

Zimbabwe: The Past is the
Future

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Edited by

David Harold-Barry



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David Harold-Barry taught history at St Ignatius College before moving to Silveira House Leadership and Development Training Centre in Chishawasha, as Director of Training and subsequently Director of the Centre. He is a Jesuit priest and spent some years in the training of young members of the Society of Jesus. Later he joined the leadership team of the Jesuits in Zimbabwe and has now returned to Silveira House as a writer in the Research Department.

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Alexander Kanengoni trained as a teacher and taught briefly before going to join the liberation struggle in 1974. After Zimbabwe's independence in 1980, he went to the University of Zimbabwe and majored in English literature. In 1983 he joined the Ministry of Education and Culture as project officer responsible for the education of ex-combatants and refugees. In 1988 he joined the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Service and worked there until 2002, when he became a farmer. Alexander's previously published work includes the novels: *Vicious Circle* (1983), *When the Rainbird Cries* (1988) *Echoing Silences* (1997) and a collection of short stories, *Effortless Tears* (1993).

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Dududzile Tafara is the Chimurenga name of a war veteran who has worked in the field of rural development in Zimbabwe since independence.

The Zimbabwe Liberators' Platform is a registered non-partisan, non-government organisation formed by war veterans whose core business is to advocate for peace, democracy, good governance and development. Their first objective is to set up a forum for refocusing on the original aims and objectives of the liberation struggle. Its membership is countrywide and drawn from former liberation war fighters, detainees and war collaborators, workers, youth, peasants, students, trade unionists, members of churches and civic organisations.

Freedom for supporters of the government only, for members of one party only - no matter how numerous they might be - is no freedom at all. Freedom is always freedom for those who think differently.

Rosa Luxemburg

Justice is the first condition of humanity.

Wole Soyinka

In one way the Zimbabwe election sets an example to all democrats. It inspires even as it appals. It is a brilliant moment in the history of elections, in Africa or anywhere else. It registers the attraction and the power of democracy as they've seldom been seen before. Where in our own continent of ingrates, would people queue for 15 minutes, let alone 20 hours, to make their point? Where, simultaneously, has any other leader gone to such lengths as Robert Mugabe to confer democratic legitimacy on himself? While he serially violates the substance of democracy, he can't do without its semblance. Each side, voter and dictator, pays tribute to what democracy is meant to be. It could be called a kind of apotheosis.

Hugo Young
The Guardian, March 12, 2002

We are in a time of great suffering in Zimbabwe, but one thing is clear: never before has there been such a wealth of documentation about the events of our history as there is today. However, documentation itself is like an unexploited seam of ore until it is mined and processed and refined. Therefore, I welcome this collection of essays, which does just that. Jesus told us: 'Do not be afraid of them. For everything that is now covered will be uncovered, and everything now hidden will be made clear' [Matt 10:26].

The writers you will meet here make things clear. I share with them the great desire that we all understand what has been happening in our country and learn from the sad events we are witnessing. The government wants docile acceptance of its policies and actions. But if truth dwells within us we cannot accept the trampling on human rights that have marked our recent past.

I believe we are called to preach the values of the Kingdom of God: love, holiness, humility, respect for others and their property, to promote peace and non-violence; we are called to feel for others, to be gentle, compassionate, understanding, sincere, truthful; we are called to be human and integrated.

This means that we put people before things, that we are God-centred, forgiving, self-controlled, prayerful, that we become healers and are ready to sacrifice ourselves for others and not to take advantage of them, that we suffer for the truth and judge ourselves before we judge others, that we are joyful, the salt of the earth and the light of the world. We are called to respect the poor, to be renewed with God's vision [John 3:5], to be motivated by the Holy Spirit, to be free and to free others [John 8:36] and to be full of hope.

Unless we can stretch our heads, our hands and our hearts to such desires we will be doomed to repeat the cycle of violence and the struggle we are now experiencing. I believe these essays are an excellent contribution to the process of awareness and conversion that our country needs today.

Pius A Ncube
Archbishop of Bulawayo

'We build the road and the road builds us.' This adage, much used in development parlance, can easily apply to the struggle for Zimbabwe. We thought there was a certain closure about the date 1980 – that the victory was won and all we had to do was 'enjoy the fruits'. Events around the turn of the new century have shown how naïve we were. We now realise that the 'fruits' do not tumble into our laps. We have to wrestle everyday with forces bent on appropriating these fruits to selfish ends. And in that continuing struggle for justice we ourselves are built into a new people.

In the present crisis people ask, 'how is it possible that we have reached where we are now?' No one can claim to have foreseen the extent of the catastrophe we now experience. The papers in this collection grew out of a desire at Silveira House, Chishawasha, to understand what has happened. They are not the findings of a symposium nor were they produced under pressure. They are the considered reflections from different angles on our history since independence. The editor has made no attempt to point the writers in any particular direction. As a result, although there is much common ground, there are also remarkable divergences of view about recent events and their origins. There is also much divergence of method. Some of us are academics, some practitioners in daily civic struggles and some of us are 'the ordinary people' who go about their daily business but have something to say.

I would particularly like to thank all the contributors for the time they have taken to write. They are actors in the ongoing drama and it has not been easy to create space for measured reflection. Dieter Scholz, the director of Silveira House, suggested the collection in the first place and Janice McLaughlin solicited many of the papers. I am particularly indebted to Irene Staunton and Murray McCartney of Weaver Press for their patience in seeing this collection through all its stages of delivery. They worked closely with Rosalie Wilson in the final stages of editing. Finally Diakonia of Sweden, in the person of Ulf Riccardsson, and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation of Germany, in the person of Anton Bösl, have provided the encouragement and the resources to enable us to spend much time on this task.

If this collection contributes to an understanding of where we have come from and helps us to design our future wisely, it will have done well.

David Harold-Barry SJ
Silveira House, Chishawasha
March 2004

Current politics in Zimbabwe: confronting the crisis

Brian Raftopoulos

All authoritarian regimes face limitations that impose constraints on the politics of repression. These limitations take various forms: the economic crisis that such regimes may not have caused, but certainly accelerate, the erosion of national legitimacy as a result of the perceived betrayal of a vision of renewal, the emergence of an alternative political movement, and the growing criticisms of the international community.

All these have been present in the recent history of Zimbabwe. The origins of our crisis pre-date independence. It is necessary to restate this in the light of the revulsion which has grown towards the present government. It is analytically impossible to discuss the problems of internal politics, economics and land reforms, without an understanding of the colonial inheritance.

Yet the knee-jerk reaction to this argument is to dismiss it because of its association with the endless diatribe of a ruling party in a seemingly inexorable slide towards defeat. The Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU PF) can be likened to the Titanic, with its captain, in this case, positively in search of icebergs. But for all of us in search of alternatives, the pressing issues of our past await serious consideration and action.

My intention is to describe the post-colonial context of the present crisis in Zimbabwe. I shall analyse the ways in which a formerly strong nationalist party, with a broad social mandate, has seen its legitimacy eroded over the last two decades. For a state to maintain its right to rule, it must continuously engender the consent of its citizens, through an overall management of society with a minimum use of force.

In addition, it must provide space for dissenting voices to emerge, through processes and structures that are characterised by openness, accountability and the possibility of a peaceful transition to an alternative political regime. These are difficult conditions to guarantee, especially in the context of the economic crisis that prevails in Zimbabwe today,

but they are terms that most Zimbabweans now demand as a prerequisite for a political contract with any future ruling party.

As a nation, we are at the most critical point of our history, struggling to chart a peaceful path beyond our present devastating political and economic conditions. It is appropriate that we should pause to reflect on the post-independence years and gather the 'resources of hope' that we desperately require for the decades of reconstruction ahead.

The first and second parts of this chapter provide an overview of the economic and political developments of the 1980s and 1990s. The third section reflects on the more recent developments in the country and examines possible future trends. The extreme conditions in the country demand that we plot a path out of the current crisis. Failure to do this would be to submit to one of the most dangerous effects of authoritarian rule, namely, the inability to see alternatives. Such an exercise demands we avoid looking for easy scapegoats and face honestly the many factors that have brought us to where we are. President Mugabe is a major contributing factor to the Zimbabwean crisis. But he is part of a broader set of obstacles and in the long term these – many of which are beyond our borders – will have to be confronted.

1980s – years of restoration and hope

At independence in 1980, the new government embarked on a vision of 'national reconciliation' that, in economic terms, sought to combine a continuity of existing production structures with policies to improve the conditions of the majority of the population neglected during the colonial years.

Confronted with the dilemma of a mass support base seeking immediate redress to long-existing inequalities, the new state sought to pursue a policy of high economic growth rates, increased incomes and social expenditures, and the promotion of rural development. The first Minister of Economic Planning and Development observed that 'our development strategy goes beyond the mere increase in the material wealth of society. Equity in the distribution of wealth and income is one of the cornerstones of our economic policy.'

The broad objectives of the policy document *Growth with Equity* [1981] were:

- The establishment of a socialist society.
- Rapid economic growth.
- Balanced development and equitable distribution of income and productive resources.
- Economic restructuring.
- The development of human resources
- Rural development.

- Worker participation.
- The development of economic infrastructure and social services.
- Fiscal and monetary reform.

Following this statement of policy, the government launched the Transitional National Development Plan to achieve these objectives. Consequently, much of the 1980s saw an impressive expansion in the social services, as the new government stretched its resources to achieve a rapid delivery of benefits to a highly expectant constituency. This emphasis in policy underlined the state's concerns with equity in the social sectors and the use of aid funds to develop this process.

A reform government consolidating its power

The government's policy on land in this period, and indeed until 1997, was based on a cautious, market-based approach to reform. One leading land expert described the process thus:

Land was purchased by the state for redistribution following willing-buyer, willing-seller procedures. This framework was agreed to at the Lancaster House Conference. The private sector led the identification and supply of land available for resettlement, while central government was a reactive buyer choosing land on offer. The government provided land to beneficiaries selected mainly by its district officials under the direct supervision of central government officials.¹

In addition to this legal process of land acquisition, the 1980s witnessed low-intensity land occupations, or 'squatting', carried out by various communities, sometimes unofficially supported by party officials. For the most part, the ruling party opposed such processes of self-provisioning, preferring to follow the legal, market-driven process. Prime Minister Robert Mugabe told 'squatters':

If we were to ask your forefathers whether they lived in the same area as their ancestors' graves, the answer would be in the negative. Now that we are buying farms to resettle people, who will stay there if you want to protect ancestors' graves? Of course we must protect our ancestors' graves but we must stay on arable land where we can be productive.²

¹ Moyo, Sam (2000) 'The Interaction of Market and Compulsory Land Acquisition Processes with Social Action in Zimbabwe's Land Reform'. Paper presented at the SARIPS Annual Colloquium on Regional Integration: Past, Present and Future, Harare, September 2000.

² *The Herald*, 20 August 1985.

Using the willing-buyer, willing-seller process, some three million hectares of land were acquired by the end of the 1980s for resettlement. Recent research on what happened during this period indicates that many positive developments resulted, with settlers acquiring access to potable water supplies, dip-tanks, clinics, schools, improved toilets, housing loans, roads and marketing depots. And these areas witnessed a drop in cases of alcoholism, decreased domestic violence and reduced rates of suicide.³ So, while the process was certainly slower than many land-starved rural dwellers might have wished, and it witnessed problems of implementation and funding, it produced some positive and sustainable results. In the current environment of a highly politicised, fast-track process, these achievements are often forgotten.

In the field of labour relations the state took several policy measures to protect workers, such as the Minimum Wages Act and the Employment Act, both passed in 1980. Independence witnessed a series of wildcat strikes where workers expressed their general desire for the immediate fruits of freedom, and the more particular desire of equity with white workers in the same job in the same industry. Through its legislative interventions the government sought to improve both income levels and employment security. In 1985, the government passed the Labour Relations Act, giving greater recognition to workers' rights to join trade unions while also retaining a measure of control in the hands of the Minister of Labour, similar to the role of the minister under the old colonial Industrial Conciliation Act. The persistence of such powers indicated the new state's nervousness about conceding power in these early years.

While such policies provided some protection for workers in the 1980s, the longer-term trends in income and employment levels were largely negative. While real wages increased in mining, industry and commerce from 1980-82, thereafter they either declined or remained static for much of the 1980s. In the lowest wage sectors of agriculture and domestic employment, wages increased for much of the 1980s. With regard to employment, growth levels averaged a low 1,72 per cent between 1980 and 1989.

In economic terms, the 1980s were a time of social welfare expenditure, slow land reform, cautious minimum-wage regulation and limited economic growth. The hope that growth would provide a trickle-down effect to the poorest in the country proved forlorn. For a new state, in need of establishing its legitimacy, such trends were disturbing and they indicated a need for a major policy change at the macro-economic level. Given the dramatic collapse of socialist regimes in 1989-90, and

³ Kinsey, Bill (1999) 'Land Reform, Growth and Equity: Emerging Evidence from Zimbabwe's Resettlement Programme'. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 25,2 173-96.