



BRITAIN ZIMBABWE SOCIETY

Incorporating the Newsletter of the Britain Zimbabwe Society

‘DUTY TO ASSIST’: ZIMBABWE CRISES TEST SADC’S RESOLVE

- **Reviews of Mbeki’s ‘Realpolitik’, Zuma’s firmer hand.**
- **Is the country in ‘a reasonable state of political repair’?**
- **Has the ‘extraordinary’ now become the mundane?**

Report from Diana Jeater

The BZS Research Day this year, in partnership with the African Studies Centre, Oxford, and with support from the African Studies Association UK, was on the topic ‘Zimbabwe and the Region’. Ten papers were presented in four panels. There were also two keynote talks: from Zimbabwean Minister for Industry and Commerce, Prof Welshman Ncube, leader of the MDC (N) party in the Government of National Unity; and from the LSE’s theorist of international relations, Prof Jack Spence, OBE. The majority of papers were from black Zimbabweans, which was a first for the Research Day – although all of them were male, which perhaps tells us something about the gendering of the academy in Zimbabwe?

• **To Page 2**

In this issue...

Prof Ranger wins another award.....	Page 2
Community Links: ‘How Kadoma has impacted my life’	Page 13
Books: Memoirs of Patricia Chater reviewed.....	Page 14

Another award for Professor Ranger

He is no newcomer to adulation. A man of many great achievements, and a hero in his own right, the Britain Zimbabwe Society's patron, Prof Terence Ranger, was recently numbered among Zimbabwe's great and good, at a glittering ceremony in London.

The Zimbabwean awards ceremony took place on Saturday 28 April.

"I was given an award for the non-Zimbabwean who has contributed most to Zimbabwe. Diana

Jeater very nobly said she would drive me there and back, but (the event) did not start until 7 pm - and it did not end until 1 am - so I decided not to attend. I sent (a speech), which Diana read on my behalf.

"It was evidently a grand, black-tie, ball-gown event," Prof Ranger said.

Prof Ranger says he is hoping to complete his memoirs of the period 1957-1967 sometime this year.

Zimbabwe: Transformation in crisis

• From Page 1

Several themes recurred throughout the day, but a sense of transformation in crisis remained constant.

In the past, we might have expected papers on Zimbabwe and the region to highlight everyday interactions arising from migrancy, trade, regional politics and cultural exchange. But, as Maxim Bolt observed at one point, over the past decade it has become hard to discuss 'the normal' when considering Zimbabwe's role – economically, socially and politically – within the region. The impact of Zimbabwe's crisis on the region, and the 'normalisation' of responses to its crisis, was evident in many papers. It seems that the extraordinary has come to seem mundane.

Nonetheless, historical and global contexts helped to situate the exceptionalism of the current situation. The consequences of good and bad neighbourliness ran through the historical papers, as well as being a central concern in the present. Interventions in

Zimbabwe's management of its affairs have been situated locally, regionally, and internationally, with uncertain hierarchies of influence between these different players. If Zimbabwe has, at times in the recent past, been a bad neighbour, then this raises the question of which institutions can legitimately police inter-state neighbourliness.

The power politics of the trans-Limpopo relationship and the nature of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), both as a regional community and as an African community, underpinned much of the analysis and discussion. Analysis of intra-regional relationships inevitably gave rise to the question of how both 'Zimbabwe' and 'the region' might be defined. Many papers illustrated the mutual inter-dependence of Zimbabwe and its neighbours in consolidating national (and nationalist) identities. Regional 'Others' have been central to the processes of state formation and defining national identity.

• To Page 3

Strong ties that bind in the region

• From Page 2

Analysis of the malleability of ideas of the ‘regional’ – and, indeed, of the ‘federal’ within the region – informed our discussions of the past, as well as our analysis of the roles of SADC and South Africa in the present. The movement of peoples, and the changing political alliances within the region, also raised questions about where sovereignty is vested, and how it might be asserted.

It was clear that there are strong ties that bind people across and within the region, transcending state boundaries and national identities. Many different forms of geographic movement exist within the region, and these differences are gendered. Family, sex, money and violence all contribute to the forging and maintenance of regional inter-relationships. Joost Fontein observed how trust is the glue that must bind relationships together during periods of regional disruption. We heard papers about the negotiation of trust across the decades: between traders, governments, armies and workers caught up in regional movements. Analyses of how relationships of trust have been negotiated or have unravelled exposed the processes that enable people to absorb crisis and instability into a new form of ‘normality’.

With political crisis and its consequences dominating the presentations, there were other important aspects of Zimbabwe within the region that did not get as much attention as they perhaps deserved. Religion, in particular, was underrepresented, notwithstanding an excellent historical analysis from Joseph Mujere of the role of the DRC in bringing BaSotho settlers into Zimbabwe in the early twentieth century. Today, regional airlines carry around planeloads of foreign

missionaries, while many churches have a hierarchy that is founded on regional-level institutions. NGOs, too, contribute towards a ‘regional imaginery’. Our focus on politics, diplomacy and cross-border migrants obscured some of these other forms of regional identity. We might also perhaps have thought more about the ‘global’ region. The people of the Diaspora were largely overlooked, except in a moving meditation from Andrew Mutandwa on ‘The Loss of Identity’ that closed the day. Moreover, the new immigrations into the region, notably from Nigeria, China, Somalia and India, create a different sense of ‘the region’. These communities have their own intra-regional linkages, as well as connecting back to their homelands. The Indian Ocean links, in particular, merit further investigation, both historically and in the present, with the growing importance of Indian investment in the Zimbabwean economy.

KEYNOTE PRESENTATIONS

Welshman Ncube is Zimbabwean Minister for Industry and Commerce and leader of the MDC (N) party in the Government of National Unity. He argued that SADC, the regional inter-state institution, will successfully oversee the completion of Zimbabwe’s programme of constitutional and democratic reforms, set in train by the Global Political Agreement (GPA) of September 2008. His confidence was based on a belief that Zanu-PF will have to accede to SADC’s proposals: firstly because only SADC stands between the party and ‘the might and wrath of the international community’ (cf Libya); and secondly because, disrupted by leadership

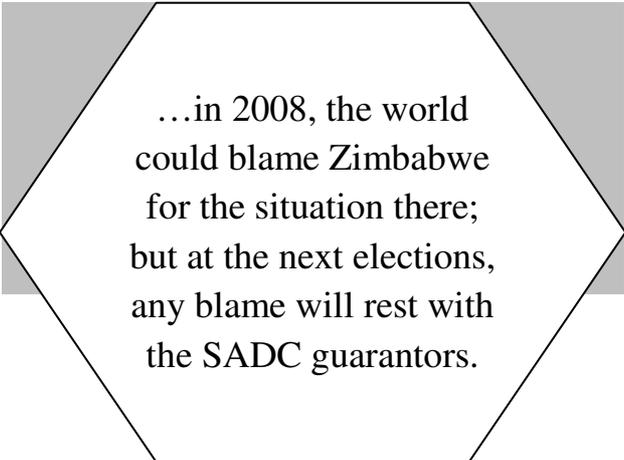
• To Page 4

‘ZANU-PF is no longer sufficiently strong to deny SADC’

• From Page 3

upheavals and declining voter support, Zanu-PF is no longer sufficiently internally or externally strong to deny SADC.

Ncube noted how the situation had changed over the past decade. The 2002 Presidential Elections saw the beginnings of concern about Zimbabwe from the international community, with interventions from both SADC and the Commonwealth urging a search for peace and unity. The mediation lasted only a few months before Zanu-PF felt powerful enough to walk away. When Zimbabwe left the Commonwealth, only SADC remained engaged.



...in 2008, the world could blame Zimbabwe for the situation there; but at the next elections, any blame will rest with the SADC guarantors.

The parties eventually engaged in dialogue under SADC auspices regarding plans for the 2010 elections. Some progress was made on draconian pieces of legislation, POSA (Public Order and Security Act) and AIPPA (Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act), but again Zanu-PF pulled out in late 2007 and decided to call unitary parliamentary and presidential elections, and to resume talks after those elections. Ncube argued that at the time, Zanu-PF was still internally sufficiently strong

to disengage from SADC, and Thabo Mbeki, the recognised SADC mediator, was not powerful enough to challenge this. Mbeki refused to impose solutions from outside, arguing the necessity for buy-in from Zimbabwe’s leadership.

However, the 2008 electoral stalemate forced a return to negotiation. SADC’s position as guarantor of the GPA, along with the involvement of the African Union, makes it much harder for Zanu-PF to act unilaterally in calling elections. SADC, stated Ncube, is bound to ensure that the GPA is implemented, because it cannot authorize elections outside the GPA. One of the key SADC players (unnamed by Ncube, but probably Zuma) had observed that in 2008 the world could blame Zimbabwe for the situation there; but at the next elections, any blame will rest with the SADC guarantors. Within Zimbabwe, stated Ncube, all stakeholders want to see the GPA fully implemented as soon as possible: everyone is tired of having to govern through negotiation and wants a clearly-elected majority government to take the lead, even if in coalition.

SCEPTICISM

There was some scepticism about this analysis in the questions that followed; but also some admiration for the Minister’s optimism. The LSE’s theorist of international relations, Prof **Jack Spence**, OBE, had previously addressed a BZS Research Day back in 2005, when he discussed Zimbabwe’s position within Africa.

• To Page 5

Human Rights concerns ‘now justify intervention’

• From Page 4

On this occasion, Prof Spence spoke more generally about interventions, and the politics that underpin when and how states, international organisations, and humanitarian agencies attempt to intervene in the affairs of sovereign states. He suggested that the experiences of the post-Cold War decades, particularly the 2000s, have reduced the appetite for intervention. There is now a greater tendency to look to regional actors and ‘contact groups’ to assist in resolving destabilising internal problems within neighbouring states.

Spence observed that, during the Cold War, the dominant paradigm was realism: preservation of order and the sovereignty of the state were the key values. There were rumbling small-scale ‘proxy wars’ managed by superpower blocs, but wider intervention in other states was dangerous. Human rights did not feature as a motive for intervention. Instead, the recognition of spheres of influence produced fiefdoms within which a blind eye was turned to human rights abuses. Debates about human rights were informed by awareness of apartheid and the holocaust, but action on human rights abuses extended no further than acknowledging the duty to care for refugees from such abuse.

After the Cold War, however, human rights emerged as a standard justification for intervention in other states’ affairs. Alongside genuine concerns about the suffering generated, there were ‘realpolitik’ interests in containing intra-state conflicts. Moreover, ‘failing states’ were characterised as disorderly

and regionally destabilising. Liberal concerns meshed with ‘realpolitik’ to produce human rights-based justifications for intervention. Sovereignty became conditional: the world was deemed to have a responsibility to protect citizens from their rogue governments.

FUZZY

Time has shown, however, that some problems – especially those arising from weak economies – don’t lend themselves to being solved by external intervention. It is not sensible to try to impose a fuzzy, ill-defined outcome such as ‘democracy’ from outside. Such intervention is likely to make the situation worse, rather than better. Spence cited Tzvetan Todorov’s 2002 distinction in ‘Right to Intervene or Duty to Assist?’, noting that the ‘responsibility to protect’ is problematic, but that there is perhaps a ‘duty to assist’.

This argument led Spence to focus on the role of SADC in the southern African region, specifically regarding Zimbabwe. He noted that some changes in a state must be slow, and that intervention can’t be a short-cut. The ‘duty to assist’ leaves states to sort out their problems, with the assistance as needed of a regional ‘contact group’. Zimbabwe, he concluded, is in a reasonable state of political repair. It is, he suggested, time for the diaspora to return.

As with Ncube’s presentation, there was a sense from some of those asking questions that this picture could be stiffened with a dose of

• To Page 6

‘The military define what is possible’

• From Page 5

‘realpolitik’. Domestic actors may try their best, but ultimately, as in Cote d’Ivoire, it is the military who define what is possible.

PANEL 1 – THE REGIONAL HISTORIES OF MIGRATION

The first paper of the day, from **Francis Musoni**, doctoral candidate at Emory University, traced the history of illegal cross-border migration in southern African politics, 1913-1953. The paper demonstrated how state formation depended on the definition of a regional ‘Other’ against which the state has been, and is still, defined. The creation of ‘illegal’ workers was an unintended by-product of state-building.

Musoni showed how the phenomenon of cross-border jumping arose not because states couldn’t define and control their borders, but, rather, because they could. Regional economies benefit from the movement of labour, but state formation depends upon the defining and policing of borders. If workers were not trying to cross these borders illegally, argues Musoni, the state would not be so clearly defined. Illegal migration, he suggested, is not in resistance to the state, but embedded within the state. Consequently, there is always a degree of ‘tolerated illegality’ and condoning by border officials, because ‘illegal’ does not necessarily mean ‘illicit’.

The paper traced the changing forms and extent of co-operation between Zimbabwe and its immediate neighbours (notably Malawi and South Africa) in trying to restrict the free movement of labour. South Africa was generally more in favour of free movements of labour than states further north, which worried about the loss of available labour to more economically powerful states to their south. The arguments used for controlling some categories of worker changed over time (from the strictly jural, to ostensible concerns over the health risks posed by ‘tropical Natives’, to negotiations over the number of ‘permitted’ workers as a tool of diplomacy). However, the formation of the Federation took some of the labour pressure off Southern Rhodesia and so reduced tensions arising from concerns about haemorrhage of labour to South Africa.

In discussion, it was noted that there are gendered dimensions to clandestine migration, and that women continue to act as key facilitators of clandestine labour movements. Women’s involvement as agents for cross-border jumping goes back to at least the 1930s and tends to be an adjunct to commercial sex work.

The purpose and function of the fence on the South African border was raised, as a possible example of discontinuity with the past: a different concept of the border with a different form of border control.

• To Page 7

Basotho struggles for belonging in colonial Zimbabwe

• From Page 6

Joseph Mujere, fresh from successfully defending his doctoral thesis at Edinburgh University, spoke on Basotho struggles for belonging in colonial Zimbabwe, 1872-1930s.

He described the community of Pedi missionaries from Lesotho who came to the territory as part of DRC mission settlement in the Chibi and Morgenster areas and whose evangelists pioneered the conversion of the southern Shona. Its members included prominent African thinkers such as Johannes Mokwile, of the Southern Rhodesian Natives Association. They owned freehold land, which they ran communally, with their own school on the farm.

The paper raised interesting questions about sovereignty, identity and 'progressiveness'. As a monogamous, educated and economically enterprising community, the Basotho evangelists might have seemed like 'model' Africans for the state.

Yet, as a group of 'alien' Africans, the community posed conceptual and organisational problems for the state. They were not answerable to local African authorities. The Native Affairs Dept felt the need to appoint a "customary authority" as a point of control over the community. This decision was challenged by the brothers who ran the general store on the farm: they took legal advice to challenge the authority of the 'chief'. The community also strongly resisted eviction from their farm, and the graves sited there, following the 1930 Land Apportionment Act. Following eviction into Gutu, the community again purchased a communal farm.

Despite their 'progressive' activities, they were mistrusted by the Native Commissioner as a 'disunited, squabbling and difficult people.'

In discussion, it was noted that both the state and the Basotho themselves projected an image of the community as 'progressive'. Their literacy gave them a high profile, particularly as they wrote in English. They remain a distinct community even today: although they routinely use chiShona for everyday interactions, they still preserve seSotho for funerals and other rituals.

PANEL 2 – EXPLORING CONTEMPORARY ZIMBABWEAN MIGRATION

Ushewedu Kufakurinani, a UZ historian, was in the UK en route to a sabbatical term in Lisbon. Although his main research work focuses on gendered histories, he spoke on a contemporary research project: 'Narratives of those left behind: the impact of migration on gender and family in Zimbabwe 2000-2011'. The paper was based on interview material: Kufakurinani emphasized that his data was qualitative, not quantitative. He had not tried to set the interview agendas, but to reflect the concerns of family members whose families have been disrupted by migration.

He noted that the reasons for family members to migrate may be personal, political or economic; different reasons influence the different nature and extent of family disruption. Interestingly, he noted, politics were undoubtedly a 'push' factor in many cases, but this sensitive topic was 'vividly absent' in the narratives he was told.

• To Page 8

‘Malaitsha’ and displacement in Matabeleland

• From Page 7

The narratives largely emphasized negative outcomes from migration. Absence of a parent or parents may compromise or confuse the healthy development of a child’s emotional well-being. Many children were in child-headed households, or being brought up by ‘strangers’. Even where one parent remained, there were difficulties in maintaining extended family contacts.

In many families, there were also financial costs: remittances dry up or have lost their purchasing power through dollarization. Marital relationships were also profoundly transformed by migration: in some cases, opportunities for infidelity led to HIV infection; in others, women were liberated by men’s absences, becoming more autonomous household heads; and in some cases, migration allowed for a shame-free divorce or separation where the marital relationship was already *de facto* over. Where wives have migrated, there is also evidence of a significant impact on gender roles, with men becoming ‘domesticated’ (*kudyiswa*).

In discussion, it was noted that there can also be excessive pressures placed on migrants by people back home: to provide evidence of success by purchasing homes, kombis, and other investment goods. This, too, can influence the gendered perceptions of migrants and those left behind.

Tinashe Nyamunda, from the Economic History department at UZ, examined the rise of the *Malaitsha* remittance system, developed by illegal migrant workers from Matabeleland wanting to send goods and cash home from South Africa during the 1980s. Nyamunda argued that the systems developed in the early

years of Zimbabwe’s independence provided a robust framework on which a national informal remittance system was built during the 2000s. He noted that literature on the diaspora has not yet focused much on remittances, which is a large and complex topic. This paper focused on *how* migrants remit, and the systems that emerged during the post-*Gukurahundi* crisis period.

Nyamunda observed that the *Malaitsha* culture emerged in the 1980s. While the rest of Zimbabwe was developing greater wealth, Matabeleland ‘was displaced from this development’. Local youths had to seek work clandestinely elsewhere. Illegal migrant status in South Africa made formal remittance systems impossible, so they evolved an informal system through social networks. Go-betweens delivered both cash and goods, offering a door-to-door service that developed into a robust business.

CRISES

As the political and economic crises spread beyond Matabeleland, so there was increasing out-migration. The need for effective remittance expanded, and the *malaitsha* system became national. Attempts to limit Zimbabwean migration by UK, South Africa and others resulted in more clandestine migration, resulting in more demand for informal remittance systems. Unlike cross-border traders, clandestine migrants couldn’t bring goods home. Moreover, formal systems of remittance, which include transaction costs and import tax, are very expensive, so even legal migrants often prefer to use informal systems.

• To Page 9

• From Page 8

Malaitsha couriers evade interference from the authorities through bribery: a form of ‘tolerated illegality’ comparable to that which Musoni noted was extended to border-jumpers. Because they operate outside the formal system, *malaitsha* couriers avoid paying for duty and also avoid payment queues. Their service is both quicker and cheaper than formal remittance.

Of course, there are some disadvantages to the system. It operates entirely on trust and reputation: users of the service have no guarantees and no means of comeback if their goods are not delivered. A perhaps less obvious disadvantage, which nonetheless had become, according to Nyamunda, a matter of some concern, is the close relationship that couriers develop, through their regular visits, with clients’ wives.

In discussion, it was noted that the *Malaitsha* system did not just operate in Matabeleland, even before 1988. Moreover, it was revealed that the couriers will even take charge of children to ensure that they are safely smuggled from one location to another.

Maxim Bolt, of Birmingham University, presented work asking ‘How transient is life on the South Africa-Zimbabwe border? Fugitives, farm workers and the micropolitics of permanence.’

Drawing from his period of immersion fieldwork amongst Zimbabwean labourers on fruit farms around Musina, just over the border in South Africa, Bolt examined the relationships between the lives of permanent and seasonal workers. Bolt noted that the fruit farms are the core of stable community life on the border area. They

provide a focus for a range of social activities along and across the border. Even the security forces engage with farm life sociability, to the detriment of effective policing of the border.

The target-oriented lives of the seasonal workers contrast with those of the permanent workers on the farms. Seasonal accommodation is austere and basic, becoming very overcrowded during the picking season. Only employed workers have the right to stay in the accommodation, with informal residents sometimes being locked inside the quarters all day to hide their presence.

The permanent residents’ lives are very different: they have a sense of local attachment. They invest in their homes and display evidence of their success. Their sleeping areas in their quarters are divided off, and they develop yards, stoeps, and vegetable gardens. The farm is a home, much more than a site of employment, for them. This is all despite the fact that the permanent workers have no security of tenure.

TRANSIENT

A dichotomy between transient-insecure/permanent-secure worker communities would be too stark a distinction. Boundaries are blurred, especially around the roles played by women. The only women with permanent work on the farms are those caring for the children and household of the (white) farmers. However, economic challenges on the Zimbabwe side of the border pull in many vulnerable young women, who may connect with the world of the permanent workers in *mapoto*-style relationships, carrying out household work such as laundry, cooking,

• To Page 10

The ANC-ZAPU war time alliance

• From Page 9

cleaning and growing vegetables. They gain a degree of wealth and security, alongside real risks of unwanted pregnancy. Transient men, on the other hand, are unable to establish such relationships with female companions to provide household work for them. So there is a clear gender division between the experiences of permanence for male and female seasonal workers at the border. *In discussion*, questions were raised about how permanent workers have been affected by rising xenophobia in South Africa. Regarding the panel as a whole, it was noted that there have also been significant border-crossing movements at Botswana, Zambia and Moçambique, and that movements into Zimbabwe have changed profoundly since the 1990s.

PANEL 3: POLITICS AND THE REGION DURING THE LIBERATION STRUGGLE

Hugh Macmillan, who has just completed his project at St Antony's on the South African ANC in Zambia, 1965-1990, spoke on the military alliance between the ANC and ZAPU that led to the Wankie and Sipolilo Campaigns in 1967-68. As context, he noted that the founders of the ANC had always envisaged it as a regional organisation; that there were nine liberation movements based in Lusaka in the mid-1960s; and that by 1967, there was considerable scepticism within the ANC about the leadership of both ZANU and ZAPU. The pressure for an ANC/ZAPU alliance came from the military grassroots. The ANC's armed wing, MK, trained alongside ZIPRA, the armed wing of ZAPU.

Moreover, with the realisation that the route into South Africa from Botswana would remain

closed even after Botswana's independence, the ANC needed to establish an alternative route into SA. The alliance was seen as the only way for MK/ANC to get back into SA, via Rhodesia. Oliver Tambo thought that the alliance with ZAPU would supply useful local knowledge and establish a vital military base, as few thought that post-UDI Rhodesia had long to last. Despite reservations from some within ZAPU, who feared that it would dilute their leadership, the alliance was also strategically useful in illustrating the effectiveness of both ANC and ZAPU to the OAU and other sponsors.

However, the combined military actions of the ANC/ZAPU were unsuccessful. The ANC combatants were regarded as foreigners by the people at the grassroots providing essential support services; ZAPU was not fully committed to the alliance; the ZAPU army included reluctant conscripts; and the joint command was not well prepared. The alliance fell away. There were no further joint campaigns until 1978/9, which in 1980 resulted in MK people being in the ceasefire collection points alongside ZIPRA, to the anger of both the Rhodesian Front and ZANU.

The disaster of the Wankie/Sipolilo campaigns had long-term consequences for both ANC and ZAPU. Within the ANC, the problems were contained. Despite a near-rupture over the failure to recognise the MK heroes of the campaigns or to learn lessons from the mistakes, a limited programme of reform was effective. Within ZIPRA, however, the camps nearly collapsed; there were several mutinies;

• To Page 11

• **From Page 10**

ZAPU ruptured with the emergence of FROLIZI in 1971; and ZAPU emerged much more dominated by siNdebele-speaking interests.

Jocelyn Alexander, of Queen Elizabeth House in Oxford, spoke on treason and mutiny amongst the liberation forces in the Zambia camps. She argued that accusations of treachery are part of the normal process whereby those establishing a new political order police the boundaries of ‘permissible politics’. Charges of betrayal are linked to schismatic changes in ideas about the body politic; and liberation movements are liable to schism brought about by changes in their host and training countries, as well as by coming into contact with other liberation movements in those places.

Charges of betrayal arise in such contexts. Social and political differences within liberation movements, rooted in gender/generation/education, give rise to grievance and complaints and thence to suspicion of alternative loyalties. Dissent and criticism is likely to be treated as treason, as is indiscipline. Both can lead to violent reactions. Consequently, within exile communities and armies, we see the imprisonment, torture and execution of those accused of treason.

The Zimbabwean liberation forces established their own security wings to root out traitors. These units were, in effect, partisan forces being used as tools to purge opponents. In 1975, new nationalist leaders began to arrive in Zambia having been released from detention by the Rhodesian government. The ZIPRA leadership wanted to exclude these political ex-detainees, arguing that they were not well-placed to act as leaders, because the situation had moved on so much since their original

detentions. New arrivals had to assert their political loyalty. Many were seen as potentially ‘anti-leader’, resulting in mass detention in military pits: up to five hundred inmates were held in one location. Such mass detention was manifestly inefficient.

Following an internal review of the policy, the ZAPU security wing, NSO, under Damiso Dabengwa, oversaw a change in the ‘politics of treason’ in ZAPU. Unlike standard military intelligence, NSO had a state-building agenda. Its members had been trained in British CID police techniques. NSO considered that ‘sell-outs’ didn’t need to be eliminated, but re-educated. Crimes, the NSO argued, should be treated as crime, not treason. Many of the prisoners were released – sadly, just in time to be bombed or captured by Rhodesian forces.

Tim Scarnecchia, of Kent State University, introduced recent developments in his current investigation of diplomatic archives, moving through the later period of the UDI negotiations to consider also the first few years of foreign policy in independent Zimbabwe. In particular, he examined and contextualised the lack of an international response to reports of the Gukurahundi massacres. Scarnecchia has demonstrated in previous papers how the diplomacy of the nationalist movements took off in the 1960s, as nationalist leaders encountered what the Cold War could and couldn’t do for Africans. The effectiveness of their negotiating strategies was framed by inter-party rivalries and intimidation to enforce the party lines (for example, over the Pearce Commission).

The 1976 Geneva Conference provided an important opportunity for Robert Mugabe to

• **To Page 12**

learn about effective diplomacy. He emerged from the Conference as acknowledged leader of both ZANU and ZIPA. This was achieved partly through presenting himself as distanced from the Soviets and Nkomo; and largely through the assistance of his allies in diplomacy, the military leaders Josiah Tongogora and Rex Nhongo (Solomon Mujuru). The image of Mugabe that was constructed in Geneva, argued Scarnecchia, helped to camouflage the events of the Gukurahundi.

During the Gukurahundi, the Zimbabwean government argued that it was the victim of South African destabilisation. The claim was convincing to the international community, which remained ignorant of the extent of talks between Zimbabwe and the South African Defence Force at the time. Scarnecchia argues that the CIO, the Zimbabwean security service, was close to the SADF and that the claim of a threat from the SADF was merely useful rhetoric. The Zimbabwean government continued to convince the US and the UK that it was committed to reconciliation and unity, despite the Gukurahundi campaign.

Discussion of these papers brought together themes found in all of them, but particularly picked up on issues raised by Scarnecchia. It was noted how the Cold War had distorted Zimbabwean nationalist politics, and how this carried over into the 1980s, enabling the US and UK to turn a blind eye to the Gukurahundi revelations. These histories also reveal a submerged regionalist current alongside the nationalist movements, influenced by the pan-Africanism of Kwame Nkrumah from the early 1960s.

Nationalists' loyalties were not only to the territories established by the colonial states: there was also a sense of federation. Wider units and alliances enabled more effective organisation; Southern Rhodesia on its own was limited and small.

Scarnecchia pointed out that Julius Nyerere had offered Winston Field membership of the East African Federation, and that other forms of confederation were also mooted. These included, of course, the old proposal to join South Africa, but not the Federation that was actually put in place by Britain. However, observed Scarnecchia, Mugabe did not conduct diplomacy in this way, remaining firmly committed to negotiating about Zimbabwe alone.

PANEL 4: REGIONAL DYNAMICS **SINCE 2000**

The final panel was under Chatham House rules.

However, **Andrew Mutandwa**, the poet, journalist and former press aide for Mugabe, who has recently published his poetry collection *A Temporary Inconvenience*, was happy for it to be reported that he presented a moving and poetic meditation on life in the diaspora. He focused in particular on exiles living in the southern African region, noting that those in South Africa and Botswana felt particularly alienated. Integration and welcome were better in Zambia and Malawi. He noted that there is a general misperception that exile is easier for whites. All communities in exile need cultural organisations to maintain their identity.

Sue Onslow (who is also happy for her comments to be attributed) has recently interviewed scores of whites, many self-identifying as ‘Rhodesians’, who now live in the UK, as part of UWE’s Rhodesia Forces oral history. Like those in exile in the southern African region, they display significant signs of trauma. However, she observed that those who had roots or links with rural UK tended to fare better than those with links to urban UK areas. It was noted that, for exiles, it is healthier to think in terms of a ‘change’ rather than a ‘loss’ of identity.

The other speaker in this panel was **Miles Blessing Tendi**, also of QEH Oxford, who spoke on ‘Mbeki’s “Quiet Diplomacy”, 2000-2008’. The two presentations and subsequent discussion raised a range of issues about the region since 2000. What follows is an unattributed summary of the points raised by a variety of speakers.

Realpolitik and backroom contexts

In 1995, South Africa had condemned Nigeria’s execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa, and found itself isolated within Africa. This experience left a legacy: SA was reluctant thereafter to move out of step with the rest of Africa regarding Zimbabwe. In the post-Cold War environment, however, South Africa was obliged to protest Zimbabwe’s land seizures and human rights abuses.

Ian Phimister and Brian Raftopoulos have argued that the South African ANC always preferred ZAPU to ZANU. But this is a static analysis: there has clearly been a gradual rapprochement between the ANC and ZANU (and Mugabe and Mbeki, in particular), since 1980.

The Mugabe team were seasoned negotiators; Mbeki’s team were relatively inexperienced. Mugabe had been asked to delay land seizures until after South Africa’s transition in the 1990s, in order not to panic South Africa’s white population. This put Mbeki in Mugabe’s debt.

The Role of Britain

Mbeki felt that Britain’s response to the land seizures complicated his attempts to resolve the crisis in Zimbabwe. Mbeki tried to mediate between Mugabe and UK PM Tony Blair in 2001, but Blair refused to talk to Mugabe. Blair, with the FCO, tried to get support for a military invasion of Zimbabwe from a SA base, in order to protect white interests. This put SA in a difficult position with little room for manoeuvre.

Mutual demonization of Mugabe in the UK, and of Blair (and the UK’s interests more generally) in Zimbabwe, affected the ability to negotiate effectively. It narrowed down policy options towards more aggressive measures, and escalated the tensions. The possibilities for negotiation were reduced by a mutual refusal to recognise the other’s rationality.

Role of the military

Cyril Ramaphosa has argued that the military will force the politicians to negotiate. However, Mbeki did not think that the military had paramount power in Zimbabwe, so he would only deal with Mugabe. The MDC were advised to reach out to political cadres in the Zimbabwe National Army. However, they apparently did not do this well. It was claimed that MDC MP Job Sikhala had once

• **From Page 13**

approached airforce commander Perence Shiri and asked him to join with MDC because ‘Mugabe is finished’: this was a clumsy and inept strategy.

The Zuma era

There are reports that South African President Zuma is not trusted by Zanu-PF negotiators, owing to experiences during the liberation struggles. Zuma was in Moçambique at that time and travelled regularly to Switzerland, apparently without hindrance from the security services. Zanu-PF negotiators regret having agreed to accept Zuma as a mediator. Zuma’s people are taking a firmer line regarding constitutional change and the rule of law in Zimbabwe, but they are out of their depth. Negotiations since Mbeki’s departure take place at a much more superficial level. Both Mbeki and Mugabe are men who appreciate intellectual skills; Mugabe doesn’t respect Zuma’s brainpower.

Zuma’s people are taking a firmer line in the sense that they are aware that SADC stands between Zimbabwe and the US/EU, and occasionally threaten to abandon Zimbabwe to them. The Kimberley process negotiations illustrate that the US is moving further away from conciliation with Zimbabwe, while the EU is moving closer.

The Day closed with a reflection on the themes raised by the day – including sovereignty, intervention, innovation, negotiation of trust, and the overarching significance of SADC. Fulsome thanks were expressed to Zoe Groves and Miles Blessing Tendi for their work in organising the event (noting that Zoe’s achievement was compounded by managing it all from thousands of miles away in

Johannesburg). We also thanked the other panel chairs: JoAnn McGregor, David Maxwell, Sue Onslow and the BZS President, Knox Chitiyo. Logistical support was provided by Margaret Ling, who organised the finances, and by Marieke Clarke and her team of volunteers who helped magnificently with registration.

BOOKS-----

**Patricia tells of her
‘unique African
experiences’ in
eastern Zimbabwe**

Patricia Chater, *Hidden Treasures, A Memoir*, introduced by Ann Hastings, published by Weaver Press, Harare, for the family and friends of Patricia Chater, 2012

Reviewed by Prof. Terence Ranger

PATRICIA Chater died on 16 July, 2011, in her early nineties. She was then one of the oldest members of the Britain Zimbabwe Society, and a devout reader of its publications. She died at St Francis Church, Makoni, where she had lived since 1960. Six years before she died she completed this memoir. Patricia was already an accomplished author. She had described the co-operative farm experiment at St Faith’s Mission under Guy Clutton-Brock in her *Grass Roots* (1962), and later had recounted her life at St Francis during the guerrilla war in *Caught in the Crossfire* (1985). But neither of these books is still in print. This

• **To Page 15**

BOOKS-----

The remarkable woman that was Patricia Chater

- From Page 14

new memoir covers the whole span of her career from birth to death and hence repeats material from the previous two books as well as adding greatly to them. Even readers who possess the two earlier books will find the memoir fascinating.

Patricia lived in rural Zimbabwe for nearly 60 years. She worked first at the multi-racial farm experiment at St Faith's and when that collapsed became the only white member of the African Church of St Francis under the care of Baba Basil Nyabadza. She confesses that she never perfected her Shona, but with her closeness to the African sisters at St Francis, she had unique access to the African experience of eastern Zimbabwe. Makoni district, in which both St Faith's and St Francis are situated, has been richly productive of memoirs. Guy Clutton-Brock left his own account of St Faith's; Didymus Mutasa has described his early political career and imprisonment; Chido Matewa has reconstructed an autobiography of her father Stephen, who was a great friend of Patricia and was inspired by Guy; Maurice Nyagumbo, who has close family connections with St Francis, wrote his own autobiography of struggle, *With the People*; my own as yet unpublished memoir, *Writing Revolt*, refers often to Makoni and to St Francis. Academic studies by myself, by Sam Moyo and by Blessing Karumbidza have detailed the history of land settlement and re-settlement in Makoni. One might say that the history of Makoni district is more richly documented than any other part of Zimbabwe. And Patricia Chater was at the heart of it all. Not only did she write books, but she enabled others to be published. It was she who smuggled out the manuscript of Maurice Nyagumbos' *With the People* so that it could be edited by John Conradie. (1979). She gave me hospitality at St Francis when I was researching my *Peasant Consciousness and Guerrilla War* in the early 1980s. (1985).

So to read Patricia Chater is to explore the beginnings of African nationalism, as Clutton-Brock met with the African leaders at St Faith's to draw up the National Congress constitution in 1957. It is to confront the inflexibility of the Anglican Church, both against Francis Nyabadza, the enthusiastic visionary who founded St Francis, and against the farm co-operative at St Faith's. It is to experience from within the intense emotions and spiritual experience which gave rise to an African church. It is to discover the manifold obstacles to African initiative and enterprise under Rhodesian segregation. It is to understand the commitment of people like Nyagumbo against repression and injustice. It is to share with Patricia the terrifying days of the guerrilla war and the agonising grief of the murder of Basil Nyabadza in a dirty tricks operation in March 1977. And it is to share with her too, the initial joy and hopes of independence giving way to disillusion with the authoritarianism of the new regime. The Nyabadza brothers flourished under ZANU-PF, the constraints which had hampered Basil vanishing with the patronage of Didymus Mutasa. St Francis became much more prosperous as the Nyabadza men acquired farms and built themselves country houses all around the church. Patricia expresses some tempered criticisms of the new regime as its male domination becomes more obvious. She ends up the sole MDC voter in a community solidly ZANU-PF.

It does the Nyabadzas credit that they accepted Patricia's heresies, caring for her devotedly in her old age. It does Patricia credit that she could still find the hidden treasure of joy and contemplation in this

- To Page 16

very different time. I warmly recommend the book. BZS members can obtain a copy free by contacting Patricia's nephew, Mark, at: markfchater@yahoo.co.uk, or 15 Norham Gardens, Jerome Bruner Building, Oxford, OX2 6PY.

COMMUNITY LINKS

'Singing for Change' – Bringing Pumula and Sheffield together through the Arts

By Philip Weiss, project director
SEMEA (Southern eMedia Education &
Arts) www.semea.org.uk

**Bulawayo revisited: An artist's
internment, and a review of the work
that continues in 2012**

It is not often governments have the wisdom to support community to community initiatives. They would rather reserve taxpayers' money in government to government hand-outs, hoping that the trickle-down effect reaches the real poor. There is this nascent belief that government does things better than communities, or that they are elected by a constituency to manage the money- at least most of the time. There is a vast pyramid to the donor bureaucracy, and most of us now realise that only a small percentage can achieve their intentions. Development is in any case a protracted process, often without an exit strategy and without an end game. It is possibly the need for an end game that dooms projects to failure – in particular the need to stick to tight time and financial targets which communities can rarely meet without considerable capacity building.

So it is with some pleasure our singing project in Sheffield received funding through the Global Community Partnerships programme of the British Council to support our linking programme in Pumula, Bulawayo. Until now the project has been self-financing. We were not to spend funds overseas but despite this obvious limitation, we succeeded in pulling together an educational DVD and CD that has been created with visual stories and harmonies from both communities and by people from many different backgrounds.

My recent visit to Bulawayo and Pumula was long overdue, but precipitated by the funeral of the 'Singing for Change' project's musical director, Mandla Sibanda, who was also a skilled graphic designer. The funeral was appropriately held at the Es'phakeni centre, Pumula, drawing several hundred people and fellow artists. The artist had been returned to Sunduza's base, where he had trained while a student at St Bernard's School, and we thank the Sheffield community, and BZS members and others, for generous contributions which assisted in his repatriation.

Drawing American greenbacks from the cash machine was something of a cultural shock and certainly a financial shock to the bank account back in the UK, as Zimbabwe does not accept travellers' cheques. However, post funeral blues were partially put asunder as the community came together to push the link with Sheffield forward by considering work on sustainable projects to support the work at the centre. Since I left I can now visibly see (via Skype) that the offices have a new coat of paint, and the walls are now adorned in beautiful street art work. I am also told that Chibuku have agreed to support a new *neshamwari* (friendship) vocal competition at the centre at the end of July 2012. Maybe you too can visit and contribute, and arrange a private concert in the centre's fantastic acoustic.

We shall be arranging visits and exchange opportunities for volunteers over the coming months from those with appropriate skills wanting to support the capacity building process.

COMMUNITY LINKS

Pumula and Sheffield together (contd. From p.16)

The project has drawn on the musical compositions of different artists, and encouraged by Sheffield-based artists Keitu Motlogwa, Simon Mbambo, Owen Ncube on percussion, and led by the late Mandla Sibanda. We have also had great participation in the project workshops from visiting artists including Tsungai Tsikirayi (Flame Lilly band), Bart Wolffe (formerly Theatre in the Park, Reps, et al), Duncan Mbonjani (former chairman Zambuko Izibuko) who joined us from Holland, and Debs Gardner-Patterson who created that wonderfully humorous film “Africa United” with its roots firmly in the African story-telling tradition that highlighted the issues of HIV in the young (and indeed many other issues). We relied heavily on musical compositions from Mandla Sibanda based in Sheffield and Simon Banda in Bulawayo. We successfully explored an initial Skype link workshop and can now report the group is also connected by Skype using wireless broadband in Pumula – what progress! This input follows a generous donation from Brinsworth Manor Junior School in March 2012 at a recent fund raising concert held with SOSA-XA! Choir (<http://www.sosa-xa.org.uk>), and workshops with Owen Ncube.

Since independence, community artists have been struggling to survive, and to engage productively in their communities in ways other than being presented as colourful tokens on airport tarmacs for visiting dignitaries. Aid agencies have been notoriously reluctant to support them because the outcomes cannot easily be measured. Artists however remain at the centre of any cultural and urban regeneration and are used as channels of communication through music. It could be argued that ZANU PF recognised their value when insisting the output on public broadcasting should be angled towards indigenous music rather than imported pop. Many musicians applauded this, though

some of their output became politicised as a consequence. Only a few seemed to have understood the consequences of too close a relationship with political friends.

Creativity as can be seen on any Zimbabwean street remains at the centre of the economy, but is ironically and simultaneously usually at the margins, remaining within the informal economy. This has much to do with how government understands the role of “culture” and the freedoms of expression that it may choose to limit. It would like to switch culture on and off, depending on how beneficial it seems to be to the ruling party or opposition at any one time.

Artists are not just for the street – they also design buildings, packaging, books, TV shows. They are at the heart of many industrial processes. They turn dead “space” into living centres of entertainment and attraction, boosting the economy. They create literature, software, and seize new economic opportunities with the entrepreneurs that push their products. They are at the centre of all life involving accumulation of knowledge or products.

I started volunteering part time with Sunduza Dance Theatre in 1989 at the request of Stephen Chifunyise, then Permanent Secretary of Culture. Chifunyise’s work on Government policy was once again applauded at the 2012 Cultural symposium for artists at HIFA (the Harare International Festival of the Arts). That report is being widely disseminated. I had not imagined in 2012 I would still be working with the same team in Bulawayo and, in more recent years, Sheffield.

I worked in 1992 with the late Tisa Chifunyise on a report for the United Nations Environment Programme that highlighted potential environmental resources that could support education in Zimbabwe. I think she would be pleased that that word “environment” in Zimbabwe is no longer limited to natural resources but through her efforts and those of her husband, “culture” is also at the centre.

• **From Page 17**

The focus of our attention has been the Es'phakeni Open Air Cinema or theatre in Old Pumula, a structure heavily used by the community youth but with decayed resources. It seats over 700 people. Pumula is a rapidly expanding urban area, about 16km from the centre of Bulawayo. One would like to see its own local resources developing to support artists and others into employment. The community in Sheffield have been raising funds to support local artists in repairing the existing centre. This has included drawing up costly architects plans, supporting a lease arrangement for the centre with the City of Bulawayo, encouraging development of the centre, rebuilding toilets, reconnecting the water supply and unblocking drains, repainting the offices and walls, repairing the roof of the several buildings that surround the main amphitheatre, rehabilitating the night car park, and raising funds to repair the doors. The work is on-going – one small step at a time, each representing a huge leap forward! Developing this centre as a strong base was seen as essential for fostering new ideas, to host visitors, and to encourage the local economy.

Pumula is an interesting environment. Once a rural area around St Bernard's Mission, it is now moving outwards to Robert Sinyoka Primary, St Peter's Mission, and the Amazwi Game Reserve and Khami. Pumula South is now fully laid out with roads and new housing. There is also a renovated Youth Venture Camp nearby that hosts a variety of youth groups, including local dance groups. It came as something of a surprise to me that many locals were unaware of the Game Park on their door step with its potential link to environment education. The possibility that Khami close by as a national monument might tie closely with new local theatre productions is also a thought for the future.

It is these resources that enhance the value that artists can bring to the community through educational work. Thus it was that over ten years ago the concept of Amasiko lemvelo Learning was born. It would be a very slow birth – a concept around the “cultural environment” that artists themselves created and would have to take forward and develop. They could see a

future, but not always clearly how to get there in a sustainable way.

The “Singing for Change” project represents an “aspiration” through which the stage performances of a dance group – in this case the “a cappella” isicatamiya ensemble, Sunduza – can reform and survive, around and within their local environment, or perhaps because of the local environment. Their international experience and links potentially allow them to lead cultural development in the community in partnership. It also means opportunities for other upcoming artists in the area, of which there are many.

The project has inspired the part of the Sheffield community and the Bulawayo community to work even harder to achieve the goals. This determination has been pushed still further by the desire of the Sibanda family to see much of the work by Mandla Sibanda (1972-2012) properly reflected. The package includes a new CD- Sibemunye recorded by Sibanda's Sheffield choir SOSA-XA! Sounds of Southern Africa at Red Cloud Studios. It was engineered by Brett Wormesley,, a former resident of La Reunion, and remastered by Geoffroy Dumas in La Reunion, proving the value of the internet and that the island sees itself as part of Africa. It is their second studio recording (after Manhanga 2006).

The choir kicked off in May 2001 led Simon Banda, musical director of Sunduza, and encouraged by SEMEA. Though doubtful that audiences might take to such an endeavour, they have been strongly encouraged by Mandla Sibanda's weekly rehearsals since October 2001 appealing to hundreds of Yorkshire school children and raising awareness that African languages are indeed alive, well, and possible to explore thoroughly, and not merely in a brief workshop. The infamous palatal clicks have been demystified and digested and the performances represent a new intercultural exploration in music whose origins in any case are closely linked to American jazz, polyphony, church influences, as well as indigenous Zulu harmonic forms and others.

• **To Page 19**

COMMUNITY LINKS

How the Arts bring Pumula and Sheffield together

(contd. From p.18)

The project I think has also surprised Zimbabweans (in the UK and in Zimbabwe) and challenged their perceptions about the dynamism and change cultural forms experience. Given new sets of cultural expressions and freedoms, we can all explore the culture of others, and consider how we might do this.

Our recent visit at the invitation of former Bulawayo residents Lindiwe Dlamini and Shepherd Sibanda from the local Seventh day Adventist Church, saw it packed with people from Zimbabwe, Zambia, South Africa, Botswana, Ghana and the Afro Caribbean diaspora. The music lifted the collective roof and brought together diverse communities and age groups.

The DVD has welcome contributions from postgraduate students at Sheffield University through the Geography department encouraged by Dr Daniel Hammet, and the Sheffield International Development Network (SIDNET). They encourage people to think about development with narration from Ethel Dlamini-Maqeda. The story of the Es'phakeni centre is eloquently told by Simon Banda and Bekithemba Sibanda in music video and photos. John Salway, poet and drama teacher, recounts the story of Sheffield. Bart Wolffe confronts the

BACK OF THE BOOK-----

issue of exile through his poetry, and Dronfield Henry Fanshawe School tell us their story about how they engaged with African artists over five years. They provide materials through their Y9 geography group and very talented music students for those in Zimbabwe to look at and listen. The project concludes with a memorable performance from SOSA-XA! Choir on the stage at the Merlin Theatre with Mandla Sibanda

The community contributed in other ways. Our chairman, Robin Raily, who visited the project in 2006, presented some photographic artwork. This now adorns the cover mount and CD as well as part of the internal artwork to which young Zimbabweans also contributed from St Bernard's School in Pumula. There is also the digital content from Brinsworth Manor Junior School in Rotherham. For the first time also, several imbube/ isicatamiya songs have been transcribed by Mandla Sibanda and the dedicated John Salway into full four part harmony and stave notation, so that other UK choirs might explore the music.

To Order:

To order a copy of **Singing for Change/ Sibemuny** (DVD plus CD) please send cheques payable to Southern E Media Education & Arts c/o 9 Goddard Hall Road, Sheffield S5 7AP for £15.00 plus £2.40 postage and packing (total £17.40). All profits once achieved go to the project in Bulawayo. It will also be possible to purchase this online via Pay Pal using a credit card or bank debit on our web site at <http://www.singingforchange.org.uk> or via the Sunduza shop at <http://www.sunduza.org>

The Zimbabwe Review is published by the Britain Zimbabwe Society. Editor's contact: capeel@ocms.ac.uk

Will 'single knight' syndrome prove Zimbabwe's undoing?

MOHAMMED Mursi's rise to power on the back of street protests and electoral resolve by Egypt's indefatigable activists presents an example of grit by ordinary citizens in taking on the might of a powerful military establishment, not once, but thrice in the space of 18 months.

• **From Page 19**

Egypt's experiences are instructive for Zimbabweans. With the constitutional log-jam in Zimbabwe, and constant threats by militants to derail the democratization process, there have been no 'Tahrir moments' there to speak of. Instead, the parties to the Government of National Unity have been unraveling the people's expressed wishes. We seem to have vested in certain individuals boundless prerogatives to water down or throw away what was gathered from the constitutional consultations.

And yet, the thirst for change in Zimbabwe is palpable. Hundreds died between March and December of 2008 because the electorate voted for a new President and government. Voting for change is one thing, though. Delivering it is, as the Egyptians have demonstrated, quite another. Much more people-driven initiatives are required. Barring the heroism of the Women of Zimbabwe Arise! (WOZA) activists, very little is happening by way of visible advocacy, outside of the political party structures. And the political parties, especially the top echelons, have submitted to a coziness which has seen more energy dedicated to other pursuits. (Congratulations to the *Right-Honourable* Prime Minister on his nuptials, by the way). When it comes to securing a democratic transition, they seem to have only one focus, SADC and President Zuma's mediation process, to the detriment of an activist presence on the ground. And as citizens, we are content to leave it all to the politicians – the wise men who, after they have attended to their domestic issues, will hopefully still have the resolve to lead us through a successful transition.

KNIGHT

It was the people of Egypt, drawn from all walks of life, who heroically fought for leadership change, without one single knight in shining armour riding at the front of the throng. The Egyptian people achieved this victory collectively, for themselves and by themselves. They idolized no-one, allowing no individual to take the credit and recognizing no political formation as synonymous with the revolution. They knuckled down together, in Tahrir Square and other public places, and when challenges arose, they dared to believe that their collective will and actions would succeed. And succeed they did.

President Mursi will be first to disavow a Messiah's role. He knows the people of Egypt were their own champion. They forced first Mubarak, and then the remnants of his circle in the military, to concede – even after the generals suspended the newly elected parliament. Tahrir Square was where the struggle was painfully, persistently, and patiently waged, and Tahrir Square is where the battle was won. Mursi was, and is, a product of that struggle, not its owner and heartbeat. The movement he leads, which won its mandate after the people had paid for it with their blood and sweat, is an instrument for transition, not the arrogant custodian in whom the democratic struggle has been patented.

Mr Tsvangirai, the Prime Minister and winner of the first round of the 2008 Presidential elections, commands huge respect in Zimbabwe. He negotiated an end to the post-election impasse from a position of strength, but has frittered a lot of that advantage. Recently, in the latest of many concessions, he agreed to move the threshold for liability for human rights violations to 2009, excluding the perpetrators of the 2008 election violence from prosecution. Over spirited objections by legislators from the Prime Minister's party, Justice Minister Patrick Chinamasa declared that the revision of the threshold had been "approved by the principals", i.e. Tsvangirai and Mugabe. Not for the first time, Tsvangirai's MPs appeared to have been in the dark over their leader's concessions. While Mugabe and Tsvangirai, and whoever else is associated with that incongruous group called the "principals", make compromises, the contrast with the masses of Egyptian activists confronting an entrenched and undemocratic system could not be more stark. Zimbabweans have made the mistake of putting faith in one man. They have therefore forfeited the instruments of change to an elite club acting in their own interests. – **By Clayton Peel. Views expressed are not necessarily of the BZS.**