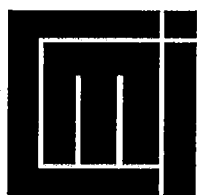


Trade Unions in Processes of Democratisation

A Study of Party Labour Relations in Zambia

Lise Rakner

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Summary:

This report assesses the role of labour in the recent transition to multi-party rule in Zambia. The main question considered is to what extent labour, through its policy-making organ the Zambia Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU), effected policy changes at the national level in a democratic direction. The report analyses Zambian industrial relations in the post-colonial period with particular emphasis on the period of one-party rule (The Second Republic 1973). The case study concludes that the trade union movement was established in a pluralist setting and has remained autonomous from the state despite strong efforts to incorporate the union movement into the party/state. The organisational autonomy of the union movement is one of the main reasons why the trade union movement spearheaded the transition to multiparty democracy in October 1991.

Sammendrag:

Denne rapporten analyserer den zambiske fagbevegelsens rolle i overgangen til fler-partisystem i Zambia. Et hovedtema i rapporten er i hvilken grad fagbevegelsen, gjennom sentralorganet zambisk LO (ZCTU), påvirket den nasjonale politikken i en demokratisk retning. Undersøkelsen gir en historisk analyse av forholdet mellom fagbevegelsen og staten i etterkrigstiden, med spesiell vekt på tiden etter innføringen av ett-partistaten (1973). Studien konkluderer med at den zambiske fagbevegelsen ble etablert i en pluralistisk kontekst og at den har bevart sin autonomi til tross for mange forsøk på å inkorporere fagbevegelsen i partiet/staten. Fagbevegelsens organisasjonsmessige autonomi er en av de viktigste årsakene til at den dannet ryggraden i demokratibevegelsen som vant fram ved valget i oktober 1991.

Indexing terms:

Democracy
Democratisation
Trade Unions
Zambia

Stikkord:

Demokrati
Demokratisering
Fagbevegelse
Zambia

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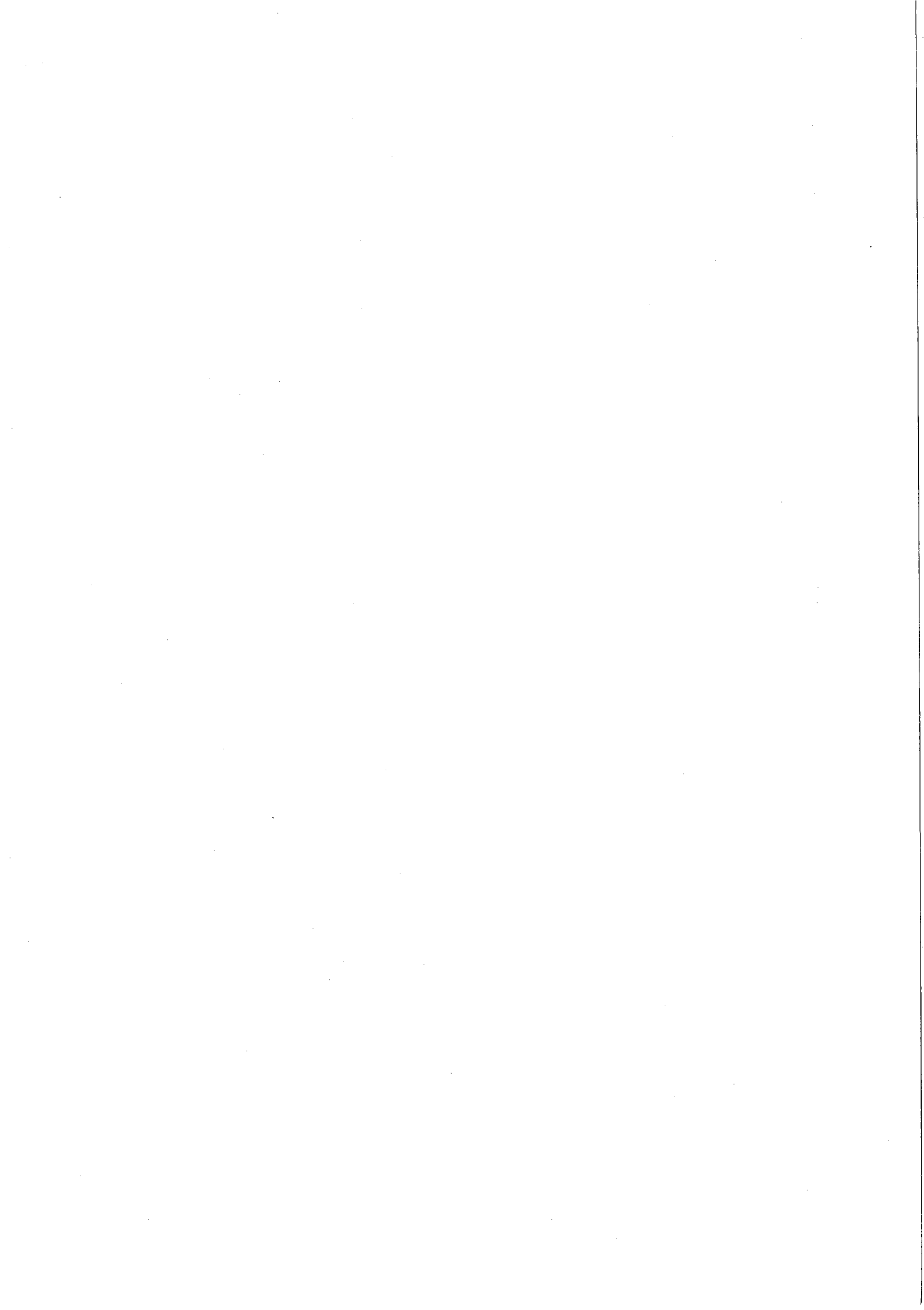
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Fantoft
December 1992

Zambian key facts and figures

Official Name: Republic of Zambia

Form of State: Unitary republic

Date of Independence: October 24, 1964

Constitution: First Republic (1964-1972): Multiparty Democracy

Second Republic (1973-1991): One-Party System

Third Republic (1991-): Multiparty Democracy

President: Dr. Kenneth Kaunda (1964-1991)

Mr. Frederick Chiluba (1991-)

Government: United National Independence Party (1964-1991)

Movement for Multiparty Democracy (1991-)

Official languages: English, Nyanga, Bemba, Tonga, Lozi

Area: 753,000 square km

Population: 7.79 mn (1990)

Percentage of Population in Urban Areas: 51.3 (1990)

Life Expectancy at Birth: 54 years

Gross domestic product (GDP): USD 1,960 mn

GDP per capita: USD 390

Principal export earning: Copper (92 per cent)

National debt: USD 7,146 mn

Total labour force: 3.86 mn (1990)

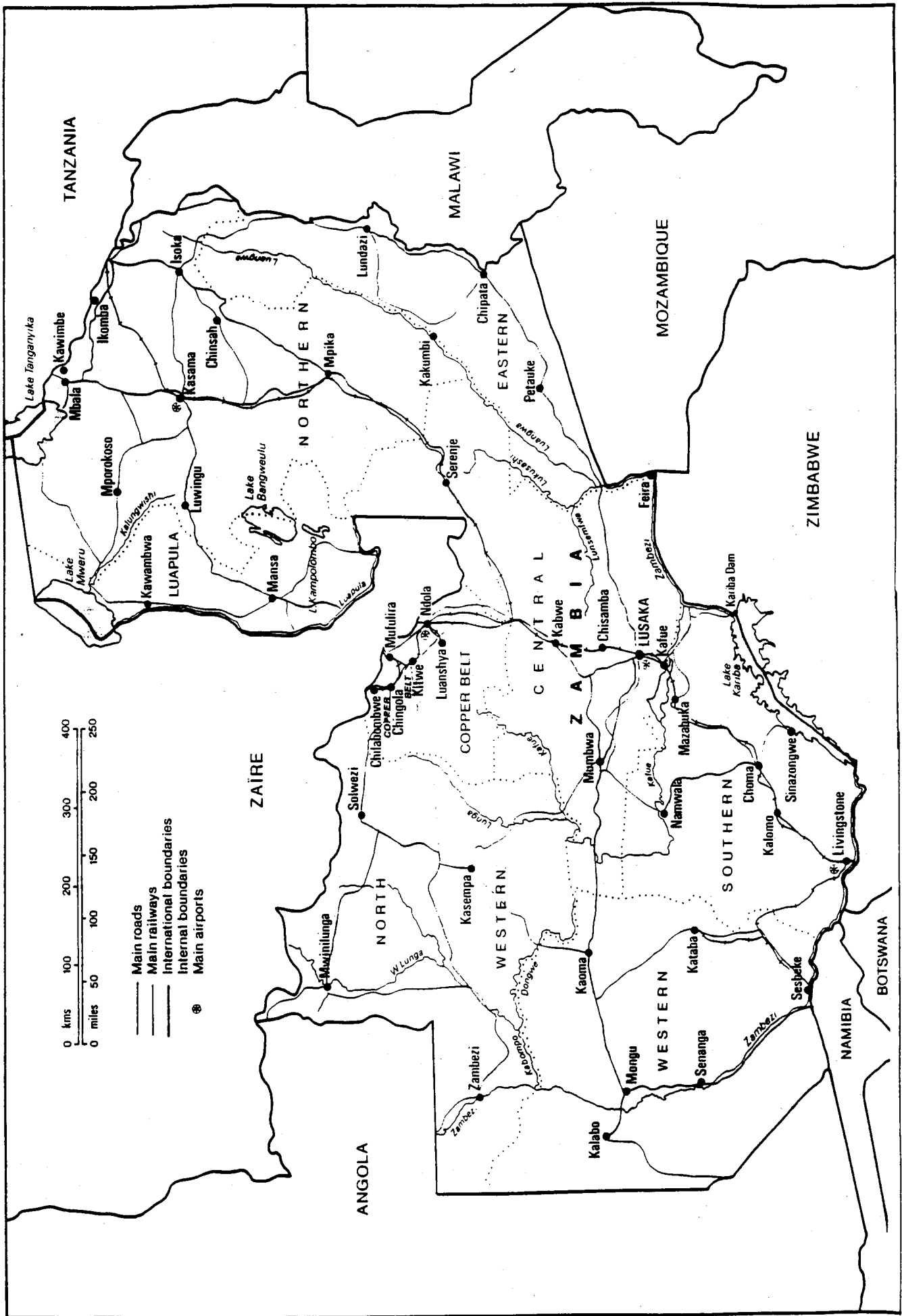
Percentage of total labour force in formal employment: 9.8 (1990)

Sources: *World Development Report* 1991, *The Economist Intelligence Unit* 1991-92, *Monthly Digest of Statistics* (C.S.O.) 1990.

List of abbreviations

AAC	Anglo American Corporation
ANC	African National Congress
BSAC	British South Africa Company
CSO	Central Statistical Office (Lusaka)
DIPD	Department of Industrial Participatory Democracy
EIU	Economist Intelligence Unit
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNP	Gross National Product
GRZ	Government of the Republic of Zambia
ICFTU	International Confederation of Free Trade Unions
IFCTU	International Federation of Christian Trade Unions
IFI	International Financial Institutions
ILO	International Labour Office
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INDECO	Industrial Development Cooperation
IR 1971	Industrial Relations Act 1971
MMD	Movement for Multiparty Democracy
MUZ	Mine Workers Union of Zambia
NCIWU	National Commercial and Industrial Workers' Union
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
NUBEGW	National Union of Building, Engineering and General Workers
NRAMU	Northern Rhodesia African Mine Workers' Union
NRMWU	Northern Rhodesian Mine Workers' Union
NRTUC	Northern Rhodesia Trade Union Congress
OAU	Organisation for African Unity
RRAWU	Rhodesia Railways African Workers' Union
SAP	Structural Adjustment Programmes
TUC	Trade Union Congress
UFP	United Federal Party (European)
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNIP	United National Independence Party
UNZA	University of Zambia

UP	United Party
UPP	United Progressive Party
WFTU	World Federation of Trade Unions
ZANC	Zambia African National Congress
ZCCM	Zambia Consolidated Copper Mines
ZCTU	Zambia Congress of Trade Unions
ZFE	Zambia Federation of Employers
ZIMCO	Zambia Industrial and Mining Cooperation
ZTUC	Zambia Trade Union Congress



Chapter 1:

Democracy and the role of civil society in Africa

In a period when democratisation is gaining ground in the developing world, the question of how organised labour can contribute to this process is increasingly being put on the public agenda. In approaching these questions, Western theories of state and civil society may help provide an understanding and will therefore serve as the theoretical framework of this analysis.

The focal point of this study concerns the relationship between the Zambian labour movement and the governing party (UNIP); in particular, to what extent the labour movement, through its central association, the *Zambia Congress of Trade Unions*, effected policy changes at the national level in a democratic direction. The central issue in this connection is why the trade union movement in 1990 broke its long alliance with UNIP, an alliance which had been in place since 1961. After the break, the labour congress became a central force in the opposition to the one-party rule. The main question guiding the analysis is this: Which factors can account for the changes in party labour relations manifested in the political events of the 1990s? The emphasis is put on the political developments of the second republic, or the one-party state (1973-1991), but relevant historical events will also be considered.

In December 1989, Frederick Chiluba, the Chairman-General of the Zambia Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) announced that the trade union movement would work for constitutional changes in order to bring an end to the one-party rule which had lasted since 1973. Forces from the trade union movement, the churches, parliamentary dissidents, business elites and students formed a coalition movement under the name *Movement for Multiparty Democracy* and Frederick Chiluba was elected president. On October 25, 1991, after an election process characterised by international observers as free and fair, Chiluba became the new president of the Republic of Zambia, by winning an overwhelming majority of the votes (80 per cent) and the Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD) formed the new government.

By analysing the relationship between the ruling party UNIP and ZCTU during the one-party system of government, I wish to shed light on the political and economic factors which may explain the trade union involvement in the political struggle. The aim is to portray what role the trade union movement perceives for itself in the Zambian society. An understanding of the relationship between UNIP and the trade union movement is important in a number of ways.

Firstly, very little is known of the nature and actions of African civil society organisations as the scholarly debate has focused predominantly on the role of the state. In order to understand the new development trends in the region it is therefore necessary to undertake research concerning forces outside the state structures. Secondly, an analysis of the role of labour and how it perceives its role is instrumental for an assessment of the new democracy in Zambia. The MMD government was given overwhelming support from the urban working community and the trade union movement. However, what is the basis of the trade unions' support of MMD and the struggle for democratisation? Was the support and the subsequent break with UNIP a sign of a genuine quest for democracy on the part of the unions, or was it merely an indication of a growing disillusionment with the economic policies of UNIP? A deeper understanding of the processes involved and the self-perceptions of the trade union movement may therefore give an indication of the sustainability of the newly won democracy in Zambia.

Developing nations, and African nations in particular, have since independence been characterised by authoritarian rather than democratic regimes. A large scholarly debate has been devoted to the question under what conditions transitions from authoritarian to democratic regimes may occur. The theories have focused on socio-economic, institutional and cultural conditions (Lipset 1959 and 1981, Almond and Verba 1965, Diamond et al. 1990). However, despite a vast body of theoretical work, history seems to take its own course without regard to the predictions of political scientists. Although it was commonly held by most African observers and leading political scientists that the political and economic development in Sub-Saharan Africa¹ had not proceeded far enough to expect democratic changes (Huntington 1984), countries in this region have experienced significant changes of a democratising nature in recent years. In fact, few countries on the African continent remain untouched by the

¹ The term Sub-Saharan Africa refers to Africa south of the Sahara desert, commonly known as the non-Arab part of Africa. When referring to Africa in the analysis, I am referring to Africa south of Sahara.

political events which have swept the continent over the past two-three years. But democratisation in Africa has occurred in an economic context quite different from the one predicted by scholars, as most countries on the African continent have experienced serious economic recessions since 1980. In other words, in Africa the economic *crisis* has so far created conditions for transition from authoritarian and largely corrupt regimes to democratic regimes and thus *reversed* the causal links often assumed in the literature concerning preconditions for democracy.

Presenting a somewhat different interpretation, a number of scholars have preferred to emphasise external or international factors in order to understand the current changes on the African continent (Legum 1990). With the demise of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe, a number of scholars and observers have argued that the recent wave of democratisation in Africa should be understood in the context of the changes in Eastern Europe; as a "diffusion" of democratic ideas. Another group of scholars emphasising the external dimension have in particular emphasised the strong pressures from the international donor community (Gibbon 1990, Callaghy 1990). Since 1989 the lending agencies have included principles of good governance and respect for human rights as conditions for their loans. With the deepening of the economic crisis of most African countries the conditionalities of the international donors are bound to impact. Nevertheless, while these external factors certainly are very important and to a large extent have provided a political "opening" in which changes can take place on the African continent, they fail to offer an adequate explanation of the differences between the various countries. In order to understand why a country like Zambia recently held democratic elections, why changes have taken much longer time in Kenya, not taken place at all in Malawi and been very violent in Zaire, it is necessary to place emphasis on internal factors.

This observation illustrates that macro level theories about preconditions for development and democracy must be supplemented with knowledge about national characteristics of the country studied. Hence, political theory should serve as general guidelines or as a conceptual framework for an empirical analysis. In order to fully comprehend the process of political reform, the role of civil society or the voluntary associations outside the realm of the state, must be analysed. It is evident, judging from the recent political events both in Africa and Eastern Europe, that popular movements have put pressure on the elites and been instrumental in the transition process. However, in the African context, research on civil society and its role in the political process has been limited until now. In particular, little

research has been carried out on the role of trade unions in processes of democratisation or their relationship with the state in general.

The limited interest in civil society in comparison to the state and state structures, must partly be understood against the background of the authoritarian regimes that emerged in Africa in the post-colonial period. Shortly after independence, the liberal democratic constitutions inherited from the colonial powers were replaced by various forms of authoritarian rule in all but a few of the former colonies in Africa. These changes affected the scholarly interest as well. Following political instabilities, ethnic rivalries, civil wars and limited economic development in many developing areas, theoretical approaches emerged in the late 1960s which perceived unchecked participation to be an obstacle to economic development (Huntington 1968). From an emphasis on liberal democracy, the scholarly debate shifted to a consideration of "the strong state". State society relations were by many conceived of as a relationship in which ruling elites had to subjugate social groups and increased participation in order to achieve economic growth (Kesselman 1973). Within the African scholarly debate, weakness of the state in terms of steering capacities became a main concern (Jackson and Rosberg 1984).

As the economic recession in Africa gathered momentum and approached crisis-levels, it became evident for most observers outside and within Africa that centralised state structures had not generated economic development. On the contrary, the state monopolies had in many instances opened up for a political culture of corruption, unaccountability and fraud. Stronger emphasis on corruption and bad governance from an emerging domestic opposition and from the donor community during the 1980s brought issues of participation, good governance and civil society back into the African scholarly debate (World Bank 1989, Bratton 1989, Sklar 1982, Diamond, Linz and Lipset 1988). As the emerging opposition in country after country related the issue of bad governance to the economic decline, one regime after the other began to crumble. In order to analyse the processes involved, attention was again directed to the social forces outside the state domain. Within the political science debate, studies of voluntary associations have in particular been linked to regulation of state society relations and to profound processes of political change (Bratton 1989, Diamond et al. 1990).

1.1 Trade unions in processes of democratisation

The term "civil society" has been present in Western political discourse for at least two centuries, and it has been given so many interpretations and connotations that it is not possible to give one definition which can be

agreed to by all. However, some core notions can be deduced from the historical writings. Firstly, civil society should be understood as the realm between the family and the state comprising the network of voluntary associations working toward or interacting with the state, yet being financially and organisationally autonomous from the state. In other words, the issue of concern to this analysis relates to the ability of associations at the intermediate level to bring about policy changes at the national political level. How then, can the demands for political change from civil society be conceptualised? And more specifically, what is the role of trade unions in these processes?

The literature concerning transition from authoritarian regimes to democracy, drawing on the experiences in Latin America, Southern Europe and most recently Eastern Europe, has indicated that trade unions as leading associations of civil society are often instrumental in the process of regime transition (O'Donnell, Schmitter and Whitehead 1986, Przeworski 1989, Valenzuela 1989). Due to their central position in the economy, trade unions can damage the economy through work stoppages. Further, trade unions have a continuous organisational base and the workplace is one of the few places in authoritarian political settings where people can organise without police interference. In addition to the general democratising potential of the trade unions, membership and participation in trade unions introduce citizens to democratic procedures which again may induce people to participate in national economic policies (Fenwick and Olson 1986, Pateman 1970).

Despite the *prima facie* importance of trade unions both in terms of their value orientation and as agents for democratisation, trade unions have been given little attention in the scholarly debate on development and democratisation (Bates 1971, Sklar 1982). However, while this fact may point to a weakness of the scholarly debate, it also suggests that civil society, and trade union movements in particular, in many third world societies have been too weak to have an impact on the national political development. The strength of a trade union movement is often associated with its numerical base and with the level of industrialisation, which again may explain the limited focus on trade unions in largely peasant-based third world societies. Nevertheless, studies of trade union movements in developing nations have indicated that in countries where workers are organised in industries of great importance to the economy as a whole, their numerical strength may be of less significance (Valenzuela 1989). According to Valenzuela, the level of union density and the organisational strength of a union movement may therefore be more appropriate indicators of union strength than their numerical proportion of the labour force as a

whole (Valenzuela 1989). Considering the Zambian mine workers, this observation is of relevance because it is evident that their influence on Zambian political development cannot be attributed to their numerical strength vis à vis the total labour force.

1.2 The case of Zambia

It has often been stated that modern Zambian history begins with the discovery of copper in the last century as the copper mining industry in twenty years transformed the economic basis of the territory from an agrarian to an industrial economy. Indeed, the copper industry has made Zambia a very special case in Africa. Industrialisation created by copper led to a high level of urbanisation and by 1990 more than 50 per cent of the population was located in urban areas, which leaves Zambia with one of the highest urbanisation rates on the African continent. The level of urbanisation also affected the trade union movement. Due to the central location of Zambia's major industries, along the rail-road from the capital Lusaka to the border of Zaire, the Zambian trade union movement had from an early stage a large, and in an African context, strong union organisation.

The history of the Zambian labour movement goes back to the time when industrial action originated in the mines. The first major protest of African workers occurred in 1935 after an increase in the poll-tax for African mine workers in the Copperbelt. It sparked off the first strikes in the history of industrial relations in Zambia. However, it took more than ten years before the Colonial Office recommended the formation of a collective bargaining machinery to Africans. The *Trade Union and Trade Disputes Ordinance* was passed in 1949 and it legalised the formation of African trade unions. From 1947 to 1957 African trade unions were formed in most areas of production (Bates 1971, Meebelo 1986).

The Mine Workers Union (MUZ) has been the strongest union through most of the post-colonial period due to the importance attached to copper in the national economy. Judging from the organisational network, level of education and strength vis à vis the governing authorities, it can be argued that the Zambian trade union movement is one of the most powerful union movements on the African continent, arguably, with the exception of the South African trade union movement. Another important factor which can account for the strength of the Zambian labour movement, is the relative absence of ethnic divisions. A number of studies carried out on the Zambian labour movement have pointed to the fact that the Zambian labour movement has developed a working class consciousness which limits the

utility of the term ethnicity in studies of Zambian labour relations (Epstein 1958, Gertzel 1979).

In the modern history of Zambia, trade unions have played a significant role in the political and economic development of the nation. First of all, the trade union movement was a major force in the struggle for national independence. A large part of the emergent black leadership was recruited from the labour movement and the organisational network of the trade unions was utilised in the mobilisation efforts in the struggle for independence. However, the issue of involvement in political matters split the trade union movement and as the analysis will point to, the division between politically and economically oriented trade unionists has been a major source of conflict within the union movement.

The main focus of this analysis is placed on the Zambia Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) as disputes concerning industrial policies since 1980 have involved UNIP and the Congress. ZCTU was created by an act of parliament in 1964 and was intended by the UNIP government to be a channel for communicating UNIP's policies to the workers. ZCTU was therefore initially considered an agent of the government and given considerable financial and organisational resources. As a result of the close ties between the party and the labour congress, the relationship between ZCTU, the leadership of the national unions and the rank and file has varied considerably in the period since independence. In the following analysis, the question of who controls the central political organ of the trade union movement (ZCTU) will be discussed at length. Beyond doubt, ZCTU is today the most powerful non-state association in Zambia as it embraces all nineteen national unions in the country.² ZCTU membership comprises more than 80 per cent of the total work force in the formal sector employment and the membership is today around 350,000. The Congress is financed by contributions from the affiliated unions and the national unions are required by the 1971 Industrial Relations Act to contribute 30 per cent of their membership contributions to the Congress.

Political developments in post-colonial Zambia

As in most other African post-colonial regimes, the parliamentary system of government inherited from the British colonial powers in Zambia was replaced by a one-party regime by the new national elites. The introduction

² See appendix I for a list of the unions affiliated to ZCTU in 1991, and their membership-figures.

