

ZIMBABWE

The Process of Liberation

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As long as the Africans in Zimbabwe were not strong enough to challenge the power of the white Rhodesian state established in 1890, the British, as the legal colonial authority over Rhodesia, were content to leave matters in the hands of the Rhodesians. Successive British governments conveniently avoided treating Rhodesia in the same manner as they had done other African colonies where independence was given to the indigenous peoples in the 1960s.

In Rhodesia, the existence of a white community was to make the country's history follow that of other colonies where a white settler community was also present — such as in Algeria, Angola, Kenya and Mozambique. As in these countries, the development of African protest from an ineffective moderate force spanning the period 1957-64 to armed struggle in the mid-1960s forced the imperialists to abandon their original inertia. At first they tried to protect the white regime in Rhodesia; then it was the white regime with the participation of a few moderate African elements until they were forced finally to take account of the genuine representatives of the African people, the Patriotic Front. The result, in the form of the Lancaster House Conference, was one of the most unforgettable ironies in the history of decolonisation. The armed struggle in Zimbabwe succeeded in bringing the conflict to an end through the very constitutional mechanism which had been denied the majority in the first place.

Nationalist movement

Ever since the banning of Rhodesia's first modern-day African nationalist party, the African National Congress in 1959, followed by the banning of a second one, the National Democratic Party, some African nationalists became impatient at seeing their parties banned one after another. Thus when the Zimbabwe African National Union was in turn banned in 1963, some leaders were opposed to the formation of another party and favoured operating from underground. A split soon developed within the nationalist ranks leading to the establishment of the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) led by Reverend Ndabaningi Sithole and the People's Caretaker

Council (which later kept the old name of ZAPU) led by Joshua Nkomo. Sithole was later replaced as leader of ZANU by Robert Mugabe in 1976.

The differences to some extent became essentially historical when the two movements both embarked upon armed struggle toward the end of the 1960s. However, certain factors continued to nurture the differences despite the coming together of the two to form the Patriotic Front in 1976. The leadership during the split stayed essentially the same as when the armed struggle was started. Also the two parties operated from neighbouring states of differing ideologies. ZANU's dependence on Mozambique tended to make the party more ideological and led to its adoption of Marxism-Leninism as its guiding philosophy in 1977. On the other hand, ZAPU's dependence on Zambia, a country heavily dependent on Rhodesia and South Africa for its economy, tended to circumscribe ZAPU's operations against the Smith regime. Also Nkomo's abortive negotiations with Smith in 1976 and the two men's subsequent secret meeting in Lusaka in April 1979 combined with a belief that the ZAPU leader was pro-West all tended to reflect on the party as more moderate than ZANU.

The role of the imperialists

When Ian Smith declared illegal unilateral independence in November 1965, Harold Wilson, then Labour prime minister, said that the rebellion would end in a matter of weeks rather than months. It did not. Rhodesia was able to receive massive help from South Africa and, as the Bingham Report has revealed, many companies, including British ones, helped Rhodesia to survive by breaking United Nations sanctions. The period 1965-71 saw attempts to settle the Rhodesia problem between Britain and Rhodesia without the participation of the African majority. Part of the reason for their exclusion was that African political activity had been outlawed when Ian Smith's Rhodesian Front party came to power and the armed resistance was still in its infancy.

The period 1972-78 was most crucial in that imperialist strategy went through dramatic changes. The guerrilla war in Zimbabwe had been placed on a more effective and regular footing in December 1972. The Caetano regime's defeat in Portugal in 1974 forced the imperialists to revise their strategy which hitherto had consisted of giving exclusive support to the white regimes of Southern Africa. In his National Security Study Memorandum No 39 on Southern Africa Henry Kissinger had written, 'The blacks cannot gain political rights through violence. Constructive change can come only by the acquiescence of the whites'. Now they discovered they were mistaken.

Henry Kissinger began to speak of the need to stop the 'radicalisation of Southern Africa' by which he meant the need to involve moderate African elements with the whites to the exclusion of the black militants. As he wrote in *Africa Report* September-October

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1976: 'The white population of Rhodesia must recognise the inevitable and negotiate for a solution which respects its basic interests while there is yet time'.

Kissinger persuaded Ian Smith to proclaim his acceptance of the principle of majority rule in September 1976. Believing that growing pressures might force the man, who only the previous March had said that he did not believe in African majority rule in a thousand years, to shift, the African nationalists agreed to attend the Geneva Conference in October 1976. That he had not really changed was soon shown by the breakdown of the conference when Smith opposed the British suggestion that militant African leaders should be involved in the

transitional period to independence in Zimbabwe.

The abortive Geneva conference however served as the source of events which were to become important later. It served as the source of the subsequent internal settlement agreement reached on March 3, 1978, with moderate African leaders: Bishop Muzorewa of the United African National Council (UANC), Reverend Ndabaningi Sithole of the African National-Sithole (later renamed Zimbabwe African National Union-Sithole, ZANU-Sithole) and Chief Jeremiah Chirau of the Zimbabwe United People's Organisation (ZUPO).

Because it involved Africans who identified with capitalism, the internal settlement was attractive to western imperialism. However the Africans participating in the venture did not substantially command the support of the guerrilla fighters. The result was a painful contradiction for imperialism, which it never quite resolved.

When Ian Smith declared UDI in 1965, the Labour Party was in power in Britain. UDI came at a time when opinion in Britain as in other parts of the western world was that change would come to Rhodesia through the white regime. All that was necessary therefore was to make the regime in Salisbury see reason. Thus because of the existence of white settlers who had constituted themselves into a state, Britain's decolonisation role took a slightly different form in Rhodesia. While in her other African colonies Britain had given independence to the indigenous people, in Rhodesia, her role consisted of persuading the white-controlled state to be politically accommodating to the Africans.

British attitudes

That was the general British attitude to Rhodesia. In terms of the attitudes of various British governments towards the colony, there was, however, a discernible difference of approach between Labour and the Tories. Successive Labour governments presented themselves as being more sympathetic to the aspirations of the African majority, and refused to confer legal independence to Rhodesia until the advent of African majority rule. On the other hand Labour governments opposed the forcible unseating of the illegal Smith regime as a necessary precondition to installing an African majority rule government. Various excuses were advanced, the most notorious of which was the kith and kin argument of prime minister Harold Wilson.

In order to strengthen its claim to being more sympathetic to African aspirations, Labour soon involved other parties in the Rhodesian conflict. In 1966 it took the matter to the United Nations where it was debated right up to 1979, the year of the Lancaster House conference. In 1976 Labour, in the wake of the events in Angola and elsewhere, was to involve the United States in what came to be called the Anglo-American initiative on Rhodesia. With the Americans, Labour generally consulted African states and specifically cooperated with the frontline states of Angola, Botswana, Mozambique, Tanzania and Zambia. But Labour's claim to being sympathetic to African aspirations was largely nullified by its lack of action to unseat the regime as well as its failure to prevent South Africa and other countries and companies (some of which were British) from illegally helping Rhodesia to maintain itself in power. As the Bingham Report revealed, Labour and the Tories knew how Rhodesia was being illegally supplied with oil by British companies, but did nothing to stop this practice.

In their attitude on Rhodesia, the Tories, unlike Labour, never felt handicapped by a split allegiance between the Rhodesian settler community (kith and kin) and the African majority. From very early on, the Tories had fairly consistently shown a willingness to try to end the impasse, but in ways which benefited imperialism in general and the white regime in particular. In 1970 Sir Alec Douglas-Home tried to reach a separate agreement with Ian Smith on the basis of which



independence would have been given to Rhodesia before the advent of African majority rule. That agreement was rejected by the African people in 1971. In 1979, Mrs Thatcher tried unilaterally to recognise the Muzorewa regime. The Bishop and the other moderate African politicians participating in the so-called internal settlement were ideologically acceptable to the Tories. As Mrs Thatcher said before she became prime minister, 'The problem isn't between whether you should have a white or black government, it's who shall be the black government.' (*Time*, May 14 1979, p. 13). But she was forced to abandon her intended unilateral recognition of the Salisbury regime. Amongst the factors which forced her to change her plans were the Americans who resented being left out by Thatcher's single-handed approach to the Rhodesian problem. President Carter was also nervous lest Mrs Thatcher's insensitivity to the feelings of African nations jeopardise the interests of imperialism in Africa and other Third World countries. The Americans made plain their preference for the Anglo-American plan previously pursued by Labour governments because that plan's general acceptance by African states held out a better prospect for maintaining a western foothold in a future Zimbabwe as well as good relations with other African states.

Mrs Thatcher also found that by August 1979, the Muzorewa regime was not supported by a single African country. In Zimbabwe the unpopularity of the Muzorewa regime was evidenced by the fact that the African leaders did not have the support of the guerrillas. The

Guerrilla fighters with captured weapons



majority of the Zimbabweans resented the regime, as was shown by their increasing support of the guerrilla war. The Muzorewa regime was forced to introduce such widely unpopular measures as the protected villages, which were in reality concentration camps, and martial law, which by the time of the Lancaster House conference covered 92% of the country. Other measures which the regime implemented to cope with the guerrilla war were unbelievable. The *Financial Times* of 1 May, 1979, reported that the Rhodesian army had introduced what it called Operation Turkey. This was a campaign aimed at isolating the Zimbabwe peasants from 'all but their immediate food needs, so that they will not have any to hand to the guerrillas ... In the Tribal Trust lands (African Reserves) not a single shop is open. People may have to walk for 30 miles or more to find one. Over 1,000 primary schools were closed as a result of the war and over vast areas, normal medical facilities were no longer available'.

Labour and the Tories knew how Rhodesia was being illegally supplied with oil by British companies

The role of the OAU

The role of the Organisation of African Unity was most noticeable through the African frontline states of Angola, Botswana, Mozambique, Tanzania and Zambia. Throughout the entire period of the war, they offered assistance to the liberation movements in the form of refugee camps, training facilities, moral, material and diplomatic assistance. The importance of the frontline states could be seen from the 1969 Lusaka Manifesto which declared that in the event of the racist regimes of the south seriously wishing to end the conflict through negotiation, the African states would bring their influence to bear on the liberation movements to come to the conference table. In the absence of a genuine desire to negotiate they pledged themselves to support the guerrilla war.

The first attempt to settle the conflict between the racist regime of Ian Smith and the nationalists was in 1974 during the so-called Victoria Falls Bridge Conference, which took place in railway coaches supplied by the South Africans. It failed. The Geneva Conference of 1976 was held against the background of a similar procedure whereby the frontline African states influenced the liberation movements, and the South Africans influenced the Smith regime to go to the conference table.

The success of the frontline states in persuading the liberation movements to the conference table contrasted sharply with the failure of other forms of intervention. An attempt in Lusaka by Zambia to bring all the four Zimbabwe movements (ANC, FROLIZI, ZANU, ZAPU) under a single leadership of Bishop Muzorewa in the umbrella organisation of the African National Council (ANC), in December 1974 failed to stick. Other attempts by Tanzania to create a third armed force in 1975-76 also failed to stick. The failure of creating viable and new political institutions over and above existing ones was proof that the frontline states were dealing with matters which could only be resolved through the evolution of Zimbabwean nationalism itself and not from outside. Indeed it was in their traditional role of support of the liberation movements that the OAU generally and the frontline states particularly met with most success.

The Lancaster House Conference

Although the Tories were forced to abandon their original idea of recognising the Muzorewa regime, their agreement at the August 1979 Lusaka Commonwealth Summit to call a Rhodesian conference did not mean that they were suddenly enamoured with the idea of

settling the conflict with the participation of the PF. Although having to take the PF into account they hoped to utilise their advantage of being the organisers of the conference and keep alive the prospect of an agreement with the Muzorewa regime to the exclusion of the PF. During the Lancaster House conference which began in September 1979, the Tories, through Lord Carrington, the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, used heavy-handed methods of brinkmanship aimed at precipitating a walk-out by the PF so as to leave the Thatcher government free to reach a separate agreement with the Muzorewa regime.

The Tory handling of the Lancaster House conference was castigated by the United Nations, the Organisation of African Unity, the Commonwealth Secretary-General, the African frontline states and Amnesty International. The heavy-handedness of the Tory government against the PF contrasted sharply with Carrington's dealings with the Muzorewa delegation, with which he agreed on virtually everything that was tabled at Lancaster, sometimes without so much as a discussion taking place. This automatic consensus induced the belief among the PF and many observers that the British had already agreed with the Salisbury regime on what they were going to do, and that Lancaster was a mere acting out of what had already been set.

Try as they did, the Tories were prevented from excluding the PF delegation from the Lancaster deliberations by international and African pressure. They were foiled also in their plans to unilaterally recognise Muzorewa's regime by the fact that by the time of Lancaster, the Salisbury regime was clearly devoid of political support in Zimbabwe. Indeed, its basic lack of support had already been demonstrated during the April 1979 elections when it was forced to use all types of tactics to get people to vote for it. Those elections in fact were declared by almost every independent observer to be invalid except the Tory representative, Lord Boyd.

After a tortuous course the Lancaster House conference ended on 21 December 1979, with agreement on a constitution for Zimbabwe, transitional agreements and a ceasefire. The transitional period again showed the partiality of the British government against the PF guerrillas in favour of the Muzorewa regime. When the governor Lord Soames arrived in Rhodesia to supervise the transition to independence, he did not dismantle the Rhodesian government machinery. This resulted in his heading a system which continued to fight against the guerrillas. The hated protected villages were not dismantled; Muzorewa kept being referred to as the prime minister despite the fact that he was required by Act of Parliament to cease

and military aircraft deployed to bombard remote tribal villages with anti-Mugabe literature.

functioning, as were all Rhodesian regime officials, when the governor set foot in the country. Combined Operations continued to issue reports slanted against the guerrillas, with the result that guerrillas were continually accused of intimidation and other ceasefire violations when in most cases they were not responsible.

The British governor turned a blind eye to most of these Rhodesian actions as well as to the continued presence of South African forces in Zimbabwe. The irony of the accusations against Mugabe for all the alleged acts of intimidation contrasted sharply with attacks against him and members of his ZANU-PF party, some of which resulted in death. Mugabe himself narrowly escaped death when a bomb exploded on a Fort Victoria road as he was travelling to the airport after addressing a political rally.

Just before the poll for the 80 African seats, Ian Smith had publicly

called on white Rhodesians to support Joshua Nkomo against Robert Mugabe.

But far from this endorsement being a positive gesture, it was in reality intended as a liability in the context of Zimbabwean politics. Mr Smith hoped to discredit Nkomo in the eyes of African voters who would vote against Nkomo for his alleged connections with racialsists like Ian Smith. It was hoped that many voters would remember Mr Nkomo's unpopular attempts to reach a separate negotiated solution with Ian Smith in 1976. By his endorsement, therefore Smith hoped to revive this memory to the detriment of the ZAPU leader.

Nkomo's party faced other obstacles in the campaign, but not as great as Mugabe's ZANU. The latter was prevented from bringing in vehicles and much election material from Mozambique. The ZANU-PF election campaign symbol of the hoe and an AK47 was rejected. Election material was seized. Mugabe himself was constantly prevented from returning from exile on the flimsiest of excuses. Bishop Muzorewa on the other hand had a field day. The *Daily Mail* revealed on March 5, 1980, that for the only three seats which he won, each cost the Bishop £5 million. He was given 200 cars, trucks and vans, seven helicopters and thousands of pounds worth of food and drink. At one rally, he supplied food and beer for four days to a crowd which ranged from 10,000 to 70,000. One farmer gave him 40 head of cattle and a brewery shipped in beer and soft drinks. Behind the scenes, business men and agents for multinational corporations handed over bundles of cash aimed at keeping Mugabe away from the seat of power. Tens of thousands went into newspaper advertising, leaflets and radio and television advertising. Troops were used to hand out pamphlets and military aircraft deployed to bombard remote tribal villages with anti-Mugabe literature. The South African government's contribution was said to have been the largest. Their attitude was if money can do it, we have got it.

A total of eleven African parties originally registered to contest the poll for the 80 seats. These were the National Democratic Union (NDU); the National Front of Zimbabwe (NFZ) led by Michael Mawema; the Patriotic Front (PF) led by Joshua Nkomo; the United African National Council (UANC) led by Bishop Muzorewa; the United African People's Union (UAPU); the United Federal Party (UNFP) led by Chief Kaiser Ndiweni; the United People's Association of Matebeleland (UPAM); the Zimbabwe African National Union-PF (ZANU-PF) led by Robert Mugabe; the Zimbabwe Democratic Party (ZDP) led by James Chikerema; and the Zimbabwe United Peoples Organisation (ZUPO) led by Chief Jeremiah Chirau.

The election results

Out of the original 11 parties which entered the campaign for the independence elections, only three succeeded in getting the required minimum of 10% of the vote in each constituency to be eligible for a seat in the 100-member National Assembly. Out of an estimated 2.8 million voters, a total of 2,702,275 voted. Of these 1,668,992 or 62% voted for Mugabe's ZANU-PF, giving the party 57 votes in parliament. Nkomo's PF gained 638,879 votes or 24%, entitling the party to 20 seats. Together Mugabe and Nkomo commanded a massive 77 of the 80 seats allocated to Blacks under the constitution. Bishop Abel Muzorewa, who once claimed that 64% of the people had voted for him in the farcical April 1979 elections, this time round received a total of 219,307 votes or 8% of the electorate, giving the party only 3 seats in parliament.

Virtually all of Mugabe's 57 seats were won in generally Shona-speaking areas and Nkomo's 20 in Ndebele-speaking areas. This does not mean however that the voting was strictly according to tribal lines. If it were, the Shona vote would have been equally divided among all the Shona-speaking parties, ie, those led by Mugabe, Muzorewa, Chikerema, Mawema, etc, and the Ndebele among the PF, UPAM

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and the UNFP. The constituencies in which Mugabe's ZANU-PF and Nkomo's PF triumphed dovetailed more closely with those geographical areas where their respective guerrilla armies were operating. ZAPU, which traditionally operated from Zambia, covered western Zimbabwe while ZANU-PF operated from Mozambique, a country with a longer frontier with Rhodesia. ZANU-PF won a seat in all but one constituency.

The success of Mugabe and Nkomo had a lot to do with the knowledge of the people that only the guerrilla fighters had the capability to stop the war. Bishop Muzorewa's early rise to prominence had been largely based on his claims, later found to be without foundation, that he could command the support of the guerrilla fighters. At many of his political rallies he was in the habit of chanting the slogan 'Heavy' whose origin he claimed to be connected with the first time he handled a grenade. Reverend Ndabaningi Sithole also never tired of claiming that he was the first president of ZANU, by way of trying to cash in on the guerrilla connection. When the two clerics realised that the people were not being fooled, they created their own private armies which gradually under the internal settlement were used for political purposes. These private armies, or auxiliaries, were so ruthless in their methods, that ordinary Zimbabweans hated them as much as they hated the Rhodesian security forces. The massive vote for the liberation movements of Mugabe and Nkomo was, indeed, not only a sign that the people yearned for peace, but also a mandate to the new government to deal with these ruthless elements, which were becoming a terror against the populace.

Implications of Mugabe's victory

The make-up of Mugabe's cabinet shows the influence of various factors. The inclusion of members of Nkomo's party as well as Nkomo himself serves to emphasise the continuity of the Patriotic Front alliance under which the two parties cooperated right up to Lancaster. Between them, Mugabe and Nkomo command 77 seats in the new 100-member parliament — enough to change the constitution. It appears however, that the constitution will not hastily be changed. First, the need to retain the confidence of the whites is related to whether the constitution is tampered with or not. Because of the legacy of racialism, most of the managerial expertise in the Zimbabwe economy is still largely the prerogative of the whites. Although there are many qualified Africans in all fields, they lack the necessary experience. As the vice-chairman of the Rhodesian Promotion Council (the equivalent of the British CBI) said in May 1978, there

Critica marxista

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Mauro Calise e Renato Mannheim, I governi «misurati». Il trentennio democristiano

Pierluigi Onorato, Dove nasce il rischio dell'involutione autoritaria

Biagio de Giovanni, Crisi e legittimazione dello Stato

Guido Carandini, Analisi marxista e capitalismo contemporaneo. Appunti per una ricerca

Giuseppe Prestipino, Filosofia e politica: colloqui e riflessioni in Polonia

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Schede critiche

Vittorio de Matteis, Felicità, benessere, azione politica; Alfonso M. Iacono, La contraddizione in Hegel; Giuseppe Cognetti, Materialisti dell'ottocento; Massimo Modica, Le riflessioni linguistiche di Gramsci; Lucilla Ruberti, Il simbolismo del mito e lo sviluppo della coscienza; Anna Maria Nassis, La teoria della rendita in Ricardo

Libri ricevuti

Summaries

were 'anything between 10,000 and 20,000 black graduates together with many, many other sophisticated and advanced blacks. I understand', he said, 'that Malawi and Zambia had 3 and 17 graduates respectively at independence'. However, in order to effect a peaceful transition which enables blacks to acquire the necessary skills and experience, the whites will need to be reassured about their future. Mugabe has been at pains to do this.

The need to maintain the confidence of the whites is also related to the security situation. South Africa, which massively funded the Bishop, hoping that he would be returned to power, is clearly nervous about the example which Mugabe's victory will have in South Africa. Before the election results, the South African prime minister and other leaders kept reiterating that South Africa would intervene if the PF alliance came to power. Most of this sabre-rattling was however being done in the confident hope that Muzorewa would win or that the election results would be so inconclusive that chaos would result from jockeying for power among the African parties. Since some of them had armies, such jockeying was seen as potentially leading to civil war as happened in Angola.

The emergence of a clear Mugabe and Nkomo win has removed the threat of a civil war according to the earlier predictions in Pretoria and elsewhere. Moreover, the coming to power of a government committed to socialism through constitutional means has done irreparable damage to the propaganda of the South Africans. They

How the votes were cast

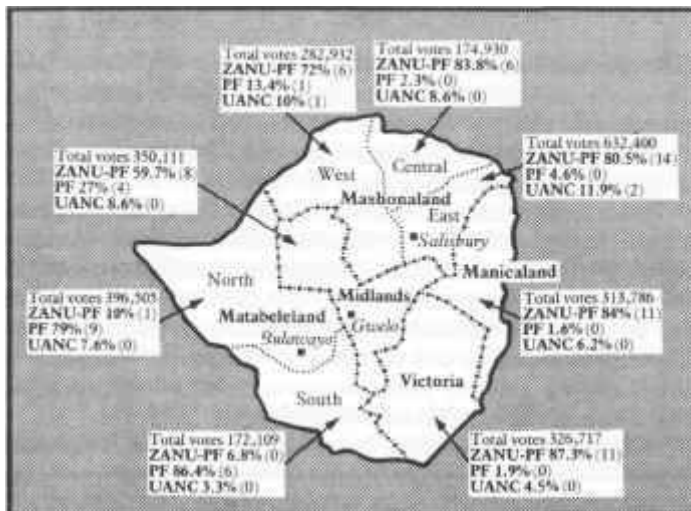
Total estimated electorate: 2,883,000

Seats: 80. Total valid votes cast: 2,649,490

ZANU/PF (Mugabe): 63% (57 seats)

PF (Nkomo): 24% (20 seats)

UANC (Muzorewa): 8% (3 seats)



will find it difficult to prevent the same process being demanded in Namibia and South Africa itself.

Barring the sudden eruption of instability in Zimbabwe which would give South Africa the excuse for intervening, the defeat of Muzorewa has removed the political peg on which Pretoria could have hung a justification for intervention. The massive defeat of all the smaller parties and the UANC pulled the rug from under the feet of moderate African nationalists in Zimbabwe and in southern Africa as a whole. One would have thought that their defeat would have put paid to South African tactics of utilising African moderates. However, Pretoria is known to be still grooming moderates from Zimbabwe especially elements from the Bishop's party. The hope in Pretoria appears to be that in the event of discontent arising within the new Zimbabwe the South Africans would be ready with a political alternative to the former guerrilla fighters.

discontent built up by years of racial oppression will demand the attention of the new government.

Relations with imperialism

Writing in the *Daily Telegraph* on his return from Zimbabwe after the elections, Governor Lord Soames' Special Adviser, Conservative Euro MP Robert Jackson, urged that Britain should assist Zimbabwe 'during its formative period' so as 'to ensure that the new Zimbabwe starts its life with a system orientated fundamentally towards the West' (March 14, 1980). Although prime minister Robert Mugabe has adopted a cautious attitude to relations with the west and South Africa, he is aware that there has to be a limit to new Zimbabwe's dependence on western capitalism. It was Bishop Muzorewa's identification with capitalism and his ties with South Africa which prevented him from satisfying the aspirations of the majority of Zimbabweans.

Mugabe's commitment to socialism will be implemented in a pragmatic fashion. This approach will be largely dictated not only by Zimbabwe's geopolitical position as a neighbour of apartheid South Africa, but also because of the objective legacy of racial management of the country stretching back almost 90 years. Some of his pragmatism is to be seen on the issue of land: Mugabe has said that socialist utilisation of land will be begun on unoccupied or under-utilised land.

Furthermore, in appointing white cabinet ministers to the portfolios of agriculture and commerce and industry, Mugabe has opted for the interim continuation of the Rhodesian economy while devising ways in which it can be expanded as well as making its surplus available to a wider population than before.

However, there are mammoth difficulties in effecting a peaceful transition to socialism. The widespread worker unrest in March served to indicate the urgency and therefore the speed with which discontent built up by years of racial oppression will demand the attention of the new government. While some demands were economic, others, for example the dismissal of unpopular white foremen, were political and were being advanced by way of testing the change in the new political climate. Such a demand would have been unheard of in the days of Ian Smith or Bishop Muzorewa, under whose regimes strikes were illegal.

The hardest part of the new government's job is how to satisfy black aspirations built up over 90 years while at the same time avoiding dangerously antagonising attitudes of racial supremacy built up over as long a period. Here though the new government has the important advantage that every one expects change to occur, so that it is a question of how rather than whether it will be effected.