

Zimbabwean Workers, the MDC & the 2000 Election

Peter Alexander

For the first time since Zimbabwe gained its independence in 1980, the country's president, Robert Mugabe, faces serious opposition. In the elections, held in June, the worker-backed Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) won 57 out of 120 elected seats, with Mugabe's party, the Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) securing 62 (Endnote 1). The MDC's successes included all 27 contests in the three most populous urban areas (Harare, Bulawayo and Chitungwiza), and all the fully urbanised constituencies in the next six largest centres. There can be little doubt that, had the election been free and fair (which, clearly, it was not), the MDC would have won more constituencies than ZANU-PF; though, since the president had the power to appoint an additional 30 MPs, one can be less certain that it would have obtained an overall parliamentary majority. Since the party had only existed for 16 months, this was a remarkable achievement, and in 2002, when Zimbabwe holds its presidential election, the MDC's leader, Morgan Tsvangirai, will be well placed to mount a victorious campaign.

This article does not provide a general assessment of the Zimbabwean elections which would need, for instance, to consider regional variations, attitudes in rural areas, and the impact of political violence. Its focus is limited to understanding something about the MDC. The party was brought into existence by the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) and its top leaders – including Tsvangirai and his deputy, Gibson Sibanda – are trade unionists. Yet the MDC leadership also contains, as its spokesperson for economic affairs, Eddie Cross, an industrialist who supports South Africa's Democratic Party. Funding has come from, among others, white farmers and British Tories, and the party's economic programme, largely neo-liberal in character, has been welcomed by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. How, then, do we explain this apparently curious and contradictory amalgam? Has Zimbabwe's working class been duped in some way, or should we, perhaps, resurrect the labour aristocracy thesis? The breadth of the party is further underlined by the presence, within its ranks, of the International Socialist Organisation (ISO), a small, but well-rooted, trotskyst pressure group, led by Munyaradzi Gwisai, now an MP. So, one also wonders how it is possible for an alliance that is so broad – both socially and politically – to hold together, and for how long it will do so.

Initial interest in posing questions about the MDC was partly motivated by a comparative concern. It was thought that, in understanding the circumstances under which workers broke with their allegiance to a national liberation movement and built a new party, it might be possible to shed some light on South Africa's future. We

return to this in the conclusion. In providing an assessment of the MDC, albeit partial, it was also hoped that in a small way it might be possible to contribute to the political sociology of democratisation (as distinct from its political science) (see Saul, 1997). The assessment presented here is based mainly on group interviews with factory workers and on individual interviews with MDC and union leaders (Endnote 2). These were conducted in Harare, Zimbabwe's capital and largest city, during the period of the election.

Pre-history of the MDC

At independence, Zimbabwean unions were weak, and divided into six separate federations (Endnote 3). They were given a boost by two developments. First, there was a spontaneous upsurge of industrial unrest (with recent research showing that there were far more than the 200 strikes that were officially acknowledged for 1980-81) (Research and Planning, 1984:23; Raftopoulos, interview). Second, the government encouraged a merger of the federations into one body, the ZCTU which, henceforth, co-ordinated a large majority of the country's trade unions; indeed, 51 out of 58 unions responding to a 1984 survey indicated that they were affiliated (Research and Planning, 1984:31). To begin with, the ZCTU had a close relationship with ZANU-PF, and Albert Mugabe, a relative of the President, was the organisation's general secretary (Sachikonye, 1997:109). Although the Zimbabwe African People's Union, with 20 seats in parliament, had considerable backing in Bulawayo, ZANU-PF, which had 57 MPs, was the most popular party in Harare. Moreover, the government – which, at least rhetorically, was socialist and pro-worker – had brought in a minimum wage and some protection of employment, and it had introduced social improvements, including an expansion of public education.

Cracks in this cosy relationship became apparent at the ZCTU's 1985 Congress, when the organisation stressed its autonomy from ZANU-PF; by 1987 it was complaining bitterly about unemployment (already estimated at 20 to 25 per cent of the labour force), inflation, and the maldistribution of wealth (Loewenson, interview; ZCTU, 1991a; Mutandare, 1987). The first mass movement against the government, however, was that involving students at the University of Zimbabwe (UZ) in 1988-89 (which produced many of the MDC's leading activists, including Tendai Biti, now the shadow minister for foreign affairs, and Gwisai). According to Biti, the movement was

very, very important. It was the first time people criticised the legitimacy of these heroes. It showed you can make noise and not get killed.

The movement, which began as a protest against corruption, broadened to include two other major issues: opposition to Mugabe's plan for a one-party state (a plan that was later dropped, partly, perhaps, because of the demise of the USSR), and opposition to his proposed shift to a neo-liberal agenda, subsequently known as the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP). In 1988, Tsvangirai – a former ZANU-PF commissar, a mine worker and a trade union activist – had been elected as ZCTU Secretary General, and when, the following year, he sided with the students, he was detained for six weeks on charges of being a South African spy (MDC, 2000a). In 1990, a general election year, the ZCTU adopted a clear stance in favour of multi-party democracy and against backing any particular party, and it also opposed the introduction of ESAP (ZCTU, 1990).

ESAP was not bad for everyone. Andy Ashcroft, a First Secretary at the British High Commission noted:

The sky-line [of Harare] in 1991 was perhaps that of a large town. When I returned in 1996 it definitely had the air of an international city ... one of the positive effects that ESAP has had (Business Partnership, February 1999).

But, it was bad for the working class. The universal minimum wage and employment protection were dumped, the cost of education and health rose steeply, there was rapid inflation (reaching 48 per cent in 1992), real wages slumped (especially in the public sector), there were large numbers of retrenchments (in the private sector as well as in state employment), and inequality increased (Bond, 1998:380-408; Sachikonye, 1997:123).

In June 1992, the ZCTU held a march against ESAP that was poorly attended and attacked by the police (Bond, 1999a; Biti, interview). It responded by strengthening its organisation, a process that was already underway, but which was now intensified. Some unions were merged and new ones joined, extra departments were established and, from March 1993, the federation published a monthly paper, *The Worker*. In addition, ZCTU regional committees were created, and according to Gwisai 'these became the most powerful segment of the working class, rather than the affiliated unions'. Meanwhile, the state's retreat from direct economic management and its endorsement of collective bargaining – a product of the new approach – encouraged unions to build a factory-based capacity. State-sanctioned, directly-elected workers' committees had existed since 1980, and these were now, in effect, drawn into union structures, or sometimes superseded by shop stewards (Sachikonye, 1997:111-7; Gaidzanwa, 1991; ZCTU, 1991b:45-9; ZCTU, 1993; *The Worker*, March 1993; Adler et al., 1996:86).

Parallel with organisational improvement, the ZCTU began to clarify its political outlook. In Zambia, Frederick Chiluba, leader of the labour-backed Movement for Multi-party Democracy (MDM), had been elected as president as early as 1991, and one might ponder why it took the ZCTU until 1999 to establish the MDC. Doubtless, part of the answer is that governmental decay and popular resentment did not yet match those that existed over the border, where Kenneth Kaunda had held power for 25 years. Initially, at least, the ZCTU's organisational weakness may also have been a factor. In January 1993, Tsvangirai announced:

[The ZCTU] will this year embark on a massive campaign to mobilise workers to transform itself from a largely vociferous organisation that no one seems to listen to, into a viable political force to be reckoned with (The Worker, March 1993).

However, at this stage, the reckoning that Tsvangirai wanted was not the removal of Mugabe, but a *social contract*, which remained the focus of the ZCTU's political thinking for the next five years. According to Godfrey Kanyenze, the ZCTU's chief economist, the social contract was first proposed within the labour movement by Tsvangirai himself, who raised it in 1992 'after some visit'; the visit may have been to South Africa. Certainly Tsvangirai favoured the formation of a tripartite body similar to South Africa's National Economic Development and Labour Council (established in 1995). In opposing ESAP, the ZCTU had complained that it had not been consulted about the programme's design and it criticised the part played by the World Bank and IMF, but it had not attacked structural adjustment as such. Now, in its 1996 report, *Beyond ESAP*, drafted by Kanyenze, the ZCTU proposed an alternative adjustment

programme, which would have included a social contract (Endnote 4). By 1998, even Mugabe was convinced of the need for some kind of tripartite body, which he called the National Economic Consultative Forum. However, he opposed the ZCTU's proposals for reducing unnecessary government spending (seen as the major cause of economic decline), and he wanted to involve labour leaders as individuals rather than as representatives, so the union movement refused to participate (Kanyenze, interview; Loewenson, interview; Sibanda, interview; *The Worker*, April, November 1998).

By 1998, not only had the economic crisis deepened considerably, but the temper of class struggle had been transformed. 1994 saw several major strikes, including a successful stoppage by bank workers (Bond, 1999a:98; *The Worker*, August 1994). In 1995, there were riots, and massive anti-government demonstrations. The following year witnessed numerous strikes, including, towards the end of the year, what Biti described as 'a watershed' – the general strike by public service workers. According to Gwisai who, together with his ISO comrades, played some part in agitating for the action, it was 'a movement from below in which the leaders of the three major unions – the teachers', nurses' and public service workers' – were forced to join in'. Biti recalled that the 'ZCTU had withdrawn into its shell – the social contract etc. – but now reasserted its hegemony'. Similarly, Gwisai noted that, when the nurses continued their action,

sections of the ZCTU leadership began to change. Some were able to recognise that something was happening in the working class, and ... Morgan was at the forefront of that. He issued a call for a general strike, which was not authorised, and nearly lost his job (the strike was aborted).

The public service workers succeeded in winning most of their demands, and this had an impact on other workers. In 1997, strikes were more widespread, and even included action among farm labourers (*Socialist Worker*, December 1997) (Endnote 5). Unrest was also being fuelled by hardship, with Sibanda – who had been President of the ZCTU since 1989 – observing that real average earnings had declined by 63 per cent since the introduction of ESAP in 1991 (Sibanda, 1997). In general, strikes were victorious, thus raising the level of self-assurance among workers.

Successful militancy may also have given confidence to the ex-combatants associated with the War Veterans' Association (not that the Association showed any sympathy for the workers). When, as a consequence of the looting of the War Victims Compensation Fund by its senior officials, payments to nearly 50,000 veterans were suspended, there was a series of well-organised protests (van der Walt, 1998a:86) (Endnote 6). Eventually, Mugabe agreed to a one-off payment of Z\$50,000 (about US\$2,800 at the time), plus a monthly pension of Z\$2,000, for each of the former combatants. This, however, was an unbudgeted expenditure, leading to two further developments. First, partly also because of a threat to confiscate 1,500 white farms, the value of the Zimbabwe dollar collapsed, falling by 75 per cent in the space of a few hours on 14 November (Bond, 1999b:8-9). Second, in order to fund the payments, Mugabe decided to introduce new taxes, including a 5 per cent 'development levy'. Van der Walt (1998a:86) explained:

For workers, who already faced low wages, a 30 per cent inflation rate and taxes which consume up to 42 per cent of income, this was the last straw.

On 9 December 1997, the ZCTU held a successful stayaway to protest against the new taxes. According to Mutimutema Shoko, leader of the domestic workers' union and now an MP,

it demonstrated that things had taken a new twist towards the working class ... [the ZCTU] resolved to tell the workers that if they are not organised to come up with one voice, these problems are endless.

Biti recalled: 'This was a momentous occasion in the history of this country because it brought confidence – you could smell working-class power in the air'. In January 1998, price hikes in basic commodities triggered days of riots in Harare's townships and left, perhaps, 13 people dead (Bond, 1999a:99; Gwisai, interview). On 3 and 4 March, a second stayaway against the unpopular taxes was backed by 90 per cent of the 1.2 million workers employed in the formal sector, and on 4 September, with the ZCTU threatening a third strike, the government scrapped the taxes (van der Walt 1998b:85). Victories brought increased membership, and Tsvangirai claimed that by April 1998 the labour movement's membership had reached 700,000, compared with 200,000 in 1996 (*The Worker*, July 1998). An important feature of the stayaways had been that, in effect, they were endorsed by the major employers' organisations, which encouraged their members not to deduct wages or take retaliatory action (Cross, interview). *De facto*, business was already forging an alliance with labour against the government; this was based on shared frustration with Mugabe's increasingly capricious rule, and on a degree of mutual respect derived from negotiating many agreements with each other. The ZCTU was now at the centre of a national, political movement.

The MDC & the Election

Whilst the MDC was initiated by the ZCTU, a second major strand in the new party were the middle-class activists associated with the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA) (though the NCA, as an organisation, decided not to back the MDC). These included Welshman Ncube, Professor of Law at the University of Zimbabwe, and now the MDC's secretary general and its MP for Bulawayo North-East. Focusing on demands for constitutional reforms, such as a reduction in the power of the executive, the NCA was able to build a broad alliance of NGOs, churches, lawyers, academics and opposition parties. Like the resurgent workers' movement it, and the civil society movement more generally, was also a product of ESAP (which had created a greater demand for welfarist NGOs, financially squeezed a section of the middle classes, such as doctors and academics, and alienated those democratically-minded lawyers who were appalled by increased levels of corruption and dictatorial behaviour) (Raftopoulos, 2000:37-46; Biti, interview).

The government's establishment of a Constitutional Commission, to consider demands for reform involved part of the NCA's base, leading Rene Loewenson, an MDC intellectual, to conclude that it was important for the MDC to include the middle classes 'who wanted their voices to be heard'; otherwise they would end up being 'on the outside pissing in'. One might also be justified in wondering whether, perhaps, the anti-Mugabe intelligentsia concluded that, since they could not rely on the middle classes as a whole, they needed to work even more closely with the unions. Significantly, whilst trade union participation in the NCA was not extensive (though the ZCTU was an affiliate), Tsvangirai was the organisation's chair, allowing him to play a pivotal role, leading both of the country's principal pro-democracy

movements. If, at this point, there were external influences, they came, not from right-wing interests, but from social democratic forces, notably the wealthy German-based NGO, the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, which was backing both the ZCTU and the NCA (Gwisai, interview).

From May 1998, if not earlier, support for the formation of a workers' party was voiced at labour forums (open meetings of workers held regularly in the urban centres) (Gwisai, interview) (Endnote 7). In November, *The Worker* reported:

A caller from Chimanimani said time was ripe for the formation of a labour party. 'There is so much discontent with the current leadership that if a labour party is formed today, every worker will rally behind it'. As for Tsvangirai, the man most see as their saviour, he has kept his cards close to his chest.

After yet more stayaways, on 11 and 18 November, this time in protest against a 67 per cent increase in the price of fuel (*Socialist Worker*, December 1998), the ZCTU executive bit the bullet and convened a National Working People's Convention (NWPC) (Endnote 8). The Convention, held in Harare on 26-28 February 1999, consisted mainly of workers (particularly ZCTU activists from the regions) and to some extent peasants (who often came via the churches and development organisations), though the NCA people, and others from the middle classes, made an important contribution in leadership roles (delivering papers, chairing sessions and the like) (Gwisai, interview; Loewenson, interview). The Convention's 'Declaration' – which drew, in part, on popular consultations held around the country (somewhat like the Freedom Charter) – was a left-leaning programme that ended with a call for a 'democratic political movement for change' (NWPC, 1999).

The Convention had, in effect, taken the decision to found the MDC, and it was left to the ZCTU's organising department to work out the details (Shoko, interview; Gwiyo, interview). In practice, this enabled Tsvangirai, in particular, to shape the character of the party in the months prior to its official launch in September. The MDC's *Manifesto*, published in August 1999, was a more conservative document than the 'Declaration' and marked the beginning of a shift to the right. The latter document, had, for instance, emphasised that 'National policies should prioritise the ... people's basic needs', and it proposed that 'The right to a minimum standard of health inputs (food, water, shelter) and health care be defined and entrenched in the constitution'. These or similar formulations were absent from the *Manifesto*, which placed the emphasis of economic policy on 'growth', and argued, as the Declaration did not, that 'The MDC will interact with international financial institutions'. The *Manifesto* also asserted, again for the first time, that the MDC favoured social democracy (whilst also, however, supporting 'traditional leaders' and 'traditional culture').

On 7 August, when the ZCTU held a special congress to consider its attitude towards the MDC, the chair (presumably Sibanda) hailed the event as 'historic and important'. Tsvangirai argued that the 'ZCTU must take an organisational decision to enter into strategic alliance with the Movement for Democratic Change', adding, cautiously: 'However, if the MDC reneges [sic] on the commitment to serve the interests of workers then ZCTU would reserve the right to withdraw its support' (ZCTU, 1999). The main proposal was that the NWPC Declaration 'be adopted', implying, of course, support for the MDC. This was not opposed by any of the speakers, though one noted, with a degree of prescience, that 'his only worry was the issue of money'. According to the minutes of the event, when the motion was put to delegates, 'the unanimous answer was "yes"', and none wished to record a vote against, or an abstention, or even

an objection. Nevertheless, Collen Gwiyo, a general secretary of the black workers' union, confided that about a quarter of union leaders did not support the new approach, and it is known that some – including, perhaps, the current Acting-President, Isdore Zindoga – still identify with ZANU-PF. Delegates (see appendix) left it to the ZCTU General Council to implement the organisation's new policy, though it seems they also backed the nomination of Tsvangirai and Sibanda for the MDC's top posts (Lowenson, interview).

The following month, at the 15,000-strong launch held at the Rufaro stadium in Harare, Tsvangirai announced a provisional executive in which middle-class leaders were prominent, and key working-class leaders were absent (*Standard Online*, 11 October 1999; Gwisai, interview). Gwiyo acknowledged, 'there are indications of sidelining of certain activists of labour'. Partly he blamed 'opportunists' within the MDC leadership; not Tsvangirai, but 'some businesspeople, academics and lawyers' who were 'for capital [not labour]'. However, he also recognised that there may have been a weakness on the union side:

We might have allowed an opportunity to control the MDC to slide ... saying it is not the trade union role to transform itself into a political party, so let's ask those who are in a position to form a political party to do so; but we didn't put the terms.

After the launch, the MDC executive created new provincial structures and modified some existing ones, producing, altogether, 12 provinces (though the country has ten). Effectively this reduced the influence of those trade union activists who had been building provinces based on ZCTU regions. Whilst the membership of the provinces varied greatly, and was, one assumes, much larger in Harare and Bulawayo, at the party congress, held on 29 and 30 January 2000, each province was accorded equal representation (300 delegates). The main task of the congress was that of electing a leadership. The top six posts were determined by an open vote, with, unsurprisingly, Tsvangirai elected as President and Sibanda as Vice-President. A further 24 seats filled on the basis of two per province, and two extra women were added to comply with constitutional provisions. Finally, it was decided to co-opt a few specialists whose expertise was required, and it was only at this late stage that Cross, the main organiser of the Confederation of Zimbabwe Industries (CZI), came into the leadership (Sibanda, interview; Loewenson, interview; Gwisai, interview; Biti, interview; *The Worker*, February 2000). Gwisai claimed that Harare province, dominated by Harare's ZCTU region, wanted an open election for all positions and was unhappy with the outcome of the elections. Loewenson accepted that there were disputes about the executive's composition – on a class and regional basis (not 'race') – but added that sufficient consensus was reached to move on.

Notwithstanding the disputes, the congress was perceived as a great success, thereby underlining the fact that the MDC was a viable alternative to ZANU-PF, quite different in scale to any other opposition party. The congress was followed, soon after, by the referendum on a new constitution, which included, at Mugabe's behest, mention of land acquisition. The combination of the MDC's strength and this attack on private property, pushed a significant number of white farmers and white businesses towards the MDC, and with them came their money. Later still, Tsvangirai received support from major foreign donors, including British Tories associated with the Zimbabwe Democracy Trust (*Observer on Sunday*, 21 May 2000). Sibanda responded to questions about such funding by saying:

What is wrong with us accepting donations from well-wishers who see the same view as us? The real issue is whether they make any meaningful decisions in the MDC – the answer is 'no'.

This is fair and reasonable, and in large measure Tsvangirai's fundraising was a pragmatic response to the problem of financing political campaigns (first the referendum, then the election). Indeed, whilst Cross's ascendancy undoubtedly improved the MDC's capacity to raise money, he was subsequently blocked from standing for parliament. Nevertheless, one would be justified in questioning whether 'influence' might be more valuable than decision-making power, and whether, from the standpoint of the MDC's base, it is appropriate for the party's leaders to 'see the same view' as capital.

The referendum was, of course, lost by Mugabe (who obtained 45 per cent of the vote) which gave a boost to the opposition, but also precipitated the land invasions (an analysis of this is beyond the scope of this article (Endnote 9)). However, Biti, the MDC's spokesperson for land affairs, regarded them as 'state sponsored', contrasting them with genuine peasant invasions that occurred in 1998. Gwisai, though, pointed to examples of peasant participation to suggest greater complexity, reminding us that the war veterans are not the mere puppets of Mugabe (a point that has been underlined since the election, in disputes over who should control the redistribution of white farms). Whatever one's precise characterisation, there can be little doubt that the invasions were associated with intense and widespread intimidation of MDC activists, with the party recording the deaths of 31 of its supporters in the run up to the election (MDC, 2000b).

For the election, the MDC stood candidates in all 120 constituencies. It provided the following description of their backgrounds: six involved in agriculture (including farmers), eight in executive positions in companies, seven self-employed, nine in the transport industry, nine in technical fields, one ordained minister, one environmentalist, two employed by NGOs, three in the medical professions, eight working for government in legal and administrative fields, five lawyers, nine academics, 19 educators, 18 in other professions, and 16 trade unionists (MDC, 2000c). Sibanda said that some of the candidates were, in fact, peasants, but his definition of 'peasant' was very broad, for he added:

In Matabeleland there was one [peasant], Thabane, from Umguza, and one lady from Umzingwane, and then this one we lost, Gwanda South, he's a peasant, a headmaster there.

According to *The Worker* (July 2000), of the 57 who were elected as MPs, only 12 were trade unionists (including Sibanda, now the MDC parliamentary leader). Gwisai calculated, probably correctly, that 'the vast majority [of MDC MPs] were middle-class academics, lawyers or other professionals. There were also some business people and one or two farmers'.

The predominantly middle-class character of the MDC leadership, especially its candidates and MPs, is in marked contrast to its plebeian base of support. The latter is reflected in the organisation's origins and presence at conferences, and also, for instance, in its final election rally, at the Rufaro stadium, attended by about 35,000 people (of whom, almost none were white and most were evidently working class) (Endnote 10). In the election, the MDC certainly attracted overwhelming support in predominantly middle-class constituencies – such as Harare East, where it won 80 per cent of the vote – but these contain a small minority of urban voters. The majority of

people in the Harare and Bulawayo provinces live in working-class constituencies, and here the MDC vote ranged between 70 to 86 per cent of the total. In the rural areas – where, in 1992, 69 per cent of Zimbabwe’s population was residing – the outcome was mixed. Whilst overall, ZANU-PF won most of the vote (and was especially strong in the three Mashonaland provinces). In the two Matabeleland provinces the MDC won all but two seats, securing between 35 per cent and 86 per cent support (see map). Although the MDC has strong support among teachers and farm labourers, one must assume that most of these rural votes came from peasants (Endnote 11).

Colloquially, the MDC is often referred to as ‘the workers’ party’, and Sibanda described it as such at the Rufaro rally, later defending his formulation saying:

Basically, that’s where our base is. When we say ‘workers’ we include the peasants. But the base really is the workers.

In terms of its mass support, Sibanda is clearly correct, but it is not a ‘workers’ party’ in the classical sense. It seems likely that most of the funds come from outside the working class, and the labour movement has no institutional hold over the leadership. This issue was raised in a number of interviews, comparing the MDC with the British Labour Party and South Africa’s African National Congress (ANC). Loewenson reminded me, first, that, unlike those two party’s, four of the MDC’s ‘top six’ were trade unionists; second, she suggested that maybe the ANC’s Alliance with the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) allowed the former organisation to have greater influence over the latter than vice versa. Sibanda was more sanguine, responding that this was something the MDC would have to address at its next congress, early in 2001. At the NWPC, there had been some discussion about whether the new party would be a labour or workers’ party, but Tsvangirai had come out firmly against this, arguing for a broad-based organisation. It is probably more accurate to say, as Tsvangirai now does, that the MDC is a social democratic party (though it is a more contested formation than might be implied by this description) (Endnote 12).

How, though, do the politics of Cross – a London-trained economist, former government employee, and a businessman with investments that include ownership of a clothing factory – mesh with Tsvangirai’s thinking? To begin with, Cross is happy to label himself as a social democrat, but we can go further. It would be a mistake to see him as representative of Zimbabwean capital in general for, as Loewenson pointed out, there are sectoral divisions and major differences between ‘patronage business’, overseas companies and so on. Patrick Bond, author of a recent and excellent economic history of Zimbabwe (1998), situates him within a corporatist tradition that has deep roots in Rhodesian history (2000a). Today, arguably at least, that tradition is evidenced in the country’s system of industrial relations – a system in which Cross, wearing his CZI hat, has played a significant part. Each industry negotiates minimum wages on an annual basis (with new rates gazetted by ministerial approval), and it was through such negotiations that Cross came to know the ZCTU leadership. In showing me an MDC working paper proposing German-style, industry-based ‘social funds’, Cross unintentionally underscored Bond’s corporatism thesis. The paper not only argues for well-organised and adequately funded employer and employee organisations, it also says that it should be ‘compulsory’ for these bodies to affiliate to the appropriate federation (for example, the ZCTU). Further, these federations, together with the government, would then participate in a ‘binding Social Contract’ (MDC, 2000d).

There is, then, a strong intellectual bridge between the top ZCTU/MDC leadership and those business interests – essentially ‘national capital’ – that are represented by Cross. He and Tsvangirai can both say that they are social democrats, and they can agree on the need for structural adjustment and a social contract. Indeed, it would not be inaccurate to define the central planks in the party’s programme as ‘corporatist neo-liberalism’ (a more positive gloss is to call them, as Kanyenze does, ‘social market economics’). The issue, now, though, is who is moving in which direction across the bridge. Politically, Tsvangirai is in charge, and it is not impossible that, under the impact of renewed class struggle and/or deepening crisis, he could move back towards the side of labour. Thus far, however, the movement has been the other way. Cross was quick to repackage the MDC’s economic policy, and he gleefully informed me:

The World Bank took one look at our programme and they said ‘we would have been proud to produce a programme like this, let alone have it handed to us’.

In March this year, he told a meeting in Harare:

First of all, we believe in the free market. We do not support price control ... We are going to fast track privatisation. All fifty government parastatals will be privatised within a two year time frame ... We are going to privatise virtually the entire school delivery system (Bond, 2000a).

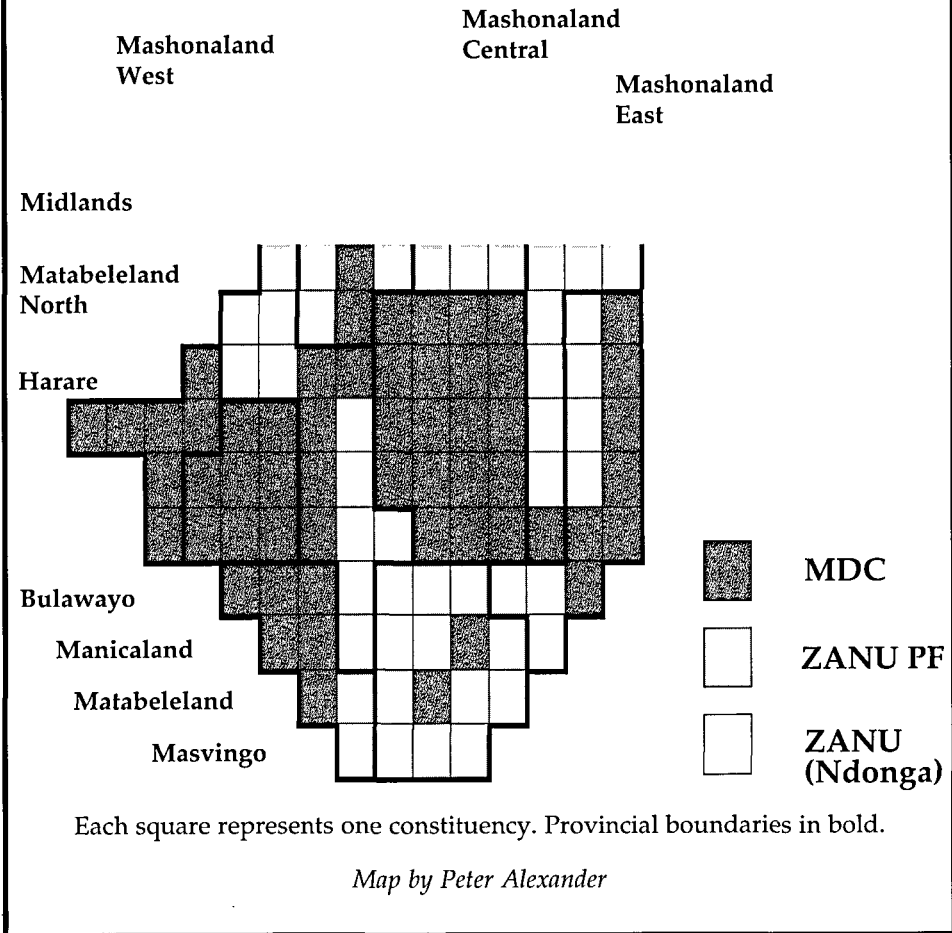
To date, none of this has been repudiated by Tsvangirai, who has often been quoted as saying, ‘the IMF is like my doctor – I do not like his medicine, but I know that it will make me healthy again’.

Workers’ Attitudes

Given, first, the class nature of much of the MDC’s leadership, second, its programmatic support for the kind of neo-liberal policies that have impoverished the majority and, third, its widely publicised financial backing from white farmers and overseas business interests, why should the working class have been so firm and enthusiastic in its support for the party? Was this tempered in some way, and what are the implications of workers’ attitudes for the future of Zimbabwean politics?

To begin to answer these questions, Terence Mashingaidze and I conducted interviews with four groups of workers employed in factories located in Harare’s south-west industrial sector. The selection of factories was virtually random: I drove into the area, saw a largish factory, sought permission to meet with a group of workers (at a convenient time), and then located an another enterprise in a neighbouring road that was engaged in a different industry. The result was that eight managements were contacted, with the four that provided access covering different kinds of activity and, in terms of nationality and ‘race’, a range of different ownership and management combinations (Endnote 13). In three cases the groups were selected by the leadership of the workers’ committee, and in one this was undertaken by a personnel officer (who, according to those interviewed, did so randomly). The result was groups that ranged from two, through about eight and ten (the preferred size), to about thirty, with discussions lasting from roughly 30 to 60 minutes. At the time of the interviews there was a high level of political violence (and in one case workers refused to talk to us because of a fear of reprisals). Consequently, an undertaking was given not to reveal the factories that were involved or record the names of workers who spoke. The discussions that ensued were moderated by the researchers using a

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semi-structured schedule, and they were taped. In general, the views expressed were very similar in all four factories, leading one to conclude that, in all probability, they were widely held among Harare's industrial working class.

Women workers were only represented in one group and, from observation, it is likely that in the other three factories women were either not employed on the shop floor or were employed in small numbers. However, in broad terms, this gender bias reflects the demographics of manufacturing workers in Harare. According to Zimbabwe's *Census 1992*, only 25.4 per cent of the 79,587 people whose occupation was listed as 'manufacturing' were women, as were only 4.6 per cent of the 15,083 included as 'machine operators'. Nevertheless, had there been more women in the sample, there may have been more comments on matters such as paraffin queues and childcare (Endnote 14). The groups appeared young, averaging just over 30 years in the one case where we asked. Yet, workers' committee leaders tended to be older, and, if anything, our samples were biased against youth. In 1992, 45.1 per cent of

Zimbabwe's population was under 15, and, of those aged 15-59, 57.2 per cent were under 30. 'Generation' was almost certainly a major determinant of voting behaviour, with Mugabe's frequent references to colonial racism and liberation having little appeal to young people whose major struggle is for daily survival (Endnote 15). However, on the one occasion when the question of generation and support for the MDC was raised, the worker said simply: 'It's because the working class is mostly young!' It was also noticeable that many of the workers were reasonably well educated – typically they possessed some O' levels – and although they were encouraged to speak in Shona, most preferred to address us in English (Endnote 16). Doubtless, this reflected the emphasis that Zimbabwe has placed on education, as well as a level of unemployment that permits employers to select better-qualified applicants (Endnote 17).

In all four cases, we began by asking whether workers should vote in the election and, if so, why? Nobody responded negatively. A few said things like, 'its our right to vote so we should'. Most, however, responded in one of two related ways. The first of these is typified by the comment: 'I think workers can vote just because of economic hardships'. High rates of taxation, low salaries, the increasing cost of food, housing, transport, and schooling, were all prominent in the lists of 'hardships'. One man highlighted the breadth of the problem in the comment, 'I will have 3, 4, 5 young brothers who are unemployed; so I will have to look after them, and my parents, who are in a rural area'. Generally, 'suffering' was presented as a variety of injustice (that is, as moral economy). Thus, for instance, the problem with high taxation was that 'social services are not commensurate with those taxes', and 'we don't know where that money is going, so it seems the government is milking the poor'. The argument about 'salaries' was usually in the form, 'I had an increment of 20 per cent, and the prices went up by 200 per cent', though one worker commented: 'You used to find artisans moving around with their cars, and now days its very rare'. With 'school fees' the complaint was both that 'it was promised that primary education would be free', and that 'a lot of children are staying at home because their parents have no money'.

The second main response to our initial question can be summarised in one word: 'change'. 'Change' was often the other side of the coin to 'hardship', the ending of which was sometimes described as 'positive change', in contrast to 'change for its own sake'. For some workers the concept was also linked to a theory that politicians have a 'limited shelf life' (though this was not a phrase that anyone used). One worker drew the analogy of a healthy child who ages, adding 'when someone is reaching [their] seventies they are failing to achieve some things'. Another explained (in Shona):

It is like a new daughter-in-law. In the early days of her marriage into the family her behaviour will be superb ... With time she gets relaxed and many weaknesses or flaws begin to surface.

Many workers insisted that 'change' meant 'change the system'. For three of them this was equivalent to a 'government for the poor', and thus similar to 'positive change' (one woman added, in Shona: 'If the government does not change ... most of us are going to be retrenched. Then we will relocate to the rural areas, and that will compound the suffering'). One man qualified his response by adding: 'in 1980 [at liberation] we changed the system'. Six workers linked their definition of 'change' (or 'change the system') to Zambia and/or Malawi. One man added: 'We have to support people with trade union backgrounds', and another said: 'I am going to support the labour party, MDC, which stands for the workers. We have got the example of Zambia, which was changed by the labour party' (Endnote 18).

Three workers said 'change' meant 'change the government' and, since Change! – *Chinja!* in Shona – was the MDC's main election slogan, its use clearly implied support for that particular party. A common view was 'We are the ones who formed the MDC, hence we should vote for it'. Two men (one in Shona) were complimentary about Tsvangirai, who was said to 'appreciate the position of the worker'. Significantly, not one of the workers in these four factory groups, which included about 50 workers, expressed any support for the government – one woman claimed (in Shona), 'No living person is going to vote for ZANU-PF' – and nobody disagreed with those individuals who supported the MDC. Such overwhelming backing from workers was, of course, reflected in the Harare election results.

The initial question produced few responses that could be described as political, rather than economic. Even when we asked specifically about politics, many respondents turned the discussion back to economic concerns, and one simply told us: 'No. I'm not going to say about the politics, I'm going to say about the economic hardship' (Endnote 19). However, as if to underscore the close relationship between economics and politics he then added: 'This ESAP, we, as workers, we want it to be lifted out'. When pushed to comment on politics, people expressed opposition to corruption, and to the war in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), but there were far more voices concerned with restricting the powers of the presidency. One man said (in Shona): 'Our president has been in power for too long. Look at countries like the USA, they have limited presidential terms'.

Questions about land and rural/urban relations produced more interest. One man wanted land for accommodation, saying 'I'm still renting – though I've been here for ten years'. Another wanted distribution of at least 30 per cent of the land ('the rest can go to the white commercial farmers'). Generally, however, there was scepticism about the government's redistribution programme. Three workers in different factories made a similar point, with one of them expressing it thus (in Shona):

for the land to be effectively utilised people need to be provided with jobs ... because without jobs we cannot buy equipment and other inputs.

One man complained (again in Shona):

This land grab has caused a lot of problems – for example scarcity of foreign currency ... Of course there is a critical need for land ... but the land question has been manipulated by the political elite for its survival.

While some of these responses suggest a strong urban bias, many workers still had links to rural areas (Endnote 20). One man, for instance, argued:

I was at my rural area, and people from the urban areas are busy educating those people ... You have to say to them, 'sorry I have failed to come to a funeral because of the economic hardship'. They say 'I want to come to look for employment, and if he comes he says please can I have the bus fare to go back' (Endnote 21).

However, this view was contradicted by one man who argued, 'Things seem to be cheaper in the countryside ... and they always receive something from the people working in the urban areas'. Another man thought that people in the rural areas were 'afraid of a fresh blood war'.

The sense of injustice, to which reference has already been made, sometimes incorporated a class consciousness. This was evident, for instance, in complaints that,

while the government had agreed to pay increases of up to 90 per cent for civil servants, it did nothing to assist other workers. One woman said (in Shona): 'The government is doing nothing for us, the industrial workers, just for the civil servants'. Her notion of class, however, involved overlapping categories, for she had just complained: 'The government is serving the rich, it's not there for the poor'. The notion that 'industrial workers' are part of 'the poor' may be related to the fact that, whereas Zimbabwe's 'poverty datum line' now stands at about Z\$8,100 per month, the average minimum wage is approximately Z\$2,500 (roughly US\$50) (Kanyenze, interview). At the one factory where rates of pay were discussed, however, workers said they were receiving about Z\$2,000. In addition to 'industrial workers' and 'the poor', 'we' was also defined as 'the workers' and on two occasions as 'the producers of wealth'. By contrast, 'they' were sometimes the government or 'bureaucrats', but it could also be 'the employer'. 'It is the employers who determine our fate', asserted one worker, adding, 'They give low wages in spite of the massive profits they make. We should not just blame the government'.

Notwithstanding this consciousness of class, there was little anti-capitalist sentiment. For instance, there were almost no voices calling for society to be controlled by the workers (a view that was widespread in South Africa by the late 1980s). To the contrary, there seemed to be a concern to be 'fair' and 'reasonable', and this was applied especially to the white farmers. Workers were disturbed that Mugabe was scaring away investors and causing a shortage of foreign currency; in other words, that he was threatening their own futures. There was also, however, a complaint that 'there is a lot of racism in industry' (though even this was turned into an attack on the government, which, it was said, had failed to address the problem). Another example of being 'reasonable' concerned pay demands. The ZCTU wants all pay to be above the poverty datum line, and although one man agreed with this, another, with general assent, felt that if this happened 'business might collapse'. The more popular demand was for a rise that was in line with inflation. Nevertheless, there were some more radical thoughts, including those of one man who argued:

We understand that in the 1980s the government used the marxist system, which benefited the poor, but socialism cannot prevail in one country, or even a continent. It should be global. As workers we feel that can happen!

These interviews can, I think, assist one to understand better the relationship between the working class and the MDC, especially when they are coupled with the preceding analysis. First and foremost, the bond is based upon an overriding desire for 'positive change', for a reversal of the tendency towards impoverishment, for which Mugabe is held responsible. Whilst, for the workers, economic problems are paramount, there is a recognition that trade unionism does not provide an adequate solution, and that since political advance is possible it should, at least, be given a try. Moreover, since the MDC, which is a product of this desire and this recognition, has been built, in the main, by the workers and their leaders, there is, or so it might seem, a reasonable chance that it will succeed. If the middle classes or the farmers want to join *their* party, or if foreign interests want to give it support, so much the better; afterall, they too have good reasons for wanting an end to Mugabe's rule. This, in short, is the politics of short-term interest as perceived by the majority of workers (not those of a 'labour aristocracy'). As for the longer term; well, as one worker told me: 'If things don't work out, we try other means'.

Scenarios & Conclusions

The MDC did very well in the election, but it did not win. Mugabe remains in power, and the people are still poor. One possibility is what might be termed the Suharto Scenario. Suharto, it will be recalled, was President of Indonesia from 1965 until he was forced from power by a massive, popular, and largely spontaneous uprising in May 1998 (Endnote 22). In the group interviews, one worker mentioned Suharto, and two others said that mass action might provide a way forward. Even Kanyenze thought that Mugabe would not be removed through elections, and that, as with Suharto (his example) 'it would have to be done through other means, particularly civil disobedience'. He also felt that disobedience was probable (given the high level of inflation, then running at 59 per cent, and set to worsen), and Sibanda agreed that such mobilisation was both likely and 'a good thing'. It seems to me, however, that the full Suharto Scenario is improbable, for why risk mass violence when there is a strong possibility of Mugabe being removed in the 2002 election? Of course, if he refuses to allow a reasonably fair election, or rejects its outcome, that would be a different story. In the weaker sense, though, we have already witnessed the tendency toward civil disobedience in the ZCTU's highly successful stayaway, held on 2 August 2000. Moreover, given the level of price rises and the high degree of confidence among workers, there is a strong chance of pay-related mass strikes later this year.

Then there is a Reform Scenario. Within ZANU-PF, there is already considerable pressure on Mugabe, and if this grows he might decide to bow out of the limelight, possibly attempting, like Julius Nyerere, to retain influence through the party (Bond, 1999b:11; Bond, 2000b:1). Whilst something like this may happen, it would solve little, since a new president or presidential candidate is unlikely to have the kind of popular credibility, as a critic of Mugabe, that would be necessary to thwart Tsvangirai's campaign for the presidency.

A third possibility is the Kaunda Scenario: Mugabe is beaten in the 2002 election and hands over power to the MDC. Kanyenze thought this improbable, because the Zimbabwean government is too 'arrogant'; certainly Mugabe has demonstrated a willingness to use extra-legal force, if necessary, to maintain his rule. In a pure sense, the Kaunda option does seem unlikely but, if there is a high level of working-class mobilisation and the MDC takes the necessary steps to develop its base among the peasantry, it remains, I think, the most likely possibility. The MDC will, though, need to engage in the kind of sustained media work and outreach campaigning by trade unionists that was undertaken by the ANC prior to South Africa's 1994 election, and it could benefit from revisiting its land policy. On balance, then, the fourth scenario, a continuation of ZANU-PF rule well beyond 2002 seems less probable. There are just too many forces stacked against it: worsening economic crisis; a well-organised working-class; most of big capital; the middle classes (at least in the urban areas); the western powers; Matabeleland, most of Manicaland, and much of the Midlands and Masvingo; considerable internal dissent and scepticism even among erstwhile allies among other southern African presidents.

What, though, will happen to the MDC? It is, as the lawyers say, 'common cause' that there are tensions within the MDC, and there appear to be a number of distinct discourses, even around the leadership. Cross says, categorically, 'we will subsidise nothing' and 'we do not support price control' (interview; Bond, 2000b). Kanyenze, by contrast, emphasises 'equity' and a 'stakeholder driven process', and complains about 'people like Eddie [Cross] ... who've taken the policies more to the right, which doesn't go down well with labour'. So far, especially, perhaps, because of the pre-

election violence, these tensions have rarely reached the surface, but this is likely to change. MPs will have to take up positions on a range of issues, and on some of these – perhaps land, maybe price controls and subsidies – there are likely to be divisions within the parliamentary caucus that could spill over into labour movement and public debate. The likelihood must be, however, that the widespread and intense desire to get rid of Mugabe will ensure that the MDC holds together, at least until the presidential election.

Even after that election, there will probably be a honeymoon period. For instance, had the MDC come into government after the voting for parliament – which, for a brief moment, seemed possible – it would have been able to bring some immediate improvements to the economy. Mugabe's costly war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) would have been speedily ended, the number of ministries would have been reduced from 57 to 15, some financial aid that had been suspended would have been released, corruption might have declined, and there would probably have been some increase in investor confidence. By the time the MDC forms a government, the specifics will have changed, but it remains likely that there will be some short-term economic improvements. As for the longer term, one must, I think, be sceptical about any market-based policy having significant success in an economy as weak as Zimbabwe's (see Bond, 1998 and 1999a). The example of Zambia – where the MDM had a similar social base and similar politics to the MDC – is pertinent. There, pro-market reforms, especially privatisation, have increased corruption, boosted profits for foreign businesses, undermined union organisation, and increased poverty (Adler et al., 1997). Tsvangirai responded to concern about the MDM analogy by saying: 'I think Chiluba did not come on board with any ideology at all', and then added that Zambia showed it was necessary for workers to retain 'their initiative over the party' (Bond, 2000a). This is, surely, an extraordinarily weak defence to problems related to the dynamics of global capitalism and key government policies.

Biti argues that there will be 'class struggles within the MDC ... between the neo-liberal element and the leftist element', and there are signs of this already. For instance, Gwisai clearly has popular support over some of the issues he has been raising, such as subsidies, price controls and opposition to a social contract. Thus, Shoko recognised that workers want taxation 'ploughed back in the form of subsidies'. In the group interviews there was support for price controls and *The Worker* (July 1998) reported criticisms of negotiations for a social contract. However, as Gwiyo noted: 'the struggle has just started ... the struggle for workers is yet to take shape'. Any emerging opposition will no doubt search for alternatives to the present MDC programme, and it may find value in proposals recently advanced by Bond (who, significantly, perhaps, is highly regarded by Biti). He recommends (2000b:11):

price controls (a short-term palliative to be sure, but a popular bandaid to some inflationary problems); foreign exchange controls; repudiating Mugabe-era debt, mainly on the grounds that IMF/Bank programmes were incompetently designed; massive expansion and redirection of basic-needs state subsidies ... growing state ownership and worker control of important – and potentially viable – bankrupt private firms (and mines and farms); and a reorientation of budgetary spending and imports towards working-class and poor people's need.

This takes me, finally, to the relevance of Zimbabwean events for an understanding of South African politics. To the best of my knowledge, the only serious attempt to undertake such a comparison was that offered by Ian Phimister back in 1995. He recognised that there were important differences, including, though not only, the fact

that in Zimbabwe the liberation struggle had been 'almost exclusively rural' while in South Africa it was 'largely urban'. The thrust of his case was, however, that the similarities were more compelling, and he concluded that,

the shared trajectory of national liberation goes a considerable way towards explaining why it is that erstwhile heroes of the fight against settler colonialism sooner or later squander their credibility ... precisely because they depended on the support and invariably the leadership of black professionals and other better-off elements, they ended up entrenching social inequalities.

There is much to be said for this argument, though I would certainly want to factor in the international economic dimension, pointing to similarities between ESAP and South Africa's GEAR (Growth, Employment and Redistribution). Clearly, at this stage, Mbeki is not Mugabe – they have differences over key regional issues, and notwithstanding the AIDS debacle, rising unemployment and attacks on various groups of workers, Mbeki retains widespread support – the implication is, however, that he could, in some sense, become another Mugabe.

What are the main features of Zimbabwe's recent history that might, in modified form, be applicable in South Africa? The first is that, when people's living standards drop they begin to blame the government, leading, in instances where the administration has been in a power for a long time, to a popular mood of resentment that can turn into mass mobilisations. This has happened in many settings; in, for instance, the UK (against Margaret Thatcher), as well as in the immediately relevant cases, Zambia and Malawi, and more dramatic ones, such as Indonesia. Second, for countries with post-liberation, nationalist governments, unless opposition takes on a provincial or ethnic form, its core will consist of the labour movement. According to South African government insiders, Mbeki has given tacit support to Mugabe because he does not want a labour-backed opposition movement to succeed, particularly not in his 'back yard'. It seems possible, then, that Mbeki is not only aware of the parallels between the two countries, he is also concerned lest COSATU, increasingly hostile to his policies, follows the ZCTU in launching an opposition movement.

But let us, for a moment, return to that key difference between the two countries' recent political histories, the question of terrain of past struggle. First, for Zimbabwe, despite the continuing importance of the land question, the main dynamic is now located in the urban areas, thus reducing the difference between the two countries. Second, though, the South African working class is more politically experienced than that of Zimbabwe and, relatedly, the ANC has much firmer working-class roots than ZANU-PF. These roots are largely provided for the ANC by its allies, the South African Communist Party (SACP) and COSATU and, initially, the leaders of these organisations can be expected to use their influence to stall the formation of a mass labour-based party (and this has already been the case). However, if present trajectories continue, discontent can be expected to rise, and proposals for a new party (which have existed since the early 1980s, and have periodically reappeared) will gain increased support. Eventually, the SACP will have to decide whether or not to back such a movement, but this is a matter of detail (albeit a significant one). The contrast between the two countries is important, however, in that, in the more politicised South African context, a new party would be unlikely to endorse the kind of neo-liberal, social democracy that the MDC offers; after all this is, to a large extent, the kind of politics already practised by the ANC.

For Zimbabwean workers, the creation of a 'workers party' marks a major step forward, a valuable experience. 'If, as the man said, 'things don't work out, we try other means'. So, then, maybe the voice of another Harare worker is salutary – perhaps the only solution to poverty is a socialism that is global, and perhaps, too, as he said, it 'can happen'!

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Endnotes

1. There is some possibility that this balance of parliamentary forces will change. At the time of writing (18 August), ballots are being recounted in a number of constituencies where the outcome was close, and the MDC is also challenging some results, claiming prima-facia evidence of intimidation. In addition the Supreme Court has nullified thousands of postal votes cast by soldiers in the DR Congo.
2. Unless otherwise indicated, all quotations are from these interviews (which were taped).
3. For Zimbabwe's labour history in the period preceding independence, see Britain & Raftopoulos, 1997. For the most recent contribution to the history of its more dramatic earlier phase, see Phimister & Raftopoulos, 2000.
4. Patrick Bond's trenchant criticism of *Beyond ESAP*, which he says 'codified many of neo-liberalism's worst conceptual errors and policy recommendations' (1998:412) is, doubtless, valid. Nevertheless, in presenting an alternative to the government's general approach to economics, rather than merely rejecting specific policies, the ZCTU leadership may have begun to envisage itself as an alternative government.
5. The farm labourers' union, the General Agriculture and Plantation Workers' Union of Zimbabwe, claimed about 84,000 members as late as December 1999 (Magwaza, interview). Compared with South Africa, this sector is well organised. Surprisingly, perhaps, there is greater legal support for union organising and collective bargaining in Zimbabwe than in South Africa. For a valuable insight into the consciousness of farm labourers, see Rutherford, 2000.
6. See also Norma Krieger's Briefing in this edition of ROAPE. It would be a mistake to regard the war veterans as an homogenous block; the Zimbabwe Liberators' Platform, for instance, represents former guerrillas who suffered greatly at the hands of Mugabe (see Moore, 2000b).
7. According to Gwiyo, labour forums started with the advent of ESAP, 'as a tool to denounce government'. He says that they were also used to mobilise support for the annual May Day rallies, but, from the 1997 stayaway, became more frequent 'as a

result of change in consciousness, [with] workers beginning to take an interest in their political role’.

8. In preparation for the gathering, the ZCTU held broad-based consultative workshops in 20 towns around the country, and a summary of participants’ contributions is reproduced in Kondo, 1999. One person complained: ‘At independence they [*chefs*] came with socialism, an ideology they brought from the revolution, later they came up with ESAP, borrowed from the International Monetary Fund and World Bank. All we, the *povo*, was taught and expected to do was to answer to slogans in chorus and to do it as said’. In general, there was ‘recognition that collective bargaining is not helping at all’, and it was found that ‘workers were ready to form a party’ (Shoko, interview).

9. It will take time for an detailed account to emerge, but for a stimulating, if preliminary, analysis that suggests a possible move towards feudalism (a term that Biti also used), see Moore, 2000a.

10. This massive gathering was in marked contrast to Mugabe’s closing rally in Harare, at which only 5,000 people were present. I give these figures because the scale of the meetings was misrepresented in some western media; this was probably as a consequence of briefings by Jonathan Moyo, then ZANU-PF’s campaign manager, now minister of state for publicity and information in the president’s office. Moyo claimed that the MDC rally only filled a small section of one stand, implying less than 5,000 people, and that the ZANU-PF rally attracted 25,000 people.

11. *Census 1992* recorded that 31.2 per cent of Zimbabweans were living in urban areas, 51.4 per cent were on communal land, 12.9 per cent lived on commercial farms, and 4.5 per cent lived in resettlement areas or on state land. Outside the two urban provinces, the majority occupational classification was ‘agriculture’. Sixty-four per cent of the MDC’s total vote came from the rural provinces. All voting figures are taken from *The Herald*, 27 June 2000.

12. In an interview with Bond (2000b), Tsvangirai grappled with the politics of nationalism, arguing: ‘In many ways we are moving away from the nationalist paradigm ... MDC politics are not nationalist inspired, because they focus more on empowerment and participation of the people. ZANU’s nationalist thinking has always been top-down, centralised, always trapped in a timewarp’.

13. A number of the managers complained that shortage of foreign exchange was limiting supplies and restricting output, though production was being undertaken in ‘our’ four factories.

14. Only one of the groups included specific discussion on gender. This produced two responses, both from men over 40. One said, ‘I wouldn’t like women to get into parliament’, and the other commented: ‘At the moment our culture hasn’t changed to let our women rule, but, with time, we expect that to happen’. It would be interesting to take this matter further, possibly by comparing working-class paternalism in Zimbabwe and South Africa.

15. Moreover, Tsvangirai, aged 48, was more capable of relating to and articulating the concerns of the younger generations than Mugabe, aged 76.

16. My observations about the gender and age composition of Zimbabwean workers are largely confirmed by Gaidzanwa, 1991. However, this earlier study found lower

average levels of education; a difference which may, perhaps, be explained by the fact that it was conducted a decade ago. In 'our' groups all the workers were black.

17. My general impression, not only from these interviews, was that education correlated with confidence to speak out against Mugabe (which is, of course, ironical, since the high quality of Zimbabwean education was, arguably, the single most impressive achievement of his first ten years in office).

18. Pressed for details about conditions in Zambia and Malawi, responses were more sanguine. From knowledge that had been received from lorry drivers and Zambian traders, the workers understood that conditions were still bad in those countries, though in Malawi it was said that 'things have relaxed a bit'. It may be, then, that the importance of change in these two countries was that it demonstrated that labour-led parties had the ability to win elections.

19. Miles Larmer (pers. com.), whose MA (1992) was on the campaign to remove Kaunda, suggests this attitude is 'uncannily similar to Zambia – "politics is not our concern, we leave all that to the politicians."'

20. In a survey conducted a decade ago, out of 172 urban workers, two-thirds maintained a rural home (Peta et al., 1991:118).

21. When Sibanda was asked, what, in his experience, convinced peasants to vote for the MDC, he replied: 'The economic issue. We are telling them we are going to create jobs, we are going to bring prices down. That's what they are voting for, there's no doubt. Most of the youth in the rural areas have got no jobs, and those are the people who voted for us'.

22. Subsequently, *Socialist Worker* (July, 1998) and the *The Worker* (November, 1988) both carried articles containing support for the application of this approach to Zimbabwe. For a useful account of the Indonesian events, see Fermont, 1998. She notes, *en passant*, that, at 86 million strong, Indonesia's working class is larger than the entire working class of the world at the time of the *Communist Manifesto*.

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Group interviews with workers from four different factories in south-west Harare.

Appendix: Delegates to ZCTU Extra-Ordinary Congress, 1999

Amalgamated Railwaymen's Union	10
Associated Mine Workers' Union	11
Association of Enginemen	2
Banks and Allied Workers' Union	5
Catering and Hotel Workers' Union	14
Cement and Lime Workers' Union	2
Chemicals, Plastic and Allied Workers' Union	5
Commercial Workers' Union	19
Construction and Allied Workers' Union	5
Domestic and Allied Workers' Union	3
Education, Scientific, Social and Cultural W. U.	5
Electricity and Energy Workers' Union	4
Federation of Food and Allied Workers' Unions	2
Ferro Alloys Workers' Union	2
Iron and Steel Workers' Union	3
Leather Shoe and Allied Workers' Union	7
National Airways Workers' Union	2
National Engineering Workers' Union	13
Posts and Telecommunication Workers' Union	7
Railway Artisan Union	2
Textile Workers' Union	7
Tobacco Industry Workers' Union	5
Transport and General Workers' Union	3
Urban Councils Workers' Union	11
Total	149

Source: ZCTU, 1999. In addition to the 24 unions listed above, the congress allowed the Sugar Industry Union to attend 'on full delegate'. Nine of the ZCTU's affiliates were 'not in good standing', though four attended with observer status.