

that he has only been able to offer a ‘cursory review’, he still concludes that it ‘leaves no doubt that the Somali refugee repatriation from Ethiopia has been successful’ (p. 128). To my mind without any sense of the refugees’ experience of repatriation, there remains considerable room to doubt the success of the operation from their perspective.

The book, which has clearly evolved through research over some years, would have been strengthened by a more thorough attempt to update the bibliography beyond 2000. For example, while the literature on refugee repatriation in the region is still sparse, there are recent works to which the author does not refer, for example by Gaim Kibreab, Jonathan Bascom and Laura Hammond. It would also have helped if the book included some maps, especially for those unfamiliar with the geography of the region.

OLIVER BAKEWELL
University of Oxford

Citizen of Africa: conversations with Morgan Tsvangirai by
STEPHEN CHAN

Cape Town: Fingerprint Cooperative Ltd., 2005. Pp.106. £9.99 (pbk.).

doi:10.1017/S0022278X07002753

Chan presents the book’s two objectives as first, an assessment of how Tsvangirai, the MDC leader, has matured, presumably since the formation of the MDC, and second, to search whether he has his own intellectual roots (p. 6). The book, as the author asserts, was written at a time of the MDC’s fledgling electoral fortunes (p. 1), increasing scepticism by the West as to whether the party could wrest power from ZANU-PF, and against the background of rising factionalism within the party.

One cannot, in the circumstances, help but conjecture that Chan hoped, through the book, to indulge in a public relations exercise that would portray the party and its leader as a worthy investment, and confound the sceptics before the 2005 parliamentary elections. Chan’s affection and respect for Tsvangirai are undisguised throughout the book.

Chan laments the state’s increasing repression and monopoly of resources and the state media as constituting major impediments to the MDC. He further postulates that ZANU-PF’s intellectual platform, founded on pan-Africanist reasoning and rationality, accounts for its diplomatic successes in Africa and the West (p. 3). It is rather arguable whether ZANU-PF’s successes are not more a reflection of the MDC’s failure to articulate and identify with the ideals of the liberation struggle. As Tsvangirai himself admits, the MDC should have invested more in Africa than in a Western-oriented human rights agenda (p. 94).

Chan claims that the historic referendum of February 2000 was won by the MDC, forgetting that the vote ‘no’ campaign was spearheaded by the National Constitutional Assembly, NCA. He further repeats the tired official lie that war veterans engineered the subsequent farm invasions. All available evidence, including the logistical and financial support for the invasions, points to the state’s involvement.

Chan sets out structured interviews, and poses leading questions to elicit responses that fit into his conception of what an MDC leader and future president

of Zimbabwe should be like. For his part, Tsvangirai acquits himself very well, demonstrating strength and depth of character, resilience, immense courage and a commitment to change the status quo at any price. However, one cannot help wondering whether the contest between ZANU-PF and the MDC is more for power than ideological. Chan's citing of the similarity of Tsvangirai's views with those of some ZANU-PF politicians (p. 87) is not helpful.

Either Tsvangirai did not get the opportunity to articulate his views on ZANU-PF's rule beyond the naked repression and the trademark abuses of power, or he did not bother to. ZANU-PF's rule has long since ceased to be by consent and popular will: it is based on the subversion of state institutions to serve partisan interests. These institutions were not transformed at independence to serve the interests of democracy.

Chan's view of democracy is based on the Westminster model of democracy whose mechanisms for checks and balances were developed over centuries that entailed bloody revolutions. It is understandable therefore, that his conception of democracy finds expression in 'free and fair elections'. Tsvangirai's fixation with elections is in the circumstances understandable, if he places faith in the Western models of democracy. In truth, democracy is more about how the country is governed than about elections. Without transforming the repressive and partisan state institutions, wishing for free and fair elections is like chasing a mirage.

Chan is at pains to make Tsvangirai fit into the mould of a 'moderniser', whatever that means, hopefully to endear him to the West. He further desperately seeks to locate the roots of nationalism in Zimbabwe in the labour movement, even going to the extent of citing an un-referenced industrial strike of 1985 so as to make it fit into Tsvangirai's labour background. The reality, however, is that the nationalism of the 1950s and 1960s was nothing more than a continuation and an extension of the resistance to colonisation that began as soon as the British settlers set foot in Zimbabwe. This resistance found expression in the well-chronicled wars of 1893 and 1896.

Chan attempts to ideologically rationalise Mugabe's repressive rule and excesses as Maoist, which Tsvangirai correctly rejects and categorises as none other than power driven. He is also right about Mugabe and African leaders scapegoating the West for their own failures.

However, on the MDC foreign policy, one would have hoped that Tsvangirai would have provided a framework anchored in the SADC regional, African and the north-south context, so as to deny Mugabe monopoly of those platforms. On the paucity of intellectual politicians within the MDC, his response is less than convincing. It is up to the MDC to make their party attractive to African intellectuals. He is however right about the need for African intellectuals to proffer creative solutions to Africa's development problems, rather than parroting solutions based on Western models and experiences.

Finally, Tsvangirai's 'modernist' failure to appreciate the important role and contribution of the informal sector to the country's economy is rather puzzling (p. 44).

WILFRED MHANDA

Zimbabwe Liberators Platform/University of Zimbabwe