Editorial

Zimbabwe's Mugabe's Re-Election— Over Blair

The British oligarchy, trying to install opposition Presidential candidate Morgan Tsvangirai to take control of the government of Zimbabwe, has suffered a defeat with the victory for President Robert Mugabe of the ZANU-PF party, in the March 10-11 national vote. Mugabe received 1,685,212 votes, with 56% of the 2,998,758 votes cast, trouncing Tsvangirai, the candidate of the Movement for a Democratic Change (MDC), who garnered 1,258,401 votes, with 42%. Three other candidates received a total of 55,145 votes; voter turnout was 3,130,193, or 60% of registered voters. The opponents of Mugabe and Zimbabwe, will contest the vote, complaining that it was tainted; but the margin of over 400,000 votes should dispel, for honest and intelligent observers, any notion that the election does not represent the will of the Zimbabwean people.

Contrary to the British government of Tony Blair—who announced in advance that he would not accept the election results unless his man Tsvangirai won—the Organization of African Unity and Zimbabwe's neighbors have endorsed the results. Gertrude Mongella, leader of the OAU observers, said that "in general the elections were transparent, credible, free and fair." The Southern Africa Development Community Ministerial Task Force said: "Despite the reported incidents of pre-election violence and some logistical shortcomings during the voting, it is the considered opinion of the SADC Ministerial Task Force, that the elections were substantially free and fair, and were a true reflection of the will of the people of Zimbabwe."

On March 12, the South African Federated Chambers of Commerce also pronounced the view that the elections had been free and fair: "The Zimbabwean elections proved to be similar if not better than the elections in other countries."

As Zimbabwean Ambassador to the United States Simbi Mubako pointed out a week before the election, this was turning out to be one of the most closely observed elections in history.

In the weeks leading up to the election, the British government and royal family did all they could to incite violence, and to prevent a free election. Not satisfied that no major violence erupted, and that Zimbabwe remains calm, the BBC (which had been banned from Zimbabwe) went fishing for post-election riots. On March 13, when the results were announced, BBC's lead story was that President Mugabe should expect his victory to be short-lived; the broadcast called for street protests like those in Yugoslavia and Ivory Coast, which "might succeed, where the elections failed, in unseating him."

At the (British) Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Australia over the March 2-3 weekend, Prime Minister Blair became furious when the heads of government refused to condemn the Zimbabwe elections in advance. This prompted South Africa's usually diplomatic President Thabo Mbeki to respond to Blair with his own modest proposal: "Those inspired by notions of white supremacy are free to depart [the Commonwealth] if they feel that the membership of the association reduces them to a repugnant position imposed by inferior blacks."

Prince Charles, unable to control himself, flew off the handle when he heard of how the Commonwealth leaders had treated Blair at their meeting. He said that the Commonwealth was "drinking in the Last Chance Saloon," and, "If the Commonwealth could not stand for liberal democracy and human rights, it deserved to be treated with international contempt."

The road ahead for Zimbabwe will be hard. One should not rule out further destabilizations inspired by the British, who have suffered one of their severest setbacks in Africa since Zimbabwe's independence in 1980. Zimbabwe's enemies will no doubt focus on the economy, which is in bad shape, and will apply great pressure on Mugabe to rejoin the International Monetary Fund, if they fail to overthrow him. Nonetheless, since President Mugabe has become a strong IMF opponent, this election adds a potentiality for Africa's development.