

## Zimbabwe: Who Owns It; Who Runs It?



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The history in Africa in Zimbabwe in particular of European colonization, colonialism, land claims, self-determination, and a racial divide are key issues and elements in this story. In many ways the current violence, political intimidation, and the rise of a powerful opposition party to Robert Mugabe and his 20-year rule are representative of the legacy of colonialism on the continent of Africa, and the instability and excesses that often follow in the wake of independence in African nations for many years. The legitimacy of the takeover of white-owned farms and the question of whether Mugabe's actions and motives really reflect his struggle to hold onto power as opposed to genuinely attempting to resolve colonial wrongs are issues fundamental to the story.

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On April 18, 2000, the African nation of Zimbabwe observed 20 years of independence. But for most of the country's 12 million people, this event offered little reason for celebration. Long considered a development model for other African states, Zimbabwe now faces a number of serious crises: an unpopular war in the Congo, a virulent AIDS epidemic, severe economic difficulties, a corrupt and heavy-handed government, and a violent struggle between white farmers and black squatters over land rights. Embattled President Robert Mugabe, once considered one of Africa's most highly regarded statesmen, is the focus of widespread criticism for his role in fomenting rural discontent and racial tension over the land issue and conducting a wide-ranging campaign of intimidation against the country's newly founded opposition party, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). Mugabe and his Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) have been the only leader and ruling party in the nation since independence. A veteran guerrilla fighter, Mugabe rose to power battling the forces of the white-minority Rhodesian regime of Ian Smith to a standstill during the 1970s, and then skillfully negotiating a peaceful hand-over of power to the country's black majority. In its first decade of freedom, Zimbabwe prospered under Mugabe's leadership, and represented an oasis of peace, stability, and economic and social progress in Africa. But in the 1990s world prices for Zimbabwe's agricultural exports plummeted, international financial agencies imposed harsh terms for much-needed loans, and Mugabe and his party became increasingly dictatorial, corrupt, and unwilling to tolerate political dissent. Mugabe sometimes appeared to behave in a bizarre and eccentric manner, for example by accusing the country's small and persecuted gay community of causing many of Zimbabwe's problems.

After a humiliating defeat in a constitutional referendum in February 2000 that proposed an extension of his term as president, Mugabe faced an uncertain political future. New parliamentary elections were to be held, and the MDC was gaining popular support. The economy was collapsing and many Zimbabweans wanted political change. At this point, Mugabe revived the land-reform issue in a calculated way, to shore up his electoral support in rural areas, put the opposition on the defensive, scapegoat the country's small but prosperous white minority, and deflect attention from his own government's failings. Land had been at the root of the struggle of black Zimbabweans against white-minority and colonial rule ever since Britain colonized and settled the region, which it named Rhodesia, in the 19th century. As a result of unfair treaties and sheer brute force, the white settlers had gained control of most of the country's fertile land, leaving the black majority with only small tracts of rocky, unproductive soil. The white minority regime of Ian Smith, which ruled Rhodesia from 1965 to 1980, consolidated this unfair pattern of distribution, and the guerrilla groups who fought against it based their support in the countryside on their pledge to restore the land to its original owners. But after winning independence, Mugabe's government had made only half-hearted efforts to rectify this injustice. Twenty years after independence, over two-thirds

of Zimbabwe's most prosperous and productive farmland still lay in white hands. And then in the spring of 2000 the land crisis intensified with the occupation of about 1000 white-owned farms.

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After reading this information below, watch this News in Review report and then identify events depicted in the video that suggest cause and effect and historical inevitability.

During the spring of 2000, bands of alleged veterans of the guerrilla war, under the demagogic leadership of Chenjarai Hunzvi, a man whose nickname was "Hitler," forcibly occupied approximately 1000 white-owned farms, threatening their proprietors and their families, and causing some to flee. A few farms were burned, and at the time of this writing 10 farmers and 20 black farm workers had lost their lives in the ensuing conflict. Mugabe himself refused to condemn these farm invasions, blaming the selfish white minority for causing the problem. At the same time, he accused the MDC of fomenting discontent among black farm workers, and receiving financial backing from the Commercial Farmers' Union (CFU), the organization representing the country's white farmers. Weeks of tension ensued, and the land struggle in Zimbabwe became the focus of widespread international attention. Britain, the United States, and other countries condemned Mugabe and his government, and expressed concern for the safety of the farm families and the black workers they employed. Even African leaders friendly to Mugabe, like South Africa's new president Thabo Mbeki, urged him to adopt a more conciliatory position on the land issue.

Meanwhile, the election campaign proceeded in an atmosphere of violence and terror. The MDC, led by Morgan Tsvangirai, a former trade union official, faced serious obstacles in its attempts to reach the voters, but in the end, on June 24 and 25, the people of Zimbabwe finally had their say. Partly as a result of voter intimidation, Mugabe's party held on to most of its rural base of support, winning 62 of the 120 contested parliamentary seats. But the MDC, bolstered by a strong showing in Harare, the capital, and other major cities, won 57 and ran a close second. Because of a constitutional provision allowing him to appoint an additional 30 members, Mugabe faced no serious threat to his majority position in parliament. Nonetheless, the election results had been a sharp setback and an embarrassing repudiation for him and the party he had founded.

In the wake of the election, the farm crisis eased somewhat. The illegal occupations came to an end, having served their political purpose, but Mugabe committed himself to moving ahead on the land-reform issue, with or without the co-operation of white farmers. At the same time, the country's other problems showed few signs of being resolved in the short term. For its part, the MDC, emboldened by its stunning success at the polls, announced plans to contest the presidential elections, due to be held in 2002. Some prominent figures in ZANU-PF were quietly beginning to suggest that changes in direction, and possibly leadership, were now in order for their party. But whether Robert Mugabe will try to hold on to power and seek yet another term

as Zimbabwe's president remains to be seen.

### **Follow-up Discussion**

Is this a historical example of "two wrongs don't make a right"? Why might an oft-quoted truism like this be so difficult to apply to the recent historical events in Zimbabwe? Why is it important to understand to the best of our ability the historical facts and context and to try and avoid making simplistic judgments?

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## The Historical Context, Conditions, and Chain of Events

Before the Europeans: the era of "Great Zimbabwe"

In their book *Into Africa: A Journey through the Ancient Empires*, Marq de Villiers and Sheila Hirtle write that "other than the Temples of the Middle Nile and the brooding, enigmatic African face of the Sphinx, Great Zimbabwe is probably the most romantic of all Africa's ruins. This has not been such a bad thing, over the years: romance breeds legend, and legend is still a more reliable guide to history than the boasting of victors. It's easy to forget, though, that at the root of the legends was a very real and formidable kingdom called Monomatapa. . . . It's probable that Great Zimbabwe began as a cattle-herders' refuge from the tsetse fly. Religion and politics built it, gold and trade sustained it, power and ambition made it great, war and social exhaustion ended it. It was glorious while it lasted."

The nation of Zimbabwe takes its name from a massive complex of stone buildings that dominates the high plains just outside the town of Masvingo in the southeastern part of the country. In the language of the Shona people, the nation's major ethnic group, "Zimbabwe" means "stone building." The impressive stone-walled enclosures of Great Zimbabwe are a dramatic symbol of the country's long history and past glories. Constructed by the Bantu ancestors of the Shona over a period of 400 years beginning in the 11th century, Great Zimbabwe served as the headquarters of the vast Monomatapa kingdom, an empire that once included all of today's Zimbabwe, and also northern South Africa and considerable stretches of Mozambique, Zambia, Malawi, and Tanzania. It was ruled by powerful kings whose wealth was based on huge herds of cattle and whose trade relations extended from neighbouring kingdoms all the way to Arabia and distant Asia.

After the decline of the Shona empire in the 15th century, Great Zimbabwe no longer served as an administrative and political centre, but remained an important place of worship for the local people for hundreds of years. However, when the first European explorers came across its immense ruins in 1871, their initial reaction was stunned surprise. How could the black African ancestors of the people they were about to colonize and exploit have had the skill and knowledge to have erected such magnificent structures? To investigators like the German archaeologist Karl Mauch, the answer was simple. No black Africans, past or present, had built Great Zimbabwe. Instead, Mauch claimed, its construction was the achievement of some Middle Eastern people, possibly descendants of the mythical "Queen of Sheba" referred to in the Old Testament. Deeply imbued with racist attitudes toward black Africans, Mauch and other white Europeans like him could not credit them with the intellectual ability to construct such amazing buildings.

To the popular Victorian novelist H. Ryder Haggard, whose best-selling book *King Solomon's Mines* did much to fire the European imagination with African themes on the eve of imperialist expansion in 1885, Great Zimbabwe

symbolized both the ancient mysteries and the exciting potential of the "dark continent." He wrote that Mauch "had found in the far interior a ruined city he believed to be the Ophir of the Bible. This story of an ancient civilization, long since lapsed into the darkest barbarism, took a great hold over my imagination." As Britain, France, and other European powers embarked on the colonial land-grab known as the "scramble for Africa," the promise of gold, diamonds, and other riches believed to be located deep in the heart of this unknown continent was a powerful impetus for conquest.

In the decades prior to the arrival of European explorers, missionaries, and settlers, the territory of Zimbabwe had witnessed the influx of many tribal groups. These peoples were moving north out of what is now South Africa as a result of a series of violent upheavals known as the mfecane, which followed the rise to power of the warlike Zulu ruler Shaka. The most important of these new arrivals were the Ndebele who overthrew the Rozwi kingdom of the Shona, and established themselves as a strong military power in western Zimbabwe. Their ruler was known as Mzilikazi, a nobleman who had once served the Zulu king Shaka but had to flee after a dispute over looted cattle. He imposed a feudal, caste-based social order over the land he ruled, with his Ndebele at the top and the once-powerful Shona at the bottom. Many of modern Zimbabwe's ethnic tensions between these two peoples derive from their troubled past history in pre-colonial times.

### **Reflection and Assessment**

Why do you think the first European explorers to reach the interior of Africa during the 19th century did not believe that blacks could have built Great Zimbabwe? What conclusions can you reach from this about the attitude of Europeans toward Africa and its inhabitants at that time? What today are the lessons of history we should learn from this period of time in Zimbabwe?

### **From Sir Cecil Rhodes to Ian Smith**

In 1870, the Ndebele king Mzilikazi was succeeded by his son, Lobengula. Like his father, he was a powerful military ruler, who extended his realm to include parts of Mashonaland, the home of his tribe's rivals, the Shona. It was at this time that the first white Europeans began to make their presence known in the area. Among these were missionaries and explorers like the famous Dr. David Livingstone and Karl Mauch. But by the 1880s, the British mine owner and financier Sir Cecil Rhodes, who had built a personal fortune and strong political power base in the Cape Colony of what is now South Africa, was becoming very interested in the Ndebele and Shona lands to the north. Rhodes had a dream of an uninterrupted swath of British colonial territory stretching across the African continent from the Cape of Good Hope in the south to Egypt in the north. He wanted to build a railway "from the Cape to Cairo," and also gain control of the region's rich mineral resources, including gold and copper.

In 1889, the Ndebele ruler Lobengula received Charles Rudd, a representative of Rhodes' British South Africa Company (BSAC). Rudd offered Lobengula weapons and a pension for life in return for the rights to his kingdom's mineral resources. Seeking to weaken the king's control over the territory, Rhodes promoted white settlement in Ndebele and Shona lands and dispatched a group of colonists known as the "Pioneer Column" to the region in 1890, under military guard. Finding the gold reserves seriously depleted, the white newcomers instead turned to farming and cattle ranching. By this time, Lobengula was becoming seriously alarmed at Rhodes' and the settlers' intentions, and appealed directly to Queen Victoria to curb Rhodes and the BSAC and respect his people's rights to their land. But Lobengula's entreaties went unanswered, and the British Colonial Office in London gave Rhodes permission to continue with his settlement and exploitation of the area. In 1893, using a cattle raid as a pretext, Rhodes deputy Leander Starr Jameson led a military force into the Ndebele kingdom. Employing the newly invented Maxim machine gun with deadly effect, Jameson's forces inflicted a crushing defeat on Lobengula's troops, who were armed only with spears and shields. Over 3000

Ndebele warriors fell in battle, against only one white casualty. In the years that followed, Lobengula's people were forced into tribal reserves, while the best lands were seized by a steady influx of settlers from Britain and South Africa. After the king's followers raised one last desperate rebellion in 1896-7, which was brutally suppressed, the Ndebele and Shona peoples were subdued and became second-class citizens in their own homelands. It would be nearly 70 years before they would rise again against their white masters.

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In 1923, the BSAC formally handed over control of its territory to the British government. The northern and southern areas, which now comprise Zambia and Zimbabwe, were named Northern and Southern Rhodesia respectively in honour of the man who had sponsored white colonial settlement! The black majority was relegated to the position of non-citizens, without the right to vote, and British settlers consolidated their economic and political control. In 1953, a federation of Northern and Southern Rhodesia and Nyasaland (now Malawi) was formed, but met with strong black African resistance. After several African nations had already won their independence and Zambia and Malawi were on their way to achieving theirs in 1964, alarm bells started to be heard among the white rulers in Salisbury (now Harare), the capital of Southern Rhodesia. Fearing that their part of the dissolved federation would be the next to undergo black majority rule, most white Rhodesians rallied around a political leader named Ian Smith, whose Rhodesia Front party swept to victory in a whites-only election. On November 11, 1965, Smith defied both Britain and world opinion by declaring a unilateral declaration of independence (UDI) for Rhodesia, under the rule of his white-minority government. For the next 15 years, Rhodesia would be the focus of considerable international condemnation and growing civil unrest.

#### **Reflection and Assessment**

To what extent can the roots of Zimbabwe's current conflict over land ownership and racial privilege be traced to the colonial period of its history? What, in your opinion, was the legality of the actions of Cecil Rhodes and of Ian Smith?

#### **The Independence Struggle and Beyond**

During its 15 years under white-minority rule, Rhodesia faced international trade sanctions and the disapproval of Britain and the United Nations. But a number of Western countries did not respect the call for a trade blockade against Smith's illegal regime and continued to trade with it. Rhodesia also found important allies in Portugal and South Africa. Alone among the European colonial powers, Portugal refused to permit its African colonies to become independent, and fought a bitter war in Mozambique, which borders Rhodesia. South Africa's apartheid regime was a natural ally of Ian Smith, and extended considerable economic and military assistance to him. Secure in their sense of racial superiority and supremacy, most white Rhodesians were confident that their government could weather international opposition and mounting black domestic discontent.

But during the 1970s, the tide finally began to turn. By 1972, the two main black liberation movements that had been founded in the 1960s, Joshua Nkomo's Zimbabwe African Political Union (ZAPU), and Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU), were engaged in a full-scale guerrilla war with the Smith regime. Nkomo's movement drew most of its

support from the Ndebele people of western Zimbabwe, while Mugabe's power base was rooted in the Shona majority. ZAPU and ZANU were divided by conflicting ethnic loyalties and rival international backers, with the Soviet Union supporting Nkomo and China favouring Mugabe. But despite their differences, the two groups were able to form a strategic alliance by the mid-1970s, called the Patriotic Front. By then, Portugal had decided to grant independence to its African colonies in fact, army soldiers, placing roses in their rifle barrels, actually walked away from the conflict and a newly independent Mozambique offered bases within its territory for Patriotic Front raids into neighbouring Rhodesia. Other African countries like Tanzania, Zambia, and Botswana formed an association of Front Line States to back the struggle for majority rule.

The Patriotic Front's determined fight to end white-minority domination was known as the Second Chimurenga War, in honour of the first Ndebele and Shona struggles against Rhodes and the BSAC forces in the 1880s and 1890s. By 1979, it was clear that it was gaining the upper hand. Desperate to maintain power, Smith offered a limited degree of political control to some black leaders outside the Patriotic Front, and changed the name of the country to Zimbabwe-Rhodesia in 1978. But whites still controlled a majority of seats in parliament, and dominated the economic and social life of the nation. This arrangement was totally unacceptable to Nkomo and Mugabe, who insisted on a new government, founded on the basis of majority rule.

In late 1979, Britain brought the various parties together for a conference in London that would determine Zimbabwe's future. Under the terms of the Lancaster House agreement negotiated there, free elections were to be held under British supervision, and the winner would form Zimbabwe's first majority-rule government. In February 1980, Mugabe's ZANU-PF swept to victory, winning most of the seats in the new parliament. Nkomo's ZAPU held on to its Ndebele strongholds, and formed the opposition. Smith's Rhodesia Front was practically wiped out, but the agreement also guaranteed whites important political and economic power in the new country for the first 10 years after independence.

Mugabe's new government immediately undertook an ambitious effort to redress old colonial wrongs and provide a better life for Zimbabwe's previously disenfranchised majority. Massive investments were made in education, health care, and social programs, especially in rural areas of the country where the local population's basic needs had long gone unmet. In order to defuse the long-simmering animosity between the Ndebele and Shona peoples, Mugabe named his former rival Nkomo to a high position in the new government. He also appealed to the country's small but economically influential white minority to remain in the country and contribute to Zimbabwe's future prosperity. As a result of Mugabe's practical policies and favourable global economic conditions for the country's main exports, Zimbabwe experienced healthy rates of economic growth in its first decade after independence. But the issue of land redistribution, which had been a major grievance of the black majority during the bitter years of civil war, remained unresolved.

Despite Mugabe's efforts at reconciliation with his old rival Nkomo, relations between ZANU and ZAPU remained tense, and the Ndebele region of the country erupted in open revolt in 1982. Following years of sporadic conflict, the two leaders agreed to merge their political parties into one in 1987: ZANU-PF. Mugabe became president, and he and his faction soon obtained a stranglehold on power in the country's government. Increasingly intolerant of opposition, Mugabe presided over what became a one-party state with little dissent. At the same time, much of the previously white-owned land that his government had bought in order to redistribute to poor landless blacks was instead given to highly placed figures within the ruling party and their families.

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Mugabe's growing dictatorial tendencies began to draw serious domestic and international criticism as the 1990s began. It was at this time that the once favourable conditions that had stimulated Zimbabwe's economic growth during the previous decade began to change for the worse. The country experienced a prolonged drought that damaged its main export crop, tobacco, and also brought hardship and starvation to many subsistence farmers. Lavish government expenditures on schools and clinics, along with a rising defence budget resulting from military support to the Frelimo government of Mozambique had driven up the country's deficit. At the same time a downturn in global markets for Zimbabwe's products had sharply reduced its foreign exchange reserves. Mugabe was forced to appeal to international financial institutions like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for loans to keep the country's economy afloat. But in return for their assistance, these agencies demanded that he impose a severe Economic Structural Adjustment Program (ESAP), to reduce the deficit. This would have to be done at the cost of dramatically reduced spending on education, health care, and social programs, along with drastic cuts to civil service jobs and salaries and the privatization of many previously government-owned enterprises.

Mugabe's government reluctantly accepted these measures, but they did little to help solve the country's main economic problems. Instead, they triggered a sharp decline in the living standards of most Zimbabweans. While the white commercial farmers and newly enriched members of the government elite continued to prosper, life for most people became a daily grind for sheer survival. Resentment soon took on a political form, as mass protests organized by the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) led to harsh repression. In the elections of 1990 and 1996, Mugabe's ZANU-PF won big majorities against a fragmented and persecuted opposition. But by the end of the decade, Zimbabwe's list of economic and social problems was growing even longer. Price increases for basic items, a severe fuel shortage, an unpopular war in the Congo to which Mugabe had committed the country, unemployment of almost half the country's workforce, and mounting outrage over government corruption and repression served to embolden a new, united opposition force known as the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). Led by Morgan Tsvangirai, a former head of the ZCTU, the MDC presented Mugabe with his most serious political challenge since winning independence. In February 2000, Mugabe's attempt to win public approval for a two-term extension on his presidential mandate under a new constitution met with decisive defeat in a national referendum, with the MDC leading the "No" campaign.

It was against this background of profound economic, social, and political crisis that the country's land issue erupted into violent conflict in April 2000. Without question, Mugabe manipulated legitimate black grievances over the unfair distribution of the country's farmland for his own political purposes. By allowing gangs of armed squatters to invade white-owned farms and terrorize their

operators and the black workers they employed, he became the target of widespread and largely legitimate criticism, both inside and outside Zimbabwe. At the same time, though, there were other aspects of the country's troublesome land issue that received far less attention, especially from Western media and political figures. In the first place, Britain, as Zimbabwe's former colonial master, has an ongoing obligation to live up to its part of the Lancaster House Agreement, committing it to providing financial assistance for the purchase and redistribution of illegally obtained white-owned land to the black majority. Second, countries like the United States, which had maintained close economic ties to the white-minority Smith regime, were on shaky moral and legal ground when they condemned Mugabe's actions. Third, many African leaders, although highly critical of the government's approach to dealing with the land issue, nonetheless recognized that it was a long-ignored injustice, that Mugabe, to his credit, at least was trying to resolve.

Perhaps the strongest argument for a different method of solving the land crisis in Zimbabwe is the economic one. Agriculture represents the country's most important source of exports and foreign currency, which Zimbabwe needs to pay for fuel and electricity. For better or worse, the white farm owners remain crucial to the survival and prosperity of this sector of the national economy. Any prolonged social and political upheaval may trigger a mass exodus of white Zimbabweans and cause foreign lenders and investors to hesitate before contributing to the country's economy. But the current unfair pattern of land distribution is an undesirable holdover from the colonial period, one that is long overdue for significant reform. The upheavals of the early part of 2000 have been a traumatic time for Zimbabwe, especially when they are added to the already lengthy list of problems the country faces. But they also may indicate that this potentially rich African nation may be entering a period of transition. With the requisite political will inside the country, and with the patience and support of its many friends, including Canada, Zimbabwe's people may yet see the realization of their hopes for peace, stability, and progress, for which they sacrificed so much during their struggle for independence and beyond.

### **Reflection, Assessment, and Hindsight**

1. Make a list of the challenges Robert Mugabe and his political movement faced during Zimbabwe's struggle for independence, and after it was won.
2. Make another list of the major achievements of Mugabe's government during the first decade of Zimbabwe's independence.
3. Make a third list of the problems Zimbabwe began to face during 1980s and 1990s.
4. And finally, make a list of at least 10 key events throughout Zimbabwe's history that, in your opinion, were crucial to the chain of historical events that have brought Zimbabwe to where it is today. Compare your list of events with those of others in the class.
5. From the information contained in this passage, how would you evaluate Robert Mugabe and his government in Zimbabwe? Do its failings outweigh its achievements, or vice versa? Explain the reasons for your conclusions.

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## An Expert's View

Professor P. L. Ehioze Idahosa is the co-ordinator of the African Studies Program at York University in Toronto, and has been a Zimbabwe watcher for over 20 years. He is currently writing a book on the claims on land as a legacy of the colonial era and the unfinished nationalist project in Africa. News in Review would like to thank Professor Idahosa for taking the time to respond to questions on the land crisis in Zimbabwe.

How would you assess the media coverage in Canada and the West of the recent land occupations in Zimbabwe?

The response by the Western media was one-sided without getting into many of the complex historical issues involved in the "land question." The tendency was to over-focus on Mugabe, and in fact to personify him, as if Zimbabwe is Mugabe. He is not a nice person, to be sure; and indeed he is very much part of the problem. Everything was blamed on Mugabe, especially the economic crisis, without mentioning the role of the disastrous policies imposed by the World Bank and IMF, albeit implemented by the ZANU-PF government.

There has been little effort made to set this crisis in context, either the long history of the complex political and constitutional negotiations over land, the appalling social and economic conditions under which people lived and continue to live on the farms; how much of this land is not being used, the fact that even two studies done by the World Bank and UNDP (United Nations Development Program) pointed to the fact that at least 20 per cent of the land could easily be redistributed with little effect on Zimbabwe's economy, while providing some security for the poor farmer, at least when handled correctly. There was also the putting forward of tendentious economic arguments about the collapse of the economy if there was land redistribution. There's little attempt to contextualize the way in which the British, both under Margaret Thatcher and subsequent administrations, have essentially refused to assist the serious implementation of land reform.

Do you think that the situation in Zimbabwe is viewed differently in Africa than it is in North America? If so, why?

From all accounts the view in Africa is very different, although highly variegated along popular-elite class lines. There are different reasons for this. On the one hand, the land occupations appear to be very popular among ordinary Africans, even where many of them recognize Mugabe as an opportunistic hypocrite. The view from the elites, however, is one of guarded public support for Mugabe, while showing some restraint in how or what they say to support him. This is especially so in eastern and southern Africa, where the issue of European settlement has always been fraught with tension. This is especially so in the case of South Africa, Botswana, Namibia, and Kenya, but also places

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where there was smaller European settlement, like Tanzania. The reasons for the guardedness are explosive. Land, after all, was a central platform for nationalism and anti-colonialism, and is therefore viewed as an issue of both class and racial justice in countries where land consolidation among small groups is very high, and where it is seen as one of the betrayals of nationalism. Hence for this reason many of the elites cannot come out and publicly condemn it. At the same time when the West appears to be telling so much of Africa what to do, at a time when it appears that the "social" redistributive question is no longer an issue because of economic liberalizations and conditions by multilateral financial agencies, land redistribution cuts a nerve like few others. In private, it appears, however, that many leaders in eastern and southern Africa are livid with Mugabe precisely because he has precipitated something that may impact upon their own polities.

Were you surprised by the strong showing of the MDC in the recent elections? What implications do you think this will have for the future of democracy in Zimbabwe?

There was no surprise over how well the MDC did, notwithstanding some intimidation by the ruling party in some parts of the country. Even as a coalition of groups of people as different as organized labour, human rights, and many NGO's, students, and white farmers, they had an easy target in Mugabe's and ZANU's role in the ongoing mismanagement of the economy. Unemployment is as high as 50 per cent in some parts of the country, especially affecting organized labour and students. In addition, there is the ongoing disaffection in Matabeleland, home of the Ndebele minority, owing to long-held grievances over massacres and unequal distribution of power; the increasing centralization of authority, the rough and often brutal clamp-down on demonstrations by various parts of what was at times an amorphous opposition until the MDC galvanized them and acted as a conduit for organized dissent and opposition. Moreover, they were well-financed they had to be [in light of] the government monopoly over many mediums both from within (and primarily from the white farmers) and from outside. Despite some losses, however, including key government ministers, ZANU was still much stronger in the countryside.

ZANU's loss of seats is a good thing, if only because it has to compromise, and will have for once to deal with a voice in a parliament with a genuine opposition, however fragmented, and despite the fact that its leader did not win a seat. Mugabe will no longer deal with a rubber-stamp parliament. It will also embolden other groups in civil society to keep up the pressure, domestically and internationally, on the ruling party. As a weakened party, it now has to reach out to a wider constituency than that it has so far depended on.

How do you think the land issue in Zimbabwe will resolve itself? Is there some way of dealing with this issue that could satisfy both landless black rural residents and commercial white farmers?

Despite the positive results of the election, the crisis will not easily resolve itself. There is a polarization between the nationalists, represented by the thrust of Mugabe's policies, and the international aid donors and investors. The Western international community is set against extensive land reform, and is generally against the systems of land tenure that much of the redistribution set out by ZANU imply; they prefer individual tenure systems, as opposed to kinship-based ones, which they believe to be inefficient. However it is the international community where most of the resources for land redistribution have to come from. These farm workers are in the main the foundation of ZANU's political support, and if much of the agenda of land reform appears to be cast in their interests, it is not necessarily done in any practical economic and political manner, and which integrates the broader interests of the farm workers to the economy and polity as a whole. If there are, moreover, still

entrenched interests for Zimbabweans who, like the international financial institutions are not only against redistribution, similarly it is the same polarization that may well make ZANU's dependence upon its thus far one dependable constituency peasants and farm workers even more acute.

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1. Using an atlas, encyclopedia, or almanac, prepare a chart or bristol-board, displaying the following information about Zimbabwe:

- Geography: location, land area, capital city and other urban centres, climate, environment, terrain, land use;
- People: population, nationality, age structure, population growth rate, ethnic groups, languages, religions, birth and death rates, infant mortality, life expectancy, number of doctors, literacy;
- Government: leaders, type of government, political parties, administrative divisions, independence, national holiday;
- Economy: overview, Gross Domestic Product, inflation, industries, work force, unemployment, agriculture, natural resources;
- Finance and Trade: currency, budget, spending on defence and education, external debt, exports and imports;
- Communications and Transportation: newspapers, televisions, radios, telephones, Internet access, vehicles, roads, railways, air traffic, airports.

Information on Zimbabwe can be obtained from the government's Web site or from the High Commission for the Republic of Zimbabwe, 332 Somerset St. W., Ottawa ON K2P 0J9, Tel: (613) 237-4388, Fax: (613) 563-8269.

2. Find out more about the stone structures of Great Zimbabwe, the people who built them, their historical importance, and their symbolic significance for Zimbabwe and Africa today. Good sources of information include Into Africa: A Journey through the Ancient Empires, by Marq de Villiers and Sheila Hirtle; The African Experience, by Roland Oliver; Africa in History, by Basil Davidson; and The Wonders of the African World, by Henry Louis Gates, the companion volume to the three-part PBS television series of the same name.

3. Using the Radio Netherlands Web site and other sources, find out more about the AIDS crisis in Africa today, and how it is impacting on the populations of countries like Zimbabwe. In 2000, an international AIDS conference was held in South Africa, in order to focus on the gravity of this problem for the continent.

4. Read and prepare a book report on one of the following books dealing with recent economic, social, and political developments in either Zimbabwe or Africa as a whole: Zimbabwe; The Political Economy of Transformation, by Hevina S. Dashwood; Africa Betrayed, by George B.N. Ayittey; The Search for Africa: History, Culture, Politics, by Basil Davidson; or Zimbabwe's Guerrilla War: Peasant Voices, by Norma Krieger.

5. As a class, discuss your reactions to Western media coverage of the land occupations in Zimbabwe. Do you think the media's portrayal of this event was

balanced, objective, and fair, or did it instead present a one-sided, partial, and negatively biased view of this issue. What criticisms would you make of the way the CBC and other Western media outlets depicted this crisis and its historical background?

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