



BRIEF OVERVIEW OF ZIMBABWE, ITS POLITICAL ECONOMY AND THE TASKS OF THE COMMUNISTS

The formerly strong economy of Zimbabwe has been destroyed by a combination of imperialist sanctions and gross mismanagement by the ruling party which has become the property of the parasitic bourgeoisie. The 'indigenisation' policy revolves almost exclusively on the plunder of existing businesses and resources by the political élite. This élite has consistently failed to pay workers while maintaining a lifestyle of conspicuous consumption. This has led to the great majority of skilled workers, skilled technicians and experienced management leaving the country.

Factories have been closed down and farming is well below optimum efficiency. Zimbabwe Communists at the present time see the immediate problem as being the re-establishment of production.

Recent History

Before the introduction of the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) introduced in 1991 under the influence of the World Bank/IMF, more than 80% of products bought in Zimbabwe were made in Zimbabwe. Rhodesia, under sanctions from Britain, had internalised much of its economy making it semi-autonomous from foreign monopoly capital and this system was to remain in place from 1980-1991, the early days on independence. The introduction of ESAP and therefore of 'Free Trade' which resulted in the import of huge amounts of unnecessary luxury goods marks the beginning of Zimbabwe's economic downturn.

The Congo War of 1998-2003 in which the Zimbabwe Army defended the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) against the US-backed invasion by Uganda and Rwanda marked the beginning of sanctions in 1999 with the withdrawal of Bretton Woods funding -- this was despite the fact that the aggressor nations, Uganda and Rwanda, continued to be funded by the same agencies. The sanctions were then compounded by the passing of the 'Zimbabwe Democracy and Economic Recovery Act' (ZiDERA) by the US Congress towards the end of 2001.

Land occupations led by former freedom fighters began in 2000. The initial slogan was "One man, One Farm" -- white farmers frequently owned three or four farms. But following the sudden deaths of the leaders of the movement, Chenjerai Hunzvi and Border Gezi in the middle of 2001, the élite started grabbing the best farms for themselves, in most cases staying in the cities while assigning their poor relatives to manage their farms. The number of white farmers was reduced from about 4000 to about 300. Many of these farmers have now gone to Zambia where they are now exporting maize to Zimbabwe. The 'land reform' was mainly distributionist in nature and did not focus on production.

Since then there has been a move to say that ALL foreign or white-owned businesses must give 51% ownership to 'indigenous entrepreneurs'. This has led to productive business owners leaving the country and in other cases skilled workers and experienced management leaving companies after their new employers have failed to pay them. It is not an exaggeration to say that most strikes in Zimbabwe are not for more money, but simply for the workers to get paid.

Restoration of Production

The immediate aim of Zimbabwe Communists is to restore production; our central demand is for the creation of a National Democratic Economy as a first step towards socialism.

The Rhodesians, under sanctions, produced an National Economy to a large extent autonomous from outside control; this was aimed at preserving the interests of the white settler minority in the face of imperialist demands for a black but neo-colonialist government. This form of planned, semi-autonomous economy persisted through the 1980s and people are aware that at that time people they were generally better off than they are now. Therefore people are responsive to our demand of establishing a National Democratic Economy. A National Democratic Economy, though necessarily multi-class in nature, must be led by the workers and peasants and advance their class interests.

In structuring a future National Democratic Economy, the intention of Zimbabwe Communists is to create a National Plan linked to Devolution of Power to the People. Planning experts must draw up a Draft National Plan. This must be discussed in every Ward and every Village throughout the nation. Every District, Town and City must have a Development Committee and a Development Plan. Every Province must have a Development Commission and a Development Plan, There must then be an over-arching National Development Plan under the guidance of a National Planning Commission. The huge Zimbabwean Diaspora must also be involved in creating and implementing the Plan.

Fuel and Energy

National sovereignty can only, in the true sense, be guaranteed by economic sovereignty. In order to achieve this the two critical issues are self-sufficiency in food production and self-sufficiency in fuel and energy.

Zimbabwe has enormous coal reserves but no oil. We have the capacity to at least partially overcome our fuel problems through the following:

- (1) Putting our whole railway system back to steam (part of it is still relying on steam) thus saving a large amount of forex spent on importing diesel.
- (2) There is a large low-grade coalfield in the south of Zimbabwe which has never been exploited. This coal is suitable for conversion into fuel. This could be achieved through a deal with Sasol in South Africa which specialises in this process.
- (3) Exploitation of the untapped gas-field around Lupane in the west of the country and conversion of vehicles to methane gas.
- (4) Production of bio-fuel. This can be achieved through the following methods.
 - a) Production of ethanol from sugar. This is already being done but can be expanded.
 - b) Increased production of jatropha on marginal land.
 - c) Production of high-protein algae at coal-fired power stations as in Brazil.

On electrical power.

- (1) The current coal-fired power stations are performing far below capacity and need refurbishing.
- (2) Hydro-electric power from Victoria Falls and Kariba Dam need to be upgrade. Kariba Dam is in danger of collapse: if this happens it will be a catastrophe not only for Zimbabwe but for Zambia and Mozambique too.
- (3) Solar Power needs to be greatly increased with factories producing both solar water-heating and solar electric panels. In the rural areas these can be used in conjunction with establishment of wood lots and the use of wood-burning stoves to reduce deforestation and the amount of time spent by women on the collection of firewood.

(4) As mentioned above, the Lupane gas-field in the west of Zimbabwe needs to be exploited and a gas-powered electricity power station built as well as gas to be used directly.

As Zimbabwe is the second largest producer of platinum group metals, we must, in the long term, investigate hydrogen-cell technology in which water is converted into hydrogen, partly through the use of platinum as a catalyst, the hydrogen then being used to generate energy.

Water

Water is a big problem in Zimbabwe. Generally, there has been a reduction in annual rainfall since Independence in 1980.

We urgently need both to complete the Matabeleland-Zambezi Water Project in the west and the Nuanetsi Scheme in Masvingo Province in the south-east. We also need to start the Matabeleland South water project linking new and existing dams to a pipeline. Thus we can deal with the three driest rural Provinces, Matabeleland South, Masvingo and Matabeleland North in that order as well as serving the Metropolitan Province of Bulawayo

The water situation in Harare and Chitungwiza is extremely serious with sewerage water flowing into the drinking supply leading to deaths through Cholera, typhus and other water-borne diseases. Proper water treatment and recycling plants are necessary both there and in other parts of the country.

Most importantly with uncertain rainfall patterns we need to have sustainable irrigation. This, of course, requires electricity as well as water.

Zimbabwe needs a National Water Plan

Land

The land question needs to be re-visited. Land must, be nationally owned but leased to those who can use it effectively. Farmland needs to be farmed by productive farmers living on the land. The ownership of farms by business people living in the cities must end. State farms and co-operative farms need to be established as well as co-operative buying and selling for small-scale independent farmers. Land must be utilised by any Zimbabwean capable of farming: those unwilling or unable to utilise the land apportioned to them must be removed. White farmers who have had all their land taken from them must be allowed to return to Zimbabwe on the basis of "One man, One farm". However, in terms of land distribution, we must be aware of local interests and feeling with land normally being allocated to people local to that area.

Minerals

Extensive mineral deposits have been found throughout Zimbabwe, especially in the south of the country. These should be exploited through a national mining company where possible and where more expertise and resources are needed, through 50/50 projects with foreign companies or foreign countries.

Banking

The banking sector needs to be strictly controlled with banks, on the whole, going back to pre-ESAP regulations. A strong state bank needs to be established as well as co-operative banks. Gold reserves need to be built up with half the gold mined in Zimbabwe going into the Reserve Bank. Very strict measures must be adopted in this sector including the confiscation of all the property of corrupt persons.

Connection needs to be made with the BRICS Bank.

Productive Capitalism

While the commanding heights of the economy should be nationally owned or controlled, at the stage of building a National Democratic Economy productive and innovative capitalism should be encouraged and a venture capital company established to assist those with sound, productive business ideas but no access to capital. There must be a policy of import substitution.

The Working-Class

As production grows, so will the working class. Until the establishment of socialism, class antagonisms will remain and strong trade unions are needed to protect and advance the interests of the workers. It is imperative that as production grows, the working-class must not grow only in numbers, but also in its control of the political economy of the country. In mining and other large-scale enterprises, workers must be given a share of the ownership.

The Peasantry

Traditional habits of co-operation must be encouraged through the establishment of better production methods, co-operative buying and selling and, where possible, collectivisation.

The Rural Proletariat

The rural proletariat employed on commercial farms is predominantly of Malawian, Mozambican and Zambian origin. These people have historically been denied their rights as Zimbabweans, yet many of them have a high level of understanding of agriculture. These too must be engaged in the establishment of collective farms. Where agro-industrial states or state farms exist or are newly established they must have their rights confirmed through an Agricultural Workers' Charter drawn up with the assistance of the appropriate trade unions. They must be given a share in the ownership of such profits.

Social Needs

Once there is adequate production, education, health and housing problems can be addressed rapidly. There is no reason why every Zimbabwean should not have a house of reasonable size in which to live which has electricity and running water. This could be achieved within twenty years with the co-operation of the people and under the leadership of the Communist Party.

Proletarian Internationalism

Zimbabwe Communists see themselves as part of the international Communist movement and the Zimbabwe Communist League follows the main line of the International Meeting of Communist and Workers' Parties (IMCWP). When we have established ourselves as a Party we shall apply for membership of that body. We also in favour of reviving the African Left Networking Forum (ALNEF) and we are supporting the South African Communist Party in this.

The Zimbabwe Communist League has in the past attended an open meeting of the IMCWP when it was held in Johannesburg. We have also participated in a Conference of ALNEF and we attended the 17th Congress of the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) in Durban in October 2016 as an observer delegation.

The Zimbabwe Communist League has well established links with the South African Communist Party, the Communist Party of Swaziland, the Communist Party of Britain, the Party of Communists USA and the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement (North). We have also had interaction with many other Communist parties and progressive organisations.

We regard ourselves as nationalists in the sense that we seek for the national unity of the Zimbabwean people in rebuilding our country; pan-Africanists because we believe in African unity for development and against imperialism; and proletarian internationalists in that we support the struggle of the workers, peasants and all oppressed and progressive-minded people against capitalism and imperialism in every country; and finally, for the establishment of socialism and communism world-wide.

Immediate Demands in Zimbabwe

In Zimbabwe we support the struggles of the workers against refusal of employers to pay them on time. We are calling for the unity of the three trade union centres, the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU), the Zimbabwe Federation of Trade Unions (ZFTU), the Congress of Zimbabwean Trade Unions (COZiTU) to form a single centre which is not affiliated to any Zimbabwean political party but is affiliated to the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU). In South Africa we have a strong influence within the Migrant Workers' Union of South Africa (MiWUSA).

In those rural areas where we have influence we have been encouraging organic farming methods including crop rotation and bee-keeping as well as commercial goat breeding. We are also encouraging co-operative selling of produce and the avoidance of selling produce to unscrupulous truck owners.

We support all calls for the implementation of the New Constitution voted for by the overwhelming majority of Zimbabwean voters but not implemented by the ZANU(PF) government.

We also call for the vote to be extended to the diaspora. (There are more Zimbabweans in Johannesburg alone than in Bulawayo).

We support any coalition of opposition parties to break the stranglehold of ZANU(PF). However we do not trust the stability of such a coalition and the Communist Party will have to take full cognisance and advantage of that.

The Party

As soon as the Party is formed, we will register as a political party which would allow us to take part in elections and at least partially secure our legal rights. However, we do not intend to take part in elections at this juncture and we will try to build Communist groups within existing electoral political parties; at present these exist within ZAPU and MDC (Green) with some interest from People First, MDC(T) and PDP. Future conditions will determine if and when we should take part in elections as the Zimbabwe Communist Party.

It has already been agreed that there will be two tier membership (as there is already within the Zimbabwe Communist League), that is Cadre membership and Candidate membership with only Cadre members having the right to vote internally. There has also been a suggestion that we have a third category of Supporters; the consensus is that this is a good idea for the future after we have built our structures and need to turn to the masses.

The 3 Priorities

The 3 priorities following the foundation of the Zimbabwe Communist Party will be:

- 1) Establishing organisation throughout Zimbabwe and throughout the Zimbabwean diaspora.
- 2) Establishing political education for all members, both ideological and practical.
- 3) Establishing working committees to further different aspects of the people's struggle.