



Patrick Bond and Masimba Manyanya. *Zimbabwe's Plunge. Exhausted Nationalism, Neoliberalism and the Search for Social Justice (Second Edition)*. Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, London: Merlin Press, Harare: Weaver Press, 2003. 304 + xix pages

Patrick Bond and Masimba Manyanya's *Zimbabwe's Plunge* is a richly detailed and provocative analysis of the ongoing crisis in Zimbabwe. Numerous books about the deteriorating

conditions in that country have appeared over the last five years, but Bond and Manyanya's text stands out as one of the best accounts, primarily due to the authors' thoughtful critique of Mugabe and their recognition that the country's political, economic and social crisis must be seen within the wider context of neoliberal economic policies. Thus the book contributes to debates about globalization and the impact of structural adjustment, as well as the literature on southern Africa. It is oddly hopeful at times, but that is one of the reasons it is such a provocative text.

The book has a number of important strengths. Most basically, it is very well researched, and provides a detailed account of the major political and economic decisions taken in Zimbabwe in the late 1990s and early 2000s. It also has a strong historical perspective, looking to the dynamics of the colonial period and early years of independence to contextualize recent developments and explain the constraints facing the country under *any* government, be it the current ruling party, ZANU, the opposition MDC, or another group. Moreover, Bond and Manyanya advance two important threads of argument that really distinguish *Zimbabwe's Plunge* from other accounts of the crisis.

First of all, they provide a thoughtful progressive critique of the ruling party, ZANU, and Mugabe, avoiding the simple trap of blaming Mugabe, as president, for the country's decline. They recognize that Mugabe has continued to be a thoughtful – and frequently ruthless – leader, outrightly rejecting facile explanations that he is insane, senile, or somehow incapacitated. Bond and Manyanya also carefully analyze the discrepancies between government policies and Mugabe's rhetoric that invokes socialist and nationalist discourse, anticolonialism, and racial solidarity to justify growing autocracy and deepening corruption. They argue that the president and ruling party adopted a 'talk Left – act Right' strategy, and thus present a potent critique from the left, exposing not only how ZANU's initiatives have deepened the impoverishment of Zimbabweans, but undermining Mugabe's efforts to win support and maintain his reputation as a liberator within Africa and the diaspora.

Secondly, Bond and Manyanya also situate the Zimbabwean crisis within the wider dynamics of neoliberal policy, particularly IMF and World Bank structural adjustment initiatives. Drawing on the critiques advanced by the Jubilee debt relief and anti-globalization movements, they compellingly argue that inter-

national borrowing and declining commodity prices created an economic trap undermining the viability of Zimbabwe and other states. They condemn the opposition MDC for failing to recognize this trap by embracing neoliberalism in their 2000 election platform. The authors also criticize ZANU's decisions in the 1980s and early 1990s to compromise with large capital and the white dominated commercial farming sector by pursuing economic strategies based on export production and international borrowing. These important insights are embedded in Bond and Manyanya's wider arguments that the recent economic decline is the latest in a series of capitalist crises in the country which stretch back into the colonial period and are rooted in uneven development that has left the black majority poor and has thus constrained the economic potential of the country.

This is the second edition of *Zimbabwe's Plunge*. It largely reproduces the text of the first edition without modification, but the authors have added a substantial and thoughtful fifty page Afterward dealing with the controversial 2002 presidential election and its aftermath. The rest of the text includes the first chapter that looks at the history of Zimbabwe's economic development during and after the colonial period, arguing that ZANU's postindependence policy of reconciliation meant that colonial structures were left in place after 1980. 'Economic Constraints', the second chapter, concentrates on the issue of debt, intertwining a detailed account of Zimbabwe's growing indebtedness in the 1980s and 1990s with arguments advocating debt repudiation and the adoption of an autonomous inward focused economic policy. In the third chapter, Bond and Manyanya provide a detailed account of the political crisis that began in 1997, exploring growing public discontent, the failure to substantially address the land issue, and the internal dynamics of the opposition MDC. The authors adopt a wider perspective in the fourth chapter, 'Globalization's Constraints', presenting blistering critiques of the global debt crisis and structural adjustment policies that were enforced by the IMF and World Bank in its wake, the willingness of the Mbeki government in South Africa to support the Mugabe regime, and the NEPAD initiative, which they characterize as neoliberal policy advanced by African leaders rather than Washington bureaucrats. In the final chapter derived from the first edition, 'Conquering Constraints', Bond and Manyanya explore alternatives to globalization and the Washington consensus, argu-

ing that Zimbabwe should reject these strategies in favour of an autonomous economic policy; they contend that some of the measures introduced by the Mugabe regime since the 1997 economic collapse could be part of such a strategy, especially price controls on basic commodities and increased tariffs on luxury imports.

There is an odd hopefulness underlying *Zimbabwe's Plunge*, particularly in the 'Conquering Constraints' chapter. The authors argue that Zimbabwean civic organizations will be able to undermine ZANU and Mugabe; given the successful rebuilding of the autocracy since the book was published, this hope seems oddly placed. Bond and Manyanya also see tremendous potential in anti-globalization groups – which they prefer to call global justice movements – as manifestations of the “demise of the ‘Washington Consensus’ brand of free market fundamentalism” (p. xiii) and the beginnings of “world scale social change” (p. 151). While I don't share their optimism, these are intriguing arguments, ones that help to make this a provocative, informative, and intriguing book.

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