

**Labour Movements and Challenges to Liberation Movement Hegemony:
Considerations on South Africa in Light of the Zimbabwe and Zambia
Experience**

**A research report submitted to the Political Studies Department, faculty of
Humanities of the University of the Witwatersrand, in partial fulfilment of
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Declaration

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this Research Report is the presentation of my original research work. Wherever contributions of others are involved, every effort is made to indicate this clearly, with due reference to the literature. Furthermore, this work has not been previously in its entirety or in part, submitted to any university for a degree.

Signature

Name in full

Date

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Abstract

Trade unions have always been part of the liberation struggle in Southern Africa, whether as a civil society formation mobilizing for better wages and improved working conditions on the shop floor, or in alliance with political formations in a bid to transform society and introduce regime change. In most cases, especially in South Africa, it was the unions that continued the struggle even after political parties were banned. It was also through the mobilization strength and resources of the unions that political parties (National Liberation Movement) emerged as formidable and hegemonic forces in Zambia, Zimbabwe and South Africa. Thus, the paper argues that, in part, UNIP (and later MMD), ZANU-PF and the ANC owe their political ascendancy to the mass mobilization by the trade unions. Trade unions have often had to resist subordination by the liberation movements. The paper suggests that; the fight for independent and worker-centered trade unions, and the unilateral implementation of structural adjustment programmes, were central to the conflict between trade unions and liberation movements. These are seen as factors that undermined the dominance of National Liberation Movements hegemony. The paper argues that; the contemporary union/party relations in South Africa show similar trajectories to those in Zambia and Zimbabwe. While the literature is explicit on how UNIP and ZANU-PF lost their ideological dominance and hegemony, the continued dominance of the ANC remains an object of ongoing debate.

Abbreviations

AMCU	Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union
AMU	African Mineworkers Union
ANC	African National Congress
CASE	Community Agency for Social Equality
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
DA	Democratic Alliance
DLF	Democratic Left Front
EFF	Economic Freedom Fighters
ETIA	Employment Tax Incentive Act
ESAP	Economic and Structural Adjustment Programme
FOSATU	Federation of South African Trade Unions
GEAR	Growth, Economic and Redistribution Programme
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
MMD	Movement for Multi-Party Democracy
NDP	National Development Plan
NEDLAC	National Economic Development and Labour Council
NERP	New Economic Recovery Programme
NLM	National Liberation Movement
NUM	National Union of Mineworkers
Numsa	National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa
RDP	Redistribution and Development Programme
RTUC	Reformed Trade Union Congress
SACP	South African Communist Party
SACTU	South African Congress of Trade Unions
SRTUC	Southern Rhodesia Trade Union Congress
UDI	Unilateral Declaration of Independence
UNIP	United National Independence Party
WB	World Bank
ZANU-PF	Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front
ZCTU	Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions
ZEDLAC	Zimbabwe Economic Development and Labour Council

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Labour Movements and Challenges to Liberation Movement Hegemony: Considerations on South Africa in Light of the Zimbabwe and Zambia Experience

Chapter One

Introduction

“The end of any dominant party’s hegemony is always inevitable. What is at stake is the manner in which that dominance erodes, how long it takes to erode, and whether it will be bridge to a democratic two or multi-party system or the bridgehead through which a one-party non-democracy or authoritarian regime comes into being” (Butler 2009:166). Various factors have towards the defeat or decline of political hegemony. Trade unions, being one of those factors in Southern Africa, have played a particular role in the struggle against colonialism and apartheid. They (like in South Africa) have assisted former National Liberation Movements (NLM) in their quest for political and economic power; at the same time, NLMs have collapsed (like in Zambia) as a result of trade unions forming part “or coalition” of the forces against NLMs led governments.

According to Giliomee, party hegemony is a situation where a political party enjoys electoral dominance for an uninterrupted and prolonged period, enjoys dominance in the formation of governments and in determining public agenda” (Giliomme 1998:128). From his prison notebooks, Gramsci’s central message is that hegemonies are “created during revolutionary experiences in which a single social class comes to actually embody the interests of society as a whole” (cited in Riley 2011:15). Trade unions are described by Schillinger (2005:2) as “organized groupings of wage and salary earners with the purpose of bringing to bear the economic, social and political interests of their members in labour relations and the political system”. This paper considers a period of at least twenty years of uninterrupted exclusive rule as being sufficient to establish dominance. The concept of “dominance defeated” shall refer to the situation where the dominant party’s political hegemony is defeated both in electoral terms and in political discourse – the electoral victory “streak” is broken, resulting in the formerly dominant party being ousted from power, rotating in and out of power or having to govern through coalitions.

The Research Report seeks to unearth the role played by trade unions in challenges to liberation movement hegemony. It considers South Africa in light of the Zimbabwe and Zambia experiences. In all three countries, NLMs fought against colonialism and apartheid, assumed political power for an extended or prolonged period, and consequently fall within the description of dominant political hegemony given above – it is worth noting that in South Africa, the twenty years dominant criteria has just been met. The context of the dominance of these NLMs differs per each country, from the system of one party state, authoritarian regime to pure multi-party democracy. The relevant NLMs are the United National Independence Party (UNIP), Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) and African National Congress (ANC).

Trade unions in all three countries have had a rich history and relationship with NLMs. The relations between them started either smoothly or roughly depending on political or economic ideology. Relations have been either based on political dominance over industrial or economic interest, or trade unions completely subsumed under the wings of the ruling party. Southall argues that “trade union movements were often regarded by government as dangerous, for they often constituted the most highly organized formations in society”. He further argues that in many countries, “trade unions have been subject to combinations of incorporation and repression by the ruling party, only to assert their independence when conditions have combined to challenge the latter’s hold on power” (2013:174).

The Zambia Congress of Trade Unions (ZaCTU) and Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU), played a pivotal role in the collapse of UNIP and the decline of ZANU-PF’s hegemony, respectively. In South Africa, the Congress of South African Trade Union (COSATU) has been in a marriage of convenience with its alliance partners, ANC and South African Communist Party (SACP). While the impact of trade unions in Zambia and Zimbabwe influenced by their inner desire of independence from the ruling party is well documented and will be further scrutinized here, trade unions under the leadership of COSATU have always regarded the ANC as the only political party through which workers interest could be realized. However, latest developments within COSATU suggest possible changes in political strategy.

This research explores the proposition that the continuous political dominance in these three countries was/is dependent, in part, on how the party/government interact with trade unions. It argues that such interaction could be coercive at times, involve harassment of trade union leaders, threats to individual union members, implementation of labour laws that limit or prohibit bargaining powers of trade unions, but it could also be in a form of corporatist interaction. The paper will therefore hope to show that labour conflicts and how government respond, are a significant source of confrontation and collapse of relationship between government and the trade unions, and ultimately between the ruling party and the general public.

Through desk research, the paper will analyze and interpret the role played by trade unions in Zambia and Zimbabwe. It will argue that it was only possible for trade unionists to lead such a political rebellion because they realized the complexity of the task at hand and that the battle against the government would only be won through large-scale social mobilization. Morgan Tsvangirai said that “ZCTU should not be so myopic that it only deals with wages but should expand its horizon and agenda to include other political, economic and social problems that confront workers” (cited in Matombo & Sachikonye 2010:114). The paper argues that strategies employed by both trade unions in Zambia and Zimbabwe led to the fall of UNIP and serious challenge to ZANU-PF since independence. In the case of South Africa, the paper argues that activities and general outlook of trade unions, though showing some level of similarity to the other two trade unions, it is distinctive.

Rationale

Trade unions are formed to protect and advance the vocational interest of its members. To realize its mandate, unions “frequently use organized strength to press political parties, whether in or out of power, to legislate in a way that benefit their members” (Robert 1964:85). However, nationalist leaders have always taken a view that national development issues should take priority over any other sectorial matters. Southall argues that “party relations in postcolonial Africa indicate that nationalist leaders have believed trade unions should give priority to their contribution to national development over representing the interest of their members, based on the assertion that they represent only a relatively privileged minority of the total workforce” (2013:174). Similarly, argues Buhlungu, most “governments have been uncomfortable with strong, radical, independent trade unions”. The

protracted subordination of trade union into NLM's power grip came from the strong view held by NLMs that "such organization violate their own determination to dominate civil society and threaten to function as independent power base for ambitious politicians and potentially for the emergence of class-based politics" (2010:192).

In both Zambia and Zimbabwe, NLMs played part in the formation and management of trade unions. This was a strategic move to curb and direct trade union activities. The desire to limit their (trade unions) autonomy from nationalist politics has proven to be at the central point of tension between trade unions and the latter. This paper attests to the argument by Wood and Dibben (2006) that "unions can play a role in broadening the nature of democratic participation in societies both through providing an effective voice for their members within and beyond the workplace, and as civil society actors working towards and/or defending democracy in the broader polity". This is however possible only if trade unions are self-determined, radically challenging policies that infringe on the economic liberation of workers, and when unions are not ideologically subordinated and suppressed within political party policies and machinery.

They further posit that unions can "effectively represent the interests of the rank and file in day-to-day workplace and related issues, and act as a mass movement promoting democratization or defending hard-won democratic gains" (2006:45).

The Marxist, according to Ncube, views "collective bargaining as a process through which trade unions tinker at the system to encourage adjustments and reforms, and not to effect fundamental structural change by redistributing wealth and power" (1985:155). However, the trade unions in both Zambia and Zimbabwe demonstrated a shift from the above position by consciously engaging in revolutionary consciousness (though not necessarily anti-capitalist). It is precisely this shift and re-adjustment of trade union ideology that National Union of Mine Workers (Numsa), an affiliate of Cosatu, is currently researching and evaluating as it explores possibilities of workers political movement in South Africa.

Research questions

What follows are the original research questions and an indication of the answers arrived at in the course of my research:

1. What has been the nature of relations between trade unions and NLMs or hegemonic party (UNIP, ZANU-PF and ANC)?

Relations between trade unions and NLMs studied in this paper show a historical ‘contract’ formed either willingly or through coercion. The similarity between the three countries is clearly in the united front displayed by the two parties (trade unions and NLMs) in combating and leading the fight against colonialism and apartheid. However, literature shows fierce conflict and confrontation amongst trade unionist and NLMs.

In Zambia, even during the 1960s and early stages of independence, the urban workforce was considered as potential political opponent to UNIP. Rakner argues that “unionized formal sector workers, especially the copper miners, from the onset at independence represented an organised and potentially powerful political opposition to the new national leadership of UNIP” (2003:49). It could then be argued that it was on this basis that UNIP resorted to controlling the work-force, “attempting to bring the trade union movement in line with its own development objectives through voluntary measures” (Rakner 2003:50). The strategy of infiltrating ZCTU succeeded up to a point for UNIP. Rakner maintains that such a strategy provided UNIP with an opportunity to “utilize ZCTU as a channel for communicating its policies to the unions”. It is noticeable that this depended on the economies, capacity to “allow for wage increases and growing job opportunities in the parastatal state”. When economic crisis eroded the legitimacy of state corporatism, trade unions became the unofficial opposition force in Zambia, a process that culminated in the formation of Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD).

In Zimbabwe, ZANU-PF has always doubted the integrity and contribution of trade unions during colonial/independence struggle. Just like in Zambia, ZANU-PF was in the forefront in the formation of ZCTU, with an intention of controlling and directing the activities of the trade unions. Southall argues that “government bulldozed the creation of ZCTU as the sole

coordinating centre under the slogan of ‘One country, one federation’” (2013:175). Trade unions in Zimbabwe according to Raftopoulos and Sachikonye, were “demonized and seen as tools of white capital and foreign interests”. Raftopoulos quoted one of the ZANU-PF military veterans as expressing similar remarks: “These whites are using stooges and puppets with the objective of taking over the government. It has happened in Eastern Europe where trade unions and human rights groups were used by foreign forces to destroy their own economies” (2001: xxv and 13).

The South African literature on the relations between trade unions and the ruling party (ANC) depicts a different contract amongst the two. When NLMs in South Africa were banned, leaders jailed and others in forced exile due to the apartheid government, trade unions (particularly, FOSATU and later COSATU) took over the struggle baton against the state. Southall posits that Cosatu “linked the struggle at the workplace with the broader struggle for democracy and formed strong links with other organizations in civil society, subscribing to a social movement unionism which developed organic links to the liberation movements” (2013:178). Since the dawn of democracy, Cosatu has remained within the tripartite alliance with ANC and SACP, this notwithstanding the adoption of pro-capital policies like Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) by the ANC government without consultation with tripartite alliance partners, as Cosatu protested.

2. Are there similarities, differences or parallels between the three countries?

Trade unions in South Africa under the banner of Cosatu present a noticeably different role to those in other two countries. While NLMs in Zambia and Zimbabwe played a pivotal role in the formation of trade unions, Cosatu emerged while ANC was still banned in South Africa. Cosatu has always maintained some relative independence from the ANC, exercising noticeable policy influences, like Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), occasionally and openly criticizing government policies. However, in Zambia and Zimbabwe, union leaders have been jailed and their offices subjected to continuous police lockdown. While Cosatu was/is regarded as an ally and a prominent figure in the fight against and demise of apartheid regime in South Africa, trade unions in the other two countries have been branded as western stooges determined to undermine national liberation gains and its economy.

Trade unions in Zambia and Zimbabwe played a pivotal role in the formation of opposition parties that proceeded to become government and challenged the hegemony of NLMs, respectively. This however has not been experienced in South Africa. Cosatu's General Secretary, Zwelinzima Vavi, proclaimed in 2004, that "Cosatu is the workers' voice, and the ANC is the workers' choice" (cited in Buhlungu 2006:78). This paper discusses inter alia, how trade unions interpreted such policies and the impact it had on the three countries political discourse and economic reform.

3. What are main sources of friction and solidarity between Trade Unions and dominant parties?

This paper argues that government policies are the source of and also perpetuate the friction. In Zambia and Zimbabwe, ruling parties were often accused of trying to subordinate trade unions under their power. Lenin argues that political struggle should always take priority of economic struggle, confirming the subordinate nature of trade unions to political power as emphasized above. This is precisely the attitude that becomes the source of friction as ruling parties set about imposing themselves on unions. In all countries examined here, pro-market policies are the genesis leading to confrontation and sour relations between trade unions and NLMs. In Zambia and Zimbabwe, Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) and GEAR in South Africa, can be regarded as similar sources of conflict. The literature points to these economic reform policies as the basis under which trade unions mobilized against NLMs.

4. Is there evidence in South Africa that suggest the emerging of opposition party influenced by trade unions?

Generally or particularly in the three countries studied here, the "formation of political parties at the behest of trade unions is more often than not a response by unions to a national liberation movement that has lost its way" (Buhlungu 2010:200). According to the survey conducted by Cherry and Southall in 2004, a survey primarily focused on Cosatu workers and their understanding but also involvement in party politics, workers believed the "ANC is representative of a cross-class or national interest", and had to "represent them and other

classes in society as citizens” (92). It would appear from this survey that the idea of an independent workers’ party was not on the horizon, and Cosatu’s view that “there was no other party seeking to promote workers’ interests” (2006:78) nullified any radical state confrontation by the unions. Recently, there has been internal conflict within Cosatu, constituted by ultra-left elements who believe Cosatu should maintain its independence from the ANC. The view of the ANC as a representative of cross-class or national interest has been questioned by Numsa, and the possibility of the workers’ party has been suggested.

Literature review

The main focus of the study is to compare so to understand the commonalities within the three countries under review. This section of the paper looks to “integrate and summarize what is known in the area” (Neuman 96) of study. The literature on trade unions and NLMs’ relations in the three countries is immense and provides for in-depth analysis and comparison.

The attitude of NLMs after colonialism and/or apartheid shows a degree of arrogance and claims of eternal power. Once in power, nationalist movements “claim not only to have brought freedom but also to be the only vehicle through which that freedom can be preserved and advanced”. Prime Minister Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana made a claim that:

“Without the Convention People’s Party there would be no Ghana, and that without political independence there would be no hope of economic salvation. The Convention People’s Party is Ghana. Our party not only provides the government but is also the custodian which stands guard over the welfare of the people” (cited in Buhlungu 2010:197).

Embedded in such an attitude are signs of authoritarianism and auguries of dissent. When South Africa’s pro-market GEAR policy was introduced and implemented, ANC under former President Thabo Mbeki regarded the policy as a “fait accompli and nonnegotiable”. Mbeki labelled critics as “ideological, puerile, irrational, mendacious, racist, and politically expedient” (cited in Gevisser 2009:250).

NLM or “nationalist leaders” (Southall) emerging after post-colonial period have always sought to maintain labour discipline. According to Buhlungu, “all African governments have been uncomfortable with strong, radical, independent trade unions” (2010:192), which were often regarded by government as “dangerous, for they often constituted the most highly organized formations in society” (cited in Southall 2013:174). Both Buhlungu and Southall maintain that trade unions have been “subjected to combinations of incorporation and repression, integrated or subordinated by the ruling party, only to assert their independence when conditions have combined to challenge the latter’s hold on power” (Southall 2013:174; Buhlungu 2010:193). Raftopoulos and Sachikony agree that, in the “process of establishing their hegemony as political force, nationalist and liberation movements tended to subordinate both labour movements and broader urban struggles” (2001:xvii). In Zambia, Rakner argues that after independence, UNIP government sought to control urban work-force through economic redistribution and political co-optation (2003:50). This would later become the thread in all three countries. The subordination of trade unions and workers under ZANU-PF in Zimbabwe was regarded as necessary if workers were to play a “leading role in the struggle for the establishment of a new socio-economic order” which they could do “only if they are properly mobilized and organized and take direction from a revolutionary party” (cited in Raftopoulos and Sachikony 2001:xxvii).

Transitional settlements agreed to by nationalist governments meant the continuation of capitalist economies previously determined by colonialism and apartheid. Southall argues that these governments, while socialist in their outlook, had to regress from their socialist positions and “took shelter under languages of reconstruction and development which sought to combine acceptance of capitalism with the realization of popular aims”. Southall gathers three reasons or circumstances which propelled national liberation movements to accept capitalist economies and risk fierce confrontation with labour movements. Firstly, colonial and apartheid regimes, while willing and prepared to concede state power, “were not prepared to concede economic power”. Had liberation movements forged ahead with socialist programs, these regimes, argues Southall, would have been prepared to pursue “military and political struggle”. On the other hand, nationalists realized that the continuation of socialist commitments would cripple the economy and result in the “advantages of productive capacity which had been built up under settler capitalism being lost”. Secondly, what had been their support base and ideological framework throughout the struggle, that is socialism, was losing

its relevance globally. The implosion of the Soviet Union in 1991 meant that liberation movement (now in power) had to adopt the neo-liberal policies “which attracted a constant flow of investment capital”. Thirdly, liberation movements “recognized the desirability of partnering with capital if they were to make their national economies work” (2013: 331-332).

These trends culminated in the adoption of Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) in Zambia and Zimbabwe and Growth Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) in South Africa. These economic adjustment programs were to be the source of contention between trade unions and governments in all three countries. Interestingly, and despite this, MMD (assumed power in Zambia) and MDC (in coalition power sharing with ZANU-PF), adopted neo-liberal economic agendas.

Theoretical framework

The traditional purpose of trade unions has always been about “protecting and advancing the vocational interest of its members. They rely on their organized strength to press political parties, whether in or out of power, to legislate in a way that will benefit its members” (Roberts 1964:85). However, the interest of trade unionists have always transcended the mere sectional interest of employment and better working conditions of their trade. Their concern stems from the “natural radicalism of men who were keen trade unionists because they wished to see a root-and-branch reform of society” (Roberts 1964:86).

The theory as reflected in the literature review highlights two contested concepts among the trade unions and NLMs – autonomy and class antagonisms resulting from structural adjustment economic policies which are perceived by trade unions as pro-capital. The study tests the Marxist arguments that economic and class antagonisms are influential for political development. Marxist arguments have been cited by both sides, and to justify both trade union independence and party dominance. Thus Marxist-Leninist principles have more than once being suggested been invoked in Zimbabwe. ZANU-PF insisted that “as a Marxist-Leninist party were about building a national democracy and to increase national control over foreign capital through an alliance between the emerging black capitalist class, the middle strata and the workers” (cited in Buhlungu 2010:203).

This report seeks to understand to what extent class antagonisms surface in conditions of post-colonial scarcity. It assumes that trade unions provide an institutional mechanism through which class antagonisms are likely to surface.

Historical configuration of social, political and economic structures emanating from colonial and apartheid era, mostly adverse social conditions as a result of external exploitation, necessitated complex mobilization of various agents towards liberation and development – which included promotion of economic development and social reconstruction. In the context of developing countries, Buhlungu argues that “the themes of liberation, democracy, development and social reconstruction are part and parcel of the standard menu of union engagement” (cited in Buhlungu 2010:12).

Damachi and Fashoyin cited in Buhlungu captured what appears as a dilemma and point of contention between trade unions and NLMs. They argued that “since the trade union played a prominent role in the independence movement, African governments therefore expect unions to play a dualistic role, first, that of aiding with overall development, and second, the representation of the job interests of the rank and file members. The argument for this reversal of the primary role of unions to be developmental rather than representational is based on the government belief that trade unions only represent a tiny fraction of the labour force in any of the developing countries” (2010:200).

The above quotation raises the question of trade union autonomy. Beckman and Sachikonye argued that the “shift towards greater union autonomy and growth of inter-union cooperation have enhanced the capacity to oppose neo-liberal reforms” (2010:17). This autonomy is viewed by Raftopoulos and Sachikonye as an “asset to be jealously guarded in the course of political struggle”. They argue that “most nationalist and liberation movements tended to subordinate both labour movements and broader urban struggles, in the process of establishing their hegemony as a political force” (2001:xvii).

The research looks at the extent to which relationship between trade unions and NLMs frustrates the former’s organizational independence, if at all, and with what consequences for ruling-party dominance.

Methodology

The intention and purpose of the study is around building a picture on the political relations between trade unions and ANC, and whether it follows the trajectories in Zambia and Zimbabwe. Thus, it considers the role that trade unions played in post-colonial political transition. The study employed qualitative approach. Cresswell defines qualitative study as an “inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem, based on building a complex, holistic picture, framed with words, reporting detailed views of informants and conducted in a natural setting” (1994:2). According to Ragin, qualitative research is a “relevant tool towards gaining an in-depth knowledge which comes as a result of case study analysis, as it provides rich raw material for advancing theoretical ideas” (1994:84).

Data was collected through secondary literature, semi-structured in-depth interviews, and documentary research. Secondary literature was used to analyze and compare historical developments in the three countries. Secondary literature (in the case of Zambia and Zimbabwe) provided a framework material which assisted in building a structural comparison with an intention to pose questions about and assist in understanding the South African union-party relations. In other words, secondary material helped to establish a comparative frame, but primary research (field work) was conducted only in South Africa. When considering the differences and similarities, Brown (2006:2) proposes that comparative method is suitable and relevant. For Mounton, the comparative method helps to broadening our understanding of the world, which can lead to the possible explanation and predictions (2001:154).

The elite interviews were meant to feature trade union leaders, ANC leaders and scholars, providing contemporary information on the subject. The study had aimed to engage prominent leaders from AMCU, Numsa, SACP and the ANC. However, after countless attempts, such leaders were reluctant to participate. Thus, the researcher admits to the minimal but significant contribution of the interviews. From the interviews, it is evident that the concept of hegemony is a contested terrain amongst the academia and civic society. There were competing views on whether the ANC is hegemonic and the criteria to be followed in order to ascertain the party’s public posture. Some of the interviewees relied on the public’s electoral behavior to determine whether the party is hegemonic. Others applied the orthodox

conception of hegemony – the dominance of social and political ideas. The study acknowledges that while trade union leaders represent the views and interest of the workers, workers themselves play various in political-labour relations. One of the relevant ways they do so is as voters. Through the report by CASE, the study analyzed polling data for North West and Gauteng provinces which are at the epicenter of state – labour friction. Equally important was looking at archival documents. The focus here was on trade union’s political and labour ideologies, internal discourse on the possibility of autonomy and formation of labour based political party (particularly concentrating on Cosatu and Numsa).

Chapter Two

Historical overview: Pre-independence

Introduction

The study/literature around union-party relations in Africa depicts the trade unions historical and long political engagement. This unions’ political engagement dates back to the struggles against colonialism and apartheid. It was through these common struggles that ties were developed between trade unions and National Liberation Movements (NLM). Various commentators have also suggested that trade unions arose not only against capitalism or industrialization but against colonial and apartheid situation. This is not to belittle their impact against the despotic capitalist colonial order. Due to the intricate connection between colonialism, apartheid, post-colonialism, and capitalism, trade unions had to broaden their scope and expand wage struggles beyond shop floor and embrace liberation, democracy and the promotion of both economic development and social reconstruction. In most countries, trade unions continue to shape the democratic project, encourage good governance and act as vanguard for economic justice. Amongst many reasons that led to the formation of trade unions in Africa was a response to “tribal associations, industrial conflicts, political campaigns, foreign labour movements and labour administrations” (Davies 1966:72).

As a result of their political stance, they have mostly found themselves intimately involved in politics and subordinated to political parties and nationalist movements. This situation usually makes them party instruments. Berg and Butler (1966) suggested that not all African trade unions were politically alert/involved during the colonial period. Their impact was usually very limited and almost restricted or nullified after independence. I should mention that their

arguments were directed mostly towards tropical African countries. This is in contrast to Davies's argument that African unions have always had to establish their identity in societies that set to suppress them. Trade unions have always understood the close proximity between labour and social struggles. He argues that "at every turn African unions find themselves deeply involved in politics – a fact as true today as it was under the imperial administration" (1966:11).

This chapter traces and attempts to analyze the role and impact of trade unions during the struggle against colonialism and apartheid. It seeks to examine and interpret the relations between trade unions and national liberation movements. It is on Berg and Butler's argument that this chapter seeks to analyze the impact, if any, of trade unions in Zambia, Zimbabwe and South Africa. In my attempt exposition of trade unions in the three Southern African countries, I shall borrow Berg and Butler's analytical questions. That is, what were the structural relations between trade unions and parties in pre-independence? How close was the relationship and to what extent may it be said that parties dominated the unions? What concrete political acts did trade union movements engage in and how effective were they? (1964:341). The idea is to determine the extent through which Berg and Butler's polemic arguments could be applied, if at all, to the three countries. The following arguments are linked but presented per each union/party perspective, beginning with Zambia followed by Zimbabwe and South African perspective concludes the chapter.

The Zambian perspectives

"Trade unions played a schizophrenic role, for not only did they oppose employer-employee exploitation, but found themselves in the invidious situation whereby colonial administration malpractices justified their political role" (Havemann 1982:3). The discovery of copper in 1920s resulted to the concentration of black mine workers around the Copperbelt as the mode of production and reproduction shifted from an agrarian into an industrial economy. During this period Northern Rhodesia was under colonial administration. The modus operandi of both colonial and apartheid systems have always been about racial divide in both industrial and social settings. Berg and Butler pointed out that "serious racial conflict means that questions of wages and conditions of work, as well as general political and constitutional issues, have been marked by racial discrimination at almost every turn" (1964:353). Mineworkers in Northern Rhodesia were divided and treated along racial lines. The attitude

of the Northern Rhodesia government was that black workers did not need trade unions or to be organized and had no rights as workers. However, their concentration in the Copperbelt made organization easier. The combination of state maladministration, poor working conditions and the need to be heard, culminated between 1935 and 1940 in fierce struggles against industrial exploitation and colonialism.

The colonial government attempted to block the inevitable black consciousness and group cohesion. “Colonial labor policy forcefully insisted upon nonpolitical unionism. It facilitated administrative regulation and control over worker’s activities, by decentralizing unionization and encouraging intra-sectoral rivalry and division” (Akwetey and Kraus 2007:125). This strategy was not unique in Zambia. It was the desperate attempt by the imperialist government to render worker’s needs remote from those of the general public. It was believed that such a strategy would alienate trade unions from the public. It was also to frustrate the mobilization of African nationalism and social consciousness amongst the workers.

To counter the government’s refusal to allow trade unions, workers organized themselves into a “welfare societies” which operated around the Copperbelt and initially concerned about industrial relations before it became a fully-blown political body. Trade unionism according to Havemann, and as it applied in Northern Rhodesia and elsewhere, is a “direct result of colonisation, for colonisation changed the nature of work in Africa and thus created industrial workers”, who needed a structure to fight against exploitation. “In a vicious circle, the workers themselves created organization and group consciousness, for as men with a special common status, they shared a feeling of solidarity” (1982:2). The strikes that ensued between 1930s and 40s were “clear manifestation of the growing workers’ consciousness among the African workers and their need to be organized into trade unions” (Mulenga 2011:4).

The African Welfare Societies formed in 1946 became the first African nationalist organization and changed their name to the Northern Rhodesian African National Congress (ANC) in 1951, led by Godwin Lewanika. The recognition of Africans as workers emanated from the Trade Disputes Ordinance Committee instituted by the government to look at labour disputes and the possibility of extending the context of ‘workers’ to include black people. This led to the formation of multiple trade unions including Rhodesian African Mineworkers

Union (AMU) in 1949. An uneasy relationship between AMU and the ANC began. Beside structural and ideological differences on how to counteract the colonial administration and imperialist tendencies, individual/personality cults amongst the AMU and ANC further delayed and frustrated nationalist objectives. Notwithstanding differences on the role of trade unions within the nationalist discourse, AMU had representatives in the Congress. In the presence of differences amongst them, one common objective necessitated a pact. They agreed that, as Bates observed, “African advancement formed a major objective of the newly formed union, that the colour bar was a major grievance shared by all Africans and that the whole political issues of the Federation revolved around the relative position of Africans and white men – these principles also affirmed the underlying belief that the cause of the Mineworkers Union and the nationalist movement were common” (1971:18).

The emergence of trade unions was more than mere response to the conditions of economic exploitation by colonial administrators and employers. It was simultaneously, Buhlungu suggests, “a response to the conditions of political oppression created by colonialism, particularly the denial of political rights and the violation of dignity of workers and the general population of the colonized”. This was not unique to Zambia as analysis in Zimbabwe and South Africa will show, later. For Buhlungu, African trade unions, Zambia included, “were economic and political creatures from the early days of their existence” (2010:198). However, the first envisaged coalition between AMU, ANC and the chiefs in which Nkumbula (ANC president) had convinced the allies in 1953 to partake, did not produce any positives. The ANC under Nkumbula had tried to mobilize workers and chiefs to demonstrate against the regimes proposed and soon to be realized Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. Berg and Butler concluded that the attempt was a “complete failure as production continued at the mines” (1964:354).

However, they failed to point out the reasons leading to such a failure. It is Bates who provided an indication on one possible reason in the fallout between nationalist movements (ANC) and trade union (AMU). According to Bates, Katilungu, the union president, “unions should not be embroiled in political controversy and its job was to fight for a better economic position for African employees”. Katilungu was of the view that “union should refrain from annoying the companies and government anymore than was absolutely necessary to achieve its objectives” (1971:128). As the tempo of political activity accelerated to new heights,

Katilungu's views were proven to be just his personal or individual views as he was soon suspended and later expelled in 1960 and 1961, respectively. It could also be argued that trade union members stayed home as a result of intimidation and fear of being fired from work. This is against the fact that Berg and Butler do not provide indication on approximate number of people who kept the production going.

Even though the events may not have reached expected heights, they most definitely awoke the sleeping beast. While the personality clash between Nkumbula and Katilungu placed them in parallel positions, "members of their respective organizations were being pushed leftward by growing nationalist militancy" (Berg and Butler 1964:254). It is said that while nationalist militancy was gaining momentum, neither of the two leaders adapted to the developments. Political differences and tension grew within the ANC and resulted to a split following Nkumbula's unmandated political position in accepting the new territorial constitution for Northern Rhodesia. The formation of United National Independence Party (UNIP) in 1958 under the leadership of Kenneth Kaunda, its first and only president during the 27 years of power in Zambia, signaled the growing desire of African people, Copperbelt miners included, to seek independence and fight exploitation. Unlike in other two countries (Zimbabwe and South Africa) where trade unions were the creation of national liberation movements or developed independently of them, Zambian trade unions played a pivotal role in the formation of UNIP and the resultant victory in the election of 1964.

In fact unionism and mobilization against colonist rule for black emancipation and independence preceded the formation of any national liberation movement. Mulenga explains that in the Copperbelt and Broken Hill, workers had formed a "nucleus of protest against some of the features of colonial rule. They destroyed the colonialist's neat concept of Africans as simple peasants, who owed allegiance to the chiefs and were encapsulated within an age-old set of rural authority" (2011:4). Colonial regime used the tax system to force Africans into copper mines while also denying them property rights. Workers embarked on various strikes in protest against unfair taxes, humiliation and human degradation at the hands of the capitalist and colonial oppressors. While Berg and Butler partly admitted that in the "colonial situation, most work stoppages represent challenges to the colonial presence and as such have political implications" (1964:364). They seem not to have recognized these strides as workers and later trade unions in opposing the colonial regime and setting the ground for

independence in 1964. While it is accepted that not all or every stoppage is/was politically motivated, for workers in Zambia, strikes represented and symbolized their collective will to fight and defeat the system which affected every aspect of their lives. Each event whether industrially or politically organized meant a step closer to the ultimate goal – independence. These were the solid foundations and social base that nationalist movements, ANC and later UNIP utilized/employed to dismantled the minority regime.

The tension and ideological difference amongst the trade unions resulted to a temporary split in the Trade Union Congress (TUC). This occasioned after Katilungu had “questioned the benefits of self-government and accepted a place on the Moncton Commission in 1959” (Berg and Butler 1964:355). It is quite clear that Katilungu was out of touch with the black masses and their desires, but most importantly, with how his own rank and file members conceived of the political landscape of the country. The split brought a more radical and pro-UNIP formation, the Reformed Trades Union Congress (RTUC). Following the suspension and expulsion of Katilungu, the split in TUC was mended and another body formed – United Trades Union Congress (UTUC) with Jonathan Chivunga as president. At this juncture, improved and “effective union-party cooperation were expected with Kaunda’s political rhetoric imbued with possible and potential strike actions, suggesting the possibility of a union commitment to the party” (Berg and Butler 1964:356).

The newly formed pact between UTUC and UNIP did not end the conflict amongst them, as opinions on when and how demonstrations should be conducted, differed. What is of significance for this paper is that the alliance between UTUC and UNIP (*no matter how unstable and volatile*) contributed to the achievement of independence and victory for the party. The convergence of the nationalist politics and worker’s rights intensified the struggle for independence

Southern Rhodesia

Berg and Butler lambasted African trade unions, especially those in tropical Africa, for having played a minimal role during the colonial struggle. Southern Rhodesia is by its geographical location does not fall or is not part of tropical African countries. However, their argument is relevant in my quest towards understanding the emergence of trade unions, their relations with NLMs and their impact in the struggle against colonial regime and leading to

independence. Unlike Zambia, Southern Rhodesia was a “self-governing colony” (Ananaba 1979:54) with the minority white population determined to foster and maintain divisions amongst the black majority. I shall return to these complications at a later stage.

“During the colonial period, social movements such as trade unions, student groups, community organizations and political parties in the black community were trampled upon in an attempt to relegate them to permanent political irrelevance” (Berg and Butler 1964:345). Just like in Northern Rhodesia and in South Africa, the colonial authorities “frustrated the development of civil society in Zimbabwe by seeking to remove blacks from mainstream politics by confining them to the realm of tribal existence where they would, as natives, define themselves in terms of ethnic as opposed to national identities” (Moyo 1993:6). Common between Southern and Northern Rhodesia and also apartheid South Africa, Africans were not considered employees under the Southern Rhodesian Conciliation Act of 1934. Trade unions could exist and organize but the system “denied them any recognition” (Berg and Butler 1964: 346).

The regime’s intentions were to prevent black workers from bargaining with employers on equal footing as did the white workers. It was also to maintain the race and social divide between blacks and whites, to place white people at an advantage, to protect them from competition but even more importantly to ensure that no unity or solidarity exist among black people. The Smith regime, writes NUSAS, “Continually sought to disorganize and control this oppressed majority so as to maintain white supremacy” (1980:31). The idea and practice of frustrating group or social cohesion amongst the black people has always been the preferred method by colonial authorities to rule the blacks. In 1901, for example, a Chief Native Commissioner in Matabeleland expressed his governing methods: “At present there is absolutely no cohesion among the natives, each little tribe is, as it were, opposed to the other, a certain amount of jealousy has naturally arisen amongst the Indunas, this jealousy has been fostered by me as it is the most politic form of governing the natives” (cited by Moyo 1993:6). This passage is brought here to highlight various methods that were employed to deny black people a voice, whether at shop floor or in any other social formation.

Trade unions could not legally exist before 1960, but while faced with draconian policies, Ananaba notes that they could still organize. Furthermore “though the unions were statutorily

denied collective bargaining right, the government recognized them as representatives of African worker's opinion and periodically consulted them on important matters of labour policy" (1979:53). While Berg and Butler spoke about lack of recognition, Ananaba wants us to believe that government recognized people's representatives which were statutorily denied the right to exist. How could government invite illegal labour bodies to discuss important matters of labour policy? Ananaba's argument is not clear and at best, questionable. To be precise, the recognition that Ananaba and Berg and Butler allude to, began only in 1959 but was not without restrictions. Muusha, quoting Schikonye, writes that even after such a recognition, "unions were forbidden to engage in politics or elect convicted political dissidents, whilst most forms of industrial action were effectively ruled out by various restrictions" (2011:22).

The history and activities of trade unions in Southern Rhodesia are not unique to that country, they resemble the realities of other unions in the whole African continent. These unions have gone through number of splits, lack of direction and drop in membership just like many other civic society formations and political parties. In 1957, African trade unions formed the Southern Rhodesia Trade Union Congress (SRTUC) led by Knight Maripe and later by Reuben Jamela (Ananaba 1979:54). Ananaba observed that from the developmental stages of the congress, "leaders were divided over trade union relationship with the nationalist movement" (1979:54). Some within the trade union leadership were reluctant about joining nationalist politics. According to Berg and Butler, "throughout 1961 and 1962 the relations between party and union deteriorated and sporadic conflict broke out". The party had urged "the unions to be more militant" (1964:346) in their protest for better wages. It is not clear why Jamela refused to go along and actually decided to work within the legal framework. Labour and nationalist movements had initially entertained friendly relations with each other before the rift between Jamela and nationalist party leadership developed. While Jamela was fully behind the politics of nationalism and the role that trade unions were to play, he desired to maintain the autonomy of the labour movement. Throughout the entire history of African trade unions, political parties had always seek to subordinate labour issue to those of national interest.

The ideological differences eventually led to the split and the formation of Southern Rhodesia African Trade Union Congress (SRATUC) with Pan-African ideological ambitions.

SRATUC leadership was driven by the Pan-Africanism's basic tenets, "a sense of solidarity, unity and identity of African and peoples of African descent wherever they may be. Black people everywhere are united by their colour, history and cultural heritage. An expression of the African and people of African origins' desire to free themselves from the shackles of racism, capitalism, and imperialism so that they can be in a position to decide and determine their future without any strictures" (cited by NUSAS 1980:96). It could be argued that these leaders understood that workers emancipation from capitalism had to be preceded by political capture and that, workers need to have a political power in order to properly address their domestic working conditions. The overall view of this project as it will show is that issues of workers cannot be understood outside the holistic societal developments. I contend that the two are inter-dependent. One is even tempted to invoke Mamdani where he wrote in the *Citizen and Subject* under the theme, "Thinking through Africa's Impasse" that "The liberal solution is to locate politics in civil society, and the Africanist solution is to put Africa's age-old communities at the center of African politics". (1996:3). My view is that nationalist leaders tapped into the significance of labour in relation to the state, hence the idea of conscientizing the working class and mass mobilization. It is also possible that SRATU leadership, just like in Guinea, saw the "unions as part of the party [*in this instance, ZANU*] and all industrial action as political". Unlike Katilungu of Northern Rhodesia, these leaders entertained the idea of integrating the unions as a "nationalist revolutionary and not as a reformist force within the context of other progressive forces" (Davies 1966:88).

Before Zimbabwe African Congress of Unions (ZACU) was banned in 1964 and succeeded by National African Federation of Unions (NAFU), it had already identified and affiliated itself with the politics of Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) under the leadership of Joshua Nkomo. The developments (splits and affiliations) in the trade unions between 1960s and 70s symbolizes the period of union's self-identification, the struggle to define themselves and their purpose, role and influence as a particular class (working class) within protracted struggle between colonial government and later Smith regime, and nationalist movements. The splits were also influenced by new and continuous developments within the nationalist movements. The Pan-Africanists (SRATUC) found a home in a rival nationalist movement, the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) led at the time by Rev. Ndabaningi Sithole. ZANU identified capitalism as a "major source of economic and social conflict" (NUSAS 1980:97). The state was mostly seen as the source of conflict. Capital is dependent on the

state to introduce, implement and maintain policies that protect the status quo (exploitation), policies that regulate social division.

However, following the NUSAS argument it could be argued that SRATUC were drawn into alliance with ZANU in order to unite and fight the common enemy – capitalism. The politics of ZANU and its ideological position embraced all anti-imperialist democratic forces. In 1974, National Chairman of ZANU, Herbert Chitepo, argued during the 6th Pan African Congress that while the party was guided by the “Marxist-Leninist theory of revolution, we are painfully aware that the road from today’s settlerism and colonialism in Zimbabwe to socialism is a big jump, and that half way we will have to pass through the transitional stage of national democratic revolution. By this we mean our revolution embraces in its ranks not only the workers, peasants and the urban petty bourgeoisie, but also the national bourgeoisie and other patriotic and anti-imperialist democratic forces”. (NUSAS 1980:97). Chitepo acknowledges the importance of workers in the national revolution.

The declaration of Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) in 1965 proved fateful to both nationalist movements and trade unionists. Central to UDI’s agenda was the will to “stop all moves towards black majority rule”. For nationalist movement particularly the ANC, UDI foreclosed any “potential for a peaceful transition to majority rule and real independence” (Muusha 2011: 26). Political parties were banned one after another while leaders were either jailed or exiled. The Smith regime did not spare trade unionists either. Ananaba writes that “Rhodesian authorities had often taken repressive measures against African trade union leaders. These measures were intensified as nationalism gained momentum” (1979:54). Perhaps partly as a consequence, “trade unions in Rhodesia were not known for their rigorous advancement of the worker’s case during the Smith years” (NUSAS 1980:103). Earlier I briefly mentioned that administrative laws (Law and Order Maintenance Act) had an impact on how trade unions conducted themselves with regard to nationalist politics. These laws led to what others have regarded as a minimal role of trade unions during the liberation struggle and unintended promotion of guerrilla warfare as the main tool utilized against the Smith regime. I wish not to dispute the prominent role of the guerrilla struggle but to highlight factors that might have frustrated and restrained the unions.

This being a self-governing colony, the “white population was more sensitive to African nationalist aspirations than the colonial authorities responsible to the British Government”. As the government clamped down on any social activity, “active involvement in politics could entail detention or restriction of the leaders and/or the banning of their union”. Following the continuous banning of nationalist movements, precaution had to be taken and trade unions were still in their developmental stages. A number of Southern Rhodesian trade union leaders “belonged to Lawrence Katilungu’s school of thought about union/party relationship” (Ananaba 1979:54). Katilungu of Northern Rhodesia argued that trade unions should not be embroiled in political controversy but focus on improving economic position for African workers.

Under these circumstances with state security forces at the employ of government against the people, trade union’s peaceful demonstrations could not hold up. It is therefore not surprising that trade unions were weak or disintegrated during the dawn of independence. The struggle for independence and against capitalism and exploitation had to be taken outside the shop floor. The black people of Zimbabwe resorted to the armed struggle-guerrilla war. The period presented the “history of unity, of the masses uniting to fight for an independence that would be more than mere words, an independence that would free them from poverty and enable them to take control of their own lives” (NUSAS 1980:21).

Unions and politics: South African overview

This paper seeks to understand the effects of trade unions on NLM hegemony, considering South Africa in light of Zambia and Zimbabwe. It is possible, therefore that the conclusion might highlight extreme cases of commonality and/or specificity. There are competing views on whether South Africa is unique compared to other African countries, including the two analyzed here. Buhlungu noted that the “notion of South African exceptionalism had led to an intellectual and political parochialism that restricts both our understanding of the specificity and the commonality of South African democratization process in the era of globalization” (2006:199). Buhlungu points to the common phenomenon of “labour-backed government coming to power and implementing neoliberal economic and social policies that are at variance with labour’s historic goal” (2006:199).

Mamdani also takes a swipe at South Africa exceptionalism. He accepts the argument on industrialization and proletarianization terms. He argues that “it is only from a perspective that focuses single-mindedly on the labour question that the South African experience appears exceptional. For the labour does illuminate that which sets South Africa apart more or less in a category of its own: semi-industrialization, semi-proleterianization, semi-urbanization, capped by a strong civil society”.(1996:28). My arguments are rooted on this line of thought.

The view here is that while the common goal was the destruction of colonial system (Zambia and Zimbabwe) and apartheid (South Africa), structural conditions and strategic methods employed were different. This section considers such conditions and, Berg and Butler earlier remarks. Like in any other African country, the genesis of trade union movements are on the basis of “economic factors, including not merely the increasing significance of black workers in key industrial sectors but a declining growth rate, increased inflation, black impoverishment, and low wages” (Southall 2013:53). As the conditions of workers in both labour and social aspects worsen, trade unions adopt a militant and fierce approach against capitalist exploitation protected by state repressive policies.

The history of union/party politics dates back to the early 1950s with the formation of South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU), the brainchild of the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA). At this juncture, CPSA (banned in 1950) was already in alliance with the nationalist party, the African National Congress (ANC) which aligned SACTU’s economic struggles to those of the ANC. From its inception, SACTU recognized the connection between unionism and politics. Leon Levy, president of SACTU, observed the ideological position of the Congress as deeply influenced by the exclusion of African workers from any political engagements. He argued that “SACTU recognized that the organizing of this great mass of workers was linked inextricably with their struggle for political rights and liberation from all oppressive laws. Every attempt by the workers to organize themselves was hampered by general legislation affecting their right of movement, domicile and political representation. Every effort for higher wages, better working conditions or the reinstatement of unjustly dismissed fellow workers was immediately met by the full force of the state” (Buhlungu 2010:59).

From this passage it could be argued that SACTU “marked an important advance in shop floor organization and an effort to bring political understanding in tandem with economic demands” (Freund 2007:206). The significance of SACTU’s political unionism and the growth of trade unionism became a subject of different interpretation. Critics argue that the alliance between the ANC, CPSA and SACTU led to the subordination of trade union’s industrial issues to the struggle for national liberation. If we accept the argument as suggested here, that SACTU’s formation was influenced by CPSA, which was in alliance with the ANC, subordination of SACTU to nationalist politics was a given. Meanwhile advocates of SACTU argue that the “alliance facilitated the growth of trade unions and enabled workers to influence the direction of the national democratic struggle” (Southall and Webster 2010:136). The view here is that the repressive policies of the apartheid regime were holistically applied in every aspects of black people’s lives. Labour exploitation affected their social lives, so as the denial of universal suffrage extended to shop floor politics – exclusion from being recognized as a worker, to compete with fellow white workers and to be able to bargain with the employer.

The situation at the time necessitated unity among organized formations against the system. Webster and Adler provide a clear analysis of the situation which SACTU found itself. They argue that “lacking a strong power base on the shop floor and faced with an increasingly hostile state and intransigent employers, SACTU mobilized the oppressed – across class lines – around the demands of the ANC’s popular programme, the Freedom Charter adopted also in 1955” (2001:127). Just like in Zambia and Zimbabwe, the dominant ideology was that South Africa could not be properly understood in terms of class but instead political change called for national democratic struggle to liberate the country from the white rule.

Early trade unionism, just like nationalist advocates, suffered from state repression, and SACTU was not spared from it. Its positioning with liberation movement led to direct conflict with the state which eventually forced it to cease all public activities in the country and by 1964 it had to seek refuge in other countries. SACTU arguably laid the foundation for future trade unionism and general mobilization of African people in the country. When nationalists took to armed struggle as a means to an end, state repression intensified as well. Nationalist organisations, ANC and Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) were banned in the early 1960s leading to the period of complete political void and uncertainty amongst the black

people. It took over a decade before the re-emergence of organized unionism following the self-exiled decision by SACTU.

The Durban strikes of early 1970s have been regarded as a “fundamental departure in the history of resistance against apartheid. Such strikes did not only break more than a decade of relative quiescence during the highly repressive 1960s, but these collective acts profoundly transformed the conditions under which resistance was to take place. It also signaled the possibility of the reemergence of a democratic movement within the country, harnessed by independent working-class organization” (Webster and Adler 2000:1). These strikes signaled the political or ideological shift among the unionists and their rank and file members. The launch of the Foundation of South African Trade Unions (Fosatu) in the late 1970s brought a clear ideological and organizational stand to the unions. In South Africa, unions played a pivotal role in the initiation of transition when political parties were banned and in the transition itself. Webster and Adler observed that unions were the best “organized and single most powerful constituency in the anti-apartheid resistance and through its protest action contributed to the chronic crisis that precipitated the transition” (2000:2).

FOSATU advocated its independence from any political formation, a view completely different from that of its forerunner, SACTU. It acknowledged that “workers and their struggle became very much part of the wider population struggle”. It also accepted the complexity and connection between the state and that labour matters were indivisible because “capital could hide behind the curtains of apartheid and racism” (Foster 1982:103). The notable difference between South Africa and other two countries is that trade unions represented by Fosatu entertained the idea of working class power. Fosatu argued that “workers need their own organization to counter the growing power of capital and to further protect their own interests in the wider society” (Foster 1982: 105). Fosatu was not far off from the Marxist proletariat revolution but only that they were silent on the idea of “state capture”, which I believe to be at the center stage of proletariat dictatorship. Fosatu introduced and promoted the concept of “working-class politics” which encouraged relations or alliance between organized workers in workplace and working-class communities fighting together the ravages of apartheid repression, oppression and capitalist exploitation. Fundamental or implicit about this conception was the recognition that “working class, while rooted in employed workers, also included unemployed workers and other dependents of

workers – students, housewives, the aged and the infirm living in working class communities” (Pillay 2006:169). Fosatu’s aspiration towards an independent working class politics upset the SACP, which accused Fosatu of assuming the vanguard position of the working class.

The muting of political dissidents at the hands of state repression allowed trade unions or worker organizations to occupy the central stage in society. Foster argued that while they intended to focus more on worker militancy, they had no “intention of becoming self-satisfied trade unionists incapable of giving political direction to the worker’s struggle” (1982:100). Fosatu’s non-political position was partly influenced by their historical experiences of trade unionism, particularly their assessment of SACTU’s errors. SACTU’s political alignment led Fosatu to argue that “its (SACTU’s) close identification with the Congress Alliance and its political campaign caused it demise, political engagement, in this view led to a neglect of workplace organizing while inviting repression” (Webster and Adler 2001:128). Fosatu combined the reading of SACTU’s history with an awareness of the experiences of trade unions in pre and post-colonial Africa, where liberation movements and governing parties, “in striving to modernize and rise out of the ashes of under-development (*and/or fighting the colonial system*), have generally sought to control their countries trade union movements” (Pillay 2006:169). From AMU in Zambia to SRTU in Zimbabwe and Fosatu in South Africa, resistance and challenge to the politics of trade union subordination to liberation movements could be seen even before the latter assumed national power. Southall and Webster argued that “given the political constraints under apartheid, the emergent trade unions were rooted inside the factories, cautious about wider political connections and skeptical if not critical of the exiled nationalist movements” (2010:133).

It is important to note that Fosatu was not in opposition to the wider political struggle or liberation movements. Instead it only pursued a different functional role from that of its predecessor. In fact it could be argued that its autonomous position laid the foundation for today’s Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu). Union autonomy from liberation movements has always been a contested concept in Africa during and after colonial rule and apartheid regime. There was therefore nothing unique or untoward about Fosatu’s non-alignment with political parties even though social developments and the state’s continuous repression forced Fosatu to reconsider its position. Community developments manifested by

growing social and political crisis led to the formation of various civic and other organization, including some non-Fosatu unions, many of which gathered under the United Democratic Front (UDF) formed in 1983. It is argued that such developments had a potential to sideline Fosatu because community based formations were inclusive of every other social aspect.

Not to be outplayed and rendered irrelevant, Fosatu embarked on stay ways which according to Webster and Adler marked “the emergence of social movement unionism: the federation was mobilizing its considerable shop floor in pursuit of a political agenda”. This shift, continues Webster and Adler, “brought the shop floor and national democratic traditions closer together and facilitated efforts to promote unity among the emergent unions” (2001:129).

The formation of Cosatu in 1985 linked together the shop floor (Fosatu) and national democratic (ANC/SACP) traditions. While it (Cosatu) accepted ANC’s leading role in the tripartite alliance, unlike SACTU, it maintained its organizational independence and not as subordinate partner but an equal player with an independent power base, strategy and leadership. While Fosatu’s working class politics had attempted to “steer clear of nationalist contamination, Cosatu adopted the view that because race and class were intertwined, the task was to combine working class politics with nationalist politics, under working class leadership” (Pillay 2006:171).

The formation of Cosatu brought about internal insurrection which contributed to the destruction of apartheid system within a few years of its formal launch. When the state intensified its repression of liberation movements, unleashing terror on individual unionists regarded as crucial to the continuation of resistance, trade unions were the only readily available mechanism against the state. This is because, argues Freund, the “state was prepared to continue to allow them to operate legally” (2007:214). Operating under the disguise of labour/wage demands and confronted with worst phases of repression, Cosatu could “bring out or close down townships where the so-called civic and other pro-ANC organizations had been effectively stifled” (2007:214). The political vacuum and leadership void placed trade unionists in a position to direct and influence internal mass mobilization and struggles against apartheid and capitalist exploitation. Webster and Adler wrote that

“with the ANC and SACP still in exile, and internal political organization under ban and leaders in detention or under trial, Cosatu emerged as the *de facto* leaders of the internal democratic movement” (2001:130).

Cosatu in conjunction with pro-ANC UDF embarked on nationwide public protest which culminated in 1986 State of Emergency and the banning of UDF. It is not far-fetched to suggest that Cosatu’s militancy improved prospects for democratic transition. Cosatu’s formation and mass mobilization did not only awaken capital and the state but ANC-SACP as well. According to Eidelberg, just as the “growing industrial labour unrest was putting pressure on capital to negotiate, the formation of Cosatu, as a result of this same labour militancy, was putting pressure on the ANC to do the same, if only for fear of otherwise risking political marginalization” (2000:133). Eidelberg argues further but this time questioning the importance or relevancy of Cosatu’s labour unrest and pressure upon the state. He argues that during 1988-9, apartheid state was already “losing its autonomy to the international capitalist world” and suggesting that labour unrest was no “longer an essential factor influencing South Africa’s negotiations with the west” (2000:134), and also the sudden improvement to the ANC’s international profile.

The view here is that, notwithstanding the role of international sanctions and capitalist interest, labour movement contributed significantly to the destabilization of the economy and society of late apartheid South Africa. Furthermore, international community and foreign capital understood that even though liberation movements (ANC in particular) were underground and in exile, they were actively involved in the activities of Cosatu and other civic movements, making it worthwhile to seek audience with the ANC. Cosatu, it could be argued, together with other formations, was a backbone of the 1980s insurrection against apartheid. Congress leaders were well aware of the significance role which Cosatu had played. Jay Naidoo could easily claim that “while acknowledging the very important role played by other forces of the liberation struggle, we can proudly say we have been the backbone of the struggle in our country” (Buhlungu 2010:57).

Harold Wolpe without necessarily mentioning and crediting Cosatu, positively observed that the “struggle for people’s power occur in the black townships where the working class is concentrated, virtually the entire population is working class”. He argues further that even the

ANC acknowledged that the “leading force in the national liberation movement is the black working class” (1988:64).

The lifting of political ban on the ANC, SACP and PAC in February 1990 changed the political landscape in the country. ANC assumed and asserted its hegemony with the alliance and entered into negotiations with the ruling National Party. The period between 1990-1994, before the transition to democracy, signaled the subordinate role that Cosatu was to play going forward. It also saw the ANC drifting to the right and for a while bringing Cosatu and SACP together.

Conclusion

The chapter has attempted to capture historical developments and relations between trade unions and NLMs. The literature is vast and rich, and cannot be thoroughly exhausted in a limited space. This chapter holds a view, one that is different from that of Berg and Butler that trade unions were a factor in the destruction of colonialism and apartheid. It is view here that Berg and Butler’s argument could only be understood by treating the working class as self-sufficient and remote from the general public and social settings. As this chapter has argued, labour and social matters are intertwined and cannot be intelligible outside/without the other. The two constitute one another. The analysis of the three countries has shown how unionists crisscrossed between shop floor responsibilities and the holistic duty of leading black people’s struggle against colonial and apartheid repressive policies. The degree at which trade unions participated in each country’s struggle differs, varied between geographical and statutory settings. The chapter argued that as similarities existed among the three countries, particular differences also characterized the outlook and practices of trade unions. Unlike in South Africa where the bulk of black trade unions under the stewardship of Cosatu embraced democracy as a united formation, the chapter has argued that unions in both Zambia and Zimbabwe were fragmented and in disarray at the dawn of independence. The chapter concludes that trade unions were some of the mechanism available and used to mobilize the masses against colonial and apartheid systems. It was also through unions and the entire civic society that NLMs built and lost their hegemonic strength. The following chapter considers factors which manifested NLM’s hegemony in relation to trade unions’ quest for autonomy during post-independence and apartheid.

Chapter Three

Trade union's autonomy and NLM's political hegemony: Post independent politics

Introduction

My departure point is the generally acknowledged fact, particularly in Africa, that trade unions and NLMs were allies in the struggle against colonialism and apartheid. I also contend that their relations were not without some degree of ambiguity. The previous chapter argued that, notwithstanding ideological differences, the two social formations worked towards achieving the common goal – independence and economic liberation. The chapter also suggested that trade unions and political parties functioned and found their meaning through society and could not be defined without, particularly the unions. The preferred system on the part of colonial authorities for dealing with unions centered around suppressive laws and subordination. The colonial system was determined to protect capital and promoted inequality within the labour system. After independence and democracy nationalist parties, now the ruling elite, did little to transform the system and change living conditions of the working poor. It is against this background that this chapter traces the involvement of trade unions in socioeconomic matters and their relationship with political parties after independence. I shall argue that from assuming state power, NLMs embarked on a campaign at hegemonising its political and ideological discourse. For Gramsci, the concept of hegemony means the “consensual basis of an existing political system within civil society; an overcoming of the economic-corporative” (Adamson:1980:170-171). Like colonial administrations, they were concerned to subordinate, direct and influence the activities of trade unions and to make unions their extension. This is evident considering the role of UNIP and ZANU-PF in the formation of federation movements in those countries. The South Africa experience is different. Basically, in this chapter I consider the extent to which trade unions maintained their autonomy after independence.

Zambia

Kenneth Kaunda's UNIP and government built its political hegemony around humanist ideology which culminated to the construction of one-party participatory democracy. The basic tenets of humanism revolve around the principles of nationalism and socialism in opposition to imperialism and capitalism. Simson captures the humanist ideology in Zambia as advocated by Kaunda. He outlines that humanism as defined and understood in Zambia as

a “relatively consistent political belief system which has no unambiguous class basis and which did not aspire to represent simply concrete participatory interests, but rather the general interest of Zambian people”. Basically humanism is achievable through participatory democracy. In view of participatory democracy, one would expect a situation where individuals, groups, civil society and political opposition parties, and other public formations are allowed to mobilize, recruit and voice their dissident opinion. In fact UNIP government set about restricting activities that would create public unrest, undermine its policies or impact negatively on the country’s economy and to indoctrinate masses with its own ideology.

UNIP after assuming power was at pains to restrict and avert labour protests which would unsettle and destabilize economy. Simson observed that for the humanist perspective as interpreted by UNIP, the “working class was not conceived of as the class which is destined by history to lead the nation, its particular interest is to be subordinated to the national developmental goals defined by the national party (UNIP) and its government” (1985:20-22). This view is in contrast with the Marxist-Leninist perspective around the dictatorship of proletariat. Behind the nationalist ideology of state and nation-building and rapid economic development and general emancipation of the public from colonial bondage, was the view that “democratic politics, in whatever form is allowed, was bound to impede development”. The only possible strategy was to proscribe democratic politics in order to “facilitate the attainment of the defined objectives of nationalist ideology” (Akwetey 2001:28). Akwetey explains further that the envisioned outcome of developmentalism was a society indoctrinated around economic and ideological objective of the party and government, allowing the ruling party to hegemonize.

Trade unions preceded political parties in Zambia. However real unionization only erupted with the formation of ZCTU at the behest of UNIP government in the early 1960s. UNIP viewed trade unions as vulnerable to what it perceived as potential negative influence from foreign forces. Following infighting and splits within union structures, Mulenga and others have summed up the state of trade unions since independence as “prostrate and powerless to make an impact upon the life of independent Zambia” (2011:6). According to government, ZCTU fulfill dual purposes. “Dual theorists identify protection of interests of union members and enhancement of national economic and political development as dual roles of trade

unions in developing countries” (Beele 1989:14). At the surface it was to control and manage the frequency of strikes and keep demands at the acceptable level. Akwetey informs us that “the re-direction of workers activities in support of government development objectives was the strategic consideration that shaped the despotic character of labour regimes” (2001:29).

The government or UNIP succeeded, at least for a while, in curbing and manipulating union activities – by planting pro-UNIP leaders in the leadership of ZCTU. Initially, it was only through the active/current UNIP membership that one could be elected to the leadership of the union. Bates captured how nominated candidates to the leadership of ZCTU felt or understood their party’s (UNIP) mandate. One candidate explained UNIP’s motivation to its preferred candidate as follows: “the party had confidence in us to run the union in conformity with what was required by economics - less strikes, more responsible demands and so forth” (1971:157). At this stage, ZCTU was an extension and under the spell of government. Unionists were coopted into the party. At this stage, it suffices to say that UNIP government was only continuing or following from an African thread. It has been argued that in African states, governments would offer prominent trade union benefits in exchange for political cooperation (meaning subordinating or even drifting away from objectives) with the party and government. Frederik Chiluba and Newstead Zimba, ZCTU senior officials, were at one stage in the top structures of UNIP government before being expelled and formed the Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD).

In the previous chapter I argued that colonial office administration insisted upon non-political unionism. After independence the strategy shifted and advocated for nation-building which had no tolerance for opposing views or public demonstration. Although socio-economic policies employed after independence improved basic conditions of Zambian people, distinction between the colonial office and UNIP government in terms of civil society engagement and free and open labour discourse, even opposition political parties is difficult to discern.

After implementation of affirmative action and placing a number of Zambian people in middle and top management positions, economic development was next. Kraus and Akwetey argue that it was in “pursuit of economic development programmes aimed at building a modern economy, state, and nation while also consolidating UNIP power – that relations

between UNIP government and unionized workers were profoundly affected” (2007:125-6). Among the issues leading to the strained relations was the lack of consultation over the construction of the one-party state, and suppression of trade union activities. While ZCTU was still under the spell of UNIP, it was expected to mobilize workers in support of government development policies by educating them about the goals and objectives of government. “Restraints on wage demands were thus as important as refraining from wildcat strikes or planned industrial actions” (Kraus and Akwetey 2007:126). The independence of ZCTU was severely compromised.

Unwittingly the state through Industrial Relations Act of 1971, which made ZCTU the only national trade union recognized by law, created a powerful force that eventually brought about the UNIP’s government demise. Opposition against one-party state and calls for the return to multiparty democracy was spearheaded by trade unions. Such opposition led to the regime reform. Akwetey explains that regime change arises when “prevailing political and ideological conditions either frustrate cooperation or coordination or effectively prevent the construction of consent to such an extent that dominant actors increasingly resort to making decisions independently and also rely increasingly on coercion, rather than persuasion, to implement its decisions” (2001:26-27). This was the situation in Zambia’s second republic in 1973-1990. The period also signaled the decline of UNIP political hegemony. Amongst many requirements needed for the party or government to remain hegemonic, is the public consent on its development projects. Consent could only be attained where open dialogue with interested parties is encouraged. However that did not occur in Zambia. It is possible that Kaunda recognised the waning of his government’s and party’s hegemony. This is evident on his decision against putting the motion of multi-party democracy to the public scrutiny via referendum.

A new generation of leaders of ZCTU emphasized union interests, autonomy and professionalism. This was amid the government’s implementation of structural adjustment after minimal consultation with civil society, trade unions included. The new crop of leaders was critical about the role of past ZCTU which they described as having “demonstrated insufficient commitment to worker’s interests”. They were further outspoken on strengthening “ZCTU autonomy from the ruling party by strongly asserting worker’s interests when they came into conflict with UNIP government policies in 1975-90” (Akwetey and

Kraus 2007:128). It could be argued that Chiluba and Zimba, now Chairman-General and Secretary General respectively, understood that working class interest could only be advanced within the government that is labour friendly. It could also be argued that they were driven by personal vendetta against UNIP and power hungry. Be that as it may, their advocacy for multi-party democracy made them enemies of the people, according to those in UNIP and government circles. Through their leadership and assisted by the trade union's readily available resources, other civil society formations were mobilized around multi-party democracy which culminated to the formation of MMD.

From 1980s to 1990 ZCTU finally found its voice, fought government policies and asserted its structural and ideological autonomy. Can trade unions engage in political and government processes and still remain autonomous? Hoxie thinks that unions must "tailor and articulate their demands and methods of action on a clear appreciation that labour is a subordinate power in capitalist production arrangements" (cited in Beele 1987:21). It has been argued that the "evolution of the [UNIP – ZCTU] relationship from its early anticolonial links with UNIP had been shaped much by the progressive impact of public policies on workers than by any formal obligation". UNIP's hegemony depended on radical (the case before and at earlier stages of independence) and progressive policies. As a vanguard of the working class interest in the absence of communist party, trade unions "felt that the policies of the government were not progressive enough and did not enhance material benefits for the workers, and unions were free to end the alliance", but unions entered into another alliance with MMD and experienced the same marginalization. According to Akwetey and Kraus, "cooperation in the era of the nationalist campaign was shaped by a common interest in terminating colonial rule and securing independence". After the attainment of independence and UNIP no longer serving the interest of the workers, unions did not feel obliged to stick around. They argued that "future roles of the labour organization could no longer be determined merely on the basis of historical relations with a ruling party" (Akwetey and Kraus 2007:132-133).

The formation of MMD with Chiluba as the president of both the party and government brought new prospects for improved labour relations, "great expectations of good remuneration for their labour and respect for professionalism" (Mulenga 2011:7). However MMD was compromised from the very beginning. To the shop floor rank and file, it presented itself as a party/movement founded and aligned within Marxist-Leninist principles.

MMD has never been a socialist party. From its inception MMD depended on Zambian business to cover and fund its campaigns. Donors are known for their conditional generosity and MMD was not exempted from this practice. Severe economic conditions did not disappear with MMD in power. Instead the government continued where its predecessor left off. Neither did the government's attitude towards the trade unions change. Chiluba saw them as against him and government's policies. Meanwhile ZCTU was clear that it "would not accept direct political control by government and that it would also like to participate democratically in high-level economic and social policy decision-making" (Akwetey 2001:36). In fact, in the early years of Chiluba's presidency, ZCTU became a lame-duck, adopting a "don't praise and don't criticize" (Akwetey 2001:38) position. While ZCTU played a pivotal role in the demise of UNIP, its quest for autonomy, writes Akwetey, "appears to have been fatally compromised when it forged a political alliance with the MMD without clearly defining the nature of mutual commitments and sanctions for defecting from existing agreements" (2001:44).

The next chapter considers the impact of structural adjustment programmes and how they affected the relationship between trade unions and political parties/governments.

Zimbabwe

In the early 1980s, the Zimbabwean government portrayed itself as a socialist government, committed to the principles of "equitable distribution of resources for the benefit of the disadvantaged social groups such as women, peasants and workers" (Ndlove-Gatsheni 2002:112). Emerging from the colonial system that had trampled upon social movements like trade unions, student groups, political parties and community organizations, ZANU-PF and its government took advantage of an absent coherent social movement in terms of social mobilization and public consciousness. ZANU-PF presented itself as the sole legitimate representative of the people. Moyo mentions that at this juncture, the party assumed the role of being the "umbrella organization of all social movements and went about destroying civil society associations in the name of the revolution" (1993:7). In an attempt to establish its ideology and rule, ZANU-PF government needed to strike the balance between the interest of the ruling elite and those of ordinary people.

During this period government policies on social development were publicly accepted. As an example its policy on compulsory free primary education appeared as progressive. This and other policies were necessary at the time when the ruling party desperately needed the support of the people. Like any other African government, ZANU-PF also tapped into African nationalism, which mostly appeals to people's aspirations, interests and wishes. At independence, trade unions and many other civil society formations were weak, divided and others go as far as to suggest that these formations played no significant role during the Lancaster House negotiations in 1979. At this juncture Zimbabwe had no labour federation but only labour centers which were fragmented and possessed little legitimacy in the eyes of the ruling party. "ZANU-PF inherited the colonial and violently repressive legal machinery of the Rhodesia state" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2002:111).

It should be noted that such a culture was not unique to Zimbabwe. Many African states tend to continue with colonial regime tendencies. In 1981 the ZANU-PF government intervened and participated in the formation of ZCTU. It is often argued that government's participation in the formation of ZCTU was essentially aimed at "containing the industrial conflict centered on worker's struggles for improved working conditions now that independence had been achieved" (Sachikonye 2001:150). Thus at the onset, ZANU-PF set out to subordinate trade union movements under its socialist and nationalist banners. ZANU-PF saw ZCTU as the "sole coordinating center under the slogan of One Country, One Federation" (Southall 2013:175). In such a societal set-up, Berg and Butler argue that "all interest groups are viewed as integral parts of the governing party mechanism" (1964:370).

The first leadership structure of the federation was mostly concentrated in party loyalists, with Albert Mugabe as its first Secretary General. The language of the federation also signaled the close proximity between the former and the party. During Albert Mugabe's tenure as Secretary General, between 1980-5, state corporatist arrangements were rooted on pact between capital, the state and ZCTU without involvement of individual trade unions. Labour activities and demands were severally suppressed. Like in Zambia the federation was an extension of ZANU-PF; ZCTU was compromised and echoed the agreement it had with the state and capital. Albert Mugabe would argue that "strikes do more harm than good. We do not need to retard economic progress by arranging strikes. There are some bad eggs in the union movement. We will watch them closely and discourage striking as much as we can"

(cited in Sachikonye 2001:150). The Zimbabwe government, just like any other African government, had to strike a balance between the development of the whole society and the needs of the trade unions. Berg and Butler argue that after independence most governments are faced with the situation where “economic growth demands reform of wage structures and changes in work attitudes and habits; it will also demand restraints on the increasing of personal incomes”. Berg and Butler suggest that it is under such conditions that “political leaders feel readjustments may best be made with the cooperation of friendly trade union organization” (1964:370).

At this time ZCTU was the principal tool to silence and deradicalize working class struggle. ZANU-PF argued that considering its class position, it was expected of trade unions to operate with its socialist objectives. The party also felt that workers were not ready to function independently. Maurice Nyagumbo, Minister of State of Political Affairs, justified cooptation of trade unionists on the basis that “because of Zimbabwe’s history of settler colonialism, most working people have very little technical, scientific and managerial skills and their ideological consciousness is still too low” (Sachikonye 2001:151). Noticeable during 1981-85 within the ZCTU structure is the high level of corruption, nepotism and authoritarianism. It was also a period in which foundations were laid for the post-colonial labour regime. ZCTU’s rank and file became increasingly dissatisfied with the political stance/position of its leaders. In 1988 new leadership was elected which became “more sensitive to the mood of the rank and file, and ZCTU now emerged as the most articulate organized critic of the government”. The government responded by detaining ZCTU’s Secretary General, Morgan Tsvangirai in 1989.

The new leadership advocated greater independence from the party. The federation also asserted its autonomy on political issues by refusing to endorse ZANU-PF in the 1990 general elections. Like in Zambia, the federation started to express its ideologies outside the party. This was the beginning of union/party friction and the decline of ZANU-PF’s government hegemony. Sachikonye argues that “suspicion increased within ZANU-PF that the ZCTU intended to combine its economic and political critique to provide a basis for an opposition movement” (2001:157). These suspicions were not without substance. The events in Zambia where labour movements directly challenged UNIP and unseated it from power (1990-1991) were still fresh in the minds of those within ZANU-PF circles and also gave

hope to ZCTU of the possibility of regime change. Government's attempt in curbing and frustrating ZCTU included amendments to the Labour Relations Act meant to reverse the "one industry, one union policy; collective bargaining was to be decentralized" (Sachikonye 2001:157). The idea was to open and encourage plurality in the shop floor but also to weaken ZCTU. At this stage, ZANU-PF viewed ZCTU as a potential political threat and treated it as such. Sachikonye mentions that as from 1992, President Mugabe boycotted workers May Day rallies in a symbolic gesture. President Mugabe remarked that "the moment you turn yourself into a political party I will tell you I am ZANU-PF, I cannot go to May Day celebrations to be a subject of ridicule by school children like students at the University of Zimbabwe" (Raftopoulos 2001:9).

By 1993, Sachikonye argues that the "relations between the state and ZCTU had reached a nadir" (2001:257). It is also important to note that ZANU-PF's hegemony and power were at risk. Military veterans, an important wing to the legitimacy of the party, were making compensation demands. To restore its public image and legitimacy, government agreed to the military veteran's demands at the expense of the working poor. At the center of conflict between ZCTU and government were the state's economic and labour policies. ZCTU also campaigned against ZANU-PF's attempt to impose a one-party state in 1990, the corruption within the ruling party and what ZCTU regarded as the continuation of the colonial strategy of State of Emergency.

The years between 1986 and 1993 saw drastic changes in social and economic policies. Government drifted away from the "accumulation strategy of growth with equity" (Sachikonye 2001:153). This also meant the end to ZANU-PF's "commitment to socialism and a retreat from social redistribution measures: the broad provision of free education and health services for the lowest-income groups and funding for rural resettlement". Sachikonye argues further that "the flirtation with socialist ideology had sat uneasily with the preservation of capitalist structures in the economy and the domestication of labour militancy" (2001:153). What concerned ZCTU more was the government's adoption of a neo-liberal Investment Code in 1989 which "envisaged the deregulation of labour conditions, undermining job security and income protection. The presaged the implementation of an economic structural adjustment programme (ESAP) in 1990" (2001:153). Chapter three looks at the impact of ESAP on labour and government relations. It suffices here to mention that

ESAP brought about substantial retrenchment of workers as a result of restructuring in both public and private sectors. Sachikonye estimates that 26.000 jobs were lost in the private sector.

ZCTU embarked on a number of strikes against government reforms. It is during this period that the hegemony of ZANU-PF government and its related institutions was severely undermined. In 2000 the government was further embarrassed during the vote for the new institutions on land acquisition. ZCTU responded to government reforms with numerous strikes. During the 1990s every other social formation was involved in riots and massive anti-government demonstrations. Strikes were widespread, involving public service workers and farm labourers, even bank workers. Matombo and Sachikonye observed that during this period, unions were viewed as “incubators for a new breed of opposition politicians with strong roots both at workplaces and in the community” (2010:118). In the wake of strikes, government responded by fuelling and creating divisions within ZCTU. As it had played the prominent role in the formation of ZCTU; this time it sought to support a rival labour center causing dissension within ZCTU. Thus Zimbabwe Federation of Trade Unions (ZFTU) came into existence and led by Alfred Makwarimba and Joseph Chinotimba. The state unleashed all forms of violence using not only ZFTU, but employing the services of state media in abetting the attacks.

ZANU-PF's hegemony suddenly evolved into domination. In Gramsci's distinction between hegemony and domination, the latter is understood as involving the “state's monopoly on the means of violence and its consequent role as the final arbiter of all disputes” (Adamson 1980:170). Sue Onslow writes that “the continuation of ZANU-PF as a dominant one-party state has of course also been intimately connected to the reorganization of state structure, and the role of violence and intimidation” (2011:7). Hegemonic government is one that enjoys public consent on ideological and political projects and a society that understands state functions and processes. They are normally mass-based and actively disseminating a dominant ideology throughout society. Thus hegemony is not the same as domination. It is usually the weak governments that “rely very often on the threat or use of force implied in their domination”, whereas “strong states rule almost exclusively through hegemony” (Adamson 1980:170). From the middle of 1990s ZANU-PF has not fared well in this regard. Its power is centered around and was maintained through fear and intimidation particularly

around and during elections. It was the combination of structural adjustment programmes and government's relentless harassment of civil society and any other dissenting voice that led to the formation of the National Working People's Convention which ultimately culminated to the formation of the labour-led Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) in 1999.

The Convention brought together people from "urban, peri-urban and rural areas, representing trade unions, women's organizations, professional associations, development organizations, churches, human rights groups, the informal sector, communal farmers, industry, the unemployed and student organizations" (Raftopoulos 2001:16). Trade unions especially those affiliated to ZCTU felt marginalized and unable to address issues through national reforms in a government that has "abandoned the desire to engage in national politics" (2001:15). MDC drew heavily on trade union resources but was/is not workers party. It is also important to note that ZCTU retained its autonomy. Instead of being solely concerned with working class issues, MDC became "pragmatically driven by issue, by working class interests placed alongside those of civil society and business" (Southall 2013:176).

According to Tsvangirai, MDC was a "social democrat party – never pure, ideologically, because of our broad orientation". He explained further that the party's main "characteristic was driven by working class interests, with the poor having more space to play a role than they do now, and an element of participation by business" (Bond 2001:35). It was not long before MDC championed neo-liberal policies as well. Justifying what appeared to the working class as betrayal and regress by MDC, Tsvangirai claimed that "IMF is like my doctor – I do not like his medicine, but I know that it will make me healthy again" (cited in Alexander 2000: 394). While ZCTU remain independent, its influence in the affairs of the MDC is uncertain. Secretary General Chibede noted in 2007 that the "party has been drifting from the left to the right...the mistake was for party to allow visitors the liberty to control the party. Some of these fly by night and political charlatans have now taken over the party" (Matombo and Sachikonye 2010:123).

South Africa

The Zambian spectre of 1991 came haunting ZANU-PF in the late 1990s and the ANC in 2010 after Cosatu called for civil society engagement. Considering the Zambian and Zimbabwean experience, ANC's Secretary General, Gwede Mantashe had a reason to be concerned. Both MMD and MDC came about through civil society dialogue initiated by trade union federations. MMD became the ruling party while MDC has seriously undermined ZANU-PF's political and social hegemony. In the aftermath of civil society engagement, Mantashe strongly criticized Cosatu for hosting the conference and "explicitly warned that the federation must not imagine that it would be able unseat the liberation movement with a civic alliance as has happened in some neighbouring African countries" (cited in Habib 2013:162).

Cosatu's political ideology is paradoxical at times and difficult to comprehend. Cosatu is a "workers formation fiercely criticizing the ANC government, including resorting to mass action at times, while at the same insisting that working class interests can only be served through a continued alliance with the ruling party" (Pillay 2006:167). Cosatu's contractual pact with the ANC-led alliance found meaning with the drafting and implementation of Reconstruction and Development Plan (RDP) in the early 1990s. Through RDP, Cosatu had envisioned a situation where it would be able to bind in "advance its historical partner in the struggle, destined to become the new government, to a set of priorities that would guarantee broadly conceived working class interests in a new dispensation" (Gotz 2000:163).

Webster and Adler captures what Cosatu had anticipated through reconstruction programme. For Cosatu the RDP was understood as a "framework for an independent, labour-driven campaign. It was also seen as the core pillar of the ANC's election manifesto to be implemented after the elections. But mostly it was viewed as a social contract, which would require reciprocal sacrifices by the ANC and the unions: the former committing itself to the programme, the latter to the cooperation needed to effect the new policies" (2001:132). However, Gotz would argue, as it also became apparent to all within Cosatu and SACP that the adoption of RDP was an "electoral gambit, rather than an item of faith, adopted in haste without thorough consideration of Cosatu's and the SACP's vision of radical change and it laid the basis for the recasting of the document's meaning in a direction more attuned to the ANC's complicated electoral needs". Gotz argues that RDP's "macroeconomic orientation

was re-defined away from the union's commitment to growth through redistribution to a direction more attractive to domestic and international capital, with commitments to fiscal discipline and macroeconomic balance" (cited in Webster and Adler 2001:133).

The re-defining led to the adoption of a more market friendly economic policy – Growth, Employment and Redistribution Programme (GEAR). It also announced the shift to the right in the ANC policy framework or ideology, and most importantly civil society's, including Cosatu and SACP, subordination to the ANC. The next chapter discusses the impact of structural adjustment on the unions and hegemony of political parties concerned.

During this time (RDP period) ANC had not openly taken a pro-market position. Hence, Cosatu did not anticipate that ANC would bring its own pre-conceptions on the notion of reconstruction. Gotz explains that unions were not able to "anticipate that their historical partner in the struggle had already begun a profound shift in self-perception, from being a liberation movement with its own exclusive concerns, to a future administrator of society who would have to give consideration to a wide range of social interests" (2000:163). ANC went ahead with RDP albeit having effected changes in the original document. RDP promised everything to everyone. Some saw it as a wish list and practically impossible. It made provision for civil society's participation. According to Freund RDP "lacked prioritization and most critically, any explanation of how the plan would be financed" (2007:217). ANC might have realized RDP's impracticability but needed to proceed with it for its political and future survival. In an interview with Jimmy Manyi, prominent member of the ANC and former government spokesperson, he outlined RDP as one of many phases which the country had to embark on in trying to understand the impact of apartheid and also to redirect government projects in order to reconstruct the past. He explains that for the ANC, RDP was about getting the country on the right footing (15 May 2014).

Another argument deals with the ANC's hegemonic project. It is generally acknowledged that RDP was meant to provide for the working class, unemployed and the general poor. The ANC understood that "no political democracy can survive and flourish if the mass of our people remain in poverty, without land, without tangible prospects for better life. Attacking poverty and deprivation must therefore be the first priority for a democratic government" (van Niekerk cited in South African Labour Bulletin 2014:44). The adoption of RDP was a

strategic move for the ANC, a move to consolidate its political dominance and social hegemony. The idea at this time was about building consent on the terrain of civil society which that could eventually secure ideological domination. While Cosatu and SACP may have entertained the idea of reconstructing the nation, one built on equal redistribution of wealth and forging the balance between capital and the working class interests, on the other hand, ANC set about to preserve the apartheid legacy.

To be hegemonic, Satgar argued that ANC needed to build alliances to constitute a historical block of forces, to have an ideological project, it needed to represent itself as a conscious subaltern working class organization, with an understanding of the state and how the state is to be transformed to advance a particular project (interview: 08 October 2014). RDP spoke to these hegemonic principles and provided the ANC with an opportunity to dominate the public platform through media and social gatherings. Gramsci's concept of hegemony or ideological domination refers to how a "class exerts influence over other classes in such a way that they will follow its political and economic project" (Jacques Derrida). It is the ideology that when it dominates, it suppresses or stamps out other ways of explaining reality. Nationalism was also a uniting force propelling black South Africans against the common enemy – apartheid. Most people from various civic society formations embarked on defeating apartheid. The ANC with its historical struggle experience appeared to be the vehicle towards achieving democracy. In its pursuit of power and hegemony, ANC suppressed the congress movement, hijacked people's revolution and tend it into a passive revolution. By passive revolution – revolution without a revolution, Gramsci meant "the elite-engineered social and political reform" (Adamson 1980:186). In chapter four I expand on the elite-engineered revolution in the form of the government's BEE policy. The capture of UDF into the ANC robbed black masses of their voice and conditioned them into accepting the party as representing the true essence of society, although key UDF people recognized ultimate ANC leadership from the outset.

The question has to be asked, is the ANC hegemonic? Following Gramsci's conception and interpretation of hegemony, Satgar believes that ANC is no longer hegemonic. His interpretation of Gramsci's concept excludes or does not regard electoral victory as being hegemonic. For him electoral victory only means the party is dominant, which is far from being hegemonic. He draws the distinction between hegemony and dominance. Friedman

echoes the same sentiments that the party has lost its hegemony. For him hegemony is the situation where the party dominates the social agenda. However for Satgar election victory does not constitute hegemony, whereas Friedman relates the decline in electoral victory to the fading ANC's hegemony. Friedman contends that the drop in electoral votes signifies the unpopularity of ANC policies. I posed the same question to Elijah Chiwota, Editor of *Labour Bulletin* magazine, who argues to the contrary. He believes that the ANC is hegemonic and controls power. While he subscribes to Gramsci's interpretation, he believes that the turnout during voting signifies the acceptance of ANC policies (interview: 17 June 2014).

In electoral democracy, hegemonic ideology has to reveal itself during the elections, unless we accept that electorates do not vote based on current socio-economic discourse. Before 2014 national elections, for example, ANC was painted as corrupt and E-tolling roads used against it but it still prevailed. I am suggesting the possibility that the concept of hegemony may have evolved from the Gramsci's period to include politics of race, historical experience and not just ideologies. While I accept Satgar's argument and interpretation of hegemony as penned by Gramsci, I think the concept is complex and encompasses various elements. Satgar also acknowledges that the term is not static. I think the concept should be looked at holistically. Gramsci spoke about hegemony as a domination by consent. Through the elections, people give a consent to a particular ideology. According to Webster, hegemony is the concept where all pervasive ideas and propaganda are dominant, and also stresses that it does not mean dominant and consensus. He argues that Gramsci used the term in order to understand how ideology operated.

While RDP was initially a working class document and adopted by all alliance partners, it soon became government's developmental strategy for almost two years, overtly followed and accepted by other classes. From its inception in 1985, Cosatu has always portrayed itself as an independent, fearless and democratic trade union federation, and most importantly as a champion of working class democracy. While it is an influential member within the ANC-led alliance, it has always maintained its organizational independence and embarked on strikes and public protest against labour and the state whenever the need arises. But is Cosatu the militant federation it used to be or a convenient tool for the ANC and government to curtail working class demands? Speaking to Cosatu National Spokesperson, Patrick Craven, on Cosatu's independent from the ANC and government influence, one readily finds the

expected affirmative independent position. Craven protested that more than once that Cosatu has been wrongly accused of being the branch of government, the perception that Cosatu refutes. He reiterated that Cosatu is an independent, worker controlled organization. He claims that Cosatu will never give a government a blank cheque (interview: 09 July 2014).

On the other hand, Steven Friedman, a scholar and political analyst, suggests that the relationship between Cosatu and ANC is structured around the “implicit bargain”. In this sense Cosatu is not in a position to influence economic policies, while ANC will also not change labour laws (interview: 17 June 2014). From this gentleman-like pact, the Labour Relations Act (LRA) was enacted in 1995. The act made it “illegal for an employer to refuse to recognize a trade union and workers enjoyed freedom of association, making it illegal for an employer to victimize workers for union activities” (Buhlungu 2010:76). The act also put an end to state repression. This suggests a win-win situation or a tamed and compromised union federation. It could also suggest or confirm what many within Cosatu regard as a situation where the federation has become a labour desk of the ANC. Chapter five ponders on the current state of Cosatu in relation to the ANC.

Why did Cosatu remain within the alliance after GEAR was forced down their throats? Habib suggests that when the ANC assumed power in 1994, it had to make a choice between “transforming the socio-economic system or finding a way of accommodating the interests of capital” (2013:15). With the adoption of GEAR, ANC seems to have settled for the latter. Hein Marais cited by Habib makes a bold statement which many in the ANC-led alliance (excluding the current Numsa leadership) might label as malicious and baseless. Marais contends that the “South African transition is merely an attempt by the ruling class to establish a new growth path after its previous attempts in the late-apartheid period failed to address the economic crisis that overcame the country from the 1970s”. His view, explains Habib, is that the “ruling class gave the ANC a mandate to deliver stable and sustainable economic growth in exchange for a limited redress project that involved the creation of a black capitalist class” (2013:22). Marais and Habib fail to explain to us, who this ruling class is, the influence they have over the ANC and the factors behind economic crisis of 1970s. A black capitalist class is the culmination of government’s BEE programme, infamously seen as creating class division among black people and as the party’s electoral investment well.

If we accept the Marais argument which I believe should not be taken lightly, then ANC was confronted with a complex situation where it needed to please various stakeholders. Andrew Chirwa, President of National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (Numsa), echoes Marais' remarks where he claims that "we only replaced white men with black men. The system is still the same. South African capitalism continues to flourish by coopting few black capitalists, whilst majority remains excluded from the economy" (NumsaNews No2, May 2014, pg 6). In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon explains the nature and state of the native middle class nationalists in post-colonial underdeveloped countries. He argues that such countries with no economic power "hope merely to replace the departing middle class of the former colonial rulers". Without economic means, Fanon believes that it is "completely canalized into activities of the intermediary type". He explains further that while other social formations may anticipate drastic economic reforms, the nationalist "mission has nothing to do with transforming the nation, rather it consists in becoming the transmission line between the nation and a capitalism which puts on the mask of neo-colonialism" (cited in Southall 2013:274).

Fanon's description matches the conditions which NLMs particularly in Southern Africa found themselves. The negotiated settlements always involve certain conditions. Zimbabwe had the "Lancaster House" agreement, whereas in South Africa, a "Sunset clause" was inserted as part of the deal. These conditions could be seen as measures to safe guard white capital. Southall argues that in many of the NLMs, "political settlements were designed to provide the stability that white capital required, not least by blunting the liberation movements' more radical demands with the incorporation of their elites into the economic structures of settler colonialism" (2013:275). The 1994 political transition, while making available many things to the majority of poor black South Africans, produced a small black nationalist elite and, safeguarded white capital monopoly while millions of working class and unemployed and poor black people are still languishing in poverty.

Cosatu, still believes that ANC is the only party that can better promote the interests of the working class. At times Cosatu's reasoning defies logic. The ANC-led government unleashed the deadly police force on the workers in Marikana, 2012. Could be it said that such a party has the best interest of the working class? Or maybe it considers the interest of those affiliated to Cosatu. Following Marais' bold argument, one is even tempted to regard the

ANC as the guard of white capital which then necessitates the subordination and muting of Cosatu. True, the orthodox Marxist-Leninist conception holds that trade unions have to be linked to the political party where they become instruments of the party. It should be stressed that such an orthodox conception was based on the idea of the party pursuing the interests of the working class, the unemployed and the poor. It could not be said that ANC possesses these attributes, let alone practicing them. It is under the ANC government that workers are threatened and killed in the interest of capital.

After the adopting of GEAR, a left movement truly committed in socialist principles would have walked away from capitalist policies. Instead Cosatu mobilized its members to vote for the same policies in 1999 and 2004 elections. Zwelimgama Vavi, Cosatu Secretary General, after publicly criticizing the ANC on GEAR, made a “u-turn” in 2004 and claimed that “although it had campaigned against the negative aspects of ANC policy since the previous elections, there was no other party seeking to promote workers interests”. He argued that “Cosatu is the worker’s voice and the ANC is the worker’s choice” (Pillay 2006:78). The aligning of the trade union movement with the ANC has a long history. Former President of the ANC Chief Albert Luthuli explained what is perceived by the ANC as a bond determined by a common history and in a common struggle. He claimed that the “ANC is the shield and the revolutionary trade union movement, the spear” (cited in the speech by Jacob Zuma, 18 September 2006, 9th Cosatu Congress). The sentiment by Vavi seems not to appreciate the historical shift since Luthuli’s period. As a trade unionist, it is expected of Vavi to be guided and driven by what is best for the workers not merely keeping with the perceived historical bond.

There might be an element of truth in Vavi’s statement. The survey conducted by Pillay in 2004 depicts formidable ANC support from the working class. The survey was conducted in five provinces, with all five provinces scoring a resounding percentage. However the survey did not determine the attitude of workers in a case where Cosatu were to form a worker’s party. In 2013 Chris Hani Foundation set to balance the worker’s opinions by engaging on comprehensive survey into Cosatu’s rank and file. Chapter five shall consider the findings of that survey. It suffices here to indicate that the findings suggest that workers entertain the possibility of Cosatu forming worker’s party.

Cosatu's independence was self-compromised from the 1993 conference where they decided to form part of the ANC-led government. The fantasy idea was then and is now, to influence and represent workers needs in government. Webster and Adler saw the deployment of Cosatu leaders to all government structures as the strategy to "strengthen the capacity of the ANC and at the same time shape its direction towards labour's goals" (2001:133). The move eroded the federation's independence and robbed it of its leading figures. The void in leadership has often been regarded as a brain drain. Trade unionists' cooptation into government has not yielded any positive outcome for the rank and file. These leaders are appointed to the government positions on the ANC party list and not that of the unions. When in government, these leaders have to toe the line. Trade union leaders that serve in government are elected on the ANC list not of Cosatu, and have to implement the former's policies. South African workers need leaders who have no ties with the ruling party, who have no political allegiance and with a single cap that of worker's needs. The current crops of leaders in Cosatu are also members of the ANC and always have to draw the line.

Conclusion

The chapter presented a brief exposition of hegemony as understood within Gramsci's conception and how it relates to the three NLMs. It suggested that all three parties canvassed for their respective population's consent and approval of their policies. The parties employed historical concepts like humanism, socialism and nationalism in order to rally the masses behind their policies and to establish and maintain their hegemonic status. The chapter suggested further that in Zambia and Zimbabwe, the parties and government's hegemony was severely undermined and challenged. The chapter also covered the concept of trade union autonomy. It was argued that trade unions in Zambia and Zimbabwe went through various phases in pursuit of independence from the parties. In the early stages of independence, they served the government, as the ruling parties played an important part in the formation of the two federations. The status quo in both countries was only challenged after the election of new leaders of the federations who portrayed themselves as pro-worker and used the federation to capture political power. The chapter suggested that in South Africa, Cosatu was compromised even before democracy. The federation has since been paralyzed and muted. Structural adjustment programmes were at the center of conflict between trade unions and NLMs. The following chapter looks at how the federations dealt with SAP? Why were they implemented and how the respective governments dealt with the opposition to SAPs.

Chapter four:

The impact of neoliberal reform

Introduction

At the forefront of trade union and political party's confrontation or conflict is the latter's economic policies, its formulation and implementation which usually exclude and subordinate the former, and mostly the impact of such economic reforms on the working class. It is often argued that the working class and the poor are the most affected by these reforms. This is the idea/position articulated by trade unionists mostly, and political pundits at times. Economic reforms, infamously known as Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP), offered themselves as much needed economic boosts to the devastated and declining economies of a sovereign countries. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank (WB) purport to provide financial relief and stability to the recipient country. However, their generosity comes with unwavering conditions. Their financial aid, because of the attached conditions, is normally between the state and such institutions, while intentionally excluding other civil society stakeholders. This chapter analyses how SAPs influenced and dictated economic policies of the three countries. IMF and WB policies in the developing countries commonly imposed severe social costs on the poor. The chapter shall consider how trade union federations dealt with economic reforms and their attitude towards IMF and WB.

Zambia

The economic decline emanating from recurrent drops in the global copper price forced the UNIP government to seek financial bailout from external/international donors. Throughout the 1980s it was held/believed by government and to a certain extent by internal opposition that the "country's economic misfortunes were the result of external forces such as the low copper prices and the heavy costs associated with support for independence struggles in neighbouring countries" (Rakner 2003:55). The government looked to the IMF for assistance. The IMF, WB and the West have always been the willing and readily available aid-donor institutions and governments. Financial aid from these institutions comes with conditionalities or ground rules which the recipient country must implement and enforce. These conditionalities will be addressed at a later stage of this section. The implementation of structural reforms were largely dependent on full cooperation and acquiescence from trade

unionists. As the Zambian federation came about at the behest of the party, and consequently was subordinated to it, government expected ZCTU to rally behind the reforms. According to President Kaunda, “the ZCTU as a people’s organization was also responsible to the party and comes under the discipline of the party. It was the duty of the ZCTU to pursue the party’s programmes and to implement party policies because the party was supreme over the ZCTU and other national institutions” (cited in Akwetey 1994:54).

Opposition to state policies was regarded as equivalent to challenging the nation itself. Trade unionists in the leadership of ZCTU, and mostly elected based on their party standings, were more accountable to the party than to their rank and file members. SAP was not merely the problem between ZCTU and other civil society organization and government. Instead the source of conflict around structural adjustment lay in the insulation of its decision-making process from various domestic social forces. Beside government’s failure to consult civil society organizations on the reforms, the main political problem was that “the costs of almost all the reforms would be borne by urban consumers including the large party and state bureaucracy created by UNIP, the strong and centralized trade union movement, and the parastatal enterprises” (Rakner 2003:58). Also to be included in this bracket are the unemployed and the poor.

There were also accusations of government corruption and the breaking of faith with the unions which escalated from the second to the third republic. As was the case during Kaunda’s presidency, MMD government condemned ZCTU’s persistent rebuttal of government economic policies. Akwetey and Kraus suggest that Chiluba would actually avoid any contact with the federation leadership. It is possible that Chiluba did not want a situation where government policies could be challenged. Communication links did not improve with former unionists at the helm of political power. Instead “MMD government found it more convenient and punitive to isolate and insulate spheres of policy making from the critical ZCTU leadership” (Akwetey and Kraus 2007:138).

In chapter two, I mentioned that UNIP government pursued humanism as its working ideology, and within which the idea of one-party state resonated. Kaunda would argue then that through humanism, the party/government “endeavored to create a situation in which no individual or group of individuals shall be allowed to possess a monopoly of any form of

power by which they can influence the direction or pace of development in the nation in pursuance of their own interests” (cited in Akwetey 1994:48). In other words the idea was to do away with class politics or just to tame and render working class politics irrelevant and similar to societal needs at large. Almost all authoritarian regimes subscribe to the illusion that centralizing power in the party-state, while effacing division and conflict, would enhance the capacity of government to secure stability, at the same time accelerating economic and social modernization. Like the other two countries being analyzed here, Zambia soon found itself at the crossroads, having to decide on continuing with African democratic socialism as its guiding ideology and maintain Zambian humanism, or to submit to foreign and international economic principles of private ownership of market-led development. The decline in copper price seems to have pushed UNIP government to abandon cross-class humanism for class market-led, pro-capitalist economic development. Again this stance is not unique to Zambia.

While the state was pondering measures to counter the escalating economic crisis which directed it to the door of IMF and gladly enforcing austerity measures in the economy as part of the attached conditions. The federation also unveiled new and radical leaders who publicly denounced government policies. According to Akwetey and Kraus, between 1973 and 1988 the government agreed to and implemented about six IMF standby arrangements and one extended fund facility. The authors explain that these agreements incorporated more and more conditionalities which included “wage freezes, slashes in government spending and borrowing, liberalization of import-export trade, decontrolling domestic prices, and cutting subsidies on consumable goods” (2007:129). Wages were frozen and workers retrenched as a result of privatization and scaling down of government bureaucracy.

The measures/reforms brought adverse social impact to the middle and lower income groups. The successful implementation of austerity measures depended on mass mobilization, particularly of the working class. Since ZCTU was regarded by government as the extension and the tool for the party, ZCTU leadership was expected to influence and direct their members towards the policies of government. In other words the bread and butter issues were to be sidelined in favour of government’s long-term economic development policies.

ZCTU's response to austerity measures resonated with the perception held by their members. It argued that "stabilization measures like the reduction of subsidies on imported maize, the liberalization of prices, and the wage freeze would not affect all Zambians equally". The federation claimed that it would be the "unionized workers that would be the losers since the government's development policies had thus far increased income inequality and widened the gap between the low-income workers and the politicians, businessmen, and bureaucrats". In their opposition to the reforms, the federation rubbished austerity measures as only bringing the "capitalist way of life, not humanism and equality" (cited in Akwetey and Kraus 2007:129), drawing from President Kaunda's earlier articulations. ZCTU's opposition of austerity measures undermined government legitimacy. This marked the beginning of animosity between ZCTU and UNIP government. The events culminated to the latter's political demise.

It is important to note that conflict went beyond union-party relations. Austerity measures were perceived differently by society at large. Within the Zambian community, two distinct groups emerged and interpreted IMF's leading role in the economic affairs of the country differently. The socialists or at least the remnants of supporters of what used to be UNIP's founding political ideology, viewed IMF solutions as "ideologically distasteful". The ideological conflict, according to Akwetey, was "reinforced by the nature of the external intervention which was widely seen as a threat to national sovereignty". Akwetey argues that IMF and WB did not limit their involvement as institutions providing credit for "solving balance of payments and development problems, but also, together with aid-donor governments of the West, became major players intervening in the domestic conflict over the reform process" (1994:2). Another formation in Zambia, which Rakner calls a "heterogeneous group" perceived IMF measures to be "unpalatable but recognized that foreign exchange from Western countries could only come through an agreement with the IMF" (2003:55).

In the face of civil society's opposition of structural adjustment, the government relied more on coercion when implementing economic policies and less on consent, which is normally attained through dialogue and negotiated agreement. According to Herbst the first tactic was the insulation of decision-making processes from supposedly obstructive political pressures (cited in Akwetey 2001:32). Akwetey explains the insulation strategy as the practice

effectively designed to exclude the “representatives of unionized workers and broad sections of affected civil society groups including the indigenous business organizations from public policy decision-making processes”. Through the exclusion of other stakeholders, unilateral decisions which affected these parties were taken. Such decisions included the reduction/withdrawal of food subsidies and the retrenchment of workers without proper notification.

In response to the government’s economic reforms, ZCTU embarked in the number of strikes and protests. I propose to highlight just two events which shook the legitimacy of UNIP government, causing it to retreat and suspend its programmes. From 1985, President Kaunda, supported largely by the governor of the Central Bank and Minister of Finance, escalated his economic restructuring reforms. The infamous auction system was introduced to make provision for the allocation of foreign exchange. A number of observers (West 1992, Hawkins 1991, Callaghy 1990) believe that the policy produced results almost immediately. However the policy had negative effects on the domestic arena. Ranker observed that “the auction favored manufacturing over agriculture, private firms over parastatal companies, and large businesses over smaller ones. The state increased transport charges, communication services, housing and schooling”. (2003: 58).

On this occasion, ZCTU was joined by the Central Committee of UNIP in criticizing the policy. In addition to the floods of strikes already crippling the devastated economy and undermining government, ZCTU, according to Rakner, “withdrew from all the boards of parastatal enterprises to which it belonged in protest against the foreign exchange auction which had raised the cost of living beyond acceptable limits and against economic reforms in general” (2003:59). In 1986 the government acting on the strident conditionalities of aid-donor institutions “attempted to remove the subsidy on maize meal. Violent riots and demonstrations broke out and the government was compelled to restore it” (Akwetey 1994:55). Unfortunately for the government, its shifting stance made it appear weak and unable to govern or simply lacking in political resolve to implement stabilization measures. It was not long before IMF and WB joined the choir advocating for the re-instatement of multiparty democracy.

Before the inevitable of 1991, UNIP government branded ZCTU as a threat and enemy of the people. In this regard it devised measures to destroy the federation. Government's response came in two distinct phases, the second one in response to failure of the first, while at the same time emanating from the persistence of the first phase. The first phase was comprised of the repression of both spontaneous and organized protests, people being detained without trials, 'violation of human rights', organized workers summarily dismissed from employment and "systematic persecution through intimidation associated with surveillance by security agencies. Protest become violent and could only be controlled through army and police intervention that claimed human lives" (Akwetey 2001:33). During this period (1985-1990) UNIP government lost its legitimacy, which culminated to the collapse of its political and state power in 1991.

Government resorted to threats and intimidation in its bid to silence the increasing opposition. It threatened to convert the federation into a mass organization answerable to the party, which would have seen it playing the same role as women and youth leagues. As expected the federation came out strongly against the proposal and argued for the retention of the federation's identity as labour organization. Left within the artillery of government was to break the centralized structure of ZCTU and weaken its source of funding. The Labour Relations Act of 1971 had made provision for compulsory affiliation to ZCTU, making the federation the only recognized workers voice. Realizing that ZCTU had grown numerically and in strength to the extent that it posed a challenge to the political stature of the party, and after the former had argued against the amendment of the Act, UNIP used its parliamentary muscles to unilaterally submit the Draft Bill to the National Assembly in 1989.

The Bill proposed the abolition of mandatory affiliation and required two thirds-majority in order to re-affiliate. The Minister of labour and Commissioner had more power over the registration and dissolution of trade unions. The second phase was more about political survival of the party than socio-economic development. The continuation of the reforms faced relentless resistance from civil society. According to Ranker "the final blow to the reform process came in response to the government's announcement of the decontrol of maize prices in December 1986" (2003:59). This move by government resulted to the biggest outbreaks of unrest in the country, post colonialism. Ranker observed that the unrest/events

“profoundly shook the UNIP government and its immediate response was to restore the subsidies, nationalize the milling companies and blame the IMF” (2003:59).

It was purely for political survival that the government suspended the conditionalities that came with IMF and WB sponsored structural adjustment programme in 1987. In its place, the government came up with the New Economic Recovery Programme (NERP). Significant about the programme is that it was widely accepted and after a long time civil society supported government economic policy. This is the period that government was criticized by foreign aid-donors of being weak and lacking political will to enforce the reforms. NERP meant that Zambia was going back to state-controlled mechanisms and doing it alone. However the break from IMF was short-lived. There were various reasons that led to the failure of NERP. Noticeable is the fact that international donors did not support the programme as it went against their preferred mechanisms. Equally important is that NERP reduced the levels of labour unrest. In 1989 Zambian government began negotiations with aid donors and at the same time refueled the conflictual relationship with ZCTU.

In chapter three I argued that MMD continued where UNIP government had left off. MMD continued under the spell and threats of IMF and WB. The new government had to submit to the stipulations (privatization and keeping budget deficits to low limits) by aid-donor institutions or risks possible cut-offs. In 1992 the MMD government re-introduced the “removal of food subsidies, liberalization of export and import trade, restrictions of public sector wage increases, abolition of all tax-free allowances and curtailment in public expenditures” (Akwetey and Kraus 2007:136). Chiluba argued that the country had to make a choice between economic recovery and continued economic decline. He urged trade unions to place their interests within the broader national interests. For a while ZCTU had no response. It looked direction-less, without any political stand or the will to engage government. ZCTU had lost its voice, weak and badly compromised. While the federation was mum and being muted, workers were laid off in huge numbers and as a result its membership declined.

The analysis on the state of ZCTU after the third republic are diverse and complex. According to Mulenga, by 1995 ZCTU was “impotent and less meaningful in terms of its usefulness to the social and economic needs of its members”. Mulenga accuses ZCTU

leadership of turning “the labour movement into an extension of a government whose philosophy and policy were not consistent with the aspirations of the workers” (2011:9). The federation cautioned its members to “avoid going on strikes as management may either send them on early retirement or dismiss them” (Akwetey 2001:38). The statement depicts a defeated federation trying to defend the interest of the capital then of its members.

However it is important to note that during the early stages of the third republic, it would not have been easy to draw the distinction between ZCTU and MMD economic policies. The influence of Chiluba and Zimba was still prevalent within the federation. On the other hand, Akwetey and Kraus portray a picture of a radical and independent worker federation even after the third republic. They argue that by 1992 ZCTU had moved from its tacit support of government’s economic policies to a more critical, nonpartisan relationship with MMD. The concern was not new, ZCTU complained of the lack of consultation and deliberations during the implementation and making of orthodox structural adjustment programme. Despite having unsettled UNIP government and assisting MMD to ascend to power, ZCTU had not realized the needs of the workers they represent, at least until 2006. It is also during this period that ZCTU appears to have found its political voice and took a stand to support any party that is labour friendly.

Zimbabwe

There were two complex issues that formed part of almost all NLM’s governance. On the one hand, is the possibility of having inherited an underdeveloped economy and a state that did little to prepare the ground for viable African rule. In this unfortunate and intentionally made situation, new nationalist governments have to emulate their masters at the expense of much needed social development and economic transformation. In most cases, even before resuming political reigns, terms of reference are always already determined. I have mentioned the Lancaster House Agreement in Zimbabwe and the Sunset Clause in South Africa. On the other hand, one should not down play bad government, lack of skills and leadership, corruption and disregard for human rights. Under this situation, masses and their representatives are deliberately sidelined or excluded from decision-making processes. Nationalist leaders by virtue of their newly acquired positions become the new class of elites among the impoverished masses. The unsuspecting population is then promised prosperous

but long-term benefits. These are the tenets and basic arguments under which ESAP are normally justified.

Zimbabwe, as was the case in Zambia and South Africa, went through the same reality. As early as 1982, the Zimbabwean government under the leadership of Prime Minister Robert Mugabe was at the doorstep of International Financial Institutions (IFI) seeking financial bailouts. It should be noted that the period from 1980-85 and to the certain extent, in the late 1980s, there were visible and common grounds amongst many sectors of society, including trade unions, for the need to press for economic liberalization. In many African circles, there is a perception that ESAPs are the external imposition. Sachikonye rubbishes this idea. He protests that the “ideological and policy agenda of the IFI’s is not necessarily a unilaterally coercive one since it may be congruent with the interest of certain social forces in the host state”. His comments are prompted by the observation that in Zimbabwe “certain social forces had pressed strongly for economic liberalization throughout the 1980s” (1995:45).

In this instance social forces does not include trade unions but it also does not mean they were against the reforms from the onset. The dominant union federation had itself expressed affirmative sentiments for a corporatist/social pact. The leadership suggested that “it is important that we change our attitudes towards each other, in a way that follows national interest to subordinate our narrow interests. Government needs to look beyond the next election. Business needs to look beyond the next balance sheet. Labour needs to look forward beyond the next collective bargaining round. I firmly believe we can all of us look, as social partners, beyond ESAP” (cited in Sachikonye 2001:161). The quote does not necessarily suggest that ZCTU was accepting and ready to mobilize workers behind the policy as the government had wanted them to, instead I believe that it advocated for an opening in terms of consultation and evaluation of both positive and negative impact of the policy to the ordinary citizens. The reader would remember that ESAP, just like GEAR in South Africa, was enacted without any popular participation, which justified hostile response from the left aligned formations. These social forces which were the combination of organized business (mining, agriculture and industrial), the black bourgeoisie in the country and the state colluded for the “abandonment of free social services, and of the traditional pact with labour sustained by employment security measures and state-mandated periodic wage increases”

(Sachikonye 1995:45). In its struggle to appease their economic masters, ZANU-PF government abandoned its ideological principles, the mass-oriented redistributive program.

In most cases ESAPs survive because they are often disguised as domestically initiated. However I believe that there has to be difference between realizing the need to secure financial aid and the penning/drafting of strategies, processes, implementation, procedures and the envisioned outcome. Equally significant is the alignment of these factors with social realities of the recipient country. For the reforms to be accepted by the population, ZANU-PF government had to claim them as its own. Minister of Finance, Bernard Chidzero once claimed that ESAP was unique and different from those implemented elsewhere. He attempted to convince his compatriots that this “is the way we have gone in Zimbabwe, and when we were ready, we called them (IMF) to come and have a look at our programme. They are merely assisting us to ensure that a macro-economic balance is maintained, and also that the reform programme is internationally credible. We framed the programme in a way that we think it will work in Zimbabwe, and not how they think it will work. But it is good that we have involved them because that is the reality of the world” (cited in Sachikonye 1995:45).

This statement is misleading and mere rhetoric meant to assuage the masses. ESAPs are mostly on terms and conditions as prescribed and determined by IFI's and donor countries. It is usually on the behest of IMF and WB that austerity measures are introduced. This was the case in Zambia as it also happened in Zimbabwe. When the first phase of ESAP was launched in 1990, it was praised and celebrated by business community and international market as a decisive shift in economic policy. The shift meant the “phasing out of price and labour controls”. ESAPs were premised on the assumption that it would “usher in highly competitive industries, lead to increased exports and investment inflows. It would eliminate forex shortages and expand employment opportunities and result in an economic boom” (Sachikonye 1995:47). This is where the conflict between trade unions and government emanates from. The idea of phasing out price and labour controls means the exclusion of labour movement from influencing and directing labour relations.

It also suggests the limited role of government around labour matters like retrenchment and intimidation of workers against striking. The relaxation of forex exchange also signaled the

profound influence of IFIs and donor countries in how domestic relations and socio-economic development are to be addressed. I would go as far as to suggest that ESAP threatens the sovereignty of the recipient country. Saunders argues that “ESAP-inspired economic and social crisis led to the decline in ZANU-PF’s political credibility” (2007:172). It is worth noting that the unpopularity of the perceived neoliberal reforms was not confined to labour structures and or indeed the wider population.

The reforms were also challenged within the top echelons of ZANU-PF. ESAP and the government were challenged on two shortcomings. The first revolved around the reluctance of the government to rule and investing the hopes and lives of the masses in perceived Western structural adjustment; the second, around lack of civil society involvement.

In 1990 ZCTU viewed the pact between IFI and government as a source of conflict, poverty and economic destabilization. As it would be expected, the federation led a series of anti-ESAP demonstrations and response to the government’s amendment of LRA. At its 1990 congress, ZCTU criticized government of having become a spectator and allowing foreign interests to dictate the country’s economic relations. In that congress, the federation concluded that the “government strategy of staking the people’s hopes on World Bank structural adjustment policies, on foreign investment, on privatization and on trade liberalization ignores the evidence of the devastating effects of these policies on working people across the globe and dooms a vast section of the society to permanent joblessness, hopelessness and economic insecurity. It further mortgages the economy to foreigners and leaves the nation economically powerless and without economic control over its future” (cited in Raftopoulos 2001:8).

Raftopoulos could be referring to the events in Zambia where SAPs only managed to reproduce poverty, social inequality, led to the protracted conflict between civil society and the state, and ultimately to the regime change. Despite the failure to utilize past events as precedence to guide future involvement with IFIs, regional leaders have “easily accepted the apparent inevitability of capitalism as being the only strategy capable of providing for development” (Southall 2013:11). As political parties come to accept the importance of trade unions and their pivotal role as potential supporters of government economic policies, it becomes strategic to devise mechanisms to win them over. At the height of popular militancy

and of the disastrous performance of ESAP, some within ZANU-PF realized the need to partner with ZCTU. Saunders argues that amid the strike outbreak, government believed that “ZCTU could help mediate and stabilize growing conflict in labour relations, and government even showed interest in helping reshape ESAP into a more effective, labor-friendly program that a collection of constituencies could be rallied to support” (2007:177).

In 1995 during ZCTU's congress, the federation resolved to institute a tripartite body, the Zimbabwe Economic Development and Labour Council (ZEDLAR), between labour, business and government was aimed at emulating SA's NEDLAC. This initiative was rejected by government fearing continuous challenge of its policies by civil society and disgruntled elements within its ranks. Instead of a tripartite body, government established the National Economic Consultative Forum (NECF) structure. The NECF according to Saunders had no “legal and little political –moral authority, its deliberations and decisions would be nonbinding and nonofficial. Participation or membership would be held on an individual rather than representative or institutional basis” (2007:178).

During the early 1990s ZCTU was not against ESAP in its entirety or as a product. It acknowledged the economic need for the country to seek foreign assistance. The contentious points had to do with the lack of consultation and its dictatorial nature. ZCTU diagnosed the early crisis of ESAP as the “state's failure to include an array of social forces in shaping and overseeing the implementation of its policies”. ZCTU identified another shortcoming, this time demanding that government should play a particular role in the implementation of ESAP rather than being a spectator. Tsvangirai would argue that “there is a need for the role of the state to be properly defined. The state has a role to play in the economy – we in the ZCTU don't believe in the complete withdrawal of the state from the marketplace and society. But we think the state needs to intervene to empower, not to control, to redress imbalances, and do so under a consensual process” (Saunders 2007:177).

ZCTU was skeptical that the state's withdrawal from the marketplace as dictated by neo-liberal policies and the embedded corruption in all government institutions would only drive government farther away from the masses. It was also concerned that government will be forced to deny the masses particularly the working class their bargaining rights. It raised concerns about a bleak future where government will be forced and persuaded by ESAPs

conditionalities to quell riots and people will be turned against each other. Thus, Tsvangirai identified undemocratic factors or tendencies within ESAP policies whereas the business community was universally optimistic. Tsvangirai argued that “Zimbabweans needed a democratic space. Because what is going to be sacrificed in this programme is democracy. When people go to the streets, complaining about these things, the state will be forced to use power to quell these riots, and in fact one of the ironies is that we are arming our own people – the police and the army – to turn against our people. At the end of the day we become the marginalized group, because the government has put itself in a position so that it cannot take a stand against the IMF” (cited in Bond 2001:31).

Realizing the complexity of the situation in the country and the fact that labour movement could not effectively challenge the status quo on its own, Tsvangirai declared that “the only way to defend against international capital marginalizing further the indigenous businessman, the worker, the peasant was to bring all these groups together” (cited in Southall 2013:176). Faced with trade union opposition to its economic policies, government sought means to weaken the federation and industrial unions. Like in Zambia, the first move was to effect amendments to the LRA. Amendments were used to reverse the “one industry, one union policy; collective bargaining was to be decentralized in a bid to weaken the National Executive Committee” (Sachikonye 2001:157). The amendments also sidelined ZCTU from collective bargaining and deliberately cut it off from shop floor membership.

At this juncture the ruling party had lost its legitimacy, experiencing continuous decline in political credibility with its neoliberal reforms condemned even within its ranks. Its handling of structural adjustment undermined its social and political hegemony. On the other hand, the labour movement, while clearly asserting its autonomy from ZANU-PF led government and publicly denouncing government’s economic policies and its handling of ESAP, was not against foreign assistance. More than anything I would suggest that ZCTU capitalized on the crisis associated with the programme in its attempt to effect regime change. This is evident in the MDC short spell in government. The party supposedly pursuing workers interests was ready to invite IFIs into the country. It is unfortunate that political development in the country denied the workers the opportunity to determine MDC’s political and economic position in relation to IMF and WB.

South Africa

South Africa emerges from a twisted social and economic history, where one's officially designated race determined one's place in society, the role that one would play in the development and reproduction of economy and whether one is worthy of equal citizenship. "The democratic government inherited one of the most distorted socio-economic structures in the world, polarized by apartheid into black and white, privileged and oppressed. That some people have escaped from each category does not diminish the structural character of the divide" (Turok 2008:115). The country's history in most aspects is distinct from the other two countries. This is evident, for instance, in the role played by Cosatu in ushering democracy in 1994. While the impact of trade unions in Zambia and Zimbabwe on the struggle against colonial domination should not be underestimated, Cosatu was already a formidable force prior to 1994, militant and heavily embedded in society. This was not the case in Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Cosatu is reported to have been in the forefront during the drafting of Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) document which envisioned growth through redistribution. The document became the ruling party's electoral manifesto which masses, workers in particular were rallied behind. It was also moderated into the Government of National Unity's economic and development policy albeit for a short while. The early 1990s witnessed the influx/cooptation of senior leaders of the labour movement in all spheres of government. Unlike the events in Zambia and Zimbabwe, appointments in government positions did not cripple the movement. RDP and its euphoria was short/lived however. In retrospect it was never a long term policy, at least within the ANC circles or to those close to Thabo Mbeki. It merely disguised the ANC as a social-democratic movement committed to improving the lives of ordinary people. This appearance of things was useful in enabling the ANC to gain the hegemony it needed to consolidate its power.

Faced with the distorted socio-economic structures and debts incurred by the National Party government, and the need to generate and maintain business confidence, to enhance the country's competitiveness, and to convince both internal and external business communities to invest more in the country, difficult choices had to be taken. To realize its economic policy, the party needed to embark on strategic management – it needed to win over Cosatu. Habib claims that the ANC, having "recognized Cosatu's capacity to destabilize its agenda by

resorting to mass strikes and protests,... sought to neutralize that threat by going along with Cosatu's proposed social pact and its corporatist strategy" (2013:126). The next chapter considers the argument that Cosatu's corporatist strategy severely compromised its capacity to represent the workers and caused it to surrender its autonomy to the ANC.

By 1993, even before the ANC assumed state power, its market-friendly policies were manifest. While the alliance partners were hard at work, mobilizing their constituencies and canvassing votes for the ANC, the party was at work "signing a letter of intent with the IMF committing itself as the future government to a program of fiscal austerity in return for a \$850 million loan for South Africa" (Gevisser 2009:249). The Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) programme was adopted in 1996 as a *fait accompli* – it was nonnegotiable and not to be questioned. GEAR signaled a shift in the ANC's political ideology, a rupture between itself and its alliance partners, and a signal of the junior position the latter would play in future economic decision-making. For Gevisser, GEAR was a "culmination of the liberation movement's moral surrender to the market: The party's neophyte economists had been force-fed a neoliberal agenda by the World Bank and the IMF, and the multiparty talks were, in the end, less significant than the offstage negotiation happening between the ANC and agents of global capital". Gillian Hart sees this shift not as a moral surrender. Instead she suggests that in the view of IFIs "blacks (ANC) had to be patiently and systematically educated on the economic realities of the world" (2002:22).

If we are to entertain Hart's sentiments that black (ANC) had to be educated on the realities of the world (the world as viewed by Western government), then Mashele and Qobo are on point in suggesting that the ANC's "u-turn made only two years into power – in 1996 – from the RDP to GEAR can only be evidence of an organization that did not know what was happening in the real world of statecraft" (2014:50). It was the similar realities of the world that transformed Mandela and persuaded him to abandon his nationalization philosophy, hardly two years after imprisonment. For Gevisser, GEAR "heralded the end to the experiment of participatory democracy with which Mandela came to power, and its replacement by a new hegemony – the grabbing hold of the reins of state by an ANC now in government rather than fighting for freedom" (2009:253-4).

It is argued that GEAR was not externally imposed, that it was an attempt to break free from the dictates of Bretton Woods institutions and foreign governments. GEAR was self-imposed and an attempt to stabilize the macro-economic situation. It was a structural adjustment policy – however, a homemade one. Netshitenzhe, who was the head of government policy when GEAR was unveiled, explains its logic in relation to government: “The art and science of governance is essentially about weighing trade-offs and making choices. With a budget deficit close to ten percent and the country a debt trap, the choice was either to borrow more and end up, begging bowl in hand, at the IMF and WB, or to reduce the budget deficit while reprioritizing expenditure in order to ensure sustainable development” (cited in Gevisser 2009:254). The government, according to Netshitenzhe chose the latter.

Paradoxically, while the ANC government claims policy originality and to be free from external pressure, some within its ranks disagree. Turok points out that financial institutions would not “operate in a country without its prior adoption of a structural adjustment programme that involved rigorous cuts in public spending, leading to increased unemployment and the other effects of their harsh medicines for economic ailments” (2008:101). GEAR had almost all the trappings that are associated with SAPs. Thus Habib suggests that Mbeki acceded to the demands of foreign investors. Habib claims that “power relations that prevailed in the early to mid 1990s, as defined by the balance of class power, the nature of state-society relationships and global power configurations, put pressure on ANC leaders, configured their choices and prompted them to adopt and implement GEAR” (2013:84). This could be the reason behind the exclusion of the left-aligned alliance partners.

While others would dispute the ANC’s claim that GEAR was self-imposed, critics seem to agree that the strategy conformed to key prescriptions of neoliberalism. Satgar for instance noted that GEAR “conformed not only to key prescriptions of transnational neoliberalism but also resonated with ideas put forward by monopoly capital”. Whereas the architects of GEAR claimed that the strategy was designed to stabilize the country’s economic fortunes, Satgar, on the contrary, argues that the strategy was “more than a stabilization package, but actually provided the most important and unambiguous signal to monopoly and transnational capital about the direction the new ANC government was taking the South African economy and further confirmed commitment to restructuring the economy according to the requirements of a globalizing neoliberal capitalism” (2008:10-11). It should not be difficult to discern the

influence of the Bretton Woods institutions considering that majority of GEAR architects were flown overseas to master neoliberal thinking. It was therefore naïve of Cosatu and SACP to expect anything different.

GEAR meant and represented distinct things to different people or stakeholders. For Mbeki it was a realization of a dream shattered by decades of neo-colonialism and apartheid, that Africans are more than able to do it themselves, to plan their own development, to compete at the highest level and without being indebted to anymore, but most importantly that Africans are capable of governing themselves without an ever present hand from foreign governments and international institutions. However GEAR was received differently by the Left. These formations saw the “ANC government as the betrayal, rather than the redemption of former legacies; they branded it as a tale of weakness and cowardice at best and venality at worst” (Gevisser 2009:253). As the party took on the mission to transform and redefine society, it had wittingly or unwittingly undergone changes itself. In a way GEAR supported the “thesis that men change at the same time that they change the world” (Fanon 1965:30).

GEAR’s criticisms went beyond the obvious lack of consultation. Cosatu leaders, Vavi in particular, argued that in contrast to what GEAR envisioned – redistribution of wealth and economic power – the policy will only accelerate societal divide. In a speech prepared for delivery during the Cosatu conference under the theme “Them and us”, Vavi, then Assistant General Secretary, cautioned that “the stark contrast between the blatant wealth of a minority and the desperate poverty of the majority will continue to tear apart the fabric of society, generating crime and social instability” (online: www.cosatu.org.za). Cosatu leaders saw GEAR as a threat to the country’s sovereignty. Mbhazima Shilowa, before he was converted to the idea – through what was referred to as “under the tree meetings” – criticized GEAR for exposing the country to the “danger of relinquishing our national sovereignty in the sphere of economic decision – making and sacrificing it on the altar of profit” (cited in Gevisser 2009:255). It should be noted that while Cosatu was audible in its criticism of GEAR and the government’s development strategy, the federation had no intention to form an independent socialist party. Instead the “comradeship of years of struggle together with mutual respect for the openness and integrity of all the leader of the alliance, led [Cosatu] to believe that Cosatu has much to gain by pursuing a process of dialogue and a series of alliance summits with our alliance partners” (online: www.cosatu.org.za).

Cosatu maintains that, notwithstanding its minimal role in the alliance, the most “effective strategy was to remain in partnership with the ANC but retain the independence and organizational capacity to take to the streets when necessary” (Habib 2013:161). The effectiveness of a strategy of remaining within the alliance and still while retaining and exercising organizational autonomy is debatable. Most Cosatu leaders are ANC members and sit in its consultative forums where government proposals are tabled and adopted at the party level. Thus, protesting against such decisions could not be seen as effective and serving any purpose for the working class. Instead of being the federation’s show of muscles, it is more like a window-dressing. This has become the fate of the movement which purports to address the plight of the workers but in reality only rubber-stamps neoliberal agenda while dragging along the unsuspecting workers. The resistance by the government to do away with labour brokers and scrap the e-tolls, shows the irrelevance and muting of Cosatu. The failure to publicly denounce the brutal killing of mine workers in Marikana in the hands of state security symbolized the supremacy of politics over bread and butter issues.

It is not clear what openness and integrity Cosatu refers to when GEAR was publicly declared as nonnegotiable. While Cosatu accused the ANC of sacrificing the country’s sovereignty at the altar of profit, it has since lost its militant approach when dealing with government policies, at the altar of securing senior cabinet positions. I should also mention that GEAR had no negative impact on the ANC’s political and social hegemony. While economic impact warranted strong rebuttal of ANC’s governance, electoral results of 1999-2009 depicts an upward trend in the party’s popularity. Criticisms against GEAR emanated from its failure to achieve the envisaged outcome. GEAR had boldly projected a growth rate of 6 percent per annum, which the government thought would solve the unemployment crisis. It sought to “create 400,000 jobs per annum by the year 2002”. Opposition had to do with the mechanisms needed to realize this dream. The strategy involved “fiscal deficit reduction, gradual relaxation of exchange controls, reduction in tariffs, tax reductions to encourage private sector investment and restructuring of state assets” (Webster and Adler 2001:140). It also encouraged de-regulation of labour. According to the critics, the strategy would decimate the role of government and fuel the exploitation of workers by the capital.

However, GEAR did not achieve its objectives. Economic growth never reached 5 percent per annum. Poverty and inequality arguably increased and society is severely polarized. “While economic liberalization benefitted the upper classes of all racial groups, its effect on the lives of millions of poor and low-income families is devastating” (Habib 2013:152). Through GEAR, government has managed to create a welfare state – the state dependent society – via social grants. Social expenditure (social grants) expanded massively and were extended to accommodate more people. Figures show that the “recipients of social grants increased from 2687 169 in 1999 to 6476587 by early 2004, and then to an astounding 12 386 396 by late 2007” (Habib 2013:88). This is where distinction between GEAR and other SAPs found in Zambia and Zimbabwe is normally drawn. While SAPs in the two countries proposed and implemented policies that withdrew states social expenditure, South Africa is a unique case. Added on top of the social grants is the provision for free medication to deal with HIV and AIDS, as well as housing programme to cater for the needy. In South Africa, Friedman believes that the argument is around what needs to be implemented, how and when. This could be seen as a success story about GEAR and the way government tries to reach out to the people. Whether the strategy is to reduce the burden on the poor masses or to secure electoral stability, is debatable.

The ANC’s response to the critics within the alliance took many forms. In the struggle to counter criticism and complaints from Cosatu and SACP, Mbeki went as far as to conjure up faceless ultra-left opponents determined to undermine the democratic government. Mbeki would protests that the “alliance was being subverted by a shadowy ultra-left in defiance of agreed policies” (Southall 2013:179). Contrary to Mandela’s admission at Cosatu’s sixth national congress that “it was unfortunate that here in GEAR we did not have sufficient consultation with other members of the alliance....In fact even the ANC learnt of GEAR when it was almost complete....We ignored those who put us in power” (cited in Habib 2013:118), with Mbeki and Trevor Manuel have always insisted that GEAR was an agreed government policy.

By declaring GEAR nonnegotiable and threatening to eject Cosatu and SACP from the alliance, ANC showed to the world that it was in power and could exercise power. To others it appeared as a bully, an authoritarian power that suppresses dissent and an organization that purports to be guided by democratic principles yet fails to apply them in-house. The events in

Zambia and Zimbabwe acted as precedents for the ANC. Through ‘under the tree meetings’, ANC identified firebrand and most vocal leaders of the labour movement in an attempt to coopt them and neutralize policy opposition. At first this strategy appeared successful as prominent figures like Mbhazima Shilowa (Cosatu), Kgalema Motlanthe (NUM) and Charles Nqakula (SACP) were ceremoniously converted to the cause. However the cooption of these leaders did not only fail to suppress policy opposition, it isolated them from their mass base. GEAR became a convenient tool for Zwelinzima Vavi and Blade Nzimande to ascend to power. Under the leadership of Vavi, partly supported by Nzimande’s SACP, Cosatu embarked on a number of protests against the devastating effects of GEAR. Nzimande would complain that GEAR represented the “most serious strategic threat to the National Democratic Revolution” (Gevisser 2009:251).

Under the leadership of Vavi, Cosatu became the most vocal critics of the Mbeki government, but that was not the end. In 2010, Cosatu hosted the civil society conference where societal ills and fragmented social fiber formed part of discussions. The event resonated with many Left-wing formations, community organizations and opposition parties to the extent that Mantashe felt obliged to caution Cosatu not to “imagine that it would be able to unseat the liberation movement with a civic alliance as has happened in some neighbouring African countries” (cited in Habib 2013:162). In chapter three, these African countries were identified as Zambia and Zimbabwe. Unlike the resolutions and pronouncements taken in the conferences held in those countries, the conference in South Africa did not resolve on the formation of a socialist party. In fact Cosatu has not envisioned life outside the ANC.

Cosatu and SACP would later form a crusade that ultimately led to the ousting of Mbeki. Instead of going it alone, Cosatu formed part of the pro-Zuma crusade (SACP and disgruntled members of the ANC) fighting for the soul of the ANC. Cosatu argued that Zuma would drive and influence economic policies in favour of the impoverished masses. The crusade that dethroned Mbeki at the party’s conference in 2007, was the culmination of the party’s failure to effectively resolve differences with its alliance partners. Whereas trade unions in Zambia and Zimbabwe consolidated their resources to effect regime change, respectively, Cosatu deployed its resources towards capturing the ANC from within. After 2009 national elections, fractions within Cosatu came to realize that the more things change, the more they remain the

same. Like Mbeki before him, Zuma coopted Cosatu and SACP leaders into his government, except Vavi. The outcome of 2009 did not produce much tangible benefit for the working class beyond normal rhetoric on job creation and vigorous development. The left-aligned critics argue that GEAR has been upgraded into National Development Plan (NDP). Compared to labour movement in Zambia and Zimbabwe, Cosatu is more tolerant towards corruption and nepotism in government. As noted, it failed to condemn the brutal killing of mineworkers in Marikana at the hands of government.

Conclusion

Structural adjustment programme in the three countries played and continues a significant role in the socio-economic development as well as the polarization of society in these countries. These reforms are the source of conflict between NLMs and labour federations. In many instances, it is the intervention of International Monetary Fund and World Bank which has fuelled the conflict and exacerbated poverty and inequality at an altar of profit. The South African events followed the trajectories of Zambia and Zimbabwe with a different twist. While the reforms in Zambia and Zimbabwe facilitated regime change and undermined state power, respectively, the South African situation has been about capturing political power from within the ANC. Unlike UNIP and ZANU-PF, ANC's hegemony was not immediately undermined after the adoption of GEAR. Unlike ZCTU in both Zambia and Zimbabwe, Cosatu has retained its relative autonomy from the ANC as provided for in the LRA. In all three countries, workers remain adversely affected by SAPs – privatization of state parastatals has led to high retrenchment rates and increasing number of unemployed. It is worth noting that while these federations (ZCTU and Cosatu) purport to be driven by socialist principles, they are mostly found displaying and engaging in the opposite. In both Zambia and Zimbabwe, federations used socialism to ascend to power and quickly ditched it thereafter. In South Africa, Cosatu in effect if not rhetoric mobilizes the working poor in support of the ANC's neoliberal policies. It remains unclear whether Cosatu, as a dominant labour center, would ever advocate for a worker's party in South Africa. The following chapter looks at the possibility of such a party in South Africa. It shall analyze current developments within Cosatu and the alliance. I shall argue that only the split within Cosatu will lead to the formation of a worker's party.

Chapter Five

South Africa's contemporary conjuncture: ANC and Cosatu politics

Introduction

“The fall of the ANC is no longer something fanciful, but a reality waiting to happen” (Mashele and Qobo 2014:108). However there are no guarantees that Cosatu or any other trade union federation will precipitate such a demise. Unlike in Zambia and Zimbabwe, the ANC has been able to coopt old and new leadership of Cosatu. Cosatu is currently a limping colossus – battling internal conflicts and factions – enmeshed in continuous and protracted court battles. Splits (AMCU from NUM) and expulsion (Numsa) have weakened Cosatu's public posture and any prospect of an independent, militant and worker oriented Cosatu. Scholarly research depicts uncertainty even among the shop stewards on the role that trade unions should play in politics. While it would be premature to predict the recurrence of Zambia and Zimbabwe in South Africa, the latter has all the factors that led to the formation of MMD and MDC – poverty, inequality, corruption in both private and public sectors, unemployment and the lack of government accountability. This chapter argues that Cosatu, as the dominant labour center, lacks the political will to effectively represent the poor. The federation appears more concerned with preserving its alliance with the ANC and SACP regardless of many short-comings of the ANC government. It will be argued that cracks within Cosatu are the signs that the ANC is bleeding, as evident in the latter's attempt to help resolve conflicts in Cosatu. The chapter argues that Numsa moment is not entirely new. It is in some respects the rebirth of Fosatu and its break from national liberation politics.

The colossus Cosatu and the limping ANC

“A class is hegemonic not so much to the extent that it is able to impose a uniform conception of the world on the rest of society, but to the extent that it can articulate different visions of the world in such a way that their potential antagonism is neutralized” (Laclau 1977:161). The ANC's National Development Plan (NDP) identifies commonly and generally acknowledged social problems. The party also articulates remedial actions in a way that even its immediate antagonist (Democratic Alliance) is neutralized. Democratic Alliance not only supports NDP, it demands government's commitment in implementing it (NDP). The DA, through its parliamentary leader, Mmusi Maimane, acknowledged the relevance of NDP. Maimane suggested that while “NDP is not a perfect document... it is the best plan we have

to deal with the high levels of poverty, inequality and unemployment in South Africa by 2030. It is also uniquely supported by the majority of parties in Parliament who also campaigned on the platform of the NDP” (City Press, 6 July 2014, pg 4).

The government’s Employment Tax Incentive Act (ETIA) has also been welcomed by the opposition parties, especially the DA. Just like with NDP, DA was instrumental in pursuing and pressurizing the government to sign the programme into law. Since the dawn of democracy, the ruling party’s policies have always been widely supported but criticized on implementation. While the ANC policies are comparable with those of neo-liberal/right aligned parties, these policies - e-toll, GEAR-NDP, labour brokers, and ETIA - are at the center of conflict amongst the alliance partners, particularly some elements within Cosatu. Those on the far Left in the alliance claim that the ANC has abandoned the Freedom Charter and is promoting and defending neoliberal policies. The National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (Numsa) has been the most prominent advocate against what it regards as the ANC’s betrayal of the National Democratic Revolution and its surrender to the demands of white monopoly capitalist and imperialist interests.

Numsa protests that the “leadership of the national liberation movement as a whole has failed to lead a consistent and radical democratic process to resolve the national, gender, and class questions post 1994”. Numsa claims that the current leadership is “predominantly drawn from the black and African capitalist class; it kowtows to the dictates of white monopoly capitalists” (Numsa Press Release, 2 March 2014). These accusations suggest that the ANC exercises power on behalf of the capitalist class. The conflicts among the Cosatu leaders and how its members perceive the idea of the worker’s party suggest the rupture in the ANC’s hegemonic force. Does this mean the ANC is nonhegemonic? Does the ANC pretend to represent the masses, especially the poor in order to be hegemonic? Gramsci spoke about pseudohegemony, the “situation in which the government in power, in order to gain a functional equivalent of hegemony, pretends to exercise its power in the name of a class which in reality it does not represent” (cited in Adamson 1980:175). Those on the Left protest that the ANC is rhetorically pro-poor and working class oriented but not in substance. The idea of a workers organization has resurfaced, as well as the concept of an independent and nonpartisan Cosatu. In the early 1980s, Joe Foster hinted and challenged workers to strive towards building their own “powerful and effective organization even whilst they are part of

the wider popular struggle”. This organization was to function as the vanguard structure in the absence of SACP. It was also opposed to the SACP’s political party alliance. It would “protect and further worker interests and to ensure that the popular movement is not hijacked by elements who will in the end have no option but to turn against their worker supporters” (1982:107).

It is now commonly or widely known that such a debate on working-class politics was overtaken by the national liberation struggle and the transition to democracy led by the ANC and SACP. More than 25 years later, working class politics has erupted in the top echelons of Cosatu. In 2014, Numsa declared that it is only the workers party led by the working class that is capable of carrying the revolution to its logical conclusion – a socialist society. Ideological differences which existed between the workerist and charterist were never entirely resolved before the formation of Cosatu in 1985. Instead compromises were reached and attention directed to the common enemy – the destruction of apartheid government. The current crises in Cosatu are the product of a number of deep-rooted, structural crises – political, economic, labour and social differences that were fundamental between the workerist and charterist. These structural crises, according to William Gumede, “impact on the trade union movement, and the trade union movement’s apparently inability to effectively deal with it – are among the reasons for the current deep divisions at national and affiliate level within Cosatu” (2014:36).

These are the same historical differences that have come to haunt the ANC. For the first time since the 1994 compromise and the country’s democratic transition, the rift within Cosatu is wide and clearly visible. Cosatu’s uncritical and sometimes blind support of President Zuma’s government, notwithstanding countless failures in public service delivery, its reluctance to do away with labour brokers and the youth subsidy, and the continuous reports of corruption in the private and public sectors, has caused a rupture within the federation.

Two strands of thought now exist within Cosatu. On the one hand is the ultra-left advocates who want to cut the umbilical cord with Zuma and the ANC, broadly. This is the revamped and regenerated Fosatu – the present day Numsa – ideologically. On the other side are those who believe that in spite of Zuma and the ANC’s failure, supporting the two may be the only guarantee of “policy concessions to the trade union movement, ordinary workers and the

poor”. According to this group and while it acknowledges all the shortcomings of the ANC, it remains convinced that “Cosatu would still wrangle more pro-worker policy concessions from it, can still change the party from within and push through the election of trade union aligned leaders to the ANC’s top leadership” (Gumede 2014:40-41). This group believes that it is only through the ANC government that the workers interest and benefit could be realized. They fear that “leaving the alliance would give the elite classes, both black and white, free rein to determine ANC policy”. For them remaining in the alliance “prevents neoliberal tendencies from dominating the ANC, and makes progressive victories more likely, especially as the global economy becomes increasingly beset by crises” (Habib 2013:208-09).

The political, social and economic conditions in South Africa make the idea of a worker’s party more likely. “The existence of a relatively large industrial working class, strong civil society organizations and an independent trade union movement with a political culture of shop floor democracy makes the survival of a worker’s party more likely”. The 2013 survey conducted by the Community Agency for Social Equality (CASE) on Cosatu shop stewards made various findings. Relevant here is the one on whether they would vote for Cosatu if it were to form a labour party. The study shows that nearly “two-thirds of shop stewards (65%) said they would vote for a labour party formed by Cosatu if the federation contested the national elections”. Since Cosatu has no individual membership but affiliated trade unions, the study focused on each trade union member and across all nine provinces. “Shop stewards from SATAWU (74%), Numsa (72%), FAWU (68%) and NUM (68%) were most likely to say that they would vote for a labour party formed by Cosatu if it contested the national elections. While shop stewards from SACTWU (50%) were the least likely to say that they would vote for such a party”.

Provinces also fared differently, but showed support to the idea of a worker’s party. “Shop stewards from Mpumalanga (73%), Eastern Cape (70%) and North West (68%) were most likely to say that they would vote for a labour party formed by Cosatu”. Amongst those who confirmed their support for the workers party, a “large number linked this to respect for the policies of Cosatu (55%), whilst smaller numbers noted the need for change in governance in South Africa (3%)”. Those who rubbished the idea of voting for a worker’s party felt that Cosatu should “remain a trade union and that it should concentrate only on fighting for

worker rights (10%), that people were reluctant to change their current choice of party (10%); that if Cosatu were to create a labour party this might create a conflict of interest or break up the alliance with the ANC and SACP (4%); or that they would not vote for Cosatu because the party would not have the capacity to lead South Africa (65%)” (2013:87-90).

These figures, 65% of shop stewards in favour of a worker’s party, could signal the end of one history and coming into being of the new. This could be the harbinger to the decline of the ANC’s hegemony and the possibility of a socialist South Africa. The figures are clear expression of the “pervasive feeling of systemic unfairness experienced by many poor black South Africans over the decline of their material conditions while a small politically connected minority are unfairly getting fabulously richer using taxpayers’ money, or on the back of old apartheid-era money or social privileges”. (Gumede 2014:37). The small percentage (3%) recognized the need for regime change which they do not associate with any of the current opposition parties. While there is no concrete evidence that trade union members in North West and Gauteng voted for the opposition parties, particularly the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), ANC’s electoral support during the 2014 national elections dropped in both provinces. North West is home to many migrant mineworkers and also the stronghold of the Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (AMCU) – a nonpolitical trade union movement. It could be that people boycotted or refrained from voting because they resented the ANC and saw no alternative party from the existing opposition or they identified with the EFF’s socio-economic policies.

Gauteng, as the economic hub of the country is also home to a sizeable amount of the middle class people. The leadership of the ruling party in Gauteng has publicly admitted that the infamous e-tolling system had the negative impact in its electoral aspirations. The party’s provincial results dropped from 65% in 2009 to 53% in 2014. It may be premature to question the ANC’s political and social hegemony. However Gauteng’s electoral results suggest that the party’s policies, especially e-tolling, has opened the political space to other parties. Noticeable is the DA’s upward trend in Gauteng from 20%, 21% and 30% in 2004, 2009 and 2014 respectively. It is also not certain whether the decline to the ANC’s popularity in Gauteng is the result of trade unions’ activities or a mere resentment of the party’s policies by the general public. The ANC may have won the provincial elections in Gauteng (53%) but its hegemonic position has been tested. Like the ANC, Cosatu is a broad church and some

within this congregation believe that the alliance has a good story to tell. This is the group that correctly cites ANC achievements such as the Labour Relations Act: workers have a right to form or join a trade union of their choice; workers have a right to bargain collectively; workers have a right to picket and strike. It is also the same group that blames the Marikana killings on the 1911 Mines and Works Act of the Union of South Africa.

The right-aligned Cosatu members believe that “challenges confronting the country are complicated by our apartheid and colonial history – attacks on unions, rising inequality, and growing poverty amongst working people. Years of segregation and systematic brainwashing including the use of the media to report negatively about leaders and organizations have entrenched deep divisions and perceptions in the minds of the workers; it has set workers against their leaders, their organizations and against each other” (Cosatu 2014:8). This group takes no responsibility for anything. According to them, ANC remains the only party with the “interest of workers and the poor at heart. It is only the former national liberation movement that has a vision to continue changing our country away from the apartheid and colonial legacy” (Ntshalintshali 2014:4).

The current leadership of Cosatu recognizes policy shift to the right and the ANC’s slow pace approach in dealing decisively with the problems affecting the working class and the poor. However, Cosatu believes in the alliance mechanisms. The federation is steadfast in its conviction that “even where there are disagreements which include the weaknesses we identified in some sections of the NDP, there is a clear commitment to have all our concerns properly and systematically addressed through alliance mechanisms” (Cosatu 2014:9). Cosatu not only believes in the ineffective social pact with the ANC and SACP, it drags along its affiliated trade unions and the poor to an unforeseen and dubious future. As I mentioned before, Cosatu is a limping colossus. There is no consensus anymore. Those on the far Left of Cosatu (Numsa) believe that “the fights and crisis in Cosatu are about the heart and soul of the federation: should it be reduced to a toothless bull dog and toy telephone of the ANC and SACP or should it remain what it has always been, a workers and poor people militant, revolutionary and socialist federation” (Numsa news no.2 - May 2014).

The Numsa moment

The delegates at the Numsa Special Congress, held in December 2013, observed that “the treatment of labour as a junior partner within the Alliance is not uniquely a South African phenomenon. In many post-colonial and post-revolutionary situations, liberation and revolutionary movements have turned on labour movements that fought alongside them, suppressed them, marginalized them, split them, robbed them of their independence or denied them any meaningful role in politics and policy-making” (press release; online: www.numsa.org.za). Numsa is adamant that the ANC has turned against the working class, robbed Cosatu of its independence and abandoned the Freedom Charter.

The cooption and patronage politics of the ANC have severely compromised the federation to the extent that it is seen as an accomplice to the neo-liberal onslaught of the working class. The report by CASE is the clear indication that the split within Cosatu could happen. The split could comprise of those members who want to remain in the alliance and those pursuing a socialist direction. The current conflicts in COSATU have culminated to what many regard as the ‘Numsa moment’. This is not just the Numsa moment, it represent the ever present Marxism spectre in every government where capitalism exists. The 2013 Numsa’s Special National Congress demonstrated the “political will and an attempt by the organized working class to confront and reclaim the strategic initiative from capital and a globalized ANC state” (Satgar 2014:53). The Numsa moment is the realization that the ANC policies have failed and divided and continue to fail and divide the working class, while the black masses remain trapped in poverty. It is premised on the observation that the ANC-led alliance and its government lack the necessary political will to effect radical democratic programmes and have willingly surrendered the basic tenets of the Freedom Charter to the highest bidder.

It is like the spectre of FOSATU with a formidable and better mobilized membership set to shake the ANC’s hegemony. The union declared that the “South African working class is in need of an independent working class party since the South African Communist Party has forsaken the working class” (Numsa news no.2, May 2014). Through the United Front platform, Numsa seeks to form a broad alliance with civil groups in order to compensate for those Cosatu affiliates who may opt not to be part of the worker’s party. In this fashion Numsa follows the trajectories in Zambia and Zimbabwe by expanding and transforming shop floor politics to speak to the needs of every poor person. Numsa considers the United

Front as a “mobilizing tool to organize the working class around working class issues and to build working class power”. Just like what the United Democratic Front and the Congress Movement used to be, United Front is not a “political party but it is about demanding the implementation of the Freedom Charter”. This also shows how Numsa is ideologically different from Fosatu. The latter was opposed to the Freedom Charter. Those against the rebuttal of the ANC policies and rampant corruption in government, regard Numsa as a sell-out and conspiring with neo-liberals and populist parties against the ANC.

They argue that “if the proposed United Front materializes, Numsa could potentially join forces with all opposing the status quo, broadening the possibility of a United Front that may even include the likes of the DA, in essence a united front comprising of entities opposing the ANC” (Num news: September 2014). The National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) is concerned that the United Front concept will “create a multi-ideological organization” capable of forming a solid and competitive opposition to the ANC. The protagonists of the Numsa moment welcome the calls to break up the tripartite alliance. Their position is informed by what they regard as the alliance’s gradual shift to the right and policy proposition that fails to combat poverty and address inequality. “The United Front is the umbrella of social forces, drawn from various sectors, which will form a strategic alliance around poverty, inequality, unemployment, service delivery and exorbitant electricity prices” (Manana 2014:21).

The piece “Democratic Marxism and the Numsa moment” by Satgar provides the interesting analysis and insight into the status of the colossus Cosatu and what it means to the future of the alliance and the Left politics. Satgar identifies common grounds between Numsa and the orthodox Marxist-Leninist vanguardist mould, the significance of the Numsa moment and the possible challenges that could befall the union. According to Satgar, Numsa moment brings together disgruntled and expelled former SACP Marxists. Most of these activists have formed themselves into a Democratic Left Front (DLF). It resonates with the policy positions of other revolutionary nationalists. While Numsa has publicly refuted suggestions of coalitions with the EFF, there are reasonable grounds to suggest partnership between them. Both parties claim to be guided by the Marxist-Leninist principles, however, and somehow inconsistently with such principles, they also call for the return to, and the implementation of the Freedom Charter.

The Numsa moment could be seen as a rebirth of the militant workerists of the 1980s that was compromised in favour of charterist politics – national liberation politics. All these formations are guided by the union’s “commitment to worker control and collective intellectual practice; and a political commitment to seek convergence with the wider Left and progressive sections of South African society”. In a way Numsa provides a political space to share common ground with other democratic Marxisms. It is therefore expected of the ANC to devise means that will not only frustrate Numsa/United Front but to ensure stability in COSATU. Satgar explains that multiple areas of convergence are at play in the Numsa moment. Firstly, it is the need to “think critically about the crises of capitalism, its dynamics, tendencies and consequences for the working class including the precariat, the permanently unemployed, the landless poor and progressive strata of the middle class”. Besides trying to find alternative ways of combating the effects of capitalism, the Numsa moment has the potential of neutralizing the ANC as a center of social agenda and economic discourse. However, the union will have to develop and attain an alternative hegemony – one that brings “to power a coherent class formation united behind a single economic, political and cultural conception of the world” (Adamson 1980:171). Secondly, these forces “converge in seeking transformative alternatives to neoliberal capitalism, including advancing a renewal of socialism that is deeply democratic, ecological, feminist and generally open to challenging the oppressions of contemporary capitalism”.

Could South Africa be the success story – a socialist story? Events in Zambia and Zimbabwe shows that labour backed political parties failed to find alternative policies or implement labour friendly policies. As discussed in chapter three and four, MMD in Zambia continued on the neoliberal agenda of UNIP, while MDC in Zimbabwe was accommodative to the capitalist policies.

Thirdly, the protagonists of this moment seem to have realized that “the expressions of capitalism are not only expressed through exploitation and commodification but that there are other dynamics within capitalism that engender oppressions related to race, the destruction of nature, gender, sexual orientation and cultural alienation”. The Numsa moment is the bold and militant rebuttal of, as well as the resistance against ANC-led neo-liberalization in the context of Marikana massacre. It challenges the normative national liberation politics of the

ANC. Satgar observed that the union “expresses a rejection of petty bourgeois nationalist leadership of workers and affirms a working class assertion of identity, interests and political power”. It rejects the indecisive politics and ideology of the SACP and argues that the cooption of the latter by the ANC has proven to be a disaster for the working class. Numsa has sought to distance itself from the indefensible Zuma project as it has “become mired in more corruption, rolling back democratic gains and continuing neoliberal globalization”. Corruption in the ANC-led government is not only visible to the union. It could be one reason why millions of people decided not to vote in the last elections. One can only speculate whether some non-voters may have identified with Numsa. It is also possible that Numsa moment came an hour late. EFF may have swayed all disgruntled ANC members into its ambit.

According to Satgar, the Numsa moment “lays the basis for a new strategic left politics, with the potential to be counter-hegemonic or transformative on various fronts”. This view is based on the perception that United Front is not a mere electoral project. By rolling mass action against ANC-led neoliberal policies, this moment has the potential of challenging the ANC’s hegemony. This is however dependent on the number of factors and challenges that need to be addressed. While it is a Numsa initiative, the involvement of other democratic Marxists demands that it “goes beyond switching the emergent United Front on and off based on Numsa programmes”. In other words it has to reactivate and deepen “organic links between community and workplace struggles as part of a new politics of solidarity” (2014:52-53). Solidarity will have to be a two-way street. As Numsa hopes for solidarity from the Left and social forces which are converging with it, it also needs to show genuine commitment to the cause and solidarity with them. These partners would have to formulate clear guidelines that will help with the institutionalization of engagement and decision-making.

Conclusion

The idea of a new, non-SACP workers party in South Africa is not new. It was articulated noted FOSATU and other ‘workerists’ in the 1980s but later shelved in favour of the ANC-led alliance. The report by CASE and the current conflicts in Cosatu are the indication that the workerist versus Charterist have persisted. According to the report, there are divisions amongst the shop stewards on whether Cosatu should form the workers party. The chapter

argued that two-thirds of Cosatu shop stewards indicated that they would vote for Cosatu if it were to contest the elections. However, the report did not consider the reaction of the shop stewards if one Cosatu affiliated union were to form the political party and contest the elections. I suggested that the ANC remains hegemonic considering how the party's policies are accepted even by the opposition parties. However, in Gauteng, the government's e-tolling system has been challenged by the public and the opposition parties. The Numsa moment is presented as the resistance against the ANC-led neoliberal agenda. I highlighted that the Numsa moment is premised on the conception that the ANC has abandoned the Freedom Charter. It remains to be seen whether it can reproduce the feats of labour movements in Zambia and Zimbabwe and contribute to the downfall of ANC hegemony.

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