "political violence" charges (virtually all from the opposition), while Patrick Chinamasa, the minister of legal and parliamentary affairs, said he will be declaring a general amnesty for all petty criminals to create room for political prisoners.

Operation MakaVhoterapi

ZANU-PF has virtually closed off the rural areas from the opposition under Operation *MakaVhoterapi* ('Operation Where Did You Vote'). As presidential spokesperson, G. Charamba put it:

"Fundamentally, MDC cannot win the runoff; will not win it... Unlike in March, rural Zimbabwe is now another country for MDC ... and Tsvangirai will be lucky to find even election agents. In towns, yes, but nowhere else. From end of 1976, I saw war and the making of structures that nourish it. There are many in Tsvangirai's camp old enough to interpret the times for him. I am sure they have seen what is happening in the country side, watched and correctly read the furrowed foreheads of those who will take the necessary decisions should and when that becomes necessary. Enough hints have been dropped regarding what will wash and will not wash come the morning after June 27. A mere twiddle by a blunt pen cannot return this country to bondage"

There are three basic objectives behind the regime's crackdown. First, so ZANU-PF can win the crucial presidential elections by any means necessary. As we previously argued in September 2007: "the

chances of an opposition victory are slim... as in 2002 and 2005, the opposition is deluding itself. The playing field is so stacked against them and they have very little counter measures to these, as ZANU-PF itself for instance had in 1980. The entire state machinery, including the media, is being mobilised to ensure a ZANU-PF victory by hook or crook... war veterans and chiefs are being mobilised to make the rural areas a no-go area for the opposition."

Will ZANU-PF's strategy work?

Increasingly, over the last few weeks, an election that MDC was clearly poised to win has turned and a Mugabe "victory" is now the most likely result as the MDC structures are decimated and the rural population bludgeoned and starved into submission. Peasants are correctly aware that the ward-based system of voting will make it easy for ZANU-PF to identify villages that vote against them and exert revenge.

Various reports indicate the game plan. Known MDC activists will be forced to plead illiteracy and be accompanied by senior ZANU-PF village leaders, who will "assist" them in voting. The day after elections, all villagers [will be] ordered to assemble near counting stations and await results so that it can be confirmed that they have truly repented. This is exactly what Charamba means, when he says the structures of war have now been resuscitated in the countryside. The crackdown is also designed to neutralise any potential centres of resistance to a Mugabe "victory", which this time will be quickly announced.

The MDC and civic society are paying a heavy price for failing to heed warnings not to take the election route as their principal strategy for achieving change rather than a central strategy of mass action centred around a fighting united front of the opposition, civic society and the labour movement demanding a new democratic constitution before any elections.

The ZAPU [Zimbabwe African People's Union] was only able to withstand *Gukurahundi* because of structures rooted in a committed core of cadres and not protest voters. [Mugabe launched a brutal war of terror on the Ndebele people, who were assumed to be ZAPU supporters and therefore dissidents. In what became known as *Gukurahundi*, between 1983

and 1985, up to 20,000 people died in the Matabeleland and Midlands regions.]

At best, elections should only have been used as a secondary tactic to mobilise people for the central strategy of mass action. Capitalist elites who have used their money to commodify our struggles and worm their way into leadership positions in the opposition and civic society stopped this and built false illusions around the elections and marginalised the activists who built the party and are today sorely needed.

Even if ZANU-PF loses, Mugabe has declared that he will not hand over power to the MDC but rather go to war -- *Hatingaregi nyika yakauya neropa ichitorwa ne penzura, tinoda kuona kuti chakasimba chii gidi kana penzura* ("We cannot let go a country that we won through the barrel of a gun by a simple vote -- we will see which is stronger -- the gun or a pencil.") A radio report on Power FM quoted Mugabe declaring at a rally -- "If you thought Hitler is gone, then you are mistaken, because Hitler is not only back but back here in Zimbabwe."

The second objective is to recapture the parliamentary majority for ZANU-PF by convicting MDC-elect MPs or forcing them to flee. As Charamba says: "They are on the run, but will not run much longer. That may mean several by-elections which (Tsvangirai) knows he will not win."

Indeed it is likely that by the time parliament convenes, enough opposition MPs will either be in detention or have fled to give ZANU-PF the majority to elect both the speaker of the House of Assembly and president of Senate despite being the minority party.

The third objective is preparation for a ZANU-PF-dominated but neoliberal and pro-business government of national unity with the MDC after the elections. In our September 2007 perspective we stated that because of the imploding economic crisis and "despite his rhetoric, Mugabe is now ready to capitulate and enter into an elitist compromise deal with the MDC, the West and business. But only after the 2008 elections, which he hopes to use to legitimise his party's claim to being the senior player in such alliance, deal with his party's succession problem as well as protect his legacy,

person and family besides his little burial plot at Heroes Acre.”

Many of his top officials have indeed been quoted suggesting the GNU is an indispensable option to deal with the Zimbabwean crisis. The crackdown is designed to force the MDC into such a GNU and preempt any potential resistance from its radicals or civic society. This is worsened by power struggles in the opposition ahead of its congress next year. Today many of the cowardly elites who have wormed their way to the top in the opposition will, as we have been warning for over two years, gladly accept the GNU, with the support of business, Mbeki, SADC and most of the West, fearful of the further radicalisation of the Zimbabwean crisis.

ZANU-PF tactics are thus working. Already the MDC is now totally silent, even in its urban township strongholds, as ZANU-PF holds sway. As one comrade said, “*ve MDC tapeta miswe*” (the MDC has put its tail behind its legs). Even civic groups that have not been raided are now stampeding to close down their offices. Fear stalks the nation one week before the election.

Way forward: Mobilise for united front for democracy and mass action

The first and most important thing is to confront the veil of fear that threatens to suffocate us. The defiance of the closure of offices by several NGOs is correct. Even if the regime closes our offices, we must not allow it to close down our movements -- underground alternatives must be urgently built. But no one group can withstand this pressure alone. We need a united collective response. This is why for the last three years and at the People’s Convention we were calling for the need to build a radical united front of civic groups, the labour movement and the anti-capitalist movement, autonomous of the MDC, even if working with it. One capable of initiating united front-based mass actions without necessarily being subordinated to the MDC. And one based on a pro-working people and anti-neoliberal/capitalist ideology.

At the Convention we unfortunately allowed our tactical differences on whether to support or boycott the March elections to divide us and stop us from the bigger project of building such united front. Today we all pay a heavy price. But it is not too late to regroup, reorganise and offer leadership in action

along with the MDC. Even under this crackdown we can regroup, initially on a defensive program of solidarity for those under attack and in self-defence and counter-attacks where necessary.

Most urgently we call for a summit of leaders of the opposition and civic society to set up a united front of resistance. We believe that such united front must be totally rooted in and organise around the bread and butter concerns of working people, including peasants and the unemployed, as opposed to the wealthy capitalist elites in business, locally and internationally.

Indeed the very origins of the MDC (and similar movements in the global South) lie in the massive protests of the late 1990s against poverty induced by the Mugabe regime’s neoliberal capitalist program of ESAP (structural adjustment). A new and powerful aspect of the MDC’s campaign in the March elections was an emphasis on such bread and butter issues of the ordinary people. Any struggle against the regime that fails to do this will be outflanked on its left by this crafty regime, which has shown, most powerfully around the land question, a strong capacity to cynically manipulate the poor’s concerns to remain in power and demonise the opposition as a stooge of the West and the business class. Without such a united front and a pro-poor, pro-working people and anti-capitalist ideology we shall not prevail against this regime. The Peoples Charter of the People’s Convention offers a powerful starting point.

One of the first things to do is to convene a massive united front rally for democracy in the centre of Harare a few days before the election or the week after, to be convened by the opposition-led by the MDC, civic groups, trade unions and the churches. If possible the unions must call for all workers in Harare not to go to work but to attend the rally. The purpose of the rally is first to fight the veil of fear and rebuild confidence in our movements. Second to send a message to the dictatorship that we will not be cowered; that we demand an immediate cessation of the reign of terror, compensation of all victims, immediate release of all political prisoners. It would send a warning to the regime that the people will not accept its June 27 circus and that the struggle will only accelerate after June 27 to include general strikes, stayaways, class boycotts and civil disobedience.

On the election, our preferred position as the ISO has been to boycott any fake elections without a new constitution and deny the regime's elections any legitimacy. The alternative is for a regrouped united front of civic society and the opposition to launch a serious and determined program of civil disobedience and mass action, supported by regional and international solidarity from working peoples and progressive movements. Indeed over the next week the MDC leadership has a huge decision to make about whether to continue participating in a sham election designed to clothe a dictatorship in legitimacy, or withdraw, regroup and lead a fightback of mass action and civil disobedience. However, if the MDC still decides to continue running. The ISO, in view of MDC's massive performance in the March parliamentary and presidential elections and the desire of many Zimbabweans to vote, has now modified its position to call for unconditional but fraternally critical support to Tsvangirai.

Our criticism is what we perceive as the increasing domination of the party leadership by capitalist and Western elites and the marginalisation of workers and radicals. This will lead to its likely pursuing a neoliberal capitalist agenda if it assumes power, to the detriment of working people. And secondly its disastrous strategy of relying on the electoral route rather than mass action. But the Mugabe regime is driving us into hell and the people need some breathing space in order to reorganise and resume our battle for real democracy and against the capitalist and imperialist bloodsuckers.

We therefore urge all our members, supporters, allies and working people in general to defy the regime's intimidation and go out and vote in the election for Tsvangirai. However voting must only be seen as a tactic to keep the flames of the movement alive and to use the space to organise and mobilise for all out people's mass action before and after June 27, and not as the central strategy for change. The defeat of ZANU-PF in March shows how much the masses now want change. Even today in the midst of the onslaught, opposition activists at the local level have organised themselves and are fighting back in places like Epworth, Bikita, Zaka and Chimanimani. But these are isolated actions, easily crushed unless more central leadership is offered. The spirit to fight in civic society is still

there. Indeed, when an ISO delegation visited the imprisoned WOZA leaders this week, we were impressed by their high spirits despite the very harsh conditions, including being denied jerseys [jumpers] in this biting winter. Or the many maimed and displaced MDC activists who are vowing that despite all they are still going to vote against the regime come June 27.

At the same time under no circumstances must we agree to the GNU sell-out idea. There can be no marriage with such a murderous regime -- we must consign it to its true destiny -- the dustbin of history. The GNU is a project for the dictatorship to perpetuate itself and for the capitalist and the imperialist elites to ensure that the poverty that the capitalist ZANU-PF government started with its ESAP is perpetuated forever, but now buttressed by a working-people supported MDC. It's time we allow the ordinary people to take charge of the struggle that is rightfully theirs and ensure an outcome that achieves real democracy, economically and politically, for the majority and not just the political and capitalist elites as we have seen so many times in recent history in the region and internationally -- in Zambia, Malawi, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa and Eastern Europe. As our brothers and sisters in Latin America are pushing ahead we say no to capitalism and yes to international socialism as the way forward for humanity.

Finally, ISO wishes to express our utmost gratitude to all those who have sent solidarity messages and donations to us and other organisations and still make a further urgent appeal for assistance. To send solidarity messages, receive updates or make a donation please email us at iso.zim@gmail.com

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