

Zimbabwe's Fight For Justice

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Twenty-five years ago, Zimbabwe's liberation movement came to power after years of struggle. Hopes soared that independence would bring an end to the legacy of colonial rule and apartheid power and give birth to a more equitable and just social order. But in many ways, those expectations had to be put on hold due to British and U.S. pressure, and for years Zimbabwe was compelled to maintain the inequitable land ownership patterns inherited from apartheid Rhodesia. The process of land reform is at root a struggle for justice and a challenge to the Western neoliberal model. The refusal to serve Western interests is what motivates U.S. and British hostility.

It is impossible to understand the nature of land reform in Zimbabwe without first examining the history of land allocation in Rhodesia. In 1893, invading British troops and volunteers conquered Matabeleland. Under terms of the Victoria Agreement, every British soldier and volunteer was allowed 6,000 acres of land, and within a year 10,000 square miles of the most fertile land was seized. White settlers confiscated cattle and dragooned the Ndebele people into serving as forced laborers on the land they once owned. Colonial Administrator Starr Jameson felt that by depriving the Ndebele of their cattle, he could secure their "submission and future tranquility." The Shona people also saw their cattle taken by settlers and in 1896, resentments had accumulated to the point where an uprising resulted. It took more than a year, but the British crushed the rebellion at the cost of 8,000 African lives.

In 1899, Rhodesia established reserves on the most arid land onto which the indigenous inhabitants were to be herded, where in just six years half of the indigenous population was confined. Passage of the Land Apportionment Act of 1930 forbade Africans from owning land outside of the barren reserves. During a twenty-year period beginning in 1935, the Rhodesian regime expelled a further 67,000 African families from their homes and transported them to the reserves. Dispossessed Africans were beaten and herded onto trucks at gunpoint, while bulldozers levelled their homes. As more and more people were forced from their homes, the reserves became increasingly overcrowded with people and cattle. To "solve" that problem, in 1944 the colonial government decreed that many of the reserves were overstocked and would have to be thinned out. Over the course of the next thirty-some years, more than a million cattle were either killed or confiscated by white settlers. In the ten years following the Second World War, another 100,000 people were expelled from their homes and dumped onto the reserves.

The liberation movement's successes eventually brought it to the verge of taking power and it was clear that the apartheid government of Rhodesia would not survive much longer. Although Rhodesia had declared its independence from the colonial system in 1965, Great Britain intervened to protect white privilege. Under British tutelage, the Lancaster House Conference was convened in 1979. The core issue for the liberation struggle was land, but British and American negotiators made the granting of independence to the liberation

movement conditional. The agreement that resulted from the conference imposed a number of limitations on the new government. One provision stipulated that for a period of ten years, land ownership in Zimbabwe could only be transferred on a “willing seller, willing buyer” basis, a formula that effectively stymied any meaningful attempt at land reform. Whites were also allotted a quota of 20 out of 100 seats in Parliament, far exceeding their actual percentage in the population, and the measure had the effect of making constitutional change nearly impossible.

Passage of the Land Acquisition Act in 1992 finally established a more flexible approach to land reform, but the process continued to be constrained by outside pressures. Progress was slow and by the time fast track land reform was launched in 2002, 70 percent of the richest and most productive land still remained in the hands of just 4,500 white commercial farm owners. At the same time, six million African peasants eked out a precarious existence on small farms in the “communal areas,” the land encompassing the former native reserves. Because of historically imposed overcrowding in the communal areas, the already barren land was depleted long before by deforestation and over-grazing, thus making it even more unsuitable for agriculture. More than a million landless blacks were engaged as hired labor on white commercial farms, laboring for abysmally low wages to make the few commercial landowners even wealthier. A team sent by the United Nations Development Program in 2001 reported, “Given the rapidly rising population growth rates and the decreasing opportunities for non-farm employment over the years, many rural dwellers were thrown into increasing poverty as a result of inadequate and poor-quality land for subsistence farming and unemployment. These inequities, the team said, were “the motivation for the Government’s determination to correct the past injustices caused by dispossessing the indigenous people of their land.”

Agriculture is the most significant sector of Zimbabwe’s economy. Western news reports encouraged the notion that land reform has harmed economic performance, implying that efficient farming was best left in the hands of the few wealthy white farmers, while discounting the plight of the millions of blacks who struggled for bare survival. The unspoken assumption was that only white farmers could be efficient. The concern expressed in the West for “efficiency” was in reality a mask for the preservation of white privilege. Efficiency is a relative term. Temporary economic dislocation is an unavoidable byproduct of land reform, but the only path to genuine and lasting progress is through land redistribution. There can be nothing efficient about a gross concentration of wealth in the hands of the few, while millions are condemned to lives of hopeless despair and poverty. No mainstream journalist has ever described the grotesque inequality of the situation inherited from colonialism and what this meant for those on the bottom.

Long after the liberation movement won power in Zimbabwe, the promise of land reform remained largely unfulfilled. During its first ten years, the nation was saddled with constitutional restrictions imposed by British negotiators that effectively blocked progress on land reform. Even so, during the 1980s Zimbabwe still managed to distribute three million hectares to some 70,000 families. Then came the adoption of a structural adjustment program, at the urging of the World Bank, and little more could be accomplished within the neoliberal agenda to rectify the inequity of the land ownership pattern inherited from apartheid Rhodesia. Investment was offered primarily to white owners of large commercial farms, and the structure of land ownership changed little. Negotiations beginning in 1979 determined under what conditions Great Britain would permit Zimbabwe to have the independence and self-rule that it had already won on the battlefield. These talks resulted in

the Lancaster House Agreement that was to remain in effect for ten years. Great Britain's economic and diplomatic might had extracted several concessions from the liberation movement. The main British demand was that the existing land ownership pattern to remain as it was. Land could not be confiscated but could only be acquired on a "willing buyer, willing seller" formula, which precluded any meaningful prospect of land reform. Under terms of the Lancaster House Agreement, Great Britain was required to provide funding for the purchase of farms. Inevitably, land that was offered for sale under the program was often marginal in quality and tended to be widely dispersed, making resettlement an expensive and difficult to administer process. Nor was the arrangement sustainable. After commercial farmers sold off marginal holdings in drier areas, farm sales slowed to a trickle. Once the agreement expired in 1990, Great Britain urged its continuation. Continued British funding for the purchase of land, it was emphasized, would be predicated on extension of the "willing buyer, willing seller" program. Furthermore, the British suggested, such purchases should be limited largely to barren regions and land abutting communal areas. One observer noted, "As for the British government, which has taken such an intimate interest in the land question and whose financial support for the resettlement program is crucial...it appears determined that, by perpetuating the spirit of Lancaster House, it will ensure that the feeble flame of socialism still flickering in Zimbabwe in 1990 will be snuffed out. So it seems likely that peasants will have to wait much longer for land reform."

Land was at the heart of the liberation struggle, but the Zimbabwean delegation to the Lancaster House talks agreed to British and U.S. terms only after receiving promises of Western funding for the purchase of land. In time those promises would be prove to be worthless. The limited prospect of success for the imposed market-based approach to land reform hinged on British and American financial support. Predictably, the US\$1 to 1.5 billion the U.S. promised to Zimbabwean liberation forces in 1976 in an agreement to end guerrilla warfare never materialized. Great Britain promised much but delivered little. Once it obtained what it wanted in the Lancaster House Agreement, it sharply scaled down its commitment. Yet Great Britain failed to match even that inadequate amount and by 1996, when Great Britain ceased funding the program altogether, it had contributed barely more than half the promised funds. The paltry US\$45 million contributed by Great Britain paled in comparison to the untold billions it had forcibly expropriated from the people and land throughout the long colonial period. By emphasizing that land should be held in so-called "capable" hands, British officials sought to maintain white privilege and ensure the continued dominance of the agricultural sector by white commercial farmers at the expense of the destitute indigenous population.

Zimbabwe finally abandoned the "willing buyer, willing seller" formula in 1997. The formula was crippled from the start by parsimonious British funding, and it was a clear that the program's modest goals were more than Great Britain was willing to countenance. In a letter to the Zimbabwean Minister of Agriculture in November of that year, British Secretary of State for International Development Clare Short wrote, "I should make it clear that we do not accept that Britain has a special responsibility to meet the costs of land purchase in Zimbabwe." Referring to earlier British assistance funding, Short curtly stated, "I am told that there were discussions in 1989 and 1996 to explore the possibility of further assistance. However that is all in the past." Short complained of "unresolved" issues, such as "the way in which land would be acquired and compensation paid - clearly it would not help the poor of Zimbabwe if it was done in a way which undermined investor confidence." Short was concerned about the interests of corporate investors, then. In closing, Short wrote that "a program of rapid land acquisition as you now seem to envisage would be impossible for us

to support,” as it would damage the “prospects for attracting investment.”

Market-driven land reform was an abysmal failure from every standpoint save that of protecting wealth and privilege. The number of resettled farmers never approached the numbers necessary for the nation to advance economically and alleviate widespread rural poverty. By the time Zimbabwe ended the program, the pattern of land ownership was still substantially unchanged from that of apartheid Rhodesia, no doubt as intended by Western advocates of the market approach. The market approach in Zimbabwe made an interesting contrast with U.S. backing for non-market based land reform in post-war Japan, Taiwan and South Korea, where it was recognized as a necessary measure for rapid development and economic recovery. In those countries, land reform was also seen as a way to counter the appeal of communism, a factor the West no longer feels it has to take into consideration. But the market-based approach placed the burden precisely on those least able to bear it. “The latest estimated cost to the southern African region for eradicating political apartheid is [US]\$115 billion, which is being paid for by southern Africans,” one analyst noted. “Why is that the subjugated people of the region are required to pay the bills of white supremacists – aided and abetted for many years by American and European countries?”

By the 1998, mounting frustration and resentment over the slow pace of land reform induced rural workers, impoverished by ESAP, to take matters in their own hands and occupy portions of several large white-owned farms. In some areas, local officials gave tacit, and sometimes not so tacit, support to these actions. Land occupations, while minuscule in scale and highly localized compared to the massive and unremitting expropriation of land from blacks under colonial rule, served to put the issue of land reform on the political center stage in Zimbabwe. As one study put it, “land invasions is the generic term used to denote a negative view of politically organized ‘trespass’ of farms led by war veterans. Invasions involve temporary visits of a few days and sporadic repeat visits. They do not entail the extended stays.” The number of farms experiencing occupations peaked at around 800 in 2000, but this fell to around 300 the following year. Over the years, a total of approximately 300 occupations were accompanied by violence that were often the acts of opportunistic criminals practicing extortion. Several case studies concluded that where there were grievances against specific landowners, farms tended to be marked for occupation. Landowners who had mistreated workers, paid excessively low wages or exhibited overt racism were far more likely to have portions of their farms occupied than those who had shown more respect for their workers. “Past studies had all predicted that inadequate land delivery would precipitate violent confrontations,” pointed out a Zimbabwean economist. “There has been an instrumentalization of violence although the scale of it has been exaggerated and it has been wrongly made the focus of the whole land reform issue. In fact, compared to rural and urban violence in South Africa, Ireland or Brazil, the level in Zimbabwe has been quite low.”

A total of around 2,900 white-owned commercial farms were earmarked for redistribution in the fast-track reform of 2002. Owners of listed farms were notified to stop farming within 45 days and given an additional 45 days to move from their farms. Land subject to acquisition comprised the following categories: unused land, underutilized land, land owned by absentee owners, land owned by a person possessing multiple farms, land exceeding size limits (which varied by region), and land contiguous with communal lands. Owners of farms marked for redistribution were told that they would be compensated for improvements made on the land, but not for the land itself, which was stolen from its original owners during the colonial era. White farm owners who lost land in the process were often allowed

to keep a reasonably sized portion on which they could continue to farm. Those commercial landowners whose only farm was taken were told that another farm of suitable quality would be given to them. "All genuine and well meaning white farmers who wish to pursue a farming career as loyal citizens of this country will have land to do so," promised President Robert Mugabe. Although some white commercial landowners chose to remain and continue farming in Zimbabwe, many chose to move abroad.

Western reports repeatedly charged that land reform was an exercise in rewarding President Mugabe's "friends and cronies." With 90,000-some families settled throughout the first twenty years of independence, and an additional 134,000 receiving allocations during fast track land reform in 2000-2, one can only conclude that President Mugabe was an extraordinarily popular man to have so many friends and close colleagues. Inevitably in such a complex process, there were officials who abused their office and arranged to be given multiple farms. An investigation undertaken by the Presidential Land Resettlement Committee identified 329 government and party officials who had profited in this manner, and later investigations were to find 70 more. The image of land reform as presented by Western media is almost solely one of corruption, yet such a portrayal is deliberately and highly misleading. Out of the 134,000 resettled farmers, those who abused the process to grab multiple farms accounted for a minuscule 0.3 percent of all allocations. These individuals characterized the entire land reform process, Western reporters told us. But to accept that argument, one would have to regard 99.7 percent of land recipients as exceptions to the rule. Nor did Western reports ever have an explanation for why many of those who received land were members of the opposition MDC. There was in fact no political test, and the process was open to anyone who cared to apply. However, the corrupt few in no way invalidated the experience of the many given hope for the first time in their lives. Clearly the focus on "cronyism" in the Western press was a red herring, meant to invalidate the process of land reform without arguing the issue on its merits. Land reform was presented in a slanted manner, ignoring the manifest fact that for all of its problems, the process has established a far more equitable distribution than the obscene concentration of wealth inherited from the apartheid era. Western reports habitually ignored the plight of millions of starving black farmers and their families eking out existence in barren communal areas while a few wealthy commercial farmers and corporate owners flourished. Another oft-repeated myth was that land reform spelled ruin for the agricultural sector. Western reports asserted that the break up of commercial farms led to a permanent loss of production, subtly, or in some cases not so subtly, implying that black farmers were ignorant and incapable of farming efficiently. No evidence was offered aside from anecdotal stories about withering crops while downplaying or ignoring the context of severe drought.

What we in the West "know" about Zimbabwe is what the corporate media choose to tell us. These stories go largely unchallenged, and few bothered to dwell on the stories that never got told. We heard nothing from black farmers, nor did we hear of the struggle of the indigenous population – the vast majority of Zimbabwe, after all – to overcome the legacy of the apartheid era. Political commentator George Shire observed, "A great deal of this lack of insight into Zimbabwe's woes has to do with the fact that knowledge about Zimbabwe is produced in the West within a racialized colonial context." More disconcertingly, very few people in the West ever pondered whether the U.S. and Great Britain had the *right* to dictate how Zimbabwe should conduct its own affairs. It was assumed that Zimbabweans were incapable of properly managing their own affairs, but as South African President Thabo Mbeki pointed out. "No self-respecting Zimbabwean with any pride in his country will accept that another should determine his destiny." In Africa, the sheer effrontery of the Western

belief in a sense of mission to dominate others did not go unnoticed. Mbeki's assessment of the campaign against Zimbabwe was that it had taken on something of the nature of a witch hunt. "In the heated atmosphere that surrounds the issue of Zimbabwe, the tendency to pose as high priests at the inquisition, hungry for the blood of the accused, has taken root – as though to demonize and punish is the way to solve the most difficult problems. In this situation, as in war, the truth soon becomes a casualty.

A popular assertion in Western media was that land reform caused the drop in the production of maize, the staple crop of Zimbabwe. Commercial farmland devoted to growing maize declined after fast-track land reform only because commercial farm owners declined in numbers. If all landowners are taken into account, then the total area planted in maize at the height of fast-track land reform actually *grew*. Toward the end of 2002, the World Food Program reported, "The area planted to cereals actually increased by 9 percent over last year, with maize increasing by 14 percent, mainly due to expansion in the communal and resettled areas." This was a far cry from the demeaning picture usually offered of ignorant and inept black farmers incapable of growing crops. Little attention was paid to the effects of drought over the period of 2002-3, which devastated crops not only in Zimbabwe but in neighboring countries as well. All of the nations affected by drought saw a plunge in crop output, and in some cases it the drop was steeper than what Zimbabwe experienced.

It wasn't easy to separate the effects of drought from disruption caused by land reform in determining the overall impact of the process on agricultural production, but Western reporters didn't even try. Losses due to drought were routinely attributed to land reform. There could be no valid comparison between productivity by white commercial farmers and black communal and resettled farmers without taking into account a number of factors. According to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, "Yields on commercial farms are on average four times higher than on communal farms, in part due to inherent differences in land quality, but mainly because of facilities for supplementary irrigation, greater use of improved technology and management practices, as well as better access to working capital." None of these factors need be denied to resettled farmers. Resettled farmers are able to enjoy the immediate benefits of farming on richer soil, but the other factors will take longer, as new farmers build up the capital necessary to effect improvements.

Western reports persisted in viewing land reform primarily through the prism of its immediate effect upon production, implying that the effect would be permanent. This distorted view had an obvious utility for those who opposed a more egalitarian distribution of land. Yet, the success of any land-reform process can only be understood by examining its long-term results, thus it will be years before a proper assessment can be made of fast-track land reform in Zimbabwe. According to a report by the United Nations Development Program, "a transition period before the full benefits" are achieved from land reform "is to be expected," requiring a minimum of five years. The substantial economic benefits realized by resettled farmers must also be considered. One study determined that, given start-up grants, subsidized credit and adequate inputs, "land reform can generate a sustainable income flow for the beneficiaries, in year 15 reaching 570-690 percent of their incomes before the project." The same study also examined the effect of land reform on production and employment, and concluded that although "some disruption of the agricultural production should be expected" in the initial stage, "production achieved by the resettled farmers after 15 years would be significant." Professor Bill Kinsey of the University of Zimbabwe carefully investigated the results of earlier land reform resettlements, and concluded that "any attempts at comprehensive evaluation of the benefits of land reform in

less than a generation are ill-advised.” Since small-scale farming is more labor intensive than operations on commercial farms, land reform should in the long-term result in a net increase in employment. Therefore it can be expected that increasing wealth across a broader spectrum of the population should act as a spur to what has been sluggish growth in Zimbabwe.

A report issued by four economists, including two employed by the World Bank, stated, “Economic theory is very clear on the fact that a one-time redistribution of assets can, in an environment of imperfect markets, be associated with permanently higher levels of growth.” Conversely, “inequality in the distribution of land ownership is associated with lower subsequent growth.” A survey of resettled households covering the years from 1983 determined that “the income of resettled households is more than five times as high as that of communal households in similar areas,” and their “productivity has increased significantly.” Given enough time, the increase in productivity means that crop yield should improve substantially, although it may never match that of commercial farms, due to the greater possibilities for mechanization on large farms. It is important to note, however, that the percentage of underutilized land in large commercial farms averaged about 40 to 50 percent in the regions with the best land, and 85 percent where the land was less suitable for farming. Studies indicate, furthermore, that “productivity decreases exponentially with increase in farm size in all natural regions of Zimbabwe.” Every study finds that resettled farmers plant a far larger percentage of land than do commercial farmers. Therefore, the difference in yield between commercial farms and small-scale farming is to a certain extent offset by the greater utilization of land by small-scale farmers. Those farmers who were resettled in the first phase of land reform in the 1980s “represent 5 percent of the population, but produce between 15 and 20 percent of the marketed output of maize and cotton, while also largely satisfying their own food consumption needs.” The report concludes, “The best available data show that the performance of resettled farmers in Zimbabwe is better than is conventionally believed,” and that a well-designed land reform program “can have a large impact on equity as well as productivity.”

These conclusions were confirmed by another study that surveyed nearly 400 resettled households in 1983-84. Follow-up interviews took place in 1987 and then again annually from 1992 to 1998. The study found that “there has been an impressive accumulation of assets,” for resettled families while “increases in returns to these assets” were “important in generating the dramatic increase in crop incomes observed in these households.” The authors noted that this “finding is robust to a wide variety of econometric concerns.” Despite a significant increase in household size, per capita incomes in the surveyed farms grew about 160 percent, which the authors pointed out, “is impressive in the context of a country in which per capita incomes have been stagnant since 1980.” Much of the reallocated commercial farmland was uncultivated prior to resettlement, thus requiring extensive clearing and stumping before planting could take place. Time constraints meant that fields could only be partially cleared and it often took years to complete the process. “Without full clearing and stumping,” the authors of the study reported, “ox-plowing cannot be done efficiently.” The same problem arose for many farmers resettled under fast-track land reform in 2002, given the large percentage of underutilized land on commercial farms. Over time newly resettled farms gain expertise in plowing, use of inputs and learning which crops grow best on the land. These are some of the factors that lead resettled farmers to steadily increase efficiency and realize greater incomes.

Difficulties in the first years of resettlement are to be expected and match historical

patterns. "Experience shows that welfare levels are almost universally lower following resettlement than before," found Bill Kinsey of the University of Zimbabwe in one of his studies. "The period following resettlement is one of stress and adjustment from which most - but not all - households will recover. There is then an upturn as farmers complete the post-relocation adjustment process and begin to reap benefits from their enhanced resource base. As experience accumulates and collaborative efforts begin, benefits continue to grow - often quite rapidly." However, a crucial factor is the degree of growth in the national economy. Unless growth is dynamic enough to absorb a growing rural population, then the increase in the size of resettled households will tend to bring down the standard of living. Unfortunately, Western sanctions act as a drag on the economy, and as long as they remain in place, urban economic growth is unlikely to be strong enough to absorb excess rural population. The success or failure of land reform is heavily dependent on a second factor as well, one that is also adversely affected by sanctions. Kinsey emphasized that the degree of "growth of welfare is extremely sensitive both to specific interventions," such as "timely delivery of inputs" for example, but also "to the wider economic environment." The ability of the government of Zimbabwe to provide the necessary inputs to support resettled farmers has been hampered by the Western sanctions. The success of land reform can only be judged over an extended period of time; thus all Western condemnations of its effect on productivity are essentially meaningless except in terms of propaganda. A proper assessment of land reform should also take into consideration sanctions-imposed constraints, which directly hinder the very factors that are so necessary for success. Ironically, those in the West who most loudly complain about the effect of land reform on productivity are also the most committed to the continuation of sanctions.

Western criticism of land reform predated the fast-track program. Already by the late 1990's, land reform was receiving a heated reception in Western circles. Kinsey argued that such "negative assessments of Zimbabwe's land reform have both been premature and have used inappropriate criteria." The passage of time necessary to evaluate the results of land reform "has yet to be achieved even for Zimbabwe's earliest resettlement schemes," observed Kinsey, "yet sweeping judgments on the program began to appear within just a few years of its inception." Compounding the rashness of the rush to judgment was the fact that Zimbabwe's land reform program "has been more complex and diverse than most." It is a paradox, Kinsey wrote, "that no critique to date actually focused fully on the program's original set of objectives," among which were poverty alleviation, providing opportunity to the landless and bringing abandoned or underutilized land back into productive use. "Instead most appear to have been sidetracked unwittingly into the vacuous debate on agricultural productivity." Although Kinsey made these observations at the beginning of 1998, the pattern since that time has remained unchanged in all respects differing only in that detractors have become more emphatically cocksure. Kinsey's research and surveys of resettled farmers demonstrated to him "that radical land redistributions do, after a lag, result in both more equally distributed incomes and higher incomes." Furthermore, there is "substantial evidence that poverty reduction through land reform is indeed growth-friendly."

By all accounts of those who have devoted their lives to studying land reform, any short-term assessment of results is both meaningless and misleading. Western critics roundly condemn land reform based on the unrealistic standard of instantaneous total success, against which the first years for resettled farmers are bound to fall short. Despite their rhetoric, it was not productivity that concerned the critics, who were universally indifferent to the gross inequality inherited from the apartheid system and its enormous waste of human potential. What could have been more unproductive than the consignment of

millions of people to lives of desperate misery and poverty, condemned to exclusion from any meaningful role in the economic life of the country? No, productivity wasn't the issue; it was the desire to perpetuate white privilege and protect the interests of Western investors. Perhaps the most astonishing aspect of the Western demonization campaign against Zimbabwe was that so many on the liberal-left wound up supporting such an agenda under the cover of "human rights." Skepticism about U.S. and British motives in the Middle East wasn't always transferred to other areas of the globe, and many embraced the misinformation they were fed about Zimbabwe, blind to every injustice except those which U.S. and British leaders pointed out.

Land reform is not only a matter of economic imperatives. It is a matter of justice. Zimbabwe could no longer tolerate the grossly unjust distribution of land created by colonial expropriation. The average white farmer owned vastly larger tracts of land than did black farmers and the land he owned was far more suitable for agriculture. White commercial farms usually far exceeded the needs of any one family. White commercial farms averaged 2,500 hectares in size, while black farmers struggled to survive on an average of 2 hectares of arid land. So concentrated was the wealth that a mere 66 white farmers owned a total of 2 million hectares, almost two thirds of the total arable land in Zimbabwe. Perhaps the most striking example was the gigantic Debshan Estate, owned by the Oppenheimer family, which totalled 137,000 hectares and sprawled across four provinces. Many large tracts of land belonged to absentee owners, including members of the British House of Lords and other prominent British citizens, a fact not entirely unrelated to British efforts to derail land reform.

Under fast track land reform, two models of resettlement were implemented. Model A1 aimed to create a large number of small farms, a process which it was hoped would decongest overcrowded communal areas. The purpose of the second model, A2, was to establish black-owned commercial farms that were expected to become productive within a short period of time. By the end of July 2002, more than 127,000 households had received land under the A1 model, averaging 33 hectares apiece. The commercial farms that were allocated for this purpose, in contrast, averaged nearly 1,600 hectares. Contrary to the image presented in the West, small black farmers responded with enthusiasm and the take up rate of reallocated land on A1 farms was 97 percent. Resettlement under Model A2 was more problematic, as there were cases where officials had neglected to inform applicants of selection. Former owners in many cases legally contested the process, which often led to the issuance of provisional court orders barring new farmers from taking up allocated land. Because of such factors, the take up rate for Model A2 farms was only 66 percent in the first year of fast-track land reform. In all, more than 7,000 individuals received land under Model A2, with farms averaging 303 hectares in size.

A land audit conducted in early 2003 found that beneficiaries of land under Model A1 generally "expressed happiness" with the land allocated to them, and many "stated that even against the unfavorable weather conditions in the 2002 to 2003 agricultural season, they had harvested better yields than in the past." However, beneficiaries pointed out that supportive infrastructure such as schools and clinics were not yet in place. Resettled farmers in Mashonaland Central said that the inability to obtain loans due to lack of collateral was a factor limiting productivity. Other negative factors included a shortage of inputs such as fertilizer and seed, and a lack of tillage services. In most provinces, immediate decongestion of communal areas was minimal, because resettled farmers failed to relinquish old land holdings as a form of insurance, in case former owners were to win

legal challenges. More importantly, the lack of infrastructure in many areas made it difficult if not impossible to move one's entire family to newly settled farms. Although construction of schools, roads and clinics in resettled areas was in progress, it was impossible to meet the demand in such a short time frame, leading resettled farmers to split their families and maintain old homes over the short term. At a national level, it was estimated that the decongestion rate in communal areas was 10 percent. Land reform is an ongoing process, so this percentage can be expected to improve over the next few years, but under the circumstances there is a limit to what can be achieved.

The development of irrigation projects was of particular importance for the success of land reform. Existing irrigation systems were primarily located on large commercial farms and designed for single users. One of the challenges inherent in land reform was the unsuitability of these irrigation systems for multiple users, entailing the need for their redesign. In the short term, the lack of clear-cut rules for cooperation and sharing of a single irrigation system among resettled farmers, as well as difficulty in accurately assessing the allocation of water and electricity bills, often led to lack of cooperation and the development of disputes. To make matters worse, former owners and disgruntled farm workers vandalized a significant amount of irrigation equipment on commercial farms. Switching to a redesigned irrigation system presented its own difficulties. Smaller farms require more modestly sized pumps and transformers, which are in short supply.

As important as it was to revamp the irrigation system in resettled areas, the development of irrigation in the arid communal areas was a more pressing exigency. Prior to fast-track land reform, only six percent of the land in communal and earlier resettled areas was irrigated, as compared to 73 percent of the land on large-scale commercial farms. Since commercial farms were situated in regions more favorable for agriculture, the location of irrigation systems was in inverse proportion to need. The government planned to establish 36 irrigation schemes in dry land communal and resettlement areas. The irrigation project was expected to rely on water in existing dams and it was hoped this would lead to increased yields in dry land areas and allow nearly year-round farming. Irrigation would also help to limit or delay the loss of farmland due to rising temperatures. Unfortunately, progress on the irrigation schemes was held up by the lack of foreign exchange due to Western sanctions. Budgetary limitations slowed but did not halt progress on irrigation systems. In Masvingo Province, a total of US\$2.36 million was allocated for construction of the Nuanetsi irrigation scheme and what was to be the nation's largest inland dam, at Tokwe-Mukorsi. The project was launched in 1997, but has since lagged behind schedule due to a shortage of foreign currency. Late payments to the Italian joint venture engaged in construction on the project led to a number of work stoppages, and the project's budget ballooned alarmingly with the passage of time. Consequently, this project, which was initially slated to be finished in 2002, can now be completed no earlier than 2006. Once the project is fully operational, it is estimated that Masvingo Province alone would yield an annual bounty of 2.1 million tons of maize, substantially exceeding current production levels for the entire nation. Eight other major dam construction projects currently underway have been similarly plagued by erratic funding and frequent work stoppages, as the government sought to juggle expenditures of its limited supply of foreign exchange among numerous competing needs.

The situation was no different in the fertilizer industry, where difficulties in maintaining production levels and distribution directly impacted on agricultural productivity. Despite a downturn in production, demand for fertilizer more than doubled as a result of land

redistribution, and the industry responded by sharply increasing prices, putting its products beyond the reach of the least affluent farmers. The fertilizer industry blamed foreign exchange shortages for its inability to import sufficient quantities of necessary raw materials such as sulfur, ammonia, potash and chemicals, as well as spare parts necessary to keep its factories running at full capability.

Newly resettled farmers often had to cope with reallocated land that had lain unused and would require years to clear completely. Furthermore, by the time the deadline had passed for former commercial farm owners to vacate their farms, more than two thirds were refusing to do so and remained on the land. This led to major delays for new farmers who hoped to take up the land in time to plant for the next crop season, and the legal process further tied up many farms where commercial farmers filed court challenges. The legal system lagged badly in confirming transfers, and almost one year had passed, only seven percent of the allocated farms in Mashonaland East and five percent in Mashonaland West had been legally confirmed. The situation was not much better in the other provinces, and many resettled farmers could not take up the land because the farms had yet to be vacated. By mid-2003, slightly more than half of the farms in Mashonaland Central were still occupied by dispossessed commercial farmers. In Mashonaland East, a total of 349 farms remained in the hands of commercial farmers. Under such circumstances, there was little or nothing a newly settled farmer could do if he or she hoped to produce a crop for the season.

The multiplicity of organizations at various levels that managed the land reform process, including such tasks as identification of land, planning, demarcation of new plots, infrastructure development, selection of applicants and assistance to new farmers, inevitably led to unintended consequences. President Mugabe formed a land review committee to investigate and examine the land review process, identify its successes and failures, uncover abuses and recommend actions. The land review committee found that irregularities resulted mainly from “unwieldy” implementation of the program. “The welter of ministries, departments, parastatals (state-owned firms), committees, subcommittees, informal groups, task forces and related organs that somehow had a role to play in program execution,” the committee reported, “made for a dispersed authority and decision-making arrangement.” This in turn “opened the way for some individuals to exert influence on the process of program execution beyond what might have been possible under a more close-knit and centralized structure.” The loose structure was a deliberate policy choice, intended to devolve decision-making down to the local level as much as possible on the belief that local leaders could best administer the program in their immediate areas. The drawback to that approach, unfortunately, was that it created opportunities for unscrupulous individuals and distortions by persons of influence. Land auditors found that in some cases, provincial and district officials had personally allocated land to favored individuals and failed to deliver notification letters to successful applicants. There were also instances where prominent local and national officials directly interfered in the selection process. Some provincial governors, district officials and chiefs bypassed the selection process to ensure through unofficial channels that they and favored individuals would receive land. Because there was no single authority responsible for the allocation of land, it was not unusual for authorities at different levels to assign the same plot of land to two or more individuals.

The land review committee identified individuals who had taken multiple farms. At the ceremony marking completion of the report, Mugabe vowed to “take full cognizance” of its findings and recommendations and to take “urgent action.” ZANU-PF Chairman John Nkomo was tasked with implementing the recommendations of the land audit committee. Nkomo

approached his job with serious determination and recovered more than 200,000 hectares in just a few months. President Mugabe made the anti-corruption drive a national priority, announcing on April 18, 2004, "In the drive to end corruption, no one will be too big or too small. The law is rough with criminals and we shall shed no tears for them." Mugabe made clear that corruption had hurt the nation's recovery."

The anti-corruption drive succeeded in netting a number of officials and businessmen who had been engaged in illegal financial dealings, and land was confiscated from those who had abused the land reform process. The campaign to eliminate corruption made truly impressive strides in a very short period of time, but Minister John Nkomo faced a barrage of disparagement as his crusade to clean up government succeeded in winning him powerful enemies. Vain attempts were made to discredit him by spreading the rumor that he was restoring land to white commercial farmers. Lashing back at self-interested officials who were doing their best to hinder and impede the anti-corruption campaign, Nkomo proclaimed, "I won't be intimidated, perturbed or frustrated by those causing all this hullabaloo. There are some people now abusing ZANU-PF for personal ambitions and gain. As chairman of ZANU-PF and, indeed, as minister, I will stand firm in defense of the party. ZANU-PF has come a long way and at different times it has had infiltrators and people planted within - the fifth columnists - but they have always been flushed out." Nkomo said he would not engage in mudslinging, and illegally seized farms would simply be confiscated. "Sooner or later ZANU-PF shall cleanse itself of these elements." Nkomo announced that "we have since moved to repossess some of this excess land. Those on the waiting list will be offered this land. There is a lot of resistance but I can assure you the process is going on." At the Fifth Session of the Fifth Parliament, President Mugabe promised that irregularities which "occurred in the process of land reform are now being attended to so they can get corrected. The Presidency is dealing with this matter and at the end of the exercise, some measure of justice and fairness will have been attained." Mugabe affirmed that his "Government will remain resolute in its efforts to eradicate the cancerous scourge of corruption in all its manifestations."

It was Zimbabwe's jettisoning of the structural adjustment program and its implementation of a non-market based land reform triggered U.S. and British hostility and the imposition of sanctions. The effect of sanctions was so harsh that the economy nearly collapsed in the difficult years of 2002-3. Measures have been taken to reverse the decline, and Zimbabwe has made remarkable strides. The road ahead remains difficult under the continued onslaught of Western sanctions and pressure and the unwelcome return of drought this year, which wiped out a major portion of the nation's crops.

Land reform in Zimbabwe was meant not only to redress the injustice of colonial theft, but also to reduce pervasive poverty and raise the standard of living for resettled farmers and contribute to the economic progress of the nation. Sylvestre Maunganidze, head of political affairs at the Zimbabwe Embassy in Georgia, said, "We realized that unless we maximized production we would not be able to survive the onslaught of the West. We are not a perfect people but we know that there is a group of people outside of Zimbabwe who would only be waiting to pounce on our mistakes but the only response we have for them is to ask them to come back in two years and they would see a transformed Zimbabwe. We thought we had good partners abroad and did not know that we were killing ourselves with this dependency. Now we are winning ourselves from dependency and we want to be independent both politically and economically." Zimbabwe, he said, will no longer be "an appendage of the industrial capitalist system."

It was precisely this independence which made Zimbabwe a target of Western hostility. U.S. Ambassador to South Africa Jendayi Frazer promised the U.S. would take a more active role in trying to effect regime change in Zimbabwe. To all appearances, the U.S. is preparing to ratchet up the pressure on Zimbabwe. In her confirmation hearings for Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice named Zimbabwe as one of the nations she termed "outposts of tyranny." Referring to Rice's statement, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Thomas Woods said that "helping to advance the president's call for greater freedom in the world is our core mission in Zimbabwe." On March 2, 2005, President Bush issued a message to Congress in which he stated that the situation in Zimbabwe "has not been resolved." The "actions and policies" of the government of Zimbabwe "pose a continuing unusual and extraordinary threat to the foreign policy of the United States. For these reasons, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency blocking the property of persons undermining democratic processes or institutions in Zimbabwe and to maintain in force the sanctions to respond to this threat." That tiny Zimbabwe posed a threat to the foreign policy of the powerful United States was a laughable assertion, but one which no one in the West questioned. It would be more truthful to point out that it was the U.S. that was threatening Zimbabwe.

Against all odds, Zimbabwe is winning. Despite Western sanctions, diplomatic and economic pressure and meddling in the nation's internal affairs, Zimbabwe is not only recovering but achieving impressive results. Land was given to those who needed it, the economy is rebounding, corruption is being rooted out, and the nation has earned a prominent place as a leader in the fight for justice. Zimbabwe has charted an independent course, determined to serve the needs of its people and not those of Western capital. In the face of unrelenting Western hostility, the transformation of Zimbabwe has set an inspiring example which those in the West who profess to care about justice and egalitarianism should be applauding rather than condemning.

Despite Western hostility, Zimbabwe remains resolute. "We have not sought to quarrel with any nation. We have no other ambition than to remain sovereign as we cooperate and respect the sovereignty of others," President Mugabe declared. "It cannot be the rule of law that is the matter, for here they massacred thousands as they colonized our country and pillaged our resources. We cannot be a nation worth its name if we succumb to and acquiesce in the sheer erosion of our sovereignty." The liberation of African peoples from the yoke of colonialism was an historic and impressive achievement, yet as long as the West continues to impose its imperatives on the continent, true independence has yet to be won. Africa must fight for its second liberation, the right to be master of its own fate, and in this struggle Zimbabwe is leading the way, a beacon of hope throughout the continent. "Through our land reform program," President Mugabe observed, "we have raised the banner of Africa's second struggle, the struggle for her economic emancipation. That is the core of the second African revolution, indeed, of the rebirth of Africa." Western leaders recognize the importance of this struggle, aware of its potential for sending the winds of change sweeping through Africa and perhaps beyond. It is fear of that prospect that is the source of the West's intractable hatred and scorn for President Mugabe and his nation's struggle for economic justice. For all of their talk of democracy, Western leaders recognize that this is in fact a struggle between the needs of African people and the avarice of capital. It is a struggle for the soul and future of Africa itself.

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