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In 1991, Zambia launched one of the most orthodox structural adjustments programs (SAPs) in Africa. The last and longest chapter of its fitful history with the IMF and World Bank, Zambia's SAP commenced during the euphoria following the ouster of long-time President Kenneth Kaunda, when it was presented as the only strategy for dealing with the country's economic collapse. What followed was one of Africa's most striking experiments with rapid liberalisation, leading to budgetary stabilisation and increased investment but also sudden unemployment and impoverishment. If in retrospect liberalisation seems inescapable, given the ballooning debt of Kaunda's last years, Zambians at the time envisioned alternative futures. The years leading up to the 1991 election saw vibrant debate among activists about how to fix the country's failing economy, with reform plans ranging from marketisation to redistribution. After 1991, however, the newly elected Movement for Multiparty Democracy shelved these proposals in favour of a SAP championed by international donors. As a result, many economic ideas advanced at the time have been forgotten, and structural adjustment has come to seem inevitable. As part of a wider book project on ahistoricism in international development, my paper tries to recover Zambia's "missing narrative" of economic reform by surveying local debates on political and economic change in the 1980s and 1990s. Examining how SA won out over alternatives has implications for our understanding of the politics of economic reform in the decades of neoliberal ascendancy.

In 1997, Joseph Stepanek, USAID's former Mission Director in Zambia, lamented that even the Agency for International Development, "which talks about ownership, sustainability, and collegiality, often pushes projects … without ever asking a government official." He recalled with particular clarity receiving a health program proposal that paralleled a Zambian reform initiative already underway.

> *I went to the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Health and said: "We're working with you on this health reform program.*

> *We have this tangential effort. I am very interested in knowing what you think of it and whether we should change or modify it. What do you think?" The conversation came to an end, and the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Health just sat there, stony-faced. I thought to myself: "Oh, boy, I really misspoke this time." The Permanent Secretary then said: "Joe, you have to give me a minute to collect my thoughts. Nobody's ever asked me before for my views."*(Stepanek, 1998: 61)

Stepanek served in Zambia from 1994 to 1996, during the lead up to the country's first presidential election since independence icon Kenneth Kaunda, Zambia's president for its first twenty-seven years, lost power. Although the Movement for Multiparty Democracy's 1991 victory at the polls prompted widespread euphoria, the subsequent five years shattered many hopes that Zambia's new leader, Frederick Chiluba, might finally lift the country's economic fortunes. In Stepanek's tenure, reports of official corruption accelerated, and Chiluba's 1996 constitutional amendment barring candidates with non-Zambian parentage from running in presidential elections – a swipe at Kaunda, his main opponent, whose parents came from neighboring Malawi (then Nyasaland) – was deemed so offensive that international donors withheld foreign aid, often at the invitation of Chiluba's critics (Mwondela, 1996: 4).

Kaunda's resurgence is somewhat surprising given how roundly he was defeated in 1991. Yet already by the mid-1990s it was clear to many Zambians that the MMD's empowerment had not improved their desperate economic straits. Judging from press reports, the Chiluba honeymoon lasted about a year and a half – from the October 1991 electoral sweep of Kaunda's United National Independence Party (UNIP) until mid-1993, when the increasing pain wrought by economic liberalisation and famine started dampening earlier expectations.[1] While these experiences were shared across the continent, they were particularly stark in Zambia given the exuberant hopes of the 1991 transition, the vigour of the subsequent structural adjustment, and the memory of Zambia's earlier economic promise.

At Independence in 1964, Zambia was one of sub-Saharan Africa's wealthiest and most urbanised countries due primarily to its copper mines, which accounted for two-thirds of the gross domestic product (GDP) and over 90% of government revenue and export earnings. (For these figures, see Larmer, 2005: 32; Obidegwu and Nziramasanga, 1981: 14). On the eve of Independence, Zambia produced almost 14% of the world's copper output. Yet the collapse of copper prices in the mid-1970s inaugurated the country's slide from one of the continent's richest economies to one of its poorest. The fall was precipitous. By the mid-1980s, Zambia's share of world copper output had dropped to under 7%, slipping in absolute and relative terms even as imported fuel and machinery costs spiked. (Calculated from chart in Mikesell, 1988: 19-20). By the late twentieth century, Zambia had the unhappy distinction of being the only country whose standing in the Human Development Index had fallen since 1975, with per capita GNP sinking by one-third in twenty years. (Hill and McPherson, eds. 2004: notes 2 and 3. For the GNP figure, see Gulhati, 1989: 3.)

In the face of this slump, Kaunda ultimately had to bow before Western creditors. Zambia took its first IMF Stand-by loan in 1973, assuming it would be a temporary stopgap. An additional loan in 1976 failed to stem the economic slide, and in 1978, Zambia signed another stand-by agreement that is sometimes seen as its first stabilisation loan. Until then, loans had borne minimal conditionalities. The 1978 loan, however, increased the influence of the international financial institutions (IFIs), requiring considerable fiscal restraint on the part of the government. For a list of the loans, see Fundanga, 1989: 143. For more detailed accounts of Zambia's interactions with the IMF, see Ndulo and Sakala, 1987. Alas, these measures did little. By 1983, with the second oil crisis driving import prices higher, creditors stopped lending to the country, forcing Kaunda to agree to his first structural adjustment program (SAP) – a ten-year rescheduling of Zambia's 1.3 billion kwacha debt (around one-third of its GDP) in exchange for a pledge to embrace austerity (Sandberg, 1990: 256. For the GDP figures, see https://tradingeconomics.com/zambia/gdp). In 1985, the government introduced a foreign exchange auction, allowing the exchange rate to float according to "demand and supply" at weekly biddings (Ndulo and Sakala, 1987: 31). Predictably, the artificially inflated kwacha tumbled in value, from K2 = $1 to K21 = $1, theoretically reducing the current account deficit by boosting exports and discouraging imports, but also driving up prices on needed imports and bringing "havoc and ruin to a large number of enterprises" (Fundanga, 1989: 144). After urban food riots in 1986 and internal calls for relief, Kaunda pulled out of the SAP in May 1987 and launched the New Economic Recovery Programme (NERP), which promised "growth from own resources" (to cite its slogan) and capped debt repayments at 10% of GDP per annum. In response, multilateral and bilateral donors cut programme aid to the country (though it kept some projects running). Despite initial growth due to increased copper prices and a good maize harvest, shortages mounted in the following year. By early 1989, as the ranks of new poor continued to increase, Kaunda returned to the IMF to negotiate a new loan.His efforts, however, were too late: not only had donors lost trust in his leadership by the late 1980s, but so had much of the citizenry.

The years leading up to 1991 brought extraordinary change to Zambia – a time when, according to the democracy activist Akashambatwa Mbikusita-Lewanika, it seemed possible to rekindle hopes lost after Independence, to launch a "re-decolonisation" of the country (Mbikusita-Lewanika, 2017).[2] Most accounts of the transition, however, rely on relatively top-down and abstract economic discussions that marginalise the intellectual and civil society ferment occurring in this short span of years. There is, of course, voluminous writing on structural adjustment, and Zambia has received attention.[3] But much of the work remains ahistorical – as Nicolas van de Walle puts it, "atemporal" (Van de Walle, 2001: 13) – overlooking the wide-ranging civil society debates in favor of econocentric analyses that present structural adjustment as basically inevitable. Lost are the possible futures that Zambians themselves imagined at the time. This paper is an initial effort at recovery.

The Transition

There were several constituencies that made up the small but increasingly oppositional civil society in Zambia. The most obvious was the trade unions, organised through the Zambia Congress of Trade Unions (or ZCTU), with Copperbelt mineworkers at the heart (Bates, 1971; Larmer, 2007; Larmer, 2016/2011). Although Kaunda established a one-party state in 1972, he did not concentrate as much power in his hands as other African leaders, seeking instead to balance among competing interest groups and political factions. Economically, he was forced to keep food costs low for urban workers through subsidies and price ceilings, even at the expense of a dwindling budget. Fatefully, as Zambia embraced IMF prescriptions in the mid-1980s, Kaunda lost the support of the mineworkers. Frederick Chiluba, head of the Zambian Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU), condemned structural adjustment and became one of Kaunda's most prominent critics. Miles Larmer describes a famous incident in his rise:

> *In 1986 Chiluba condemned the IMF for putting African governments on a collision course with their peoples and warned against the proposed removal of food subsidies. Nevertheless, in December 1986 the removal of subsidies led to a doubling of the price of mealie meal, sparkingwidespread looting and rioting in*

> *the Copperbelt mining towns. In the wake of the riots, Chiluba claimed further concessions to the IMF would make the rich richer and poor poorer. Zambia, he declared, was the only "socialist" state implementing monetarist policies. The rioting, in which 15 people were killed, led to the immediate restoration of food subsidies, and played a significant part in the government's decision to break off cooperation with the IMF in May 1987* (Larmer,2010: 47).

Although Chiluba cheered the NERP, the 1986 riots had demonstrated UNIP's vulnerability to popular protest (Bartlett, 2000: 435).

Churches also participated in the opposition. With over 80% of Zambians claiming church membership, Catholic and Protestant officials (operating through the Council of Churches in Zambia (CCZ) and the United Church of Zambia (UCZ)) exerted considerable influence, with the former particularly critical of the regime (Bartlett, 2000: 435-36). Individual church leaders joined opposition events in the 1980s and attended the July 1990 Garden House meeting that founded the MMD. Poverty and economic hardship drew particular concern. Cardinal Joseph Mazombwe, for example, advocated debt cancellation during the 1980s, and in 1987, the Justice and Peace Commission, organized by the country's three main Christian groups, issued a report deploring inequality and immiseration (Larmer, 2016/2011: 245). Church officials also served as brokers among competing political parties. In mid-1991, after a student-organized convention that brought together the country's political party leaders, leaders of several denominations arranged a meeting between Kaunda and Chiluba at the Anglican Cathedral of the Holy Cross, helping to reduce political tensions over a proposed multiparty constitution (Bartlett, 2000: 432, 439-40; Mwanakatwe, 1994: 218-23).

Businessmen, too – many trained under UNIP's educational and parastatal programmes – chafed at the preferences given to state enterprises and price controls, forming what Bates and Collier called a "dissident political faction. Some entered Parliament, and there criticized government policies. Others backed members of the Central Committee who were favourable to business interests. Still others backed the makers of coups" (Bates and Collier, 1993: 119). The business community overlapped with another contingent of Kaunda opponents: former UNIP officials who had fallen out with the regime. Since Kaunda tacked between factions in his coalition, UNIP frequently combined officials who supported and rejected current policy. Committed planners and socialists within Kaunda's UNIP, such as Leonard Chivuno, resisted structural adjustment and market reforms. Others, such as Humphrey Mulemba, were more favorable to the free market, rejecting his Humanism but advocating liberal reforms.[4] This jockeying eventually generated an enduring opposition. Arthur Wina, a market advocate, Parliamentarian, and independence-era Minister of Finance and Education, became a founding MMD member in the late 1980s; John Mwanakatwe, also a former finance minister, regularly criticized the government. Former foreign minister Vernon Mwaanga also played a prominent role in the early MMD, leading electoral campaigns and later joining Chiluba's government. Indeed, "no fewer than 20 MMD candidates in the 1991 elections were former or sitting UNIP MPs and 12 had been cabinet ministers or central committee members. Another six had been UNIP regional secretaries or district governors and four were former army offices" (Baylies and Szeftel, 1992: 83-4). Clearly it no longer 'paid to belong to UNIP,' as a party slogan once claimed.

In the late 1980s, another small but active set of Lusaka-based organisations entered the political fray, linking Zambia's intellectual and business elite with the halls of power. It is here that I want to focus my discussion in this essay. The Economics Association of Zambia (EAZ), the Zambia Research Foundation (ZRF), the Zambia Branch of the African Political Science Association, and other intellectual societies helped to generate core ideas and organise critical meetings that fed into the multiparty platform. The EAZ was the hub of this network, partly because it enjoyed funding from the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung starting in 1985, which transformed it from a dormant talking club into a vibrant intellectual society that drew 30-50 participants to twice-monthly concourse at Lusaka's Pamodzi Hotel (Respondent H).[5] Under the presidency of Mbikusita-Lewanika, a US-trained political scientist and economist who had spent his early career managing parastatal companies, the association brought together academics, businessmen, and disgruntled members of Kaunda's UNIP party.

The EAZ gathered diverse economic viewpoints ranging from staunch liberalism to various forms of planning. Mbikusita-Lewanika argued for state planning of a liberalised economy to serve a nationalist purpose. Upset by termination of the NERP in 1989, he contended that Zambia had never succeeded in decolonizing its economy. As a result, it suffered from two collateral distortions. First, it was grossly imbalanced, with a small and lucrative mining enclave sitting atop a vast population of peasant farmers whose main function was to provide cheap food and labour for the extraction industry. Second, the economy remained disarticulated: its modern enclave did not provide market and production opportunities – backward and forward linkages, to use the Albert O. Hirschman's terminology – for other sectors. The country, in other words, had never escaped the classic structure of a colonial economy, in which some areas served as food or labour reserves for others. The "mission of the times," declared 'Aka', must be "to deliver the long-deferred promise of independence: democracy and development to the legions of disenfranchised urbanites in shanties and the de facto-expropriated rural poor in scattered and dilapidating villages." Kaunda's structural adjustment program would not do so. Instead, its "trickle-down theory" would perpetuate "economic dependence and underdevelopment." While Mbikusita-Lewanika, like most Zambian opposition figures, endorsed liberalisation as a necessary corrective to years of government control, he rejected pure laissez-faire and called instead for "an independent nationalistic and country-specific programme based on self-reliance," (Mbikusita-Lewanika, 1990: 53, 86, 134-35, 142), one that required an activist government and economic planning in order to promote growth and resist outside control. A plan is "a nation's dreams," he remarked in a 2019 interview, and without one, ministries become subservient to donor programmes, turning national aspirations into mere "compliance issues."[6]

Other EAZ members disagreed. There were strong proponents of structural adjustment in the association. According to one interview respondent, attitudes toward the Bretton Woods organisations often depended on one's specialization. Those trained in macroeconomics (balance of payments, currency, privatisation) generally supported structural adjustment and deplored UNIP's partial and uncommitted implementation. Situmbeko Musokotwane, for example, currently in his second stint as Zambia's finance minister, argued in 1988 that the introduction of user fees in health posts was necessary to reduce service consumption, part of a wider need to confront Zambia's yawning macroeconomic imbalances through austerity and demand management. The reliance on expensive imports was a particular driver of debt.[7] Sectoral economists and specialists in areas like agriculture or health, by contrast, tended to doubt structural adjustment, citing concerns over poverty, equity, service provision, and development financing. (Respondent F). Take the example of Katele Kalumba, a health researcher at the Institute for African Studies and later a minister of Health and Finance under the MMD. In a 1989 article co-written with the American anthropologist Paul Freund, Kalumba called for a new kind of health planning to promote equity. While he condemned the longstanding urban bias of Zambian policy, he also disputed the World Bank's attack on government regulation and planning: "Planning is needed," he and Freund wrote:

> *precisely because structural deficiencies in setting priorities exist, and because the constituent political forces registered within the*

> *state policy planning system do not agree about the structures of authorisation and allocation. ... The range of planning discourses, the themes they address and the strategies they propose are there because consensus on the substantive issues is non-existent. What we want to stress is that 'bad planning' - like the 'bad organization' implicit in models of centralisation and decentralisation that are often prescribed for 'effective administration' in implementation literature - is a superficial diagnosis. The polarity between ... centralisation and decentralisation - in which one masquerades as oppression and the other as freedom - is a myth.*

While Kalumba did not oppose market mechanisms or the reduction of free medical services, he felt that these changes should be combined with a "pragmatic" and "dialectical" planning whose "ultimate social function should remain that of redistribution" (Kalumba and Freund, 1989: 225-27). Over the next decade, unsurprisingly, he became a critic of structural adjustment (See for example Kalumba, 2001: 1, 3).

Another prominent voice was that of the University of Zambia economist Gilbert Mudenda, who published regular *Weekly Post* columns in the years straddling the 1991 election. An advocate for privatisation as an economic accelerant, Mudenda nonetheless worried about "ideological intrusion from IMF and the World Bank, which glorified privatisation as the universal panacea for all economic ills in all societies including Zambia" (Mudenda, July -August, 1991*:* 5). While Mudenda decried the inefficiency of parastatals and warned against using foreign intervention as a bugbear for staving off economic reform, he affirmed the political motive that led to nationalisation in the 1970s – namely, the desire to end the "predominance of foreign ownership." This remained an essential item in 1991. After all, most Zambians did not have the money to purchase privatised assets, leaving the field open to foreign investors (Mudenda. August, 1991: 5; Mudenda, November, 1991.). Indeed, through subsidiaries and minority shareholding, foreign firms had been able to disguise ongoing influence throughout the Kaunda years (Mudenda, December, 1991: 5). Parastatals were, in effect, state capitalist institutions, lacking public accountability and unable to cultivate the individual initiative needed to boost industry; they were often denied control over personnel. Markets provided a necessary check on the bloated and chaotic exercise of public power. Yet Mudenda feared a "violent swing from left to right" under the MMD. "We should not apologise," he insisted, "for the fact that the state plays a role in any economy" by creating an "environment which encourages personal enterprise and minimises individual excesses associated with the egoistical of [sic] profit" (Mudenda, 1992: 9). While the Zambian budget should encourage production, Mudenda wrote in 1992, it should also promote employment, income, welfare, and depauperization – all goals that structural adjustment regularly undermined (Mudenda, November 1992: 7).

As these summaries attest, there were numerous areas of concurrence among EAZ members. All agreed that the Kaunda economy was in crisis, and they shared the view that some form of privatisation and liberalisation was necessary to combat an overblown public sector. In a decade when many feared the impending exhaustion of Zambia's mines, there was also widespread discussion of how to diversify the copper economy (Clark, 1989: 8). Furthermore, there was a general consensus among reform-minded EAZ members that subsidies – on food, fertilizer, and other goods – would have to shrink since they constituted an unsustainable budgetary burden. And everyone understood that the artificially elevated exchange rates would have to be abandoned to boost exports and reduce the black market. But these agreements masked considerable diversity about how to structure the post-Kaunda Zambian economy. It is probably true that the broad alignment among intelligentsia on certain key principles helped to ease the way for rapid liberalisation after 1991 by hiding important differences in overall economic vision. But the MMD consensus was always partial and superficial, defined more by what it opposed than what it was for, which helps to explain why it frayed in the years following victory (van de Walle and Chiwele, 1994: 43).

New ideas circulated in other organisations as well. The Zambia Research Foundation (ZRF), under the chairmanship of economist and political scientist Derrick (Mbita) Chitala, and the Zambian chapter of the African Political Science Association provided discussion forums for political change. The Institute for African Studies (IAS), especially after 1988 when it came under the directorship of economist Oliver Saasa, moderated discussions and held conferences.[8] In 1991, at the instigation of UNZA students, Saasa moderated the student-organized talks at Lusaka'sMulungushi House that brought together UNIP, the MMD, and other civil society organizations.[9] The IAS also housed Dieter Orlowski, a representative of the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, which funded and promoted the EAZ, ZRF, and other civil society organisations focused on public policy. The press as well publicised new political and economic proposals – particularly *The Weekly Post* newspaper, founded in 1991 by Fred M'membe; it became the key outlet for opposition voices. Within these organisations, one found various viewpoints, some backing structural adjustment as a necessary tonic, others condemning it for initiating "economic growth without development" (Respondent C). New economic initiatives found a sympathetic ear in more official institutions as well, including the Bank of Zambia and the Ministryof Foreign Affairs. Indeed, they gained traction within UNIP itself, with regime officials not only allowing but tapping into these discussions as a source of new ideas. As one interviewee remarked, officials sometimes attended economic discussion fora or solicited advice from their members. Particularly under the NERP, Kaunda sought innovative economic programmes, bringing together prominent academics and businesspersons who were part of the EAZ, and at times appointing officials who would later join the MMD. Thus, one should not paint too stark a divide between regime and opposition around economic experimentation: As one participant recalled,**"on the political side, Kaunda was rigid; [but] on the economic side, he was flexible"** (Respondent H).

As this review suggests, the late 1980s saw two intellectual shifts among the activist intelligentsia. Through the middle of the decade, some of those who later advocated staunch liberalisation professed socialist viewpoints, publishing tracts in Zambian and foreign journals promoting anti-capitalist and Afro-Marxist perspectives. Mbita Chitala, for example, worked with the South African Marxist Joe Slovo and edited the *Journal of African Marxists*. Donald Chanda, a future Economic Advisor and overseer of structural adjustment, published socialist analyses through the Harare-based think tank Southern African Political Economy Series (SAPES) Trust. Chiluba himself, the trade union leader-turned-president, publicly supported socialist positions.[10] In many ways, theirs was a pragmatic socialism, a product of the anti-Western sentiments common in the independence era. Nonetheless, their shift to market advocacy in the late 1980s was striking. After a devastating economic decade, Kaunda's inability to control the collapse – whether due to misrule or to international forces beyond his control– tarnished the wider socialist project with which he was associated, and private market activity seemed a way to wrest public power from UNIP, win international support, and try something new.

This set up the second intellectual shift: the turn from economics to politics. If intellectual opposition to Kaunda was stirred initially by the country's economic collapse, the target that finally mobilised political action was the rejection of UNIP's governing monopoly. Although a recent addition to the activist portfolio, multipartyism became the rallying cry. In fact, multipartyism did not come up until 1990 (Respondent B). The desire for economic reform long antedated the demand for change at the top, and one should not assume that the call for economic change in the late 1980s necessarily implied multipartyism – for many activists, it did not – any more than one should suppose that electoral democracy necessitated neoliberal adjustment. Or perhaps better put, insofar as political liberalism required economic liberalism, this owed more to the global neoliberal conjuncture than it did to any necessary coupling of the two. Too often today, the twin transitions are presumed to be an inevitable pair. Yet even in retrospect this was not necessarily so. Thus, one can read in MMD Finance Minister and former UNIP member Peter Magande's recent autobiography the line: "I hold a strong belief that, if President Kaunda allowed open debate on the state of the nation and presented a reform programme and leadership succession plan to his rule at the Fifth Convention of UNIP in March 1990, Zambia would have taken a different and perhaps a more progressive path towards the twenty-first century" (Magande, 2018: 189).

But in the end, he did not, and as the 1990s opened, Kaunda's restrictions on political debate increasingly frustrated activists. And where the EAZ felt constrained to speak, other organisations, sometimes with overlapping membership, entered the breach. Chitala recalls proposing discussions of democratic pluralism to the EAZ but detecting "elements of fear in the majority of the members who did not want the Association to be politicised" as well as worry about "arrest and detention" (Chitala, 2002: 26-29). His own organisation, the ZRF, was already set up to discuss governance and it agreed to organise a conference on multipartyism. Thus, at considerable risk and expense, activists convened a fateful two-day meeting on 20-21 July 1990 at the Garden House Hotel in Lusaka, where the Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD) was born.[11]

The papers delivered at the Garden House, compiled and published by the ZRF, testify to the power of a timely conviction. Arthur Wina's opening declared the one-party state a "colonial legacy" and tallied its failures, the greatest of which was the political stunting of the Zambian people. In place of UNIP, he proposed a bounded multiparty system, ideally with no more than three parties. For Vernon Mwaanga, the one-time UNIP minister, the greater problem was not party monopoly but "the over-concentration of power in the hands of one man." Likewise, the lawyer and future Foreign Affairs Minister Remy Mushota dismissed Humanism as a colonial residue of British utilitarianism, which justified unitary sovereign rule in the name of the "common good." As Donald Chanda put it later in the day: "This country has been a victim of several imported ideologies, ideas and policies which failed and are failing us. The answers lie in ourselves… not externally." Aka too offered a message of democracy and self-reliance, linking condemnation of Kaunda with criticism of the recently reintroduced structural adjustment: "[W]hile structural adjustment is necessary, it is not sufficient.

Structural Adjustment Programmes are concerned essentially and primarily with monetarist adjustment – not transformation." Instead, democracy required true national self-determination, not "[e]conomic liberalisation under a One Party State." It is worth underscoring how paramount economic concerns were to this multiparty agenda. "We see a situation," remarked Frederick Chiluba, "where political stability has been over-emphasised on [sic] the neglect of economic development. And indeed, as one scholar has observed: "It is true that for a quarter century, in political lexicon, Zambians have enjoyed peace and stability, but for sure our stomachs have not known peace at all."Or as Aka quipped: "Zambia is … a very democratic country – in terms of the breadth of participation in poverty and other socio-economic ailments." It was perhaps Chiluba, a year away from the presidency, who clinched the point: "The precise problem as I see it is that Humanism fails to distinguish between the rich and the poor. It assumes that the dignity of man derives from mere existence whether that man lives in squalor or high society does not matter. But we know that human dignity derives from ensuring the basic entitlements to man; man must have equal opportunities and access to good shelter, food, education, health and gainful employment." UNIP, despite its promises, supplied none of these (Mbikusita-Lewanika and Chitala, eds., 1990/91: 12, 17, 45-7, 49, 55-8, 64, 76, 97, 98).

Meanwhile, political turmoil continued. The new adjustment measures aggravated Kaunda's difficulties, requiring "a freeze on capital projects and an increase in consumer prices on maize meal of up to 275%" (Baylies and Szeftel, 1992: 81. Cf. Magande, 2018: 193 on inflation and GDP decline in 1990-1991). Inflation and shortages provoked food riots and, weeks before the Garden House conference, a coup attempt led by Army Lieutenant Mwamba Luchembe. Donors were ill-inclined to sympathy: they rejected Kaunda's effort to lighten the austerity measures in the lead-up to elections. The MMD's summer call for multiparty elections sparked the popular imagination, leading Kaunda to concede a referendum on the issue (which he ultimately cancelled) and then a constitutional amendment to allow for multiple parties by year's end. Weeks after the December amendment, in January 1991, the MMD registered as a political party and launched its campaign. In October 1991, it swept Kaunda from power. By this point, University of Leeds political scientist David Bartlett reminds us, business elites committed to staunch liberalisation had already outmaneuvered more progressive and egalitarian forces represented by churchmen and intellectuals to take control of MMD policy planning. Chiluba's sudden conversion to structural adjustment advocacy drew them behind his leadership, forging an unlikely business-trade union pairing that directed the

MMD's future course. In this regard, the election of 1991 reflected primarily an elite transfer, despite the active energies and popular support of large segments of Zambia's population. Indeed, the debates we canvassed here were overwhelmingly intra-elite.

Structural Adjustment under the MMD

The MMD electoral victory in 1991 ushered in a period of domestic euphoria that the new government used to introduce dramatic reform, including renewed structural adjustment in such an orthodox vein that it would likely have sparked riots under UNIP. In the first year, the package involved devaluing the kwacha, freeing the exchange rate, deregulating prices, launching free trade, removing food subsidies, introducing service user fees, and initiating the privatisation of parastatals. As one veteran of that administration remarked in 2019, "We implemented structural adjustment probably to the book" (Respondent I). The result was severe – somersaulting inflation, slashed public services, and ballooning unemployment – but also hopeful – the rapid appearance of goods in stores and the launch of infrastructure projects. By 1993-94, as privatisation and job losses accelerated, the government imposed fiscal controls – including a cash budget requiring all expenses to be covered by existing resources – that gradually restrained inflation. (For a detailed list of the reforms through 1995, see McPherson, 1995: 41-46). This was, in sum, a rapid and thoroughgoing adjustment, and the population bore it. While the years from 1995 onward saw burgeoning corruption and the erosion of SAP implementation integrity, the first few years of adjustment did indeed make Zambia into an IMF model.

How is it that Zambia came to embrace one of the most orthodox SAPs on the continent? Given the various postures espoused by activists during Kaunda's final years, why did this one prevail? There are a number of reasons. International circumstances contributed to the choice. The collapse of East European communism (widely cited by Zambian activists) coupled with the dominant Washington Consensus on market-led development seemed to confirm the fact that liberalisation was the only game in town. This message was reinforced by the success of the export-driven economies of East Asia and the concomitant failure of African socialist projects, especially in neighboring Tanzania, where Julius Nyerere was Kaunda's model and mentor. Of particular importance in these years was the tight coupling of democracy and marketisation – political and economic liberalisation – which made the latter seem an inevitable partner of the former. Indeed, international debates generally revolved around which came first – democracy or marketisation – not whether they had to be joined.

Another factor was the influence of the aid community. International aid increased steadily after the 1960s, growing from 1.8% of GDP in 1971-74 to 18.2% in 1989-93 (Saasa and Carlsson, 1996: 48). It spiked after 1991, as donors worked to bolster Zambia's transition. As Rakner, van de Walle, and Mulaisho put it,

> *The importance of aid to Zambia cannot be overstated. At their peak in 1992 the disbursements from multilaterals and 22 bilaterals amounted to US$1,479 million, equal to 67 percent of export earnings and 77 percent of total public expenditure. More than 35 percent of the government's budget is financed by the donor community, and donor financing accounts for on average 80 percent of the budget for capital expenditure, according to the Zambian government's 1999 budget address.*

Given this dependence, and international willingness to withdraw aid to combat economic backsliding, donor commitment to structural adjustment factored into Zambia's compliance, making the country a "receiver of policy rather than an initiator" (Rakner et al, 2001: 537, 539-40, 548). By the time of the MMD's accession to power, Zambia had a $7.3 billion debt – over 230% of its GDP – placing it among the most indebted countries on earth (Musonda and Adam, 1999: 451-52).[12] Mounting arrears left the new government scant negotiating power, prompting Chiluba booster Richard Sakala to assert that there was "no choice," that structural adjustment was "inevitable," to cite a widely used word (Sakala, 2001: 69, 72, 69-91).

Another reason for Zambia's embrace of orthodox adjustment was the nature of donor negotiations themselves, which transpired far from Zambian borders. As Matthew Martin has shown, decisions about IMF loans and debt rescheduling were taken in secretive meetings in Western cities under conditions of limited debtor empowerment and knowledge. With Zambians often ill-informed of procedures and expectations, it is little surprise that creditor concerns about loan or arrears repayment took priority over long-term development and poverty alleviation (Martin, 1991: 92, 149). Despite reforms in the late 1980s that brought in greater transparency, the negotiations conveyed a sense of *fait accompli* whereby external priorities determined domestic policy, contributing to what Miles Larmer described as Lusaka's "limited capacity" to "reflect popular opinion when [it] conflicts with donor priorities" (Larmer, 2005: 30).

In addition to external pressures, the view that markets were essential to economic and even political reform was broadly shared by the domestic intelligentsia. "The political change we wanted was tied to liberalism," explained one participant in 2019. "Initially we felt we needed political liberalism, but we then realized it was tied to economic liberalism since the only way to engage the economy was to engage private actors" (Respondent I). If this elite agreement, as we have seen, was superficial, it no doubt facilitated adjustment. If everyone appears to support liberalisation, it is hard to maintain a language of alternatives. The preference for rapid and thorough structural adjustment was also reinforced by the negative example of Kaunda's inconsistent adjustment measures, a failure that MMD leaders were keen to avoid. One respondent argued that Kaunda never "believed" in the SAP program: his implementation was partial; he focused primarily on foreign exchange; and he resisted multilateral calls for privatisation and the lifting of price controls (Respondent J). And as we have seen, the rise of businessmen and economists within the broad MMD coalition gave them a policy advantage. There were also darker motives. Amidst falling life expectancy, increased user fees, dramatic cuts in education, and agricultural decline, liberalisation had its beneficiaries: A privileged elite increased its wealth by purchasing company stock in "the opaque processes of the Zambia Privatisation Agency (ZPA)." Among the payees were former finance ministers, overseers of process (Larmer, 2005: 31, 29-32). In this way, liberalisation had a powerful insider constituency.

The fate of the EAZ is instructive in this regard. The Association threw itself behind the MMD in the election campaign, and many of its members took posts in the new government. But after the election, it decided not to align with Chiluba's administration, preferring instead to retain its independence by distancing the club from a trade unionist-turned-president who had never been fully comfortable in its intellectual ranks. According to one respondent, the EAZ found itself increasingly marginalised as Chiluba turned to a new source: a group of advisors sent in 1990 by the Harvard Institute for International Development. Initially requested by Kaunda's Minister of Finance, the foreign advisory team eventually became a World Bank requirement for the renewal of credit (Hoover and McPherson, eds., 2004: 389). Staunch advocates of rapid liberalisation and structural adjustment, the "Harvard Boys," as many Zambians knew them (though not all of them were men), soon won out in debates over economic reform, steering the country toward more rapid liberalisation than many local advisors preferred (Respondent E).[13] Economist Caleb Fundanga may have had this team in mind when he wrote that "[t]he main players have become foreign experts and those local anchormen or 'creatures of the IMF and World Bank' as they are often called. This, to a large extent, has compromised the quality of SAP programmes that have emerged." While acknowledging that local experts played a key role in designing SAPs and winning buy-in from "political leadership" and "recipient bureaucrats," Fundanga worried that they became tools of foreign authority (Fundanga, 1996: 92-93). This dominance was not only a matter of policy. Despite a few government programmes to support those who lacked purchasing power, most Zambians lacked the means to invest in privatised parastatals. As a result, foreign investors gained sway, purchasing former state assets, launching new construction, or selling goods once offered by shuttered industries. As a respondent in 2019 remarked, multiparty politics brought not only increased marketisation but also growing "domination by international actors" (Respondent I).

The MMD itself contributed to the sense of disempowerment. Chiluba is a fascinating figure in this regard. He joined the MMD at the Garden House meeting despite little involvement in prior discussions among the intellectuals that led to it. Retrospectively, some commentators describe him as an interloper, a public figure who jumped to the top of the movement and cut short the wider discourse on economic options. Yet while Chiluba is widely disparaged today because of the corruption associated with his second term, at the time he had a solid national reputation as the head of the ZCTU, and his MMD leadership rested on at least three credentials. He was one of the few widely known Zambians outside of the UNIP governing party, and thus he brought name recognition. He was untainted by compromise with UNIP, as opposed to the many senior MMD members who once worked in Kaunda's government. And he led the trade union congress, which had for years been the leading voice of opposition to Kaunda and structural adjustment (Mbikusita-Lewanika and Chitala, eds., 1990/91: vii-viii).

The MMD, like UNIP, embraced a top-down leadership model. One respondent likened the pattern of presidential deference under Chiluba to that cultivated by his predecessor, with ministers attempting to anticipate presidential wishes and refusing to offer counterargument on controversial policies (Respondent L). Indeed, "the constitution did not change the balance between executive and legislative power," report two Zambia analysts. "Presidential power and patronage continued to be the centre of political attention." As under Kaunda, a "'presidential court'" held sway (Baylies and Szeftel, 1992: 89). Negotiations with donors abroad were also restricted to a small cohort, usually led by the finance minister, and economic deliberation did not reflect the openness of 1991. Indeed, Chiluba's powerful finance ministers, Emmanuel Kasonde and, after 1993, Ronald Penza, defended structural adjustment so vigorously that the latter earned kudos from the World Bank and the IMF magazine *Euromoney* as one of the best Ministers of Finance in Africa (Saasa and Simutanyi, 2007: 20-21).

The choice for shock therapy also reflected the sense among MMD leaders that they had only a short "honeymoon period" (Respondents M and I) during which the population, desperate for change, campaign promises, and candidates in 1991 had warned of coming sacrifices, a message that citizens seemed to accept (MMD Manifesto, 1991: 1; Respondent P). As one trade union leader recalled in 2003:

> *I think the first few years of MMD in power, you know we had given them the benefit of the doubt. Most of the people in Government came from our [trade union] movement, including the President. They made an appeal in 1991. They wanted people to sacrifice, and we agreed, all of us. In most of the campaigns the question was asked 'Are you ready to sacrifice?', and we said 'yes'"* (Quoted in Larmer, 2005: 38).

This message was part of a wider commitment that Chiluba himself had pledged at the Garden House meeting. Addressing the role of workers in the ongoing opposition, Chiluba condemned Kaunda's Humanism in the name of "social justice," and called for greater income equality, "equal opportunities" for all Zambians, and improved "access to good shelter, food, education, health, and gainful employment" (Mbikusita-Lewanika and Chitala, eds., 1990/91: 95, 98). How jarring the shift when, a few years later, the newly elected Chiluba directed trade union leaders to convince their "workers to die a little so that prosperity is not overburdened with a crippling debt and an economy shattered beyond redemption" (Quoted in Larmer, 2005: 38).

The Zambian economy slipped further during the mid-1990s. Although most economists acknowledge that structural adjustment leads to short-run dips in production and purchasing power, growth that was supposed to follow from new efficiencies never seemed to manifest. Part of the problem was natural disaster. Adjustment measures began in 1992 as a severe drought struck Southern Africa, and even as bilateral donors struggled to distribute food relief, price controls were lifted and subsidies removed on fertilizer and maize meal (the main staple).[14] In agriculture, early and hasty market reforms, sometimes ill-conceived or under-prepared, often led to confusion that cost farmers desperately needed income (Magande, 2018: 200-206). By 1993, grim reports of impoverishment and official corruption signalled the waning of the MMD's honeymoon, and in the second half of the 1990s increased corruption and macroeconomic backsliding soured relations with the IFIs. Citizens also evinced a growing cynicism toward Zambia's "nyu katcha" (new culture) of personal responsibility, holding little hope that their circumstances would improve in the face of reduced consumption, dire inflation, falling salaries, and rampant unemployment. (For an account of the economic hardships in the early years, see Saasa, 1994: 23-31.) Despite the appreciation of new opportunities for free expression and initiative, many felt that MMD officials were capturing the riches of the free market for themselves. Indeed, "the democratically elected MMD Government," wrote Aidan Cox of the UNDP and John Healey of the Overseas Development Institute, seemed to "manifest less concern with social equity issues than its predecessor UNIP, although poverty reduction features as a national goal in policy documents." Fully 84% of the population was classified as poor or very poor by the World Bank and UNDP in 1997, with the percentage rising throughout the decade. "The early years of the democratically elected MMD suggest that the new government has moved away from balanced regional and district budget allocations towards a system built on political favouritism" (Cox and Heale, 2000: 4-5, 9, 15-16). How much of this can be laid at the feet of structural adjustment, as opposed to political corruption or incompetence? What is at least clear is that SAPs did little to stop the descent. As one academic warned about Africa in general, "[p]olitical liberalization is not likely to guarantee the appearance of new political alignments that favour sustained neoclassical economic reform" (Callaghy, 1994: 243. Cf. Simutanyi, 1996: 825).

Ultimately, the choice for shock therapy over gradualism, simultaneous reforms over stepwise change, proved destabilising. Agricultural services such as marketing boards and cooperatives were dismantled before the private sector was ready to fill their niche; subsidies were removed during a time of privation and price hikes; and parastatals that might have survived with timely injections of cash simply collapsed, increasing unemployment and glutting the informal sector. (On the challenges to agriculture, see Zukas, 2002: Chpt. 13; Saasa, 1996.) As one rural respondent recalled in 2019, she gave up her fishmongering business because competition for goods and buyers became too fierce; the newly retrenched all entered the local informal market (Respondent N). The austerity associated with debt reduction meant that growth and development were curtailed, and in the absence of investment funds, bilateral donors took over sectoral programming, often in desultory fashion. Given the hardship of the 1990s, it is not surprising that some rural Zambians today recall fondly – if also selectively – the days when NAMBoard, Kaunda's farm marketing parastatal, reliably purchased produce (albeit at below-market prices). As Peter Dwyer and Leo Zeilig tell it,

> *From 1992 to 1998, Zambian GDP declined by an average of 0.2 percent per annum. Formal-sector employment fell from 544,200 in 1991 to 436,066 in 2004. Social indicators drastically declined under the MMD. … The percentage of Zambians living in poverty rose from 70 percent in 1991 to 73 percent in 1998* (Dwyer and Zeilig 2012: 141).

This is a sobering record of reform. (Seshamani and Kaunga 1996, discuss a range of views on SA.)

Workers faced particular disorientation under the MMD, in part because the party was led by one of their own and its policies came as a bitter fruit of victory. (On this general despair in the Copperbelt, see Ferguson, 1999.) In the mid-1990s, new laws stripped ZCTU of its "legal monopoly over union affiliation," capping a steady decline in trade union power (Larmer, 2010: 48). Churches, too, were disappointed: While priests and bishops welcomed the end of Kaunda's rule, they condemned growing poverty and corruption, criticising structural adjustment for its impact on the poor – and sometimes becoming targets of attack.[15] Some MMD proponents ended up disavowing their early support for liberalisation. Mbikusita-Lewanika left his post as Minister of Technical Education and Vocational Training in 1992, the MMD the following year, going on to help form the opposition National Party and later Agenda for Zambia (Bartlett, 2000: 431 n.15). Mbita Chitala stumped for privatisation and attacked structural adjustment opponents when he was Deputy Minister of Finance from 1991 to 1995. But ten years later, he felt "ashamed" of "defend[ing] structural adjustment programmes with such zeal … I was just parroting bourgeois nonsense with attractive words" (Chitala, 2002: 50, 59).

Added to these economic struggles was a growing rural-urban divide, with cities attracting migrants from the countryside and development from abroad, while rural residents watched their infrastructure languish. This gap is vividly illustrated in the experiences of Nasula, the heroine of Binwell Sinyangwe's 2000 novel *A Cowrie of Hope*, as she travels to Lusaka to vend her last bag of Mbala beans and earn money for her daughter's schooling. When the bag is pilfered by a seedy businessman, a shattered Nasula determines to get justice. The story resonates with its era: Nasula is not only deprived of her goods but dismissed as irrelevant by a big man with no time for her needs. She desires not only remuneration, but recognition, cathartically supplied in the penultimate scene, when she finally gets payment through the intervention of an upstanding police officer. Alas, this was a fantasy for most. Because the Zambian economy was "unprepared" for shock, the 1990s became "a lost decade in GDP growth" (Respondent O; Rakner et al, 2001: 536). Sinyangwe puts it bluntly: "The years of the rule of money. The years of havelessness, bad rains and disease. The harsh years of madness and evil!" (Sinyangwe, 2000: 122).

There were, of course, defenders of structural adjustment. Advocates acknowledged short-term dislocations but argued that they were needed to promote macroeconomic stability, with bilateral donors providing a cushion for those most hurt. One senior Zambian advisor noted that although the IMF stood firm on core principles, it was open to requests for modification and slower pacing; it was, in other words, more flexible than critics allow (Respondent J). Rural respondents, too, reported taking advantage of new opportunities to launch businesses that were previously barred (Respondent Q). Supporters of the orthodox liberalisation often argue that it wasn't the speed so much as the sequencing of reforms that caused problems: privatisation and structural reform occurred too early, before fiscal balance and macroeconomic stability had been achieved (Adam, 1995; and Saasa, 1996). Furthermore, the delayed privatisation of Zambia's Consolidated Copper Mines (ZCCM) deprived reformers of essential taxes, exports and jobs that the rejuvenated private mines might have generated (Respondents F and H).[16] In the extreme, the defense of structural adjustment takes the form of an acknowledgement of the decade's severe developmental losses as the lamentable but necessary price for establishing a macroeconomic "enabling environment" and allowing debt cancellation through the Highly Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) program launched at the century's end.

Ultimately, Zambia's economy did grow in the first decade of the 2000s – according to the World Bank, over 5% annually between 2005 and 2013 – though this was likely driven by rebounding copper prices more than by SAP reforms. While Bank statistics indicate some decline in the poverty level, it remained stubbornly high, at 54.5% nationally in 2015, including over 75% in rural areas (World Bank estimate, http://www.indexmundi.com/facts/zambia/gini-index, CSO (1996, 2006, 2010, 2015; cited in Cheelo et al, eds., 2022: 1)). As the latter statistic suggests, inequality persisted, with growth alleviating poverty at the upper margins, but barely touching the country's majority rural poor. Paradoxically, then, Zambia can be classified as both a lower middle-income country (as it was in 2012 by international institutions) and a least developed country in the same volume, testifying to the stubbornness of its century-long economic bifurcation (Cheelo et al, eds., 2022: 1, 118, 30). Indeed, economic duality, argued University of Zambia economist Venkatesh Seshamani, is not just a result but a cause of poverty's self-perpetuation: "High growth has led to slower poverty reduction in Zambia due to persistent high levels of inequality. … [T]he lack of a pro-poor stance in the distribution of the benefits of growth (seen from the shares of the bottom 10% and top 10%) and the persistent levels of high inequality (seen from the Gini coefficient values), have contributed to the unabated levels of poverty in Zambia" (Seshamani and Ndhlovu, 2022). Even as Chiluba's successor Levy Mwanawasa directed new growth revenues to the social sectors, much of the country's poverty remained obdurately growth-resistant, with revenue accruing disproportionately to those with higher incomes.

Multiparty politics, in sum, did not yield multiple economic choices. In the political and economic literature, structural adjustment is typically cast as either a morality tale of bracing reform and common sense, with adjustment a necessary astringent on the way to economic recovery; or as a counter-morality tale of neocolonial cruelty, of industrial nations and neoliberal cons boosting their power and profit. Both of these narratives lack local voices. Perhaps what is most striking about the history limned in this essay is how little it is known outside Zambian circles. For the most part, the intellectual history of Zambia's transition is not formally written, and clues to it are scattered in people's heads, in a few published memoirs, and in newspaper back issues, grey literature, and unpublished reports lodged in Lusaka archives or abroad.[17] Recovering this "missing historical narrative" is not simply an exercise in historical reconstruction; it also affords the chance to revive other economic possibilities, to recover alternate Zambian visions of its own future.

End Notes

[1]In *The Weekly Post*, for example, see the articles "Pot-holes on the Road to Reform," (5 – 11 March 1993: 10-11); "Everything Seems Wrong in Public Sector" (11-18 March 1993: 8-9); "What People Think about the MMD" (18-24 June: 1993), np; and "What People Think about Chiluba" (25 June -1 July: 1993), np.

[2] For this and other sections of the essay, Rakner, 2003 has been extremely valuable for both reference and analysis.

[3] For a review of some of these debates, see van de Walle, 2001: 6-15.

[4] For a detailed account of these shifts in the late 1970s and early 1980s, see Sandberg, 1990: Chpt. 4.

[5] The Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, based from 1985-89 in an office at the Institute of African Studies, ran a programme designed to promote exchange of ideas between researchers and an "adequate public," which in practice generally meant the UNIP government. It also worked with the Zambian Bar Association, Chiluba's ZCTU, and the Farmer's Association of Zambia. Respondent B.

[6] Interview, May 2019.

[7] Musokotwane, "Financing of Health Services in Zambia." Unpublished Paper. Institute for African Studies. Cited in Kalumba and Freund, 1989: 225-27.
[8] Although IAS focused its research programmes on social and cultural rather than economic topics, Saasa's interests brought it into the political and economic debates of the day, and the Institute's pedigree and international standing lent weight to the opposition. For a history of the institute -- *née* Rhodes-Livingstone Institute, now Institute for Social and Economic Research (INESOR) – see Schumaker, 2001.
[9] The talks were chaired by Deputy Chief Justice Matthew Ngulube. (Bartlett, 2000: 439)
[10] Numerous respondents pointed out to me that Chiluba named three of his children after socialist leaders: Tito, Castro, and Mikoyan. For a published recollection of Chiluba's early socialism, see Scott, 2019: 81.
[11] The Garden House was a last-minute change of venue, since other hotels refused to host the meeting.
[12] For reference, the U.S. debt in 2020 was just over 100% of GDP.
[13] For accounts of these years by the Harvard advisors, see the essays collected in Hill and McPherson, eds., 2004.
[14] Reports of the drought appeared in papers by March, and the cuts listed were either introduced or continued after that.
[15] Before launching his weekly column in *The Post* in 1999, Father Joe Komakoma was arrested for protesting the 1995 constitutional changes that barred those without dual Zambian parentage from competing in elections. Komakoma, 2008: 7.
[16] Against donor wishes, the sale of such an important and complex national asset to a foreign company – there was no Zambian firm capable of buying it – was deferred until the decade's end.
[17] In addition to the memoirs mentioned earlier, see Sardanis, 2014, a memoiristic history written by one of the participants in the transition.

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All but one of the interviews referenced in this essay were conducted between May and June 2019 in Lusaka and a village near Kafue Town. The names have been de-identified. The one exception is an interview conducted by phone in January 2020.

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