



Zimbabwe: force Mugabe from power

Sun, 11/05/2008 - 15:52

Robert Mugabe lost, but is still President of Zimbabwe. Morgan Tsvangirai of the Movement for Democratic Change apparently received 47 per cent, with Mugabe of Zanu-PF on 43 per cent, which means that a run-off will have to decide who wins outright. The MDC has called the result "daylight robbery", claiming Tsvangirai achieved more than half the votes and may not enter a run-off.

The delay served to keep Mugabe in control and intimidate the opposition. Police and army have killed about 20 people, beaten and tortured hundreds more. Several hundred people have been arrested. Neighbouring countries have reported more fleeing political violence.

Mugabe has also used the media to warn against "sell-outs", such as Tsvangirai. Police chief Augustine Chihuri has even had the gall to accuse the opposition of violence and electoral rigging. Zanu-PF spokesperson Bright Matonga claimed that allegations of fraud are "the voice of Gordon Brown and the British government" and that the MDC's campaign was funded by foreign money, echoing Mugabe's fake anti-imperialist rhetoric.

MDC reaction

In the face of this onslaught, the MDC leadership has abandoned any attempt to build a movement against Zanu-PF, following a failed two-day strike. Former MDC MP and International Socialist leader Munyaradzi Gwisai rightly blamed the strike's failure on the delay in calling it: "The opposition lost a very powerful moment immediately after the elections, when clearly there was a very excited mood amongst working people and other sections of society... It's only now, when they see that Mugabe is digging in, that they talk about mobilising for mass action. But in many ways the enthusiasm and excitement and anger has diminished, so it's much more difficult now."

Tsvangirai clearly does not want to frighten the imperialist and big capitalist farmers, who are backing him, by mobilising the workers and the peasants. Keeping them on board is, for the MDC, more important than ousting Mugabe.

Despite being formed by the trade unions in 1999, the MDC was quickly co-opted and taken over by bosses and white farmers. Its practical opposition to land redistribution and its support for IMF policies of privatisation and deregulation laid it wide open to charges of being a "western stooge".

So instead of leading resistance, Tsvangirai has been touring Africa, including meeting former Nigerian president Olusegun Obasanjo, who helped steal the election last year, and Kenyan prime minister Raila Odinga.

Kenya offers a possible model for solving Zimbabwe's impasse. Earlier this year, Odinga accepted the role of prime minister in a government where President Mwai Kibaki kept his post, despite electoral cheating.

Power-sharing is attractive in Zimbabwe because Zanu-PF would maintain the hold of the military and police over the country, while granting the MDC ministers. It would allow the normalisation of international relations, e.g. suspending sanctions and halting the exodus of refugees.

The US and Britain want the Southern African Development Community (SADC) to force through a power-sharing government in Zimbabwe. US envoy Jendayi Frazer called on it to use "maximum leverage" to prevent more violence, saying Tsvangirai had won, "perhaps outright". Gordon Brown expressed outrage at the delay and Britain has raised Zimbabwe twice recently in the United Nations.

Zimbabweans should have no faith in the SADC, whose only interest is to preserve the power of established African leaders. South African President Thabo Mbeki even claimed, "There is no crisis in Zimbabwe." Likewise, the UN, US and UK want a return to the sort of neoliberalism implemented by Mugabe in the 1990s the same policies that led to the workers' revolt against Zanu-PF in the first place!

Workers' solidarity

Mbeki's "quiet diplomacy" contrasts with the militancy of South African dockers, who last month refused to unload a Chinese ship, laden with arms for Zimbabwe. Randall Howard, leader of the Satawu transport union said: "Satawu does not agree with the position of the South African government not to intervene with this shipment of weapons. Our members employed at Durban container terminal will not unload this cargo neither will any of our members in the truck-driving sector move this cargo by road."

The Cosatu union federation called for similar action throughout Southern Africa, forcing the ship to turn back after it was refused entry into several neighbouring countries. Workers across the region must continue to block all trade that strengthens Zanu-PF and demand that their own governments offer aid without strings to the Zimbabwean workers and peasants, and cut all ties to Mugabe's regime.

This kind of internationalism could play a key role in reviving the Zimbabwean workers' movement. The migrant workers, who have fled Zanu-PF terror, could help form a conduit for getting political and material solidarity to the Zimbabwean unions.

Key tasks include forming action committees in the popular neighbourhoods and rural areas to organise protests, strikes, occupations and demonstrations against Mugabe as well as defence from army and police oppression. They should demand the MDC and the unions organise mass opposition to Zimbabwe, instead of diplomatic manoeuvres. They could also organise the distribution of food, fuel and water, taking it from the bosses or Zanu-PF.

Finally, committees should act as forums to set up a political alternative to both Zanu-PF and the neoliberal MDC a workers' party with a revolutionary socialist programme, addressing the economic catastrophe in Zimbabwe and challenging the rule of white farmers, black bosses or Zanu-PF bureaucrats, as well as the solutions offered by imperialism.

If the MDC does enter a re-run for presidency as we go to press, it is undecided it would take place in a climate of intimidation and fraud. But even an MDC victory would result in an anti-working class government, determined to return the country to profitability at the expense of workers' and poor peasants' livelihoods. Instead, the masses must rely on their own power to oust Mugabe and Zanu-PF, and fight for a workers' and peasants' government.

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