



Zimbabwe: Problems and Prospects of Socialist Development



Comrades, friends, ladies and gentlemen,

I am very pleased to have been invited to discuss Zimbabwe with you. In coming here this evening I am reminded of my own university days and how it was amidst the academic walls of the medical school that my political awareness was fostered. In those days I and my student friends were already becoming aware of the inequalities that existed both in Zimbabwe and also in South Africa. At the same time, we recognised our position of relative privilege and were guiltily (and not so guiltily) enjoying the good life. We realised that for us there was a choice. We could work towards qualifications and the advancement of our own position or we could direct our thoughts and mould our attitudes towards a more austere way of life, with a more altruistic set of goals. Whatever the decision, as students, it was one which we could ponder at leisure after classes. We could support demonstrations, engage in debate, increase our factual repertoire, but delay the decision for total commitment.

After graduation there continued to be an apparent choice. The role of a busy doctor, spending his time ministering to others, being called out at all hours, was one which could provide a relatively adequate alibi. The lack of total commitment could be rationalised away as due to the urgent demands of the job; and in between the good life continued.

RECONCILIATION

I need not describe the march of political events of the 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s. Suffice it to say that the relentless greed of imperialism in Zimbabwe knew no bounds. The suffering of the masses was disregarded, ignored and aggravated by the brutality of those who were themselves victims of the class struggle. The system of colonialism and imperialism was one in which pious sadism flourished. As those of our leaders who timidly asked for a plate at the high table, for a small share in the affairs of the state, were banned, imprisoned or simply 'disappeared', the struggle for basic rights took on a more acute dimension. In desperation the leaders turned to armed struggle. With the commitment to armed struggle, there was no longer any room for choice.

An address given by Dr Ushewokunze at the University of Zimbabwe on 31 July 1981, this paper highlights the problem of a liberated country and the dangers of national conventions. Dr Ushewokunze was Minister of Health in Mugabe's cabinet and is presently the Minister of Home Affairs.

At the moment, resolve narrowed the horizon — to permit of only one lifestyle — a life directed solely to victory.

During the years of the war there was great unanimity of opinion — in fact, one could say there was no sustained disagreement. We shared a common enemy and as brothers we fought for equality, and many, many died for this. It can be said that we revolted against our oppressors and participated in the revolution. We were the revolution. We were very clear in our thinking; contradictions were resolved.

It was as revolutionaries that we came to Lancaster. It was there that we were asked to gamble our reputation, based on actions not words, for our freedom.

When our President Comrade Mugabe asked, as Prime Minister, for reconciliation, he was acknowledging, amongst other things, that our former foes now required liberating alongside us. We understood that not only our former enemies but also our own people required educating in order that they choose equality rather than pay lip service to it. When the gun was put to rest, the dialogue was started. For many of us this dialogue appears repetitive. It enunciates statements that are well known to us, we become impatient for more overt change. But we must remember that for most of our number, who have been denied access to books, access to genuine knowledge of the meaning and workings of socialism that this is a new uncharted territory. How did the suitors in Shakespeare's play choose when faced with the three caskets? Which contained the reward? Was it the golden casket, the silver one, or that which was made of lead?

SOCIALISM

What, then, is socialism? Is there a single definition? Is there a single path to it? At which stage is it achieved? We do know that socialism is not welfare capitalism. Welfare capital-

ism is the benevolent paternalism whereby a portion of the privileged's wealth is doled out for free schools, free health, good roads, low-cost housing, subsidised food, and the poor are protected from the worst excesses of poverty, provided that the numbers of the ever present poor are not too great, and provided that economic power remains essentially concentrated in the same hands as before. At a certain stage the giving stops to protect the goose that lays the golden egg.

Since Independence it has openly been acknowledged that although we may be politically free — and even this is doubtful because of the Lancaster House Agreement — we are still not economically free. Land, raw materials and industry are substantially in private hands, often directed from abroad. As will be shown later in this discussion, of Zimbabwe's fifteen leading manufacturing companies, twelve are foreign owned, as are a majority of the commercial banks. The same is essentially true of mining and agriculture. In these fields, multinationals, whose names are household words, have developed an octopus-like power hitherto unresponsive to any control or even to the wishes of the masses. In our lifetime, food, oil and other materials have become powerful weapons in the hands of the political forces often operating behind the scenes to prevent socialist change, without appearing to be directly involved. For these reasons it is imperative that the land and the nation's natural resources and industries should be predominantly under public control and scrutiny. It is apparent that ultimately the struggle for socialism in Zimbabwe cannot be divorced from that in other countries. We need to be aware of, and constantly on our guard against, the dangers of tribalism, incipient corruption, destabilisation and loss of purpose that may be fostered by the enemies of Zimbabwe.

We know that socialism is concerned with equality (and not merely

equality of opportunity), brotherhood and freedom.

What then is the prerequisite for socialism in Zimbabwe? It is agreement to have socialism. We do not require the agreement of the neo-colonialist forces for this, but the essential agreement is that of the masses of Zimbabwe. Our overwhelming problem in Zimbabwe is how to achieve this agreement. Our people, who have nearly a century of oppression and humiliation to recover from, are timid, are afraid to relinquish the bourgeois material effects which they have. In many cases these possessions are pathetic bits and pieces painfully collected over a lifetime of hardship. As the new Zimbabwean begins to stretch his limbs with new found confidence he does not yet appear to be ready to make sacrifices when he considers himself to have so little. The emerging Zimbabwean is an easy prey to the forces of capitalism, of neo-colonialism. **The deliberate policy of the former racist regime was to exclude us from training in essential skills, and this lack of trained manpower has added to our vulnerability.** We have seen it take its toll on the African continent. We may well ask ourselves, what has independence done for some of our brethren on this continent who seem to have been mesmerised by welfare capitalism? Has the neo-colonial ideology ushered in equality and a fairer world?

EXPERIENCE

We in Zimbabwe are fortunate in that we have already chosen to develop solidarity with and secure assistance from socialist countries throughout the world, and we are able to learn from their experience of socialism stretching over decades. We know from such experience that mass education, on which our government has rightly placed emphasis, can facilitate socialist awareness. Here the mass media can play a powerful part in fostering knowledge, awareness, a sense of solidarity and questioning of the outmoded institutions and values. Those who presume to educate the public should be imbued with a sense of responsibility to the public. Here the government has made a start in freeing the press from South African control and establishing the mass media trust.

Similarly, the government has made a useful, if modest, start in encouraging worker participation in industry and in establishing co-operatives and collective farming. Banks and finance corporations should be subjected to greater public scrutiny and control — already the government has a majority shareholding in one bank and a 40 per cent shareholding in another bank in Zimbabwe. Public financing should be characterised by a fully developed system of public

accountability. The labour movement should be seen to be in alliance with the government. The Party should act as intermediary between the masses and the government. Individual members of parliament and senators should remain in constant touch with the people, so that the permanent black majority in parliament ensures the momentum towards socialism.

In the end our prospects depend upon our choices. No, not our, *your* choices. The future of our country and of our advance to socialism depends upon the commitment that each one of you makes to conquer the enemy, greed and ignorance. You have a duty to enhance your own self-awareness, to recognise your duty to work with, alongside and through our Party to reach the people of Zimbabwe so that, with their enlightenment, we can achieve that for which we have fought.

TRANSITIONAL PHASE

Let me now as a political-scientist take a calm and cold look at our beautiful country — Zimbabwe. I believe we are going through a national democratic revolution whereby society and its institutions have to be democratised. It is a transitional phase to socialism and the guiding principles are socialist. Our Prime Minister has made it clear that we envisage a socialist society in the final analysis. Let us, however, remind ourselves how early in the process of defining a new Zimbabwe the present moment is, and let this serve too as a warning that humility and caution are in order in commenting on such a situation. Where then do we begin an analysis of 'problems and prospects of socialist development in Zimbabwe'?



Obviously, in trying to make an analysis of socialist development in Zimbabwe much will depend upon our reading of the character of ZANU (PF), of the class forces which it represents, and of the kind of politics and ideology which it has come to embody — of how well, in short, ZANU (PF) itself really has 'learnt its dialectics'. Such a reading is no very straightforward exercise, however. The evidence is slippery and the scope for difference of opinion and of emphasis vast. For this reason, there may be some point in bracketing temporarily the ZANU (PF) question in order to look

at the actual terrain for manoeuvre which confronts our government. It is, in any case, a way of posing the issue from which scientific socialists can hope to learn.

Lenin's enforced reversion to the new economic policy, Mao's early post-1948 dalliance with China's 'national capitalists', suggest that in the transition to socialism, the shortest distance between two points is not necessarily a straight line, that hurried and unprogrammed change can sometimes be as dangerous as going too slow. What of the Zimbabwean case in this regard?

Certainly, the inherited terrain is formidably congested and the need for tactical dexterity patent. A good starting point would be to remind ourselves that Zimbabwe possesses a notably dependent capitalist economy. It is well endowed with minerals, with gold almost the country's largest foreign exchange earner, while on the agricultural side, as much as one-half of Zimbabwe's agricultural production is exported, contributing a third or more of foreign exchange earnings. Nonetheless, this is also an economy where a quite highly developed manufacturing sector accounts for about a quarter of gross domestic product.

FOREIGN INVESTMENTS

Despite such diversification, however, concentration of ownership and a very high degree of external control has remained one of the economy's two most distinctive characteristics; the other being the fact that black Zimbabweans are estimated to control no more than 12 per cent of the productive capacity of the economy! Thus, domestic capital — in agriculture, light industry, commerce and services — merely fills gaps in an economy in which 7.6 per cent of manufacturing firms produce 68 per cent of total output, and where, of the country's fifteen leading profit-making companies, twelve are foreign owned (as are three banks); in which mining production is almost entirely dominated by foreign firms (88 per cent of jobs and 95 per cent of output), and in which, even in agriculture, perhaps as much as three-quarters of profits accrue to externally owned plantations and estates.

A number of very large companies control key sectors — Turner and Newell (asbestos), Union Carbide (chrome). Lonrho (mining and manufacturing), Delta (South African breweries) — while the South African giant, Anglo-American, which is in mining (nickel, copper, coal), iron and steel, agriculture (Hippo Valley for sugar, Mazoe Estate for citrus), and milling, and which has one or more directors on eighty-two different companies, has spread itself right across the economy.

Of course, these firms almost all rely on migrant and low wage labour and have almost all been involved in high levels of remittance of repatriated profits and dividends — two things any socialist government can be expected to bridle at. The big question is: can the possession of bargaining counters by the Zimbabwean bourgeoisie make private capital relatively immune from radical government action? This remains to be seen as no one knows what lies in the womb of time.

Some economists say that it is hard to find a sub-Saharan African example comparable to the Zimbabwe case, in which the role of foreign investments has been so long established, so deeply integrated into the sector producing the bulk of the output, so strongly interconnected with local capital, and in consequence probably as difficult to foresee being quickly altered. This is the major problem in the way of socialist development in Zimbabwe. That is why the statement in the ZANU (PF) electoral manifesto must elicit objective sympathy. I quote: **'One of the existing practical realities is the capitalist system which cannot be transformed overnight' and the attendant formulation that 'private enterprise will have to continue until circumstances are ripe for socialist change'. These 'circumstances' are the problems in socialist development in Zimbabwe.**

It might be tempting, were it not for the circumstances which are not yet ripe, to present as some material approximation to socialism the substantial state sector which does exist — marketing boards, electricity, railways, airline, posts and telecommunications, an industrial development corporation, all these together accounting for one-third of the country's total economic activity — and the quite diverse assortment of available state control — over-prices, imports, foreign exchange, new projects. This is an overt prospect in socialist development in Zimbabwe.

It, however, goes without saying that in this national democratic revolutionary phase forward-looking people ultimately would be much more comfortable with a production pattern which, even at the minimum, serviced the 'basic needs' of the population in ways that 'market forces' are never likely to do. There must, therefore, be advocacy for the movement from political to 'economic independence'. This would create 'ripe circumstances' for the controlled nationalisation of certain institutions, extended control over industry and mining and significant regulation of private sector investment decisions. In addition, this would widen the scope for the establishment of workers' control in all economic sectors. Again, the problem of the terrain being what it

is, no precipitate or unconsidered measures would follow from this approach. The general thrust must, nevertheless, be generated and sustained. Majority shareholding must remain inside the country and projects re-invested.



Robert Mugabe meeting Lord Carrington, Minister of Foreign Affairs, during the Lancaster House negotiations.

LAND QUESTION

The second conditioning factor in Zimbabwe's political economy is the land question, source of much of the heat behind the country's revolutionary thrust over the years and now a policy area of considerable challenge to our government. It provides a compelling argument for structured change. The problem is the grip on productive agricultural land by the private sector as a fundamental factor in determining the shape of such land reform initiatives as are likely to be forthcoming. One of the problems in socialist development vis-a-vis the land question is the compromise we made during the Lancaster House conference, at British dictate, to accept the entrenchment (effectively for ten years), in the constitution's Declaration of Rights, of a stringent section on 'freedom of deprivation of property'. The implications of this can be summarised as follows.

Compulsory acquisition can only take place when it is for the 'public benefit' or 'in the case of underutilised land, settlement land for agricultural purposes'. Acquisition can only be lawful provided there is 'prompt payment of adequate compensation', remitted abroad 'within reasonable time'. The provisions are justifiable and thus the supreme court could have a vital role to play. Much is left to the judges, since there is no definition of underutilised land, adequate compensation or prompt payment. In short, the British, with this section in the constitution, have tried to corner the new Zimbabwe government and thus control the pattern of socialist development in Zimbabwe even more effectively than they cornered some of their former colonies.

This can be seen as a compromise that cost us the pace of socialist advance. This carries the dangers which, if less dramatic than short-term economic crises, are perhaps even more serious in the longer run. For there is the very real possibility of becoming trapped on the terrain of short-term calculation, circumstances never quite so ripe for socialist change as to make realisation of such change a straightforward exercise.

RISKS

Then, with powerful forces acting quite self-consciously to reinforce pragmatism and caution, long-term goals of transformation may, without ever being quite ripe, merely wither on the vine. I have been told that a transition to socialism is never risk-free. **The deftest (and most successful) of revolutionaries have been those who have pushed carefully but creatively at the margin of risk, expanding that margin and increasingly controlling it.** This round of Zimbabwean revolution is much more fraught with complexity than the armed struggle which preceded it.

Nor are the Zimbabwe government's calculations with reference to this complexity being made in a vacuum. Bourgeois commentators summarise the other side of the Zimbabwean coin by talking of a possible 'crisis of expectations'. This is not a contradiction which is easily resolved. Yet even if some greater risk is likely to be envisaged in meeting some of the goals like free schooling, free health services, more and better paid jobs, social security, etc. — problems in socialist development in Zimbabwe still exist, for, viewed from another perspective, such expectations are real class demands, coming from those exploited classes in Zimbabwean society who not only wish to redress their historic situation of deprivation but who also have every reason in so doing to see the settlers and the multinationals as their class enemies. **Moreover, it is precisely in the class conflictual nature of mass demands that there lies the possibility of workers and peasants coming to see in socialism a broader solution to their deprivation aimed at the fundamental transformation of the productive relations of Zimbabwean society.** Equally, it is when such a transformation project is not in train that class demands can dissipate into mere 'expectations' (the understandable, but economic, drive for more education, more health, more pay, more land) and the movement's response transmuted into mere welfarism.

In the latter event, such demands are then too easily construed as 'problems' to be dealt with administratively — the social democratic trap — rather than becoming the substance of prioritisation and self-

conscious planning by the deprived classes themselves. Class alliances fragment, and (we) politicians, far from being catalysts of socialist consciousness, begin to outbid each other to deliver sectoral and regional favour. Or, alternatively, we turn ourselves into instruments of suppressing what we think are unreasonable demands altogether. This is the problem inherent in our socialist development and which could then be interpreted, not so much as failure to 'satisfy popular expectations' but as demobilisation of the class struggle.

WHITES

Let us turn for a moment to the bourgeoisie, whose whites — only a couple of a hundred thousand in a population of some seven million — who nonetheless continue to dominate the infrastructure of the Zimbabwe society virtually across

the direction of the judicious Africanisation of established structures.

Nonetheless, the multinational fraction of the 'bourgeoisie' does have considerably more room for manoeuvre in the long run than its 'settler' counterpart, and can be expected to continue to use it in an attempt to pre-empt radicalisation of Zimbabwean nationalism in the direction of socialism. The game of the most intelligent of this bourgeoisie must now be — in Fanon's words — 'to capture the vanguard, to turn the movement to the right, and to "disarm" the people'. Part of the tactic here consists of threat, tacit or otherwise, i.e. capital flight, flight of personnel, industrial and agricultural collapse, and part will consist of the most obvious carrots, i.e. promotions, directorships, even bribery. But part of it,

will sometimes intervene. Dealing with this aspect of racism will divert us from our socialist course.

BLACK MIDDLE CLASS

At this point in Zimbabwe's history, Maynardism must be, will be, even more urgently the white-cum-bourgeois strategy: the creation of a black middle class. For Mr Maynard, self-evidently, had learnt his dialectics. This will present problems to socialist development in Zimbabwe. Viewed in these terms and in continental perspective, it would be surprising if there were not such recruits and more in Zimbabwe — even among you here today.

Despite massive educational deprivation at the base, and real shortfall in black skills relevant to our situation, Zimbabwe does have a large pool of trained Africans —



Multinationals: The Long Reach

the board. This is far from a uniform group, being roughly divided between settlers (i.e. farmers, skilled workers, small businessmen and civil servants) and those local actors who are attendant upon, or employed by, large multinational enterprises. **It is the settler group which has felt itself to be most threatened — in their land, in their jobs, in their lifestyle — by African advance, and most supportive of limitations upon reform inherent in our advance to socialism.** Multinational capital thinks it can live, on the terrain of neo-colonialism, with a much more adventurous version of black advance and plans to do so. The interests of these two elements of bourgeois society show considerable overlap of self-identification and interest. In any case, multinational capital must certainly be fearful of too precipitous a rate of change, even if such change were merely to be in

too, will be to draw 'the vanguard' even more firmly on to the cultural terrain of international capitalism and to make the values and *modus operandi* of this global system the 'commonsense' of the new African petit-bourgeoisie-in-the-making. It will be a part of the class struggle which will be fought not in the bush but on such prosaic 'battlefields' as the sundowner circuit, the ministerial office and the business meeting over lunch at some posh Salisbury hotel or club. It will be fought by the more sophisticated white civil servants, businessmen, local managers of multinational firms as they regroup on the ground, and by the purveyors of aid, capital and technology. It would be a mistake to underestimate the importance of this aspect of the problem in our socialist development in Zimbabwe. There are limits upon such bourgeois action, of course; white supremacy is not merely a calculating machine and sheer racism

trained both locally and abroad. Complementing those already *in situ*, many of those trained abroad will be returning, and some have already done so, to claim their place in the sun, often from western-sponsored programmes which have been more or less self-consciously designed to groom them for such a moment — the middle-class or Maynardism moment. In addition, there are in most sectors, public and private, skilled and semi-skilled Africans whose advancement up the job ladder has been artificially constrained by racist definitions of competence. Such facts present both an opportunity and a danger, the danger lying in the possibility that some fundamental characteristics of the white economy in particular the extreme inequality in wealth, income, land distribution and decision making, will survive, with the skilled and educated blacks slipping into white shoes, and thereby creating themselves as

a black middle class with interests directly at variance with the majority of the population and in support of growing integration with and subordination to the world capitalist economy. Thus a 'new' or 'bureaucratic' petit-bourgeoisie will begin to form around the state and corporate hierarchies, and perhaps in future there will also be private sector opportunities for the latter to exploit for themselves. In short, black advancement will now be the name of the game, and in that context it will not be the availability of recruits for 'mere Africanisation' which is in question. Rather, the crucial factor will be the political and ideological context in which such potential recruits now find themselves and in which they must define their practice. **Marcellino dos Santos, a senior FRELIMO leader, once said that the most important way to guarantee against such deprivation as just spelt out was to popularise the revolutionary aims and to create such a situation that if, for one reason or another, at some future time some people start trying to change their aims, they will meet with resistance from the masses.** This is a prospect in our socialist development in Zimbabwe.

PEASANTRY

What are the prospects for a people's politics to safeguard the integrity of the present phase of the Zimbabwe revolution? An initial key to this should lie in the role of the peasantry, since it was among the peasantry that the Patriotic Front alliance found its popular base for advancing the armed struggle as effectively and differentially as it did. Perhaps the key is to be found

in our programme of collectivisation — peasant agriculture will be the basis of collectivisation — such collective agriculture will be by 'persuasion rather than compulsion'. When established, such units will provide the socio-political basis for the peasantry's organisation as an even more fully self-conscious class — an insurance for good prospects for socialist development in Zimbabwe.

Such collective units should not be allowed to degenerate, as elsewhere in Africa, into mere instruments of state control of peasant agriculture and peasant surpluses. There must be developed methods of political work which simplify persuasion. There must be countervailing mechanisms of popular participation and control, there must be a balance between leadership and mass action. This assumes the instinct for democratisation will remain as it is now. It is the way in which this instinct is given current expression in the rural areas as institutionalised and focussed peasant power that will be the litmus test of the prospects of socialist development in Zimbabwe.

WORKING CLASS

What of the Zimbabwean working class, an obvious guarantor of a socialist transition? Of course, the category 'working class' is a slippery one under Zimbabwean conditions because much of the workforce is in migratory movement between urban and rural settings and sometimes from beyond our borders and, therefore, not that easily categorised. Moreover, this workforce is quite diversified. The

bases for extreme working-class discontent are also patent. Between 1965 and 1975 the wage gap between black and white had actually doubled. Given the vast discrepancies in income and life chance in Zimbabwe, one must be cautious about using labels like 'economism' or 'labour aristocracy' to characterise the thrust of such labour action, even when it does come, as is sometimes the case, from those sections of the workforce which are, relatively, least deprived and best organised.

Two difficulties arise, however. First, it must be emphasised that the terrain for working-class organisation has hitherto been partially organised culminating in the recent formation of the ZTCU. Despite settler-government restrictions, there are a number of African trade unions, many with some history of struggle, albeit struggle defined, by and large, in quite apolitical terms and directed towards fairly narrowly defined objectives. Less satisfactorily, some such unions have a history of extensive penetration by the most dubious of western influences, and these are influences which are at present again zeroing in on the African working class in preparation for the destabilisation of the good prospects for socialist development in Zimbabwe. Only the development of a self-conscious alliance of workers and peasants — with appropriate political institutions — capable of arbitrating competing demands by the popular classes and resolving such contradictions relatively non-antagonistically provides the key to good prospects of socialist development in Zimbabwe.