INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

Zimbabwe, then and now

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Dear Peter:

Two hundred years ago, adolescent boys used to run away to sea to hunt whales, facing adventures and hardships that turned them into men. As a young person yearning to do something exotic and extraordinary, I chose the next best thing. I went to Africa.

I arrived in Zimbabwe in 1981, a year after post-colonial independence, wearing buttons that read: "Defend socialism at birth!" and "The Pan-African Revolution must come now!" On my second day in the country, a savvy expatriate told me not to be stupid and to get rid of them. "Americans always think they're safe wherever they are," she said in a low voice. "Wake up. This place is crawling with South African spies!"

It was a crazy, exhilarating time for both me and Zimbabwe. Years of armed struggle had forced a negotiated settlement that ushered in black majority rule. The atmosphere was electric as black Zimbabweans took power from the white minority regime and began rewriting the old rules of the country formerly known as Southern Rhodesia. Yet it was a tense transition. The party offices of the newly ruling Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) were bombed in the capital city of Harare. Assassins shot and killed an African National Congress official in the streets. A spectacular blast outside the city destroyed most of Zimbabwe's national air force. And government counter-insurgency troops sought out dissidents -- former guerrillas of the nation's other major liberation group, the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) -- who were suspected of causing unrest in the nation's west. In doing so, soldiers committed massacres against civilians just as the whites had perpetrated similar atrocities. Other dramas of change occurred in a more quiet and subtle manner. Blacks began replacing the whites in a bureaucracy that balked at new policies meant to redress a century of discrimination. Fearful conservative whites left the country, abandoning farms and businesses, despite the government's policy of reconciliation that tried to peacefully resolve long-standing racial conflict by putting aside revenge and making peace between former enemies.

As history unfolded around me in 1981, I did find "socialism

Casey C. Kelso, who finishes his ICWA fellowship with this essay, wrote about southern African societies, economies and agriculture.

at birth." I began working as a volunteer teacher at a remote mission in southeastern Zimbabwe. Many weekends, I visited resettlement areas where land had been given to peasant farmers. The new government's avowed priority was to help the rural poor. Although police did evict squatters from private property in an effort to uphold the rule of law, Prime Minister Robert Mugabe told rural audiences that land would be redistributed eventually to many people crowded in tribal reserves created by colonialism.

On other weekends I hitchhiked to Mukute Farm, a cooperative formed secretly during the liberation war in the 1970s. I enjoyed working with my "comrade" co-op members to plow fields, harvest corn and build a community store selling cheap dry goods. After every evening meal, we discussed that day's labor and decided on the next day's tasks in a democratic spirit of collectivism. The government's ostensible policy was to give peasants a clear example of how socialism functions in practice and to use such cooperatives as the tool for a general socialist transformation.

As I hitchhiked across the country back then, I often heard angry complaints from white drivers (they owned most of the cars and trucks at that time). Invariably, they'd steer a conversation into a rant about "the good old days" when the Rhodesian form of apartheid ruled the land. Not all whites were poor losers. I also met some whites dedicated to the reconstruction of a new non-racial Zimbabwe. In restaurants, black and white businessmen sat together for lunch, something unthinkable only a few years earlier. In formerly all-white city halls, black and white municipal councilors also sat together. And at the university, a few racially mixed couples snuggled timidly, self-conscious that they were part of a new era. Black Zimbabweans initially embraced reconciliation more readily than whites. I made friends with former guerrillas, disabled in the struggle for independence, who hoped their sacrifices had helped to launch a new society where everyone -- black and white -- could prosper. I left Zimbabwe in mid-1982, feeling proud that the nation was a model of harmonious race relations, both for the region and elsewhere in the world.

When I returned to Zimbabwe a decade later, the country felt like home to me, like an old friend met again. Yet now that I'm packing up to leave after living in Zimbabwe these past 18 months, I feel disappointed that Zimbabwe never fulfilled the dreams of those like myself who envisioned so much more. The optimism that I possessed so many years ago has all but evaporated, just as the purpose and vision that I had found in Zimbabwe has. I have sadly realized that reconciliation has been destroyed by racial animosity instigated by black politicians trying to retain their profitable positions of power.

Greed and venality have become the unofficial ideology of the politically powerful in Zimbabwe. In the past 12 years, socialism, which many claim was never seriously attempted, has

been supplanted by free-market capitalism. Most cooperatives --- even the vibrant Mukute cooperative where I had worked --- have folded. Surviving collectives still rely heavily on outside donors to stave off extinction. At the same time, a very different economic policy that is designed to open up the economy to international competition and eliminate government intervention has begun to close factories and force thousands out of jobs. Mugabe, now president of Zimbabwe, claims the reform program is "home-grown" though it produces the same kind of misery associated with the World Bank's economic restructuring elsewhere. Social benefits like free primary education and low-cost health care are a thing of the past. Unemployment has skyrocketed, while the price of basic foods like oil or sugar has soared almost beyond the reach of the majority of citizens. Bread lines are now common and another price hike recently sparked rioting. In 1982, my fellow school teachers were proud to eat butter on their bread at tea time. In 1993, teachers' mid-morning snack is served dry. Zimbabweans are angry at the lack of change after independence and grow even angrier as living standards slip below pre-independence levels. People are leaving cities as paupers and returning to the land because few alternatives exist.

In the interim between my two sojourns in Zimbabwe, the poor remained destitute while senior members of government enriched themselves through their positions of power. I asked a former teaching colleague, who I had tracked down after 13 years, just what independence has meant for most Zimbabweans. "Black faces replaced white faces in the ruling elite, that's all," he said. Prominent political leaders, such as Vice President Joshua Nkomo, have bought up huge tracts of land that lay idle. In Nkomo's case, he says he bought the land to prevent white farmers from taking it. However, most his property remains neglected at a time when he is denouncing white farmers for not voluntarily giving up their own land to the landless poor. Joseph Msika, the minister of local government, bought some 1,300 acres of land in Mazowe, the agricultural breadbasket. After letting the land lay idle for years, his farm was declared derelict by the government's own land board. No one, however, dares to repossess the prime farming land left lying idle by Msika and other influential politicians.

Although thousands of black elite gained large-scale holdings, the common people suffer the same poverty and land shortage as they did a decade ago. The only change is in terminology: Instead of calling overcrowded reserves "tribal trust lands," the government renamed them "communal lands." Instead of "black townships," slum dwellers reside in "high-density suburbs." Few people call each other "comrade" now except as a cynical joke to parody leaders who live as the former white masters did. In fact, the biggest issue in 1982 remains unchanged in 1993: the shortage of land among the rural poor of Zimbabwe.

Land matters a great deal to Zimbabweans, more so than to

people in industrialized nations, because some 70 percent of Zimbabweans reside in rural areas. Land is a form of unemployment insurance for those who can't find work in the cities, because many people -- young and old -- know how to plant crops of corn and beans. With an unemployment rate over 40 percent, city dwellers throng back to the rural countryside to grow food they can't afford to buy in urban areas. Land also holds great cultural significance for Zimbabweans because many believe that a family's ancestral spirits congregate around the rural homestead and that more elevated clan spirit heads reside permanently in certain sacred localities. People attach a political importance to land as well. In the 1970s, the leaders of the guerrilla war gained popular support by proclaiming that the struggle was to regain land lost under colonialism. The war was popularly termed "the second chimurenga" or uprising, recalling the first chimurenga almost 100 years before when white pioneers grabbed blacks' land. As one local journalist puts it today: "Zimbabweans fought and died for land they still have yet to attain." After a long simmer, the issue of land has come to a boil again as the government recently began expropriating dozens of farms of whites, descended from colonial settlers, for resettling blacks.

The history of land

Prior to the arrival of white settlers, who came in a pioneer column of ox-drawn wagons in the 1890s, the majority Shona people of Zimbabwe were primarily subsistence farmers, while the minority Ndebele had herds of cattle. Both Shona and Ndebele frequently shifted territory, cultivating or grazing livestock on fresh land every three or four years. After the occupation, the British South Africa Company noted in 1898 that Shona were growing crops not only for home consumption but to sell to settlers. From 1900, Shona farmers responded to market demand and supplied settlers with corn, beans and groundnuts. Some could no longer be considered subsistence farmers as they became economically wealthy from the trade. Not for long, though.

Black land was divided among white settlers as early as 1894, when the Matabeleland Order set aside whites-only ownership areas. Each member of that first colonial occupation force was granted land. Successive legislation, such as the Land Apportionment Act of 1930 and successive acts further evicted blacks from fertile and well-watered soils found in the higher altitudes of central Zimbabwe. The historical inequity in land left Zimbabwe with a striking dualism: About 4,000 white farming families ultimately ended up with half of the total 390,700 square kilometers of the country, while 6 million blacks live in the so-called communal lands covering 30 percent of the total land area, mostly in arid regions with poor soils. Given a static amount of land and rapid population growth, ecological collapse was inevitable. Land was overworked for decades with ever shorter periods for it to lie fallow and regenerate fertility. Erosion

swept soil away. As peasant families settled in the remaining forest areas, trees became scarce. Following the road leading north from Harare, the broad, green fields of commercial farms abruptly end when crossing into communal lands, where stunted crops and scraggly bushes fill the horizon. When majority rule finally came in 1980, the population of the communal lands exceeded their carrying capacity by about 2 million people.

A British-negotiated peace settlement ended the guerrilla war with national elections open to all, but ensured that the land issue remained festering, unresolved, for the first decade of majority rule. Under the terms of a constitution agreed to by all parties at Lancaster House in Great Britain, the new black government could only acquire land for resettlement on a "willing seller-willing buyer" basis. Furthermore, all government land purchases had to be paid for in foreign currency. The provisions, which were to remain in force for 10 years, severely hampered attempts to carry out any land redistribution. When the Mugabe government took office after winning the elections, a program was announced to resettle 18,000 families on 2.72 million acres of land at a cost of $60 million. With more than 800,000 peasant families on a resettlement waiting list, the government later tried to save face and boosted the goal in 1982 to 162,000 peasant families who were to be resettled on 12.3 million acres by 1990. Jumping the resettlement target 900 percent made for a completely unrealistic goal. Although Britain and the United States pledged funds, little international aid for resettlement was immediately forthcoming at a time when land prices were still low. Today, only 47,600 people have been resettled on 7 million acres, which is roughly only 6 percent of what the government planned to achieve. And thousands have abandoned their resettlement plots to return to the communal areas or seek work in the cities. They described resettlement as being dumped by the government in a wilderness location that lacked a clean water supply or roads. What happened is that authorities told new settlers to clear the land and start farming, yet equipped them with only a hand hoe and small bags of seeds and fertilizer. After spending so much money for the land, the government couldn't afford to pay for the many improvements necessary to ensure the success of resettled homesteaders.

In a surprisingly frank admission of the resettlement program's failures, Zimbabwe's comptroller and auditor-general admitted in a 1993 report that political interference at all levels has thwarted its implementation. For example, local politicians had demanded the right to choose whom was resettled, wrote Comptroller and Auditor-General A.E. Harid. Reading between the lines, the auditor-general was explaining that widespread corruption and nepotism have plagued resettlement schemes. In addition, the little infrastructure provided, such as roads or wells, fell into disrepair and some politicians encouraged other local farmers to poach, graze and cut trees on resettlement

lands, Harid wrote. Overstocking of cattle, deforestation and erosion led to land degradation. The auditor-general's harshest judgement was reserved for resettlement cooperatives, which were modeled after the farming cooperative where I had worked in 1982. He stated that these cooperatives underutilize their land and derive their meager profits from leasing out fields to private farmers or indiscriminately cutting trees to sell wood. The report pointed out that co-op schemes rely heavily on handouts from government or foreign charities. In conclusion, Harid's report lists high membership turn-over, divisive schisms, crushing debt, low pay and poor morale as factors that justify why the government should force most cooperatives to disband.

Although it constrained any effective redistribution, the Lancaster House accord did assure white farmers that they had a secure place in Zimbabwe, which depends on the large-scale commercial farms run mainly by whites. Other neighboring African countries suffered a large white exodus, resulting in terrible economic dislocation, when they gained black majority rule. At independence, the president of Mozambique warned Mugabe to refrain from alienating the white population by breaking that agreement so Zimbabwe could avoid the massive loss of skilled workers that crippled his own nation. (The loss of the commercial farming sector run by whites could still be a disaster today: In 1991, commercial agriculture in Zimbabwe provided employment for more than 225,000 people, produced 99 percent of the nation's gross agricultural output, 82 percent of the crops sales, 94 percent of the marketed livestock off-take and 50 percent of the total export earnings.) The constitution's land clause was even used as a selling-point to attract transnational corporations. In 1982, Finance Minister Bernard Chidzero pointed to the agreement as a guarantee to foreign investors that their property would be safe. "We have a constitution that guarantees property rights," Chidzero told American journalists. "It is as watertight as any constitution you can ever imagine. We cannot therefore expropriate or nationalize without compensation, and if we do, it requires changing the constitution and it is not very easy to change the constitution. We've accepted the constitution and we live by it. Therefore, we respect property rights."

The law of the land

The Lancaster House Agreement expired 10 years after independence and parliament began debating new legislation -- the Land Acquisition Act. When it was finally passed last year by a vote of 105 to 2 in a 150-seat parliament (43 members absented themselves), lawmakers pounded their desks and shouted "Yauya!" which means "It's come!" or "(The land) has arrived!" The goal of the new law is to acquire 12.3 million acres, half of the white's commercial farmland, for resettlement by black Zimbabweans. Then, this year, parliament amended key sections of the constitution and the land controversy boiled over.

The new law seriously infringes on white Zimbabweans' fundamental rights, but such worries were overlooked by the public in the growing clamor for land. The Act is being used to compel landowners to sell their land to the government without any chance of appeal in a court of law. The farms to be acquired are selected by the minister of agriculture, who personally decides who shall own land and who shall lose it. That leaves the land designation process wide open to bribery and personal vendettas, according to Zimbabwe's Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace, which has supported the claims of the landless during and since the liberation war. Commission Director Mike Auret argues that such ministerial designation of land "creates a potential for corrupt practices." And the constitutional amendment bars anyone whose land is expropriated from disputing in court the government-dictated selling price, which is payable only in local currency that is worthless outside of Zimbabwe. An Administrative Court does have the power to examine the value of the farm, which is set by a government-appointed committee, but it can't set aside the committee's decision unless an error is made in observing technicalities of the acquisition process as outlined by the Act. Most white Zimbabweans call the law unconstitutional. Most black Zimbabweans call it justice.

In a more subtle manner, the act appears designed to destroy the value of the white farmers' land so the government will spend less money to strip second and third-generation white Zimbabweans of their colonial inheritance. After the government publicly indicates that it will expropriate a farm, it can wait 10 years to actually acquire the land and another five years before compensating the landowner following the acquisition. Rumors have circulated through the white farming community that the government has directed the state agricultural bank not to offer any loans to commercial farmers whose farms have been designated for eventual confiscation. Even without the state's pressure, private banks refuse to lend money to any farmer who can't offer his land as collateral to guarantee a loan. "Politics should not be allowed to interfere with normal agricultural production," said a spokesman for the Real Estate Institute of Zimbabwe. "The government is using the Act as a ploy to catch votes, but this is just not the way to run an economy." Therefore, the property market, perhaps the basis of Zimbabwe's entire economy, is undermined because the security of possession is threatened.

The controversy was temporarily calmed by Minister of Agriculture Kumbirai Kangai, who assured white farmers that no land would be designated without consulting the local chapters of the farmers' union. He also reiterated that resettlement would only take land found to be derelict, underutilized, foreign-owned or land owned by absentee landlords. Farmers who were operating productive farms needn't worry, Kangai said. Such promises led white farmers to join government committees set up in each province to help identify underutilized farms for resettlement. A

few months later, Mugabe gave a different message to ministers, governors, ZANU leadership, chiefs, mayors, and town clerks. He said the act had been misinterpreted to restrict land acquisition only to underutilized farms. "We will get any land we want from anyone, be they black or white, and we will not be restricted to underutilized land," Mugabe said. The government backtracked and declared scores of utilized farms forfeited to the state. Kangai personally denied most formal appeals made to his ministry.

By November 1994, 98 farms covering more than 494,000 acres had been designated for government purchase. The process has not been smooth as more and more questions are raised about who is being singled out for expropriation and who is receiving a reprieve. In Zimbabwe's southern province of Masvingo, the initial list of underutilized land included derelict farms owned by cabinet ministers and other high ranking government officials. They were omitted from the final list of designated property. Land owned by multinational companies had also been protected from expropriation "for obscure reasons, which is very unfair," said Anthony Swire-Thompson, president of the Commercial Farmers' Union, which has an almost exclusively white membership. And when the first group of 70 farms were designated, the state-controlled newspaper, **The Herald**, trumpeted that the government had made it clear that the acquisitions were not racial because the list included black farmers who had left their land idle. A few weeks later, 39 of the farms were spared because they belong to black families. "You cannot in all honesty equate a black indigenous farmer to a white commercial farmer," said Lands Minister Kangai. "Those farmers are still finding their feet in the agricultural industry and they need to be assisted." But insiders allege that some of the farms Kangai gave back were bought by blacks back in 1980 for speculation, not farming, and have lain idle ever since.

Who was targeted by the government is just as telling as who was ignored or spared. Despite Mugabe's insistence that politics had nothing to do with the forced sales of land, there are obvious political targets. A white commercial farmer, Henry Elsworth, is set to lose 23,465 acres to the state under the Land Acquisition Act. Elsworth, who had formerly been appointed to the parliament by Mugabe, made an easy scapegoat. In May, 1993, an employee of Elsworth discovered a group of 24 women and children cutting firewood on the farm property and reported the trespass to his boss. Elsworth then contacted the police, who allegedly told Elsworth to take the trespassers into custody. Instead, he ordered the women and children to leave behind their hoes and axes or items of clothes, like shoes. His idea was to ensure that the illegal wood-cutters would have to return the next day to retrieve their possessions when the police would be present. But the state-run news media, in collaboration with local authorities, fabricated a much more wild story about how Elsworth stripped the women naked. Things moved fast thereafter. Several senior government officials condemned Elsworth for acting

inhumanely. President Mugabe remarked: "Why should we keep a man like that in our country?" Within days, Elsworth's land was designated as punishment for a crime he didn't commit.

Virtually the only black farms that remain singled out for government takeover belong to the president's political enemies, like guerrilla war veteran James Chikerema and opposition party leader Reverend Ndabaningi Sithole. In the case of Sithole, Mugabe's government has blatantly defied the courts. Sithole subdivided his land just outside Harare last year into plots that he leased out to people who wanted to build homes. He claims he was acting to alleviate the capital city's critical shortage of affordable housing. His assertion is backed up by the public's overwhelming response: thousands of people flocked to Sithole's Churu Farm to build homes. In May 1993, the government designated the land and riot police moved in to encircle the farm and evict the settlers. An appellate court declared the eviction illegal and ordered the immediate lifting of the police cordon. Yet the government then pushed hundreds of wretched families out of their homes into the rain. Miles of flimsy shanties now stand on the edge of the farm within sight of the former homes. The police cordon remains, barring journalists and residents alike from entering the farm, while Home Affairs Minister Dumiso Dabengwa adamantly insists on state-controlled television that the blockade doesn't exist. That kind of deliberate deception of the public is the mark of a government that has stepped across the line of fairness to repress its citizens -- black and white.

The battlelines are drawn

By criticizing the Mugabe government and the Land Acquisition Act of 1992, I am not trying to diminish the terrible evils institutionalized by former colonial rule. Southern Rhodesia had a dictatorial society founded upon force and political intolerance, with only a grudging acceptance of democratic values. White supremacists degraded the entire black population at every turn, whether it was in land distribution, education, public transport, housing or toilet facilities. So I understand the indignation and rage that contemporary black Zimbabweans feel when they see that the white minority retains the position of "boss" in the nation's economy. They see whites eating in fancy restaurants, driving in expensive cars, sending their children for private education in elitist schools, and living far above the standards of the average black Zimbabwean. Even though there is a growing black middle class in this country, there is a luxurious, separate world from that of the blacks. Overt racial segregation and racist attitudes are not permissible any more, yet vicious jokes about the ineptitude of blacks can be heard in the bastions of "white culture" such as polo clubs, rugby matches and outdoor barbecues. These whites marginalize themselves from the reality of independent Zimbabwe, retaining the economic privileges of the past but rejecting the

social responsibility that must accompany wealth in so polarized of a society. There's little feeling of contrition among that segment of the population and few conciliatory gestures, such as voluntarily stepping forward to sell good farming land.

Yet many more whites have remained, rather than emigrating to South Africa or Australia, because they are committed to Zimbabwe and not just their well-to-do lifestyle. They accept majority rule and the need for a more equitable distribution of land. Nobody disputes the need for land resettlement, but just how to go about it. White commercial farmers say black farmers should get more and better land but they insist that the rule of law must be observed. As one farmer said, a law allowing expropriation without appeal violates "international norms such as security of investment, the rule of law and order, and the ability to operate in a market-led environment." White farmers say they want social change accomplished by democratic and lawful means, rather than by the divisive racial hatred, arbitrary dictates and demagoguery that typifies the land issue today.

Newspapers carry daily reports of Zimbabwe's leaders characterizing whites as racist schemers who have taken advantage of reconciliation to keep the black masses impoverished. "Blacks in this country have tried to reconcile despite the wrongs of the past but the majority of the whites have spurned reconciliation through blatant racism and sticking to the land," said a popular professor at the University of Zimbabwe. He can get a standing ovation in his classroom with such a statement. The president and his ministers have reduced the land issue into simplistic terms: a historic showdown between "a greedy bunch of racist usurpers" and the righteous black majority. Addressing a rally, President Mugabe shouted: "They think they're more of God's children than others and they still look at their white skin as more precious and more divine than ours!" He got cheers. Sometimes the angry diatribes from officials seem genuinely motivated by concern for a marginalized majority. But other times, it appears to be a ploy to rekindle the popularity of an authoritarian regime.

The ruling party has made it clear that deceiving or dispossessing whites isn't wrong because they aren't really Zimbabwean citizens because of their color. For instance, on the 13th anniversary of Zimbabwe's independence, a full-page newspaper advertisement by the ruling party baldly attacked whites as the source of all the country's problems. The solution? Economic disenfranchisement of whites because "the economy continues to be in white settler hands and multinationals." The advert implied whites are not Zimbabweans and should be driven out. "Everyone knows the economy in Britain is controlled by the British, in America, the economy is controlled by Americans, in Japan the economy is in the hands of the Japanese, in fact, the economy of each country should be controlled by the respective country's nationals. Why, therefore, is the economy in Zimbabwe

not controlled by the country's black majority?" Agricultural Minister Kangai faced more than 200 white farmers at the annual Commercial Farmers Union meeting this year to answer their questions. But he couldn't respond to the statement by Piers Nichol, who summed up the feelings of many white Zimbabweans. "One gets the distinct impression that we are not citizens of Zimbabwe. Yet I'm a fifth generation Zimbabwean with grandchildren here. All the reconciliation given since independence to the good of the country means nothing. It appears now that we have to be betrayed to fulfill a political gimmick."

While Mugabe portrays the land issue as a battle between the landless masses and the privileged elite, the crux of the controversy is not in land redistribution but in the procedure. When the act deprived the courts of the right to settle disputes and determine the civil rights questions in land acquisition, there were "serious implications for the future protection of human rights," said one justice on Zimbabwe's Supreme Court. The court's retired chief justice, Enoch Dumbutshena, agrees that land must be acquired to alleviate overcrowding in the communal lands. But the former judge believes in the basic right of access to the courts. "In this context, we are opposed to the Land Acquisition Act only to the extent which it denies the aggrieved parties access to the courts, for it is the fundamental right of all people," said Dumbutshena, who has lent his weight to a political party that will contest the 1995 general elections.

At least six farmers are preparing to challenge the legislation at the supreme court, having pooled their money to reportedly an eminent human rights lawyer who took on the South African government during the 1970s inquest into the death of Black Consciousness leader Steve Biko. When asked about the lawsuit, Mugabe was incensed and declared that his government was above the law: "That's absolutely useless (hiring lawyers). We will not brook any decision by any court from acquiring any land. If we have to resolve to a UDI on land we will do so, but of course we wouldn't want to do that. **Zvino kana vavakuda kutambe dzatsuro, well, tinozvizivawo isu** (If they want to play tricks with us, well we are equally capable)." UDI stands for Unilateral Declaration of Independence, which the Rhodesians enacted to defy international opinion and British wrath in an attempt to thwart black majority rule. Later Mugabe thundered: "I, Robert Mugabe, with ancestral generations far back, can I be dragged into court by a settler who came only 90 years ago, who will claim that the land we are taking is his?!" As a self-deified leader, Mugabe apparently feels strong enough to defy European-style courts, which he has characterized as an alien imposition by the West.

Looking to the future

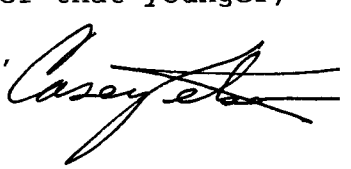
And what if the resettlement program does go forward? The lack of a coherent land policy seems to mean the redistribution

will be chaotic and that the avowed goal of redressing social inequities will be lost. The first question to be raised is why the government needs more land, since it already acquired more than 582,700 acres of land for resettlement in the 1980s and about 129,521 acres of it is leased out at low rents to undeserving individuals with political pull while the rest is lying idle and unsettled. Secondly, the realities of population growth mean that even if 162,000 people were resettled, in four to six years time the same land pressure would exist again. A third question concerns what will happen to the black people who live and work on the white commercial farmland. Three quarters of them migrated from Malawi, Zambia and Mozambique decades ago, and so are ineligible for resettlement. The Commercial Farmers' Union estimates that about 89,000 workers will be displaced. With each of these workers having an average family size of five to six, a total of about 500,000 people could be left homeless.

And the final question pertains to the sincerity of the Zimbabwe government's endlessly repeated vow of "land for all." Originally, resettled families were supposed to be chosen on the basis of need, with priority going to "refugees and people displaced by war... and the landless." Now cabinet ministers say that only those with proven farming ability and degrees from agricultural colleges will be resettled. It seems a smart move at first glance, for only the best farmers should have land to avoid environmental degradation and to maintain productivity. But then the very people who have long been promised land will not get it. Prime candidates for resettlement are young "master farmers" with a secondary school education and a large families. Those who are the most desperate -- the illiterate, the poor and the majority of the landless -- will be ignored. It seems clear that the ruling group or class clearly plans on governing to ensure its own prosperity, not to promote the interests of the underprivileged or racial harmony.

Zimbabwe's policy of reconciliation was one of the most enlightened ideas to appear in the world's troubled history of race relations. Reconciliation, a two-way compromise to put aside racial hatred, kept a divided society from unraveling in the potentially devastating transition from totalitarian white rule to democratic majority rule. It was a true victory over colonialism, because reconciliation didn't stop at a half-way point of creating an exclusively black-led African nation, but created a multi-racial country in which blacks and whites worked together to achieve a climate of tolerance and peace for all. That victory has now become hollow, as politicking destroys the ability to make fair and rational policy decisions for the good of the country. Something wonderful has been lost in Zimbabwe and its absence is as painful to me as the loss of that younger, idealistic part of myself.

Sincerely,



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