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After more than a quarter century in power, Zambia's Kenneth Kaunda, the nation's founding father, lost to Frederick Chiluba by a landslide in the country's first multiparty election, attended by the author as a member of the Commonwealth Observer group

ZAMBIA ENTERS A NEW ERA

by Fakhruddin Ahmed

I was a member of the Commonwealth observer group to observe the Presidential and Parliamentary General Elections held on 31st Oct. 91. At the request of the President of Zambia the Secretary General of the Commonwealth Emeka Anyakou had agreed to constitute a Commonwealth observer group who were chosen on individual capacity to observe the elections which had support of major political parties.

The group had no executive role and its function was neither to supervise nor to act as commission of inquiry but to observe the electoral process as a whole and to form a judgement accordingly. It may be recalled the idea of Commonwealth observer group to observe elections in Commonwealth countries arose from the decision of the Summit meeting in Kuala Lumpur in 1989 in order to foster and strengthen democratic process in Commonwealth countries. It was felt that observer's mission might play a position role in strengthening democracy and reinforce the electoral and constitutional process. Accordingly it was conceived that the Commonwealth observer group to Zambia would contribute to democratic process similar to observer groups sent to Malaysia in October 1990 and Bangladesh in Feb. 1991. The composition of the observer group included the following:

1. Rt Hon Mr. Justice Telford Georges, Trinidad and Tobago Former Chief Justice in Zimbabwe, Tanzania and The Bahamas Chairman of the group.
2. Mr. Fakhruddin Ahmed, Bangladesh, Former Foreign Secretary and Former Adviser, Foreign Affairs
3. Dr. Kalidu Bayo, The Gambia Permanent Secretary Ministry of Education, Youth, Sports and Culture.
4. Hon Jean Jacques Blais, Canada, Former Liberal Defence Minister.
5. Hon James Carlton, MP, Australia, Shadow Minister for Policy Co-ordination and Development and Chairman of the Social Policy and Health Group.
6. Datuk Harun Din, Malaysia, Chairman, Election Commission of Malaysia.
7. Dr. (Mrs) Najma Hephullah, India, Deputy Chairman, Upper House of Parliament.
8. Mrs Shirley Miller, Jamaica Director of Legal Reform.
9. Emma Nicholson, MP, Britain Chairman of the Conservative Party Backbench Environment Committee, and Member of the Select Committee on Employment.
10. The Rt. Hon Edward Schreyer, Canada, Former Premier of Manitoba, and former Governor General of Canada.
11. Hon Kerry Sibraa, Australia President of the Senate.
12. Mr. Raymond Sock, The Gambia Director, African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies.
13. Lord Tordoff, Britain Liberal Democratic Party Chief Whip in the House of Lords and former President of the Liberal Party.

In addition there were 9 members from the Commonwealth Secretariat Support Team who rendered such valuable assistance that without them the smooth functioning of the Observer Groups could not have been made possible. Zambia has an area of 752,614 square kilometres and is divided into nine provinces with a population of eight million only. It is a landlocked country surrounded by Zimbabwe, Zaire, Mozambique, Tanzania, Malawi, Botswana, Angola and Namibia. 54 per cent of the people live in towns, one of the highest urbanisation growth in Africa as a result of mining of copper, the chief resource and foreign exchange earning of Zambia. In fact, the whole history of the Zambian economy has been based on copper as an international level and it is rightly said that Zambia was born with a copper spoon. Unfortunately, Zambia today finds that it has a staggering debt of over \$6 billion, a poverty boom coupled with escalating unemployment.

Zambia was one party State and the emergency powers were extensively used during this period. It is not excessive use of arbitrary powers but economic decline that worked as a catalyst for a change in Zambia. A number of factors were responsible for Zambia's economic decline. The un-

able economic policy. Dr Kaunda after 8 years of independence ended the multiparty politics when he signed a Presidential Order on December 13, 1973 making Zambia a single party state. The existence of emergency powers and the introduction of one party state successfully negated to a substantial degree the evolution of democratic process. Mounting economic discontent, restlessness among the youth, majority of whom were unemployed, the winds of change in Eastern Europe which had profound effect on the youth all had given strength to call for democratic political pluralism and put tremendous pressure on Dr. Kaunda for radical reform. Dr Kaunda at first agreed to hold referendum to decide the issue. In the meantime opposition was gaining momentum and they rallied under the banner of Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD). MMD caught the imagination of the people both urban and rural and opposition to ruling party took a serious turn. Dr Kaunda agreed to do away with the referendum altogether and instead opted straight to multiparty elections. A new constitution restoring multiparty politics came into effect following passage of the bill in Zambian Parliament on 30th Nov. 90. President Kaunda also agreed to invite foreign observers to observe the elections scheduled on 31st Oct. 1991 and formal invitations were sent to UN, the Non-Aligned Movement, OAU, the Commonwealth as well as to Carter Group and NDI in Washington. The elections were both Presidential and Parliamentary to be held simultaneously. The candidates nominated for 1991 Presidential election were Dr. K Kaunda leader of United National Independence Party (UNIP) who had ruled Zambia since independence (Oct.

1964) and Mr. F. Chiluba, one time trade unionist. Mr. Chiluba, President of MMD, the main opposition party emerged as the successful Presidential candidate. In the Parliamentary contest there were 150 seats to contest, MMD secured 125 while UNIP bagged the rest including all the 19 seats in the Eastern Province. The results of October 31 elections came as a rude shock to many of President Kaunda's ruling party UNIP.

The election was bitterly fought and election campaign was characterised by mutual recrimination. Dr Kaunda's ruling party was severely mauled, however, the Eastern province remains its bastion where MMD failed to gain a single seat. Although besides, UNIP, the ruling party and MMD, twelve other parties registered but at the time of election MMD emerged as the only opposition to challenge the UNIP and as such it was a straight fight between the two parties, UNIP and MMD. The election campaign had begun several months following registration of MMD as a political party in January, 91 under the party's slogan "The hour has come" for change. The MMD party's manifesto placed human rights at the top of the agenda and promised to give priority to socio economic matters affecting economy and welfare of common citizens. In short, the MMD called for a new and better order through re-construction. UNIP on the other hand was unable to defend itself in the campaign while MMD went on the offensive at will. UNIP campaigned hard on slogans like peace, prosperity, consolidation of gains as well as experienced and tested leadership under Kaunda. It further tried to project that untried leadership of Chiluba could bring the country into chaos like Mozambique and Zaire. Zambia for the first

time experienced the most contentious and expensive electoral competition as well as the most acrimonious and bitter which were sometimes very personal and offensive. The observers on arrival could feel the pulse of the people clamouring for change.

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Regular political rallies were being held by the contesting parties and publicity campaign was advertised in the newspapers and on radio and television. But the intensity of the campaign was subdued compared to general elections held in Bangladesh in Feb. 91. There was no graffiti on the walls, no archways or gates except posters here and there. Following introduction of mul-



The author (far left) being greeted by Kenneth Kaunda at Lusaka State House on the eve of the elections.

tiparty system the government control over the media was slackened although MMD had complained this was not good enough and the media was still 'biased' to the ruling party. Our observation was that during the last few weeks preceding the election day both parties in the race were able to put across their message in the government controlled media even handed and on the whole reporting was fair. The only negative side was that upto the eve of polling day there was unfortunate atmosphere of rumour amid suspicion. There was general expectation that aftermath of election results would trigger off violence and destruction and many foreigners including Asians and about 40 to 50 Bangladeshi families were nervous. Some had crossed into Zimbabwe and some moved to hotels as a precautionary measure. Their suspicion was found wrong and election day as well as the announcement of result on the following evening passed off peacefully. The ruling party particularly President Kaunda, personally congratulated his opponent President Chiluba on his victory.

The Commonwealth Observer Group was divided into nine provinces and had ample opportunity to witness the electoral process. I and British MP Emma Nicholson

were assigned to Northern Province from 25th Oct till 2nd Nov, when the counting was completed. While boarding the plane for Northern Province we had a chance meeting with President Chiluba who was also travelling on election campaign. During our brief conversation he conveyed his concern that attempts might be made to tamper with the result, otherwise he felt confident. Earlier the entire group had called on President Kaunda at Lusaka who categorically assured us in reply to a question that he would step down immediately if the result would go against him.

President Chiluba took oath as President of The Republic of Zambia soon after the final result was announced. The way former President Kaunda made his exit was warmly praised by many including USA. The example set by Dr. Kaunda for transition to multi party politics by conceding defeat and congratulating the opponent was unknown in Africa. This was indeed a peaceful revolution. The US Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Mr. Cohen was reported to have said that Zaire and Kenya should learn from Kaunda's statesmanship and facilitate democratic change. He further hinted that US would soon link external aid to democratic reform in the near future.

President Chiluba soon after assumption of office while criticising the previous government for indiscipline, corruption and devastating the economy was cautious in spelling out how he was going to implement his programme. He frankly warned that poverty would take long time to eradicate but called for hard work and collective responsibility to develop Zambia. At the same time President Chiluba appealed to Zambians to continue regard former President Kaunda as an elder statesman for his contributions to the nation. This is again a rare example not only in Africa but in some other Third World countries like Bangladesh.

The chairman of the Commonwealth Observer Group in a statement on 1st November, 91, stated that elections were free and fair. The same conclusion was drawn by Observer Groups notably the Carter Group and NDI of USA. Former President Carter was himself present on election day and disclosed that he had written to President Bush requesting US assistance to mobilise economic aid to support Zambia's newly born democracy. Zambia's peaceful transformation through democratic pluralism is indeed a milestone in her history. Democratic pluralism means a system of competing approaches to party politics and national issues provided certain basic rules are adhered to by all those competing. The ground rules require that parties will need to develop a high degree of tolerance. The party in power have to accept that opposition may have different ideas about national issues and development which must be respected and could be criticised for flaws and inadequacy. The core issue is that a government will change according to people's verdict through ballots freely expressed. For us there is much to learn from Zambia's transformation into a multiparty vibrant democracy.

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I clutched my seat-belt in panic as the aeroplane made straight for the shimmering expanse of water. A few minutes later, the illusion ended as the wheels touched the firm gravel beneath and came to a halt. A sigh of relief escaped my lips as I rushed out of the aircraft after an almost eternal seven-hour journey from Dhaka via Bangkok. A thrill ran through me as I revelled in the gaiety of the night scene that greeted me. It was the thrill of being in the Orient, the thrill of being in Hong Kong.

Brilliant street lights and dazzling neon signs turn the tourist stary eyed as he travels along the silken maze of roads, tunnels and crisscrossing flyovers. Patches of the South China Sea intervene into the mainland beside the massive highways and expressways. The majestic skyline of Hong Kong drew a jagged outline against the clear sky almost obscuring it. It was only after I reached home that I learnt that the typhoon signal was up to 3.

I am glad I did not go to Hong Kong with the sole motive of filling up as many shopping bags as possible like many people unfortunately do. It is true that the city is a shopper's paradise, but surely this British colony with a past as exciting, with a history as rich and enthralling, a pace of progress as dramatic has more to offer. Hong Kong comprises of Hong Kong Island, obtained in 1841 from China, the Kowloon Peninsula and Stonecutter's Island procured in 1860 and the New Territories which was leased out to Britain in 1898 for 99 years. When Captain Charles Elliot of the Royal Navy had first planted the Union Jack at what has come to be known as the Possession Point on 25th January 1841, Hong Kong was just a barren rocky island; barren at sight but rich in opportunities. It was the land of the opium traders and pirates, the land of the Taipans, Britain's commercial treasure cove. Despite several disputes with the Chinese and the Japanese occupation from 1941 - 45 Hong Kong continued to prosper admirably. Today is one of the

THE TROBBING HONG KONG

by Sabah Moyeen

world's busiest commercial centres, standing tall with its giant mirrored skyscrapers, designer office blocks and multi-storied modern shopping arcades all huddled together in close proximity. Hong Kong's compact 1,070 square km itself gives the sight a distinct advantage. Old colonial buildings render a striking contrast to modern innovations. The sight of the Bank of China Tower, the Bank of America, Hong Kong and that of Tokyo built with brilliant gold tinted glass in Central district is awesome. Few lands can boast of a public transport system as efficient and comprehensive as that of Hong Kong. Everyday the KCR and MTR subway network transports millions of people to and fro the city. Dozens of ferries scale the waters of the Frigate Harbour (translated from Cantonese Heung Gong from where the city derives its name). The Star Ferry has become an institution by itself plying the waters between Hong Kong Island and Tsim Sha Tsui since 1898. Buses, trams and rickshaws also provide efficient and inexpensive transport services. Two underwater tunnels are currently in operation. Hong Kong boasts the longest tunnel in Asia which is 4 1/2 kms long, the first skyscraper which can be dismantled completely and set up anywhere else in the world. Right next to the Star Ferry pier on the Kowloon side is HMS TAMAR Royal Naval Headquarters and the Prince of Wales Building. Also in the neighbourhood is Flagstaff House which currently houses Dr K S Lo's extensive and exquisite display of Chinese tea-ware. A sight-seeing tour in Hong Kong should probably always commence with a visit to the famous Victoria Peak. The Peak Tram in operation since 1888 is a funicular railway where ascending and descending cars balance one another. Rising from St John's Building in Garden Rd to Vic-

torial Gap 4000 metres above sea level, one can get a spectacular view of Hong Kong Island, Kowloon, New Territories, and the islands of the South China Sea... this was one mesmerising sight which I will treasure for a long time to come.

The Happy Valley Racecourse on Hong Kong Island first came into operation in 1846. Till today it is Hong Kong's hottest entertainment and betting spot. The Repulse Bay beach is a beautiful sandy stretch which also includes a life guard club built in the Chinese traditional style. Repulse Bay situated on the south eastern coast of the island houses a few of the wealthiest families in the city. Through winding roads uphill we reach Stanley Village, an old village dating back to the 17th century which has retained its quaint atmosphere. Thatched houses and an extensive market place selling an amazing variety and

quality of goods makes Stanley a must for every tourist. One of the main wonders of Hong Kong is the much talked about Ocean Park, Asia's largest entertainment complex. A few minutes via cable car over a wide glittering expanse of water, or by the world's longest escalator ensures safe access to the Ocean Park, a mesmerizing fairyland where one can forget every care in the world amidst roller-coasters, various oceanariums and water world, an aquatic playground providing every sort of water sport imaginable. A site to visit by night is the Sun Wan harbour where the Oberdeen floating restaurants are anchored. The most remarkable of the 3 Jumbo Floating Rest is a massive neon-lit structure which provides the tourist en route on the motor launch with such an awesome sight as can completely overwhelm him. Hundreds of flashing cameras add to the garish brightness of its

neon-studded archways and exquisite intricate Chinese decor. Jumbo provides unique Chinese and sea-food dishes to hundreds of indulging tourists and the cream of Hong Kong society. Harbour Tours are also available via Chinese junks and modern air-conditioned cruisers which provide a tantalising view of sparkling, psychedelic Hong Kong by night, while dinner, music and dancing continues on board.

Another breathtaking venue is the Space Museum on the southern coast of Kowloon. This dome-shaped monstrosity seems to gulp you into its world of mechanised special effects. It has a Space Theatre, where movies are shown, an Exhibition Hall and a Hall of Solar Sciences. The most interesting and exciting acquisition of the Space Museum has been its multi-million dollar Zeiss star projector which can project up to 9000 star images. As mentioned before,



Hong Kong: On the verge of another turning point in its history.