

ZIMBABWE - From War to Peace

by Paul Weinberg

The landslide 57 seat election victory for Zanu (P.F.) hails a new era for Zimbabwe. It marks the end of 90 years of white minority rule in the territory. At the same time it offers the black population a new vision and eventual legitimate control over their destiny. The significance of the result lies in the fact that behind mistaken propaganda slogans of the R.F. that the "Patriotic Front were a group of uncivilised Marxist barbarians" was a true and representative people's movement. Furthermore the election process itself proves the point that majority rule means true representation and does not mean just simply buying off a few puppets and chiefs. The April 1979 elections in no way changed things, even though a black Prime Minister and a black majority then sat in parliament. The war by all accounts escalated and a few token gestures were made to dismantle some of the racial legislation.

By and large the situation remained as before-the land distribution remained the same, wages remained below the poverty datum line and political harassment of Zanu and Zapu continued. As one former U.A.N.C. supporter put it, "we voted in April because we thought the Bishop would be an improvement on the R.F. We were soon proved wrong, though." Behind the veneer of black rule was the R.F. machine an entrenched white veto to prevent any changes to the constitution, and the key ministerial posts securely in the hands of the whites.

Thus the recent elections opened the way for the true black voice to be heard and to the opportunity for real political representation. By nearly all accounts this expression and the election process itself under the supervision of the colonial power had its "free and fair" stamp of approval. If cards were stacked against anyone it was against the Patriotic Front (ZANU and ZAPU). According to the terms of the agreement:—

The B.S.A. police would be responsible for the maintenance of law and order. The police had actively taken sides in the civil war and their impartiality was questioned. War refugees were to return. Of the approximately 250 000 in camps in Mozambique, Zambia and Botswana only 30 000 were allowed back in during the election. The Governor soon after the termination of the cease-fire deployed the Rhodesian security forces.

The Governor proscribed electioneering in a number of areas, most of which were key ZANU PF strongholds.

Finally the Patriotic Front alliance at Lancaster House had requested a two month postponement of the elections and as increase in the size of the monitoring forces. Both these requests were turned down.

Breaches of the cease-fire at the hands of Zanla and Zipra did occur. The existence of about 5 000 guerrillas and renegade members of these armies is an accepted fact. The media



Cabinet Minister Earnest Kadungara member of the central committee of Z.A.N.U. (P.F.) talks to a rally in the Charter district in the Midlands.

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however relying on official communiques, failed in general to mention acts of intimidation perpetrated by the existing order. Numerous reports throughout Zimbabwe of people being forced at gunpoint to attend U.A.N.C. rallies and active campaigning and wholesale intimidation by the Security Force Auxilliaries were recorded. The Church and Mambo Press bombings were almost definitely the work of the Selous Scouts. At the same time intimidation of a more subtle nature was being carried out by the administrative powers. At least 4 000 ZANU (PF) campaigners and supporters were arrested on the grounds of their being "intimidators" or "terrorist collaborators". Furthermore at every rally a member of the special Branch of the Police was there taking down notes and details of speakers and participants.

In balance though, the war had de-escalated considerably.

Deaths during the cease-fire period were down to an average of 7 per day, compared with between 50 and 100 at the height of the war, and the elections themselves took place in a situation of relative peace.

To the South African Press, and the average white Rhodesian the election results came as a complete surprise. To the party Executives it was expected. As one official put it "we didn't have to politicize the people—we've done that throughout the war. All we concentrated on was teaching people to vote." For Smith and the rightwingers the common belief about the "benign African" was shattered. For years now, the rural areas have been organised into cells of about 15 to 45 people in size, each linked to the other by "bush telephone". This political organisation as in the case of Angola and Mozambique has been the backbone of the war effort and one of the major reasons for the guerilla armies success. The fact that the guerilla armies were able to move as extensively as they did in a way speaks for itself, and destroys the colonial myths so assumed by the ruling white elite.

For the man in the street ZANU (PF) represented a liberation force, one that would fundamentally change the system and its operation. For the youth, many of whom have been

institutionalised vagrants from an early age there was no other party but "Jongwe" (the cock—the symbol for Mugabe). As Pauline Zamise who has been a Zanu P.F. supporter since the start of the war and leader of her local youth wing expressed it, "I support the party that is going to bring about real changes in society—in education, land, and housing—the boys have fought for our freedom and now we are going to get it".

With the elections now over and the possibility of a right wing coup remote, the future for Zimbabwe looks bright. Behind Mr Mugabe's apparent moderation is the recognition of the importance of the process of transition for progressive development. For the whites who have clung onto their privilege and power for so long, the key word is adaption—whether they will be prepared to apply their skills to the maximum utilization and benefit of the country as a whole is the question they have to answer themselves—they do have a choice—stay and adapt or head south.

For the blacks the elections are just one part of a process that will secure their future and the rights that they have been fighting for. The vision is there, the ground work has been covered and now it is up to the imperialist power to give new Zimbabwe a chance. □



People go to the polls in the Mtoko district in relatively peaceful period. Before the cease-fire the average death rate was between 50 and 100 per day, during the election itself was 5.

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