

Launch a new opposition to stop the sell-out

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Robert Mugabe has gone to the United Nations with the Movement for Democratic Change to ask for the lifting of sanctions and with requests for aid to help Zimbabwe out of the catastrophic economic crisis which his own mismanagement and corruption and the imperialist-inspired sanctions have inflicted on the country.

The deal brokered by Thabo Mbeki, recently ousted from the South African presidency promises the MDC the post of Prime Minister and key cabinet positions in a new government. But it has completely excluded the masses from any decisions on the country's future. More than 1,000 political prisoners are still in jail, and a neoliberal economic programme to open up the country to foreign capital is central to the deal: this despite inflation running at more than a million per cent and four out of five Zimbabweans being out of a job.

MDC head of economic policy, Eddie Cross, wants to sell off all nationalised industries within two years, while David Coltart, MP for the Mutumbara faction of the MDC (which gained 8 per cent of the vote), demands a "sale of the century" of state enterprises.

Nor is the great anti-imperialist Mugabe's Zanu-PF manifesto any better. It calls for the complete liberalisation of prices, currency and trade, the slashing of subsidies for public services, and opening up the economy to even more foreign capital. The UN, along with the voice of the South African capitalists, The Independent, calls for wholesale privatisation. So everyone with the exception of the people supports a neoliberal shock therapy in Zimbabwe, the self-same policy that mass working class action forced Robert Mugabe to abandon in the 1990s!

Mbeki shares a common history with Mugabe in the southern African liberation movements; they have known each other for years. But, with or without Mbeki, South Africa backs a deal because Zimbabwe rich in natural resources, including land is a major area of investment for South African capitalism.

Impala Platinum, Metallon, and Mmakau Mining control almost all of Zimbabwe's mining industry. Standard Bank and Shoprite dominate its banking and retail sectors. Only this year South African multinational Anglo-American announced investments of US\$400 million in the country.

Relief

South African, British and US imperialism need a stable regime, an end to sanctions and coordinated international efforts to bring down inflation. Food and aid has been promised in the short term to relieve the crisis although, after the recent credit shocks, it must be very doubtful adequate funds will appear. It is a general rule that the promises to Africa are as inflated and valueless as the Zimbabwean dollar.

These measures may provide some desperately needed relief and convince the people for a time that the power sharing deal is the way forward. But when we look at the policies of the government and international capital, we can see that the misery will return.

Civil society organisations have rejected the deal outright. Many of them issued a joint statement at the end of June calling for free elections under a new constitution and rejecting any power sharing agreement.

The Zimbabwean Congress of Trade Unions has pointed out that the deal fails to provide for a transitional government or a "people-led constitution" a demand taken up by the National Constitutional Assembly, the People's Charter (which came out of a meeting of several thousand people in February), NGOs, churches, Women of Zimbabwe Arise and the International Socialist Organisation of Zimbabwe (sister organisation of the British Socialist Workers Party and the largest far left group in the country).

Many of these groups have also called for the troops to be withdrawn to their barracks and for the dismantling of all government militias (the "war veterans") and the Joint Operations Command (which organised the violence), as well as the release of all political prisoners (estimated at about 1,500, including leaders of trade unions and women's groups).

Now is the time for these organisations, alongside the trade unions, to come together and organise resistance to the deal. They should call a national assembly to debate the burning economic and social questions, such as land ownership and the economy. Such an assembly should adopt radical solutions, such as putting state industry under the control of workers not bureaucrats, more nationalisation not privatisation, and a huge programme of public works to mobilise the unemployed to build homes, cultivate the land, and so on.

Most importantly, the new opposition will need to build new instruments of struggle against the government, and against the imperialist backed economic policy. No one should doubt that the army and police will be mobilised to enforce the MDC and Zanu-PF's anti-working class plans. Only an all out struggle against neoliberalism and for real democratic and trade union rights can open the road to power for Zimbabwe's workers and rural poor.

A fighting opposition movement will therefore need to be rooted in similar assemblies in every locality, drawing in directly elected and recallable delegates from every workplace, neighbourhood and section of the poor, so that the struggles can be coordinated, mass actions can be defended from Zanu-PF thugs and state forces, and resistance linked to the demand for a constituent assembly.

If this deal goes through, then all the parties and imperialism will be united. Their aim will be the ever-greater exploitation of the Zimbabwean people. The misery of the past few years will return after a brief respite. However, activists can oppose the deal and take up the struggle, using rallies, demonstrations, blockades and strikes to implement a "people-led constitution" and a working class emergency programme to combat the worsening economy.

But to do this, a clean break is needed from both the fake anti-imperialism of Zanu-PF and the pro-imperialist neoliberalism of the MDC. Instead a mass revolutionary party needs to be built in Zimbabwe with the goal of forming a workers and peasants' government.

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