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Zimbabwe's choice

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ZIMBABWE'S CHOICE

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Abstract: The article attempts to juxtapose myths and the realities of Zimbabwe and prove that the viewpoints wide-spread in the international media and even academic community are far removed of those realities. Against the historical background it analyses the economic and political crisis the country faced in the beginning of the 21st century and the period of the “all inclusive government”. Special attention is paid to the 2013 presidential and parliamentary election and to the reasons of Robert Mugabe’s victory.

Keywords: *ZANU-PF, MDC, Fast track land reform, Inclusive government, 2013 election*

You can find an article on the crisis in Zimbabwe almost daily in the world press, both popular and academic. So, why publish one more?

The main reason is that more often than not one point is missing in those publications: what are the causes of the crisis. This article does not claim to be comprehensive, the author wanted just to express some thoughts in an attempt to draw the readers’ attention to those issues, which often become obscure.

A “time bomb”

There is no doubt that Zimbabwe was in a very serious crisis at the beginning of the 21st century. The degree of chaos in the economy, hyperinflation and the drop in production can be compared within Southern Africa only with the situation in Angola and Mozambique in the 1980s, but there were civil wars in those two countries and they suffered a lot from Pretoria’s intervention.

Nothing similar has happened in Zimbabwe. It is surrounded by friendly states, Pretoria or, rather, Tshwane, was in fact, helping it, providing electricity and extending loans. Nevertheless in October 2008 the inflation figure was 231,000,000%! (McGreal 2008) It was estimated that up 3,4-million Zimbabweans - one-quarter of the population had left the country (Kamete 2009); 1,7 million were receiving food aid (Whitaker 2008).

But what was the cause of it? Just one “evil man”, President Robert Mugabe, as most of the publications claim? Just look at the titles of the books: “Robert Mugabe: A Life of Power and Violence”, “Mugabe’s War Machine. Saving or

Savaging Zimbabwe?” and even “Dinner with Mugabe”. But can all the problems be reduced to one person, more so to the person, who was obviously “demonized” by Western-media and by some politicians as well?

To understand the tragedy of Zimbabwe we must look back into history. By the end of the 1970s a long anti-colonial war, waged by the Patriotic Front, which officially (but unfortunately not in a real sense) united two liberation movements – Zimbabwe African People’s Union (ZAPU), established in 1962, and Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU), which split from ZAPU in 1963, was bearing fruit. It became clear that the old white establishment was losing the war; and an attempt of a so called “internal settlement”, when Bishop Abel Muzorewa became a government figurehead, also failed. London, Washington and their virtual ally Pretoria began worrying that a continuation of the war would result in a military victory of the liberation forces.

The Rhodesian establishment came under strong pressure from its overt or covert supporters, especially from London, which was historically responsible for the earlier failure of the decolonization of South Rhodesia, and South Africa, which was worried by a war of liberation on its door steps. So it was forced to begin substantial talks with anti-colonial forces in October 1979 in Lancaster House, in London.

These talks were the first major foreign policy initiative of Margaret Thatcher who became Prime-Minister in May 1979. A tactic of “a carrot and a stick” was applied towards the leadership of the liberation movements. A prospect of independence in the near future was opened for them, though with a number of conditions, and, on the other hand, they were warned by so called Front Line States, especially by Mozambican President Samora Machel, who was apparently “captivated” by a strange charisma of the British Prime Minister, that if they failed to reach an agreement, they would not be allowed to operate any more in the countries neighbouring Zimbabwe

Phyllis Johnson, an author of several books on Zimbabwe, writes: “Mozambique played an active role in encouraging a settlement. President Machel did this because he knew that the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) [which Mozambique supported] would win the proposed transitional elections, and he believed the British government would deliver on their commitment on the land issue, to provide significant resources for purchase and resettlement. This belief is at the root of the firm support of Mozambique and Tanzania for the Zimbabwe land issue. They were at Lancaster House, they were part of the decision to settle, and they believed that resources would be forthcoming” (Johnson 1986).

Most probably it is correct, but the flaw of the settlement reached at the Lancaster House conference is evident: no written agreement on the land issue was made, although the armed struggle in Zimbabwe was waged not only for political independence, but for the recovery of land, seized by colonizers from Africans.

Most probably they (and perhaps even the leaders of ZANU and ZAPU for that matter) believed that their Western counterparts were genuine and substantial funding would be provided. Indeed, earlier, in 1976, when a so-called British-American plan for the settlement on Rhodesia was advanced, Henry Kissinger, then US Secretary of State was reported to promise even 1,5 to 2 billion dollars “to subsidize Rhodesian whites for agreeing to black rule” (Time 1976) , that is primarily for the buyout of white-owned land.

A Zimbabwean journalist wrote: “Zimbabweans do not forget that the main reason Zimbabwe’s independence was finally won around the table at Lancaster House rather than in the streets of Harare was because the British government promised to pay for land redistribution in Zimbabwe” (Madawo 2007).

The USA followed suit. The Secretary-General of the Commonwealth at the time of the Lancaster House Conference, Shridath Ramphal disclosed much later that in the face of the pending collapse of the talks “he secretly contacted the US ambassador in London, Kingman Brewster, and asked him to get the then US President, Jimmy Carter, to promise money to pay white farmers for their land. He quickly received assurances authorized by the American President, ‘that the United States would contribute a substantial amount for the process of land redistribution and they would undertake to encourage the British government to give similar assurances” (Plaut 2007).

However, the post-independence reality in Zimbabwe was very different from those promises. The author was present at the Witness Seminar “British and Rhodesia: Road to Settlement” organized by the Cold War Studies Centre at the London School of Economics in collaboration with the Centre for Contemporary British History in London in July 2005. When a British academic asked Lord Carrington, who had been Foreign Secretary at the time and chaired the Lancaster House conference (and later Secretary-General of NATO), what money was pledged as compensation, surprisingly enough the experienced diplomat could not recall it. Other “witnesses”, former prominent British diplomats followed suit. Moreover, all of them remained silent even when I asked an “easier” question, whether any calculations had been made how much money would be needed for a buyout.

Land seizure or land return?

Yet later one of them expressed a very interesting view: since the situation was a while after independence, the issue of funding a buyout was not regarded as essential. This way a “time-fuse bomb” was planted.

True, the conservative British government did provide some money for this purpose under the so-called “willing-buyer, willing-seller” concept, but just about 44 million pounds in total (Ibid), that is about 20 times less, than was promised 20 years earlier.

When the money allocated by Thatcher’s government had been exhausted a mission sent by Prime-Minister John Major to evaluate the situation recommended that further funding be given to Zimbabwe to pursue the land reform programme (Adibe 2006). Therefore after the defeat of the Conservative party at the parliamentary election in May 1997 the Zimbabwe government expected the “more progressive” Labour government to resume them. But when Mugabe met the new (and still young) Prime-Minister Tony Blair at the Commonwealth conference in Edinburgh in October that year he was utterly disappointed. His reply to the Zimbabwe President was rather arrogant: “Was I there when you were given that promise? I was in school and I do not honour promises I had nothing to do with” (Madawo 2007).

Then on November 5, 1997 Clare Short, the newly appointed Secretary of State for International Development sent to Harare a letter, which read in part: “I should make it clear that we do not accept that Britain has a special responsibility to meet the costs of land purchase in Zimbabwe. We are a new government from diverse backgrounds without links to former colonial interests. My own origins are Irish and, as you know, we were colonized not colonizers” (Adibe 2006).

To say that Labour had ‘no links to former colonial interests’ is utterly wrong, after all it was a Labour government who created conditions favourable for the so called Unilateral Declaration of Independence, proclaimed by the white minority in 1965. However there was an element of truth in Short’s statement as well: on a personal level interests of its members did differ from those of the Tories. The list of big landlords in Zimbabwe, especially absentee landlords, was similar to the list of British “noblemen”, and one can say that the previous government was paying compensation to themselves or to their kin and kith. Meanwhile the population of Zimbabwe was rapidly growing and so the demand for land as well.

There were several other reasons for the aggravation of the economic situation in the country. Upon taking power Mugabe and his government proclaimed socialism as their aim, although many just paid lip service to it. As the

first Zimbabwean Ambassador to Moscow said three years after the achievement of the independence: “Only Mugabe is interested in socialism”.

Anyhow, in the first decade of independence improvements of social services were significant: doubling primary school enrolment, reducing birth and infant mortality and increasing life expectancy, but on the threshold of the 1990s, with the fall of communist governments in Eastern Europe, Zimbabwe, like many other African countries made the choice to have a “free market” and in 1991 began implementing its version of the IMF proposed (or, rather, imposed) reforms, so called Economic Structural Adjustment Programme - ESAP (Bond and Manyana 2002: 60).

When a “Framework for Economic Reform” [that was ESAP’s official name] was discussed in ZANU-PF Politbureau, finance minister Bernard Chidzero, a prominent economist, who had worked for the UN in the past for many years (and was even nominated to the post of UN General Secretary) managed to convince the majority of his colleagues, that even if similar programmes did fail in other African countries, in Zimbabwe the results would be different, because the economy of the country was much stronger.

However ESAP failed in Zimbabwe as well. More so, because by 1979 over 90 per cent of goods in the supermarket were locally made (Cross, 2013), and the “opening-up” of the economy that was “inward-looking”, brought disaster to the processing industry. The rise of social instability and a political crisis followed. An average member of the Zimbabwean trade union was 40% poorer in 1996 than in 1990 (Bond and Mayama 2002: 35).

Under these circumstances, a new political force appeared in Zimbabwe, headed by a rather maverick figure, Chenjerai “Hitler” Hunzvi. They called themselves “war veterans”, though few of them actually took part in the liberation war. Strangely enough his name was chosen by the man who graduated from a medical school in Poland and who was married there to a local woman, who, by the way, claimed that “he never fired a shot. He saw no action at all” (Hill 2003:96).

Nevertheless Hunzvi became popular among war veterans as a doctor who was issuing them certificates of disability that allowed them to claim large benefit payments from the government and became in 1997 chairman of the Zimbabwe Liberation War Veterans Association (Guardian unlimited 2001).

Though the media hostile to Mugabe alleged that from the very beginning he organized and used war veterans as his political tool, in fact initially, Hunzvi was rather a big threat to Mugabe. In 1997 he staged veterans’ demonstrations demanding the government’s financial assistance for them. Mugabe was obliged to grant one-off payments of 50 000 Zimbabwean dollars (some \$2,500

at that time) to each of the organization's 50,000 members, as well as monthly pensions of 2000 Z\$ (US \$100) (BBC News 2001).

This was a heavy blow against the budget of the country, which "precipitated a run on the stock market and threatened the value of the currency" and the rise of inflation was sped up (Chan 2003: 138).

The ZANU-PF saw the way out in the rapid redistribution of land. To be able to do it, they organized in 2000 a referendum on the new constitution, which provided for the compulsory acquisition of land without compensation (unless it came from a former colonial power, Britain) (Zimbabwe Presidential Election 2002: 11).

However by that time another political force appeared in Zimbabwe, a so called Movement for Democratic Change headed by Morgan Tsvangirai, a former trade-union leader. This party, which called to vote "No" at the referendum, attracted people of different political views and different backgrounds, from rich white farmers to leftist intellectuals who had often only one thing in common: opposition to Mugabe and the ruling ZANU-PF party.

The unexpected failure of the referendum held in February 2000 became a watershed. On the one hand ZANU-PF leaders started to worry about the forthcoming elections in June, and, on the other, they believed that the laws of the country, which originated at Lancaster House, did not allow for the redistribution of land in a legal way. (Discussion 2006). So, war veterans came on the scene again, this time as staunch supporters of Mugabe.

In February-March 2000 they began physically seizing farms which belonged to the whites, chasing away their owners; at least 12 farmers were killed (Nkatazo, 2009). The international mass-media reacted with rightful condemnation, although the same media hardly noticed the fact that in South Africa 1118 farmers were killed in 1994-2001 (WND 2001). Some seizure took place earlier as well, but now the police was stopped by Mugabe from evicting "squatters" (Chan 2003: 147).

Only after the seizure of the farms began, on 6 April 2000, the government passed a new law through parliament, asserting the right of the people of Zimbabwe to "regain ownership of their land" and stating that if Britain failed to pay for agricultural land acquired for resettlement, "the Government of Zimbabwe would have no obligation to pay such compensation. (Zimbabwe Presidential Election 2002: 11).

This became a basis for so-called "Fast Track" land reform. By 2011 4,500 commercial farms, making up 7.6m hectares, 20% of the total land area of

Zimbabwe were allocated to nearly 170 thousand households (Scoones et al. 2011: 2).

Acquiring farms, previously owned by whites, many by foreign absentee landlords, the government took in mind that most of them had been run by black managers. However, high skills could not compensate for a lack of proper equipment, fertilisers, and seeds, and the authorities could not assist new farmers in getting them under the conditions of economic crisis. The situation was aggravated by a recurrent drought.

There were some “subjective factors” as well. From the days of its inception ZANU was connected with Beijing. Many party activists studied in China in the years of the “Great Proletarian Culture Revolution” and Chinese instructors trained ZANU fighters in Tanzania. The history of ZANU itself was complicated: its first President Ndabaningi Sithole was “deposed” by his fellow mates in prison, Chairman Herbert Chitepo was killed in Lusaka and Zambian authorities initially put the blame on his comrades in the party leadership, top military commander Josiah Tongogara died in a car crash in Mozambique on the eve of independence.

Nevertheless in the atmosphere of the “Cold War” this did not prevent the West from praising Mugabe: the use of radical slogans, adherence to “Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong thought” (that “thought” was dropped from ZANU documents only in 1984) were “forgiven”, because Mugabe and his party, as distinct from ZAPU, were politically far from Moscow. Neither had they close relations with the African National Congress, fighting against the apartheid regime in South Africa. The western politicians and mass-media practically paid no attention to the tragedy in Matabeleland, where government forces ruthlessly suppressed the rebellion of some former ZAPU fighters in the mid-1980s; they applauded the implementation of ESAP in spite of its heavy burden on the Zimbabwean people.

However the seizure of farms, “sacred private property” brought about the immediate and very negative reaction, especially in Britain. In a matter of months if not days Mugabe, who for many years was regarded there as a wise statesman, who received several honorary degrees and decorations, became a “monster” and “tyrant”.

Opposition, political crisis and political settlement

The controversial results of the parliamentary election in 2000, when the opinion of foreign observers on its validity differed, were used to squeeze out Zimbabwe from the Commonwealth: Mugabe preferred leaving this organization to suspension and the threat of exclusion. All “assistance” to Zimbabwe

from the USA and soon after them from the EU countries stopped, and various sanctions introduced.

True, it was not difficult to observe the rise of authoritarian tendencies in Zimbabwe ruling structures. However, even when criticism was justified, the West made a strategic blunder: a “point man” in its “crusade” against Mugabe was nobody else, but Blair, the prime-minister of the country which for almost a century maintained a colonial rule over Zimbabwe. Who could believe that Zimbabwean had forgotten that no democracy whatsoever existed at that period? Who expected that Blair’s lectures on democracy would be applauded there?

Indeed, Blair went too far in his plans for regime change in Zimbabwe. Last November the Guardian published an article under the title “Tony Blair plotted military intervention in Zimbabwe, claims Thabo Mbeki”. It referred to former president Thabo Mbeki’s interview on al-Jazeera who said that South Africa had been asked by London to join a “regime change scheme” in Zimbabwe. Moreover Mbeki made reference to “...a retired chief of the British armed forces who said he had to withstand pressure from the then prime minister of the United Kingdom Tony Blair ... who was saying to the chief of the British armed forces, ‘You must work out a military plan so that we can physically remove Robert Mugabe’. ‘We knew that because we had come under the same pressure that we need to cooperate in some scheme. It was a regime change scheme, even to the point of using military force and we were saying no.’”

Mbeki quite correctly stated: “Why does it become a British responsibility to decide who leads the people of Zimbabwe? So we’re saying, ‘No, let Zimbabweans sit down, let them agree what they do with their country.’” (Smith 2013)

This statement was consonant with Mugabe’s words at the Earth Summit in Johannesburg in 2002: “So Blair, keep your England and let me keep my Zimbabwe” that triggered applause of the conference participants (The Guardian 2002) and elsewhere in Africa as well. Indeed, the confrontation between Blair and Mugabe which continued for a decade and to a large extent became a clash of personalities ended with Mugabe’s victory to the surprise of many. Mugabe politically outlived Blair who had to reluctantly resign in June 2007, and on the other hand, whatever happens in the future, one point is very clear: Mugabe will remain in the history as a man who stood firm against the former colonial power, and the return of land to its historical African owners, ensured by him, is irreversible.

Apart from land redistribution another issue caused Zimbabwe’s confrontation with some western countries: its intervention in the affairs of DRC in

support of President Laurent-Desiré Kabila. It would not be an exaggeration to say that Zimbabwean armed forces together with their allies from Angola and Namibia saved him in 1998-2000 from the rebels assisted by Rwanda and Uganda. It can be added that Mugabe's government began supporting Kabila much earlier, when he was still fighting against Mobutu.

Further criticism at home and abroad was provoked by the Operation Restore Order in 2005 (It was more often called in Zimbabwe Operation Murambatsvina - Operation Drive Out Trash), when according to an NGO's estimate 300 thousand Zimbabweans were displaced in urban areas country-wide, primarily in the capital when their shacks were destroyed (Discarding the Filth 2005: 1). The government said that this operation was meant to get rid of illegally-built structures that had sprouted around urban centres and were seen as a haven for illegal traders, as well as to reduce the risk of the spread of infectious disease in these areas. However, quite probably this "operation" had a political aim as well. Those "informal settlements" were habituated by the down-trodden, by lumpens who could easily become "foot soldiers" for the opposition. Hardly accidental, the government's actions were taken soon after a so called "Orange revolution" in the Ukraine in 2004 where the opposition managed to mobilize thousands of supporters and to impose a new round of presidential elections.

Naturally the destiny of the country has to be decided by the Zimbabweans themselves. If foreign involvement is needed, it should come from fellow Africans and here a special role was played by South Africa. Indeed, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the African Union were making great efforts to establish stability in the country. Their leaders called for London, though in vain, to meet its promises to fund land reform in Zimbabwe and drop all the sanctions against the country.

In spite of criticism for being "too soft on Mugabe", the then President Thabo Mbeki and his colleagues in the government were quietly but steadily working on behalf of the SADC for a political solution of the crisis in the neighbouring country. Mbeki more than once expressed his readiness to promote "compromise between rival factions in Zimbabwe" but was not going to "push for regime change": "...we have to get the Zimbabweans talking so we do have elections that are free and fair". (BBC 2007)

It was Mbeki and his team who in March 2008 facilitated parliamentary and presidential elections under conditions agreed by all parties, and although violence during the elections still happened, this was the first real step towards a political settlement. The opposition won more seats in the National Assembly than ZANU-PF, but the MDC had been split into two "formations"-MDC-

T (Tsvangirai) and MDC-M, led by Professor Arthur Mutambara (later he was replaced by Welshman Ncube and the party became known as MDC-N).

The results of the presidential election for ZANU-PF were even more unsuccessful. In the first round, Mugabe received 43.2% of the votes, while Tsvangirai 47.9%. There was to be a second round, but the leader of the MDC-T refused to participate, complaining about intimidation and harassment of its supporters. In such circumstances, Mugabe was elected as the President with 85.5% of the vote, but this does not remove the tension in the country.

The way out was found thanks to the mediation of South Africa. Negotiations were difficult, not just once or twice the leader of the MDC-T, giving preliminary approval to an agreement, would say that he needed to “consult”, and then changed its position, and mediators, of course, knew with whom he consulted.

Finally, on September 15, 2008 in the presence of the leaders of the SADC member countries, the leaders of ZANU-PF, MDC-T and MDC-M signed the Global Political Agreement (GPA). Under the agreement, a government of national unity (in Zimbabwe it was called an “inclusive” government) was to be created, consisting of a President, two Vice Presidents, Prime Minister, two Deputy Prime Ministers and 31 ministers — 15 from ZANU-PF, 13-MDC-T and MDC-M was given three. Mugabe remained President, Tsvangirai received the post of Prime Minister and Mutambara became one of his deputies. (GPA 2008: 16). However, it took several months for the specific allocation of posts, and the Government was formed only in February 2009. The compromise nature of the agreement was visible from the fact that the key Interior Ministry was headed by two Ministers, from ZANU-PF and MDC-T.

One of the most important provisions of the GPA was the requirement for the lifting of sanctions, It contained a joint demand “that all ... measures and sanctions against Zimbabwe be lifted in order to facilitate a sustainable solution to the challenges that are ... facing Zimbabwe” (GPA 2008: 4). While the Western powers claim that their sanctions are “targeted” and limited, GPA contains a detailed list of them:

- “(a) enactment of the Zimbabwe Democracy and Economic Recovery Act by the United States of America Congress which outlaws Zimbabwe’s right to access credit from International Financial Institutions in which the United States Government is represented or has a stake;
- (b) suspension of Zimbabwe’s voting and related rights, suspension of balance of payment support, declaration of ineligibility to borrow Fund resources and suspension of technical assistance to Zimbabwe by the International Monetary Fund;

- (c) suspension of grants and infrastructural development support to Zimbabwe by The World Bank; and
- (d) imposition of targeted travel bans against current Government and some business leaders”. (GPA 2008: 4)

The GPA parties committed themselves “to working together in re-engaging the international community with a view to bringing to an end the country’s international isolation”. (Ibid.)

SADC and the African Union supported the clause in the GPA on the lifting of sanctions, but Western powers, united a group of self-proclaimed “Friends of Zimbabwe”, though publicly recognizing “Zimbabwean ownership of the constitutional and electoral processes and the role which countries in the region have to play”, refused to agree to the lifting of sanctions, just promising to keep them “under review” (Friends of Zimbabwe Group 2010).

However, despite the signing of the GPA, the MDC-T position on sanctions was ambivalent. According to convincing evidence from Wikileaks, at a meeting with representatives from the U.S., United Kingdom, Netherlands, and the European Union Tsvangirai urged them that the sanctions on Zimbabwe “must be kept in place” to induce Mugabe into giving up some political power. “The prime minister openly admitted the incongruity between his private support for the sanctions and his public statements in opposition. If his political adversaries knew Tsvangirai secretly supported the sanctions, deeply unpopular with Zimbabweans, they would have a powerful weapon to attack and discredit” him (Albon 2010)

But the position of the Western powers was not shared by many members of the international community. In addition to South Africa and other African states, Zimbabwe developed active links with China, India, Iran and several other countries in Asia. Mugabe, a few years ago, proclaimed a policy of “Look East” (and “East” in that terminology included Russia as well). Besides the obvious economic benefits, this course has contributed to the failure of the West’s attempts to isolate Harare politically. This became clear when Russia, together with China used in July 2008 the right of veto in the UN Security Council, blocking the intention of the Western powers to impose on Zimbabwe mandatory sanctions. (Press Release 2008). Moreover recently in the West, for example, in Germany and Scandinavia, you can hear about the need to lift the sanctions.

“Inclusive government”

In the past four years, in Zimbabwe there has been a steady growth in the economy. In 2009, the GDP grew by 5.8%, in 2010 by 8,1%, by 9.3% in 2011

(Global finance 2012) and by 4,4 % in 2012. (Zimbabwe GDP Annual Growth Rate 2012). When at the turn of 2009 hyperinflation in Zimbabwe has reached exorbitant figures, the Government (then still ZANU-PF one) went to the unusual step of entering the country in “the multi-currency” system, that is, in practice, replacing Zimbabwean dollar by United States dollar, Botswana Pula and South African Rand. This has contributed to a sharp decline in inflation, and initially even deflation. According to the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe, in November 2009, prices were at 1.19% lower than a year earlier, and in January 2014 it was just 0,54% (Zimbabwe inflation rate 2014).

One of the features for economic improvement was the recovery of agriculture. It was facilitated by a clear statement in the GPA on “the irreversibility” of land acquisitions and redistribution. While “differing on the methodology of acquisition and redistribution” its participants accepted that “colonial racist landownership patterns established during the colonial conquest of Zimbabwe, and largely maintained in the post-independence period, were not only unsustainable, but against the national interest, equity, and justice”. They agreed to ensure “that all Zimbabweans, who are eligible to be allocated land and who apply for it, shall be considered for allocation of land irrespective of race, gender, religion, ethnicity, or political affiliation”. They, furthermore, called “upon the United Kingdom government to accept the primary responsibility of paying compensation for land acquired from former landowners for resettlement”, and pledged to work together “to secure international support and finance for the land-reform programme in terms of compensation for ... former landowners and support for new farmers, ... [as well as] the restoration of full productivity on all agricultural land” (GPA 2008: 4.)

There is a widely spread opinion that changes in landownership resulted in the ‘collapse’ of the agricultural sector in Zimbabwe. Indeed, the seizure of farms and the “fast track” reform initially created a lot of problems and contributed to a decline in production. However, studies show that the situation has been turning increasingly positive.

After three years of research in Masvingo Province, specialists came to the conclusion that the image, endlessly reproduced in the media, that commercial farming had completely collapsed, was ‘profoundly unhelpful’. Although “agriculture in Zimbabwe has indeed experienced significant problems in the years following radical land reform, the notion of ‘total failure’ is inaccurate. A new agrarian structure has come into being, with a much wider range of farm sizes and farming systems than in the past, replacing a highly unequal and dualistic structure ... Novel commodity chains for crops and livestock are emerging, with new agri-businesses supplying inputs and buying produce, as in the tobacco sector. Seed and fertilizer production capacity is being restored”.

The research concludes that land redistribution in Zimbabwe has reduced flagrant racial and class inequalities in landownership and has brought into being a potentially productive agrarian structure (Cousins 2010).

Other renowned scholars, Joseph Hanlon and Theresa Smart share this view. In their opinion, attitudes towards land are different in Zimbabwe than in neighbouring countries and "... although many Zimbabweans have rural links, the new generation of land-reform farmers is well educated and often with urban links, which gives them access to markets and finance. The result is that resettlement farmers have been able to invest and produce at levels approaching those of the former white farmers, and they were able to survive the 2007-2008 hyperinflations" (Hanlon & Smart 2011).

The fate of white farmers is often quite different from that portrayed in the Western media. "Several hundred of them 'continue to operate, and have often built links with resettlement farmers, providing services such as ploughing; others have left farming, but moved upstream, playing a key role in marketing beef and tobacco" (Ibid).

On August 22, 2013 in the presence of tens of thousands of people gathered at the National sports stadium in Harare Robert Mugabe was sworn in as the President of the Republic of Zimbabwe. Success in the elections held three weeks earlier was achieved not only by himself, but also by his party. Thus ended the period of joint rule of the ZANU-PF and the MDC (more precisely, its two formations).

This period was characterized by, on the one hand, the gradual recovery of the Zimbabwe economy. On the other hand, while overall political stability was preserved, there were constant disputes, first, on the preparation of a new Constitution, and then about the terms and conditions for the holding of general elections. The challenge was in the fact that the GPA provided a series of steps for the elaboration and adoption of the Constitution and the subsequent holding of general elections, which were to be carried out within two years.

However, these processes were going much slower than anticipated. Only in March 2011, after two postponements, a referendum on a new Constitution for the country was held. Almost 95% of participants approved it, and that was not surprising, since all major political parties supported the draft. The Constitution was then approved by Parliament and signed by President Robert Mugabe, who said on this occasion: "Zanu-PF against MDC. You choose. You vote for the person to whom you would prefer. No need to fight. Let's do it peacefully." (VOA 2013)

Under the new Constitution, the powers of the President have decreased slightly, and he/she can only be elected for two five-year terms in a row. The

post of Prime Minister established in compliance with the GPA was abolished. Both the President (and Vice President) may lose their posts, if at least half of the members of both houses of Parliament will vote in favour of it because of his/her “serious misconduct”, refusal to comply with or defend the Constitution, its deliberate violation of or failure to perform his/her duties because of physical or mental condition. However, in the event of the death or resignation of the President, his/her party will select his/her successor and there will be a new general election. (The Final Draft Constitution of Zimbabwe 2013).

But the question of the timing of the elections has led to a sharp difference of opinion between the main political parties. Elections were scheduled for July 31, but this date has sparked sharp opposition from both the MDC “formations” and smaller parties. They demanded a postponement of the date of the elections, arguing the need for reforms in the field of the media and the rule of law. However the five year term of the National Assembly was expiring and the representatives of ZANU-PF insisted that such moves were already provided for by the Constitution, while the MDC had failed to ensure the abolition of sanctions envisaged by the GPA.

The leaders of the SADC member countries also called for the postponement of elections. Under these circumstances, not only both the formations of the MDC, but Patrick Chinamasa, Minister of Justice from Zanu-PF as well have appealed to the Constitutional Court, asking about the possibility of the postponement, but the Court gave a negative response, and the date of the elections has not changed (Gonda 2013)

It should be noted that in the period leading up to the elections, there were differences between President Jacob Zuma, who replaced Mbeki as a facilitator, and the leadership of Zimbabwe. It was clear from discussions the author had in South Africa April 2013 and during the celebration of the 50 anniversary of the OAU/AU in Addis Ababa in May, but also from public statements by Lindiwe Zulu, South Africa’s Presidential Adviser for International Affairs (and, incidentally, a graduate of the Peoples’ Friendship University in Moscow) (New Zimbabwe 2013).

Mugabe gave her a reply at the first Zanu-PF campaign rally, in a very sharp form: “An ordinary woman says:” no you can’t hold elections July 31”. Did this person think that we, as a country we will listen to the stupid utterances of this street woman?”

Mugabe has taken a tough stance with SADC as well: “Let it be known that we are in SADC voluntarily. If SADC decides to do stupid things, we can move out.” (Zimbabwe Guardian 2013)

Zuma “disavowed” Lindiwe Zulu, his spokesman Mac Maharaj made the following statement: “The Presidency has noted with great concern recent unfortunate statements made on the situation in Zimbabwe, which have been attributed to a member of the technical team supporting the Facilitator, President Jacob Zuma,” and added: “A number of statements have been made during the facilitation process which have been unauthorised and which are regrettable and unfortunate. Some of the utterances have also been inaccurate” (Bell 2013).

It remains to be added that after the election success for him and his party Mugabe apologized to Zulu at the SADC summit in Malawi, and rather emotionally: “I love you, Ms Lindiwe, I love you, I don’t hate you. It was a time when everyone was campaigning and one can do anything in order to win the elections” (Mambo 2013), and Zulu accepted his apology (SABC 2013).

Another obstacle to holding of elections was the lack of funds announced by Tendai Biti, then the Finance Minister (and Secretary General of the MDC-T). However, when the election date was finally determined, money was somehow quickly found.

Elections: facing “an uncomfortable truth”

Five candidates took part in the presidential election and 15 parties in the election to the National Assembly. In the first case, the clear favorites were Mugabe and Tsvangirai, and in the second one their parties, Zanu-PF and MDC-T. MDC-T was supported by several small parties, while reconstituted ZAPU went into an alliance with MDC-N in the parliamentary elections, but its leader, Dumiso Dabengwa stood as a presidential candidate independently while at the same time vowing to support Tsvangirai in the second round.

Mugabe’s victory was clear - 61.09% of the votes compared with 33.94 percent for Tsvangirai. The leader of the MDC “second formation” Ncube scored only 2.68% and Dabengwa of ZAPU and little known Kisinoti Mukwazhi of the Zimbabwe Development Party did even worse, respectively 0.74%, and 0.29% (Nehanda Radio 2013).

The results of the parliamentary elections were similar. Only three parties are represented now in the National Assembly: Zanu-PF won 197 seats out of 270, MDC-T-70, and the MDC-N two, one MP is an independent (My Zimbabwe 2013).

It can be said that the election results were both expected and unexpected. A year before the poll, commissioned by the Washington-based Freedom House showed that from 2010, the MDC’s support has dropped from 38% to

20%, while that of Zanu-PF increased from 17% to 31% (Polgreen 2012). Even earlier a former assistant to Tsvangirai told the author that his party could lose the election, while hoping that its leader would win the presidential race. Still, the election result, the huge gap between the two main parties was clearly a shock to Mr Tsvangirai, his supporters and his foreign patrons.

In contrast to previous elections, these passed peacefully and calmly. But, nevertheless, ZANU-PF former partners in GPA (and now again in the opposition) loudly complained about the “huge farce”. Claims have been brought that the voters list was provided to participating parties just before the election, and that many have not found their names on the lists. Their figure itself was really big, 305 thousand (Zimbabwe Electoral Commission 2013), though by no means all of them would have voted against ZANU-PF and its leader. Anyhow the gap was so large that the claims of Mugabe’s opponents looked far from convincing. Not coincidentally, two London periodicals, the Guardian and the Economist published articles after the election under similar headings: “Zimbabwe inconvenient election truth” (Chitiyo 2013) and “The unexpected results of the elections in Zimbabwe. Facing an uncomfortable truth” (Economist 2013).

There were many foreign observers at the elections, notably from Africa, however while those from Western countries that apply sanctions against Zimbabwe were (logically) not welcomed. In general, assessment of the elections has been positive, although there were some nuances. So, the head of the AU Mission (it is worth noting that the representatives of the AU arrived in Harare well ahead, on June 15), the former Nigerian President Obasanjo called them “fairly fair” (Information Nigeria, 2 August 2013) and the SADC mission - free and peaceful, “generally reliable”, declaring that “the will of the people was sufficiently expressed” (Mhofu 2013).

However that was not enough for the West to change its attitude towards Zimbabwe. The European Union’s statement on the election was somewhat ambivalent, in particular, it took note of “the assessments of the Southern African Development Community and the African Union”, congratulated “the people of Zimbabwe for a peaceful vote and for turning out in high numbers” and welcomed “the generally peaceful and orderly manner in which the elections were conducted”, but instead of supporting the AU and SADC stance, having expressed concern about “alleged irregularities” and “the identified weaknesses” just promised to “continue to follow developments and work closely with its international partners in the weeks to come” (Declaration 2013). However, the major EU “partner”, the USA, took an openly hostile position. Secretary of State John Kerry’s statement was blunt: “...make no mistake: in light of substantial electoral irregularities reported by domestic and regional

observers, the United States does not believe that the results announced today represent a credible expression of the will of the Zimbabwean people” (Press Statement 2013).

Once again, like the issue of sanctions, Western powers disrespected the opinion of the African continental and regional bodies. In any case, more important, of course, was the reaction to the election results in Zimbabwe. Initially MDC-T threatened to bring its supporters to the streets, but that did not happen. Then Tsvangirai filed a petition in the Constitutional Court, but a few days later took it back. However, the Court considered and rejected it, finding that the elections were “free, fair, credible and were the expression of the will of the people.” At the same time, Tsvangirai refused to negotiate about cooperation with ZANU-PF as part of the new Government, although rumours about the possibility of achieving “GPA-2” following the withdrawal of the petition spread.

Why did ZANU-PF win a major victory? Why did MDC, which five years ago (if you take two “formations” together) had more seats in the National Assembly than the ZANU-PF, and its leader in the first round had won more votes than Mugabe, was defeated?

Some observers attribute Mugabe’s victory primarily to the rise of the revenues from rapidly growing diamond mining. “Now the issue is not about the regime change, but the game change”, one of Tsvangirai’s supporters told the author back in 2012, referring to the discovery of rich diamond fields (Zimbabwe holds 25% of the world’s reserves of opencast extractable diamonds). (Jamasmie 2013). Moreover the Ministry of Mines, headed by the representative of ZANU-PF, changes its policy from the prohibition to legalization of illegal diamond mining to the satisfaction of the Zimbabwe Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining Council, representing 25.000 registered small-scale miners. The “Official” mining sector grew rapidly as well. At the height of the crisis only 3 000 workers were employed there but by 2013, their number reached 43 000 (Moyo 2013).

However the main reason was, most probably, the different treatment of the two forces of the situation after the elections of 2008: while ZANU-PF have been working hard to strengthen their positions and, in particular, to re-establish the network of their organizations on the ground, its competitors in many ways “rested on laurels”, and what is more, made a lot of mistakes.

To begin with, the new MDC members of Parliament, including ministers, in the words of one analyst “...occupied themselves with enjoying their turn to eat the cake”. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) report stated that “65% of Zimbabwe’s current MPs require intensive training in legislation

and budget analysis as they are not skilled and competent to perform their tasks”, but proved “to be very capable of looking after their own interests”. They each demanded and received a \$1 400 base monthly salary, a write-off of their \$30 000 car loans and a once-off \$ 15 000 sitting allowance bonus. In May 2012 MPs demanded residential stands at subsidized prices in “respectable suburbs”, thereby literally revealing how much they had distanced themselves from their constituencies... Of course, in these matters ZANU MPs behaved similarly, but hadn’t the MDC promised to do away with such practices?”(Martens 2013).

In the field of economy, the Finance Minister and MDC Secretary-General Tendai Biti insisted on the lifting of price controls on food, while in 2009, originally the standard salary for civil servants was defined as 100 dollars a month. Later under the threat of a strike by teachers it was elevated to 150-250 dollars, but still much less than that of the parliamentarians. In contrast, the ZANU-PF leadership supported the rise of salaries, but by 2013 the majority of civil servants earned a salary of between U\$250 and U\$300, a family of six needed (according to the Consumer Council of Zimbabwe) about U\$570 to lead a normal life (ibid.). Besides, in spite of the economic growth, in 2011 only 31 per cent of the economically active men and only 14 per cent of the women were in paid employment (Ibid.)

The case became worse for the MDC-T in a number of cities where it controlled municipalities; where both corruption and incompetence were typical. The investigation into the corruption scandal in the administration of Harare really began only three years later instigated by the directive of the ZANU-PF Minister of Local Government.

Small-scale farmers were also discontent with the MDC ministers, who were mainly responsible for the economy. For example, the parastatal Grain Marketing Board failed year upon year to pay farmers on time for their maize, due to the delay in the disbursement of funds by Biti’s ministry. In such a situation, Mugabe, in contrast, launched a Presidential Agricultural Input Scheme in support of agriculture, from which the community resettled and supported some 560000 small-scale farms (ibid.).

The results of the land reforms too, began to have more positive effects. Criticism of it partially justified, for example, some “powers that be” have managed to acquire several farms, but around 200 thousand farmers and their families have already re-settled on new land.

As an observer wrote, although the MDC had earlier publicly stated that it did not want to reverse land reform and this position was entrenched in the GPA, “one can imagine that these farmers would not be happy having to return their more fertile land to the former owners” (ibid.) and Tsvangirai

hardly managed to convince the population in rural areas because his party's connection with white farmers was too well known.

Despite initial scepticism, the "indigenization" of the economy, especially mines began to be implemented. This programme allowed for the transferring of 51% of company shares (with compensation) to black Zimbabweans. A 28% stake by law must now belong to the employees, 10% is reserved for local communities and not more than 5% for managers. After a long resistance Impala Platinum, the world's second biggest producer of platinum agreed to comply with new regulations (Martens 2013) - the remaining stock still provides huge profits for its owners. Nevertheless during the election campaign a representative of Tsvangirai said that after coming to power, the MDC-T would abandon this policy.

Subjective, personal factors also played their role. The internal squabbling and power struggles were typical for both MDC "formations". Besides Tsvangirai became too "amorous" after he lost his first wife, Susan, in a road accident in 2009. For a couple of weeks he was married to Lorcadia Karimatsenga in 2012, but he had to pay \$200 000 to be allowed to leave her and wed Elizabeth Macheke. However, pretty soon this marriage collapsed as well (Maodzwa 2014).

Jos Martens, a staff member of the German Rosa Luxemburg Foundation, who for a long time lived in Zimbabwe, expressed the mood of the voters: "What would you have voted if you had been that communal dweller who had received a fertile piece of land; if your small mine claim had just been registered; if you were a jobless ex-farm worker; if your small business was gradually getting off the ground (whom would you credit?); ...if you had just received \$1,500 dollars at the tobacco auction; if you had been struggling with corrupt MDC council officials about a plot for your house; if you had a job in a mine and were hoping to get a share of it; if ...?" (Martens 2013).

The election results have clearly caused confusion in the West, putting it before a difficult choice: whether to persist in its tough confrontation with Zimbabwe, or, at last, to lift the sanctions, as was promised if successful elections were held? Clearly there is no consent, and piecemeal solutions have appeared. Thus the European Union announced the lifting of the sanctions against the Zimbabwe Mining Development Corporation, which meant the opening up of the markets to the EU member states for rough diamonds from that country. Here the interests of European companies have played a critical role, but it is doubtful whether they will be satisfied, because the export of diamonds from Zimbabwe has already been successfully implemented to China (Karimakwenda 2014).

It is noteworthy that opponents to the lifting of sanctions have found support from MDC-T. If during the period of the GPA its leaders and supporters had (at least publicly), advocate for their abolition, now they refuse to do so, putting their own selfish interests above national ones (Chiripasi 2013). Suffice to say that according to ZANU-PF damage from sanctions since the early 2000's has been estimated to be at least \$42 billion.

However, it is not clear how firmly Tsvangirai holds the leadership of his party. While he so far remains the candidate of the MDC-T for the next elections in 2018, its leader should be chosen by secret ballot at the Convention in 2016, and demands for his resignation are growing louder. Eddie Cross, a prominent economist, Member of Parliament and one of the MDC founders laments: "We left Parliament two months ago – then holding a majority in the Lower House, have come back as the Opposition with 72 seats in a House of 270 Members... After 13 years of struggle, five elections and four years of the Government of National Unity (GNU) we are no further forward than we were in 2000, in fact we are further back than we were then... If the former Prime Minister is tired – which he is certainly entitled to be given all that he has endured at the hands of ZANU PF, let him stand down and let someone who is energetic, God-fearing and not prepared to compromise on principle, take his place. I distinctly remember Tsvangirai being reported as saying that if he lost the election he would stand down. So why the change of mind?" (Freeth 2013). But Tsvangirai is not going to concede his post, claiming that in this case the MDC will collapse: "If you remove me that will be the end of it and you all know that" (Takavarasha 2013).

On the contrary, Mugabe's leadership is not in doubt in ZANU-PF, despite his advanced age (he was 90 on 21 February this year). When a reporter asked him: "Mr President, don't you think 89-years old would be a good time to rest and retire?" he retorted: "Have you ever asked Queen Elizabeth this question or is it only for African leaders?" (Diaspora Messenger 2013).

The new Government of Zimbabwe has ambitious plans. A 116-page document "Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-Economic Transformation (Zim Asset) approved shortly after its formation envisages faster development of the economy, from 3.4% in 2013, up to 9.9% in 2018, and a payment of 6.1 billion dollars of external debt, through the mobilization of local resources (Gumbo 2013).

However, the country's leadership hopes for the inflow of funds from abroad as well, emphasizing that Zimbabwe is "friendly to foreign direct investment, that Zimbabwe will not grab someone else's business or capital that comes to invest in the country and that country respects the right of ownership" (The Standard 2013).

There is a reason to believe that the political stability prevailing after the election will facilitate a full recovery and further growth of its economy in the interests of the Zimbabwean people.

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