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**A decade of war veterans-led occupations, 1998-2009:
Politics, state and land in Zimbabwe**

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A Decade of War Veterans-led Occupations (1998-2008): Politics, state and land in Zimbabwe

Abstract

After a decade of relegation and being cast in oblivion, in the 1990s Zimbabwe's war veterans mobilised themselves into a militant organisation confronting the state, demanding welfare benefits, recognition and land redistribution. This culminated in leading a century old land movement of peasants, farm workers and later the urban homeless from 1997 when the state succumbed and unconditionally honoured welfare and financial demands of the war veterans but resisted nationwide land redistribution. Against a backdrop of failing neo-liberal economic policies, increasing state repression and heightened interest of external forces in the country's governance with regime change agendas, formidable civil society powerful, opposition politics and sanctions unfolded during the time when an alliance of peasants, rural and urban workers and marginalised war veterans crystallised and ruptured into a nationwide land occupation movement that transformed localised peasant struggles to a national class struggle with ramifications on state power. In reaction, the state instituted a "fast track" land reform programme, aimed at simultaneously co-opting the movement and suppressing political opposition. Failure of state co-optation of the movement led to military style retributive violence. As grassroots agency, widespread mobilisation against the ruling party and President Robert Mugabe was triggered, leading into electoral downfall of both the party and the President in March 2008. Power was not relinquished though and the political saga continues to unfold, in early 2009, raising questions about the future of the land movement.

Introduction

The Zimbabwe state, formed by nationalist elites out of the liberation movement has exhibited some of the most complex dynamics of class, politics and power in a post-colonial settler economy, reaching a climax in the current decade. The previous period the elite nationalist ruling class enjoyed an alliance with settler capital forged during peace negotiations in 1979 at Lancaster House. The alliance directly antagonised and negated the cause of the liberation struggle expressed symbolically and practically in a century old

struggle to reverse the colonial land ownership structures. War veterans became the 'embodiment' (Kriger 1995) of this anti-colonial struggle and therefore became the target of violent repression of the state and the nationalist ruling class (Alexander 1995).

Anchored on the cultural capital of the liberation struggle, the post independence state was populist in form and rhetoric but essentially capitalist and elitist in nature (Moore D. 1990). Sooner rather than later, the state embarked on developing an elite black bourgeoisie using land as a means of accumulation from the mid 1980s, at the expense of the land hungry peasants, farm workers and marginalised war veterans, whose main motive partaking in the guerrilla war was to regain lost lands (Moyo S. 1995).

The post-independence period has largely exhibited the inherent contradictions between state and society under a capitalist, neo-colonial and settler dominated setting (Sadomba W.Z. 2008). Current scholarly discourses and analysis on Zimbabwe's crisis has failed to examine the class position of the state itself, a critical point observed by Borras (2001) in the case of Phillipines. This omission leads, according to Borras, to an erroneous assumption that 'the state is autonomous in making policy choices ...even when these run counter to the interests of the dominant classes or groups in society' (Borras S.M. 2001:545). This paper argues that the Zimbabwean state is essentially a bourgeois neo-colonial establishment whose interests and values run against the grains of peasants, rural and urban workers and marginalised war veterans, comprising the land movement.

Conflict between the neo-colonial state, peasants and war veterans intensified from the 1990s with the rising of the war veteran movement that culminated in leading the peasant land movement. Having succeeded in suppressing the war veterans during the first decade (1980s) of independence, the state succumbed to their welfare and financial demands but failed to honour the promise to redistribute land according to conditions of a truce entered between war veterans and President Robert Mugabe in 1997. Under war veterans leadership the land movement became more militant, challenging settler capital, the state, ZANU PF elites and President Mugabe from 1998. The unfolding drama of Zimbabwe's land occupations manifests sharp class conflicts in the politics of land, state and social movements.

This paper argues that ever since war veterans started to lead the land movement, the country has witnessed intense political and social conflicts based on divergent class interests with

peasants, farm workers and war veterans on one hand, and settler capital, black elite and emerging bourgeoisie and the ruling oligarchy, on the other. An analogy can be drawn with peasant studies in Latin America where the state has umpired land conflicts with bias towards the elites and the capitalists, against the poor and marginalised. In addition, the 'state apparatus' has been itself a 'source of accumulation' for both 'state actors who are also businesspersons/landowners, and by capitalists who are not formally a part of the state' but are nevertheless favoured by the state through 'subsidies and protective trade policies' (Das R.J. 2007:5). The Zimbabwean state is no different, this paper argues. This paper ushers in a questions currently on debate about ideology in Zimbabwe's land occupation movement, whether "a revolutionary rupture with the capitalist is on the cards?" (Moyo and Yeros 2007:105).

Historical background

The 1970s guerrilla war that ended with the Lancaster House negotiations in 1979 was led by veteran nationalists except for a brief two year period when guerrillas disowned nationalist parties and fought as a united movement of Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA) and Zimbabwe National Liberation Army (ZANLA), under Zimbabwe People's Army (ZIPA). Owing to partisan cleavages of its leaders, ZIPA fractured, giving way to nationalist control of the guerrilla movement, again. A decisive military intervention by Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (FRELIMO), led to incarceration of ZIPA leaders in Mozambique and a simultaneous rise of Robert Mugabe to the helms. This was in 1977. Political myopia of ZIPA leaders and their failure to cope with internal power dynamics is a weakness that has pervaded and sustained itself in the war veterans' movement, with disastrous consequences to the general liberation movement.

Mugabe's leadership, which has spanned more than a generation, did not only have violent beginnings but was also a negation of radical left-wing ideology fashioned by ZIPA. Mugabe swiftly developed a personality cult with such alacrity that he became an idol in a few years. Selective recruitment from outside the guerrilla movement and restructuring of ZANU effectively changed the balance of power in the movement, with recruited nationalists in charge of the top structures of the movement. Loyalist guerrilla commanders in the new structure were effective in controlling the army but had no power to make political decisions. As a result, the Lancaster House agreement protected the interests of the nationalists at the

expense of the fighters, the peasants and the farm workers. An alliance was forged between the nationalists and white settlers aimed at protecting white privileges and interests in land and the economy. The post-independence period was imbued with contradictions arising from mass expectations on one hand and protection of white settler interests on the other.

The arena of conflict in the post-independence period became land. Peasants' occupation movement which had gained momentum in the liberation, war surged. State reaction to this peasant movement kept changing. Between 1980 and 1984 the state appeased the peasants through "accelerated" regularisation of land occupations. This short-lived resettlement programme mainly in peripheral zones was followed by brutal suppression of land movement actors, now labelled squatters. In addition government resettlement policy tilted towards a powerfully rising black elite and state functionaries at the expense of the land movement and marginalised war veterans.

The 1980s was a period when war veterans were heavily suppressed by the state particularly but not only, dissenting former ZIPRA guerrillas. At the end of the decade, after a unity accord was signed between ZANU PF and PF ZAPU in 1987, war veterans reorganised and formed Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans Association (ZNLWVA) which led rebellious episodes against the state, President Mugabe and ZANU PF, in the 1990s. Towards the end of 1997 a truce was entered into, signalling a new political era of war veteran dominance. This truce and its part implementation of awarding Z\$50 000 to each war veteran as unpaid demobilisation funds, has been wrongly seen by scholars and analysts as a process of cooptation of war veterans.

What has not been analysed by scholars is the effect of this victory by the war veterans over ZANU PF, the state and Mugabe. It threatened the Lancaster House alliance and 'accelerated the deteriorating relationship between farmers and the state' leading to the final demise of the alliance (Selby 2006:257). It is at this point that the end of the alliance between settler farmers and the ZANU PF elites, which had been forged in 1979, came to an end. White commercial farmers 'resolved to 'internationalise' the issue' according to Selby 'in the hope that external awareness would arbitrate the process' (Selby 2006:257). If the white farmers decided to internationalise the problem at this point, the ZCTU was much ahead of them, for:

A month before the New Labour Party was voted into power in Britain ...

European Trade Unions ... [through] the Danish Trade Union Council posted

Georg Limke in late 1996 to ... turn trade union movement in Zimbabwe into a political party. Therein lay the evolutionary roots of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). (Mudenge I. 2004a:10)

The Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) had been fighting for autonomy from the state from the beginning of the 1990s. However, as shown above they became more aligned to international donors, as they did so plunging Zimbabwe's politics in regime change agendas drafted by western governments. Observing this tendency, Masunungure (2008:64) describes the civil society in Zimbabwe as:

... shackled[,] ... characterised by a debilitating irony: it agitated for autonomy vis-a-vis the state but did not enjoy such autonomy vis-a-vis international donors and partners. Because of the financial and material umbilical cord between the two unequal partners and the asymmetrical relationships attendant thereof, the Zimbabwean civil society community absorbed the international donor agenda hook, line and sinker.

It is in this context that I have argued elsewhere that the MDC emerged to replace ZANU PF elites as surrogates to the Lancaster House alliance (Sadomba W.Z. 2008; Sadomba W.Z. 2008a). Therefore, this was more than just an end to the Lancaster House alliance but it was the beginning of a new one, to rescue the interests of settler and international capital which were under threat as Mugabe and ZANU PF elites had demonstrated that they could not hold back the rebellious veterans and later, a tsunami of the land hungry. This new reconfiguration of forces was also critical in another sense. By choosing to internationalise the issue as they drifted from the state, the opposition and white farmers had invited inter-state relations that developed into the most complex political diplomacy in the post-colonial period of Africa. Internationalisation, in essence meant appealing to the former colonial powers in Europe and not to regional powers as SADDC or the AU, for example. Mobilisation of European states, Britton Woods institutions, western media and donors, in defence of international and settler capital on one hand, against the Zimbabwe state, ZANU PF ruling party and Robert Mugabe on the other was a turning point in the country's politics. Sanctions were imposed in the country (Gono 2008). Conflict of the two groups has led into a theatrical diplomatic antagonism attracting worldwide attention and polarisation.

In conclusion, two decades of Mugabe's leadership had therefore reversed ideological gains of the liberation war and effectively protected the interests of white capital. Simultaneously

it suppressed all voices of dissent with appeasement of the peasants through a cosmetic resettlement programme. Power became more concentrated and centralised, crushing PF ZAPU which was a potential alternative to the leadership of the liberation movement. With this, a *de facto* one party state under Robert Mugabe reigned and the Lancaster House alliance, consolidated. Major internal opposition to the ruling elite was in the 1990s. Coupled with economic downturn and social strife, the stage was set for a war veteran-led land occupations movement which took shape in 1998 and spearheaded occupations up to and after the rupture of 2000. From this period the position of the state in relation to the land movement shifted many times, as did the position of Mugabe and ZANU PF, with the MDC alliance¹ acting as a catalytic agent.

The occupation period 1998 – 2002

Scholars of Zimbabwe's land conflicts have not distinguished the various phases in the unfolding drama thereby losing salient points about that struggle. This paper argues that there was a distinct land occupation period from 1998 to 2002². This section discusses the period.

When war veterans forced the state and Mugabe to the table in 1997 the two agreed that white commercial farmers would be ceased and distributed to the land hungry, with twenty percent of it for the war veterans. Government reacted by immediately designating 1471 commercial farmers for compulsory acquisition. This was viciously contested legally by white commercial farmers and no real settlement materialised. War veterans reacted by taking isolated group initiatives to mobilise traditional leaders across the country (interview K 2004). This resulted in more than 30 war veteran-led occupations, including the most outspoken Svosve occupations in mid 1998.

¹ This was composed of the broad alliance of employers, civil society organisations, White commercial farmers, student activists and workers, considered an 'unholy' alliance (Masunungure 2004:171).

² This period is quite distinct in that it was a time of marked war veterans leadership of occupying groups, weak or no state and ZANU PF involvement in the movement. Although state took part it was specifically as one of the actors but controlling the movement. All actors, viz., war veterans, commercial farmers and peasants and farm workers have clearly distinguished this period in the interviews.

War veterans-led occupations were qualitatively different from peasant led occupations in a number of ways and this new leadership intensified land struggles to levels of class antagonism and organisation analogous to the situation in Brazil and Mexico. First, the occupations were militant, clearly borrowing aggressive and advancing tactics from the war veterans' movement of that period. Second, the land occupation movement became potentially more inclusive, destroying the rural/urban divide and engulfing state organs where war veterans were concentrated like the uniformed forces. In this sense the 'local orientation' of the peasant land movement was 'transcended, and peasants ... entered national politics' developing an 'alliance with the workers' as happened in ???, according to Das (Das R.J. 2007:10). Thirdly, war veteran leadership introduced new ideologies discourses, liberation war metaphors and symbolism, guerrilla tactics and experiences. Fourthly, war veterans' leadership was vital in challenging monopolisation of cultural capital of the liberation war and history by nationalist politicians and ZANU PF. All in all the war veterans leadership of the land movement radically shifted 'grassroots agency' from being merely 'confined to and aimed at a power structure within its own immediate vicinity' to challenging the 'state at the national level' where class 'power is concentrated' (Das R.J. 2007:8) similar to the growth of the land movement in ??? as observed by Das.

Land occupations of 1998 were targeted at farms which government had designated for acquisition (interview Muchaneta, 2004). War veterans mobilised peasants and occupied the farms challenging state laxity regarding solving inherited racial imbalances of land ownership. It is however important to remember that these land occupations followed close on the heels of successful confrontation that pinned Robert Mugabe³ and opened doors for negotiation and a truce. As such occupations were continuation of war veterans' challenge to the state which had started at the end of the previous decade and sharpened at Chinhoyi in 1992. Scholars have not critically analysed this linkage except for a few (e.g. Moyo 2001, Sadomba 2008).

³ From the 1992 Chinhoyi inaugural meeting of ZNLWVA where war veterans confronted Mugabe on his poor leadership styles and bad governance, demanding him to dismiss his cabinet and to go back to the objectives of the liberation struggle, Mugabe refused to meet the war veterans again. Their street demonstrations of the 1990s, climaxing in the besieging the State House, was aimed at seeking audience with Mugabe who adamantly refused.

The antagonistic contradictions between the war veterans-led movement and the state were based on the following: a) the fissure created by reconfiguration of forces expressed in the Lancaster alliance b) subsequent government policies and programmes which protected white capital including land, particularly reconciliation and Economic Structural adjustment Policy (ESAP) c) increasing suppression of the lower classes by the state with power now concentrated in a small ethnic clique. The state had identified itself to be an organ of oppression of the majority poor classes in protection of the rich black petty bourgeoisie and landed white capital. Land occupations were therefore manifestation of class struggle, in the Marxist sense and war veterans were quite conscious of this fact.⁴

State reaction to early land occupations was draconian. The Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP), the Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO) and the white dominated judiciary attacked the land movement actors, torching their shelters, scattering them in nearby mountains and bushes and finally arresting and slamming them with all sorts of judicial punishment. When war veterans-led occupations broke out in 1998, white farmers naturally aligned with the state to suppress the occupations. It is important to note that although the Lancaster alliance had ended ZANU PF elites, the state and Robert Mugabe were at this stage in the middle of the road and therefore were protecting their class interests and not necessarily serving the alliance. They were in the horns of dilemma.

The actions of war veterans leading to the 1997 truce caused ZANU PF elites and Mugabe to be sceptical about war veterans. Indeed the relationship remained strained throughout the occupation period (Sadomba 2008). This is despite the fact that entry of war veterans into the farms led to the discovery of political strategies of the white commercial farmers and the 'internationalisation of the issue' which is itself against nationalism.

The labour movement represented by the ZCTU, evolved into a constitutional movement the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA) led by ZCTU President, Morgan Tsvangirai. The

⁴ Many interviews held with war veterans revealed this (e.g. interview Obvious 2004, a woman war veteran who led occupations in Domboshawa area, DM 2000-2006, self employed war veteran leader of occupations from 1998, DT 2000-2001 a war veteran leader, University of Zimbabwe graduate in Political Science and former senior ZIPA commander).

NCA was vocal about the need to have a new Zimbabwean drafted constitution citing weaknesses of the Lancaster Constitution of 1979. It forced government to institute a Constitutional Commission in April 1999, chaired by Justice Chidyausiku. The greater part of 1999 was therefore spent working on the new constitution and land occupations were carried out quietly. However, war veterans believed that the new constitution would have clauses that would allow land to be expropriated from the white farmers for resettling the land hungry. As such, war veterans had particular interest in the constitution for this purpose.

On September 11, the MDC was finally formed, evolving from the labour and later, constitutional movement, led by Morgan Tsvangirai⁵. This paper argues that formation of the MDC had catalytic effects on the unfolding land occupations led by war veterans. Throughout 1998 and the first three quarters of 1999, neither the opposition nor the constitution preoccupied the state and Mugabe. The main concern was the land occupations. On one hand the white farmers took government to court and resisted compulsory acquisition. On the other war veterans, true to their threats at the truce, had started mobilising peasants to occupy land and more than 30 occupations nationwide were reported (Marongwe N. 2003). A donor conference on land was held in Harare at a time when the occupations were raging and the state was fire fighting them. It is also important to note that during this period war veterans were antagonistic to Mugabe, threatening to disown him as patron to their association (Sadomba W.Z. 2008). Hunzvi was arrested on charges of embezzlement but also implicated on forming a hit squad to assassinate some senior ZANU PF members and government ministers. Relations between them had continued to sour even after the truce. ZANU PF elites had become more and more isolated, with forces from all directions converging on them.

The situation was however more complex in that the new alliance of civil society, settler and international capital also stood aloof from the war veterans because the ideologies of the two were in direct conflict with that of capital, domestic or international. In fact ZANU PF elites and the new alliance had common class interests than with war veterans and the land hungry.

⁵ Formation of the MDC coincided with the period the Constitutional Assembly was consulting the electorate provincially. The project of the new party was to prepare for the next elections, to be held the following June. As such, the main objective the new party was to display itself by actively working against the constitutional assembly programme, disrupting constitutional assembly meetings and mobilising the electorate.

It is therefore important to note that the difference between ZANU PF elites and MDC was power and not ideology and both of them were desperate for an opinion poll for the pending elections as clearly expressed by H (2000), a founder member of MDC, in an email dated 11 February 2000.

On the other hand and for the same purpose, government hurriedly prepared for a referendum, which at the time did not even have a law in place for it (Madhuku 2000:55). Clause ??? of the draft effectively maintained the spirit and content of the Lancaster House constitution proposing compensation for land acquired for resettlement by the government. This angered the war veterans who organised a demonstration against the draft constitution threatening to mobilise the electorate to vote against it. They petitioned the British high Commissioner and Emmerson Munangagwa, the Minister of Justice:

... demanding amendments in the draft constitution section dealing with land redistribution. The section [said] government [would] compensate farmers whose land [would] have been acquired but the war vets demanded that no compensation be paid. ZNLWVA Harare branch Chairman, Douglas Mahiya [said], ‘We are saying the price of the land has been paid by the blood of the people who died during the war’. (Daily News 12 January 2000).

This forced Mugabe to unilaterally change the clause of the draft constitution, using powers conferred by the Act. The clause was changed to read that land for resettlement would be acquired without compensation to the land but only to the improvements and mentioned the colonial authority, Britain, to provide financial compensation to dispossessed farmers. This triggered an immediate counteraction from the white community both inside and outside Zimbabwe now campaigning to vote against the draft constitution. Intensity of mobilisation and heightened participation of the white constituency, unparalleled since independence, illustrated the gravity of issues at stake.

When the referendum was finally held on 11 and 12 February 2000, the “no” vote prevailed and the land issue ruptured, with nationwide occupations spreading at an unprecedented speed. The rupture was signified by occupation in Masvingo of a derelict farm by war veterans followed by nationwide occupations activity. What was the state reaction to this? What was the position of civil society and the opposition movement? And finally what was

the position of ZANU PF and Mugabe? These are critical questions whose analysis will illuminate the unfolding processes in Zimbabwe's political life from 2000 to 2008.

The defeat of the draft constitution, which was largely about the land but also preparing for Mugabe's exit, widely interpreted as ZANU PF impending doom in the next elections. In this sense the referendum had served its purpose for both ZANU PF and the MDC. Owing to isolation from the liberation movement, settler and international capital, weakened position from war veterans attacks and the opposition coalition now led by MDC, the ZANU PF ruling class was desperate. Mugabe realised that war veterans and the surging land movement were an asset in the manoeuvre of this new development. Tactically, he decided to "hijack" the land movement in a bid to use its cultural capital against the MDC and particularly against white commercial farmers. He started to work towards what many thought was a genuine alliance with the land movement, particularly the war veterans who led it, from around February 2000 (Sadomba 2008). The state enacted various pieces of legislation in support of the movement e.g. The Occupiers act 2001, The Land Resettlement Act 2000. These enactments should be against the backdrop heightened MDC activities, increased demonisation, intensified diplomatic onslaught and sanctions which were catalytic to the internal conflicts of the movement.

However the organisation of the land movement did not have a conventional hierarchical formation, having been rooted in the structures, ethos and practices of guerrilla strategies and tactics and local traditional agro-religious structures. These two forms of movement and social organisation resulted in horizontally structured locally organised units of occupations that had no centralised command. As such, the attempt to hijack the movement by co-opting the leaders of Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans Association (ZNLWVA) was ineffective (Sadomba 2008). This is because the structures of ZNLWVA did not initiate the nationwide occupations nor did they control them. MT (Interview with MT 2001), a War veteran who coordinated occupation in Mazowe and Matepatepa, was clear that, "The whole thing was spontaneous [with] no central organising platform that gave any direction ... nobody told us to do anything".

The horizontality of organisation of the land occupations also explains the possibility of the nationwide spontaneity as it does the extent of the land grievance and the antagonistic levels it had reached. It was embedded in the nature and character of organisation of African land

movements as analysed by Sam Moyo (2002) albeit imbued with both advantages and disadvantages. The structure made cooptation difficult by the state as well as impossible to confront by the Commercial Farmers Union. It was flexible and suited local conditions and atmosphere. In short the horizontal and dispersed nature of the land movement was ideal for land occupations but later this proved a limitation for state attacks during Murambatsvina period when the ZNLWVA was also weak and partially co-opted.

The land movement engulfed the urban landless and occupied land for urban housing and agriculture.

The fast track housing cooperatives were born out of structures of the War Veterans Association that led the land occupations in both urban and rural areas. From the year 2000 they moved into open space belonging to councils within the urban areas and onto privately-owned White capitalist farms around urban areas. Housing cooperatives were formed on all occupied land. Members were drawn from the community and were [the] homeless poor ... Thirty nine co-operatives [were] formed between 2000 and 2003. (Masuku 2008:191).

These housing cooperatives were also characteristically different from the preceding ones that started in mid 1980s. In Harare war veterans formed a union in 2001 called The Greater Harare Housing Cooperative. Before they were smashed by Operation Murambatsvina in 2005, the union in Harare alone had achieved various stages of housing construction and development in allocated stands: 1712 completed houses, 734 houses at roof level, 473 at window level, 1332 at slab level and 2026 foundations. In Harare alone there was a total of 10 097 houses in construction progress, on land distributed through the movement. In comparison, nationally actual houses constructed annually between 1985 and 2000 ranged from 15 000 to 20 000 (Masuku 2008:186). 10097 houses in two years without state assistance were phenomenal. This figure can be juxtaposed with progressively dwindling numbers from 1500 stands officially allocated in Harare in 1999 to 220 stands in 2004. The progress in housing provision in Harare alone was at least two thirds of the national annual output and more than 1000 times of official land allocations in Harare.

With this, the war veteran-led occupation movement had done away with the political rural and urban divide along ZANU PF/MDC partisan affiliations. It became a movement that united the poor classes of the peasantry, farm workers, urban workers and the reserve army

of the unemployed, thereby raising the land question and struggles to their true national character. It is this factor that is fundamental in explaining class conflicts of Murambatsvina which scholars have not debated but have put their whole weight on analysing demographic statistics of the catastrophe, failing to make use of the data to explain class antagonism. In some cases figures themselves are exaggerated as they seemed to be an end in themselves rather than means.

This class alliance forged through the land movement (Sadomba 2008, Masuku 2008), has escaped the analysis of many scholars and researchers. The majority of this poor urban working class was comprised of retrenched workers of the 1990s as industry shrank under ESAP. These retrenchments, coupled with severe housing shortage, had caused congestion owing to illegal construction and extension of outbuildings on high and low density properties. By the time of Murambatsvina struck in 2005 more than 80 percent of housing stands in Harare had such illegal constructions, illustrating the magnitude of the social base for mobilisation at the disposal of the land movement.

This was at the height of urbanisation. Lynch (2000) pointed out the characteristic paradox of inverse relation of urban influx and shrinkage of resources or means of livelihood in Third World cities. The situation of Zimbabwe during ESAP and especially during the occupation and fast track periods, seem quite different and this might explain how the country has managed to sustain its economy even under sanctions and mismanagement at national level, especially before Operation Murambatsvina in 2005. Zimbabwean working class is highly skilled, disciplined and educated, probably the best on the continent. As a result, shrinkage of industry gave birth to a vibrant informal sector of small scale manufacturers in different fields with trained artisans and technicians producing high quality products. More than 60 percent of the urban working class in Harare were in the informal sector (Masuku 2003:186) absorbing labour from the rural areas. Almost all the different sectors of industry were duplicated albeit at a lower scale, in the informal sector, competing now with the established capitalist large scale industries.

This economic condition swiftly changed at the commencement of the occupations in 2000. There was sudden capital flight resulting from the imposition of sanctions and as a backlash to expropriation of settler capital. The working class structure also as suddenly transformed from formal to informal self employment. The power of trade unions on the work class also

withered with this changing environment. Land occupations in the urban and rural areas were a major turning point since the formation of MDC in 1999 and they eroded its base, which heavily relied on the trade union politics. Regimentation of the workers was no longer possible for both the state and for MDC. Structural changes of and within the working class explain the failures of stay-aways called for by MDC after 2000 that had succeeded earlier.

The land movement had developed far reaching objectives beyond redistribution and these included 'restoration of dignity of Zimbabweans,' 'equitable distribution of land', 'restoration of cultural values', 'urban health' and 'self-help strategies'. Housing cooperatives and Unions in urban areas and resuscitation of war time base committees, were ocular proof of '...self sustaining, democratic peasant worker organisational structures, with a view to preparing for longer-term class-based political education and ideological struggle' slipped Moyo and Yeros' (2005:190) observation.

Differences in ideology between state, ZANU PF elites and the land movement caused antagonistic clashes at the district level proving that co-optation of ZNLWVA leadership at national level was not automatic but was resisted at the base of the pyramid owing to divergent objectives and conflictual ideology of the FTLRP. The objective of war veterans was for land to be given to the land hungry people as outlined by DTM (Interview 2000, former ZIPA commander and leader of land occupations in Mazowe):

Some people have been saying the land issue has been on the agenda because ZANU-PF wants to use it to gain some political mileage. But I, as well as my colleagues, War Veterans, we have a genuine desire to have the land issue resolved once and for all now. Political mileage would be a downstream benefit rather than the main objective. What we want to do is actually to give land to the people. If ZANUPF as a party is going to benefit by that, well, there is nothing wrong with that. But it will be wrong for anybody to assume that we are doing this so as to bolster the position of ZANU-PF. That is not the case. We genuinely want to resettle people. The poverty that is quite abundant among our people can only be ameliorated... rectified... corrected, if people get land. There are no jobs in town, there are no jobs in industry and most of our people are on the land.

However, war veterans were also aware that ZANU PF elites were opposed to them and the final objectives of the land movement. They knew that ZANU PF elites and government

officials 'dislike,' 'fear' and feel 'unease' about war veterans, preferring to 'keep' them at a 'distance' as a result. (interview with DTM, 2000 a war veteran leader of occupations holding a political science degree). At Shiro Farm in Goromonzi in 1998 war veterans threatened the ZANU PF senior ministers and politburo members that after repossessing land they would return to overhaul the party leadership and allow the marginalised peasants and war veterans to take over (interview DM 2000, K 2004, Muchaneta 2004). However, the intriguing question is why, if war veterans saw the need of changing leadership of the party and government since the Chinhoyi meeting of 1992, did they not take it as a priority? Why did war veterans not take over the party machinery first as prelude to taking over state power? What exactly did they mean about their return?

This was the leadership dilemma that the war veterans were grappling with during the land occupation. As Mudenge (2004a) later confirmed Mugabe had decided to unleash the state machinery – specifically the army – to silence war veterans. So war veterans 'knew that they risked becoming targets of state violence' which they had to avoid and stir the ZANU PF elites away from the Lancaster Alliance 'resulting in the 'interaction between the needs of politicians for a constituency, [and] of people for land (Alexander J. 2003:97). War veterans faced the threat of ZANU PF elites going back into the Lancaster House alliance. Strategic compromise seemed inevitable and ZANU PF gain of 'downstream benefits' was certainly one of them.

MDC, the Commercial Farmers Union (CFU), private and international media, painted the occupations as chaotic. They claimed that occupiers were murdering, raping and torturing people in the farms. They depicted war veterans as rogue elements sent into the farms by a beleaguered ZANU PF, an aged president and desperate state to suppress the opposition party. Evidence on the ground suggests otherwise. Land occupations were far from being chaotic; they were orderly principled generally non-violent except for minor assaults. Interviews with many white commercial farmers, one white lawyer who represented farmers and farm workers, not to mention the occupiers themselves, clearly shows this. During the occupation period war veterans had specific rules of operations that they followed which included not to take any farm property, not to destroy produce or kill animals, to request from the owner for anything they needed etc. (interview P 2000, Bota 2004, Personal

communication with white farmer H 2000-2003, Interview white farmer BT 2004).⁶ War veterans were given more rules by the spirit mediums before they went to occupy land. These included prohibition of any type of sex during occupations and in the occupied areas (Participant observation 2000-2004).

However criminal elements took advantage of the situation as a white farmer B (interview 2004) clarified:

War veterans would not fall in the criminal element [group] who I know took advantage of the whole situation to ... gain from what was going on at the time ... those people can't be war veterans. So they were abusing the name of war veterans ... Genuine war veterans were after the land. This was pretty as much straight forward as that

For political strategic reasons, the new alliance of the MDC, settlers, international capital on one hand and ZANU PF elites on the other, portrayed war veterans as barbaric, unintelligent and incapable of ruling the country or leading the people. White commercial farmers themselves confirmed that war veterans were not violent and did not loot the farms; they were clearly after the land.

During the occupation period, white commercial farmers failed to respond positively to the pragmatic proposals of war veterans to share excess land. War veterans actually approached the farmers with the idea of not driving them off the land but to share land that was in excess and was underutilised or multiple farms.

⁶ The PhD research done in the same research area by Angus Selby (2006), a son of a white commercial farmer is also quite illustrative. It is notable that Selby fails to cite any assault from the research area let alone any death but he relies on newspaper reports on cases that took place outside the research area, at a national level. The paper is not suggesting that there was absolutely no act of violence in the research area but this was quite minimal. For example one farmer was not allowed to get out of his house when he refused to share his land and he was rescued by the police. At another farm war veterans admitted clapping forcing the white farmer to take off his shoes and sit on the ground while they addressed farm workers. However these were few isolated cases and in most cases based on the farmer reaction. For example at Duncombe the farmer, after agreeing to subdivide land and occupiers had planted their maize crop, he came and ploughed them under and this caused retaliation by occupiers. They stripped tobacco leaves with whips and a new agreement for compensation was signed this time at the police station out of agreement of the two parties to involve the police (Personal observation 2000).

We first negotiated with the [to share] farmers and entered into written agreements before even occupying. However when we now made a follow-up to implement the agreements at the time of elections, the farmers started to change their mind and they were now saying they signed under duress. We then realized that these people were dishonest and they were not serious; we were just wasting our time.

Another reason why commercial farmers kept vacillating, was that farmers expected the MDC and Morgan Tsvangirai would win the 2002 elections hoping to reverse the land reform.. This thwarted chances of negotiation and dialogue giving the ZANU PF elites the opportunity to start fresh occupations which were not based on the criteria that the war veterans had used. The ruling party elites were punishing the white settler farmers for aligning with the MDC and therefore sharing land with them was out of question. In some cases war veterans went ahead to mobilise the land movement actors in defence of some commercial farmers against this state and ZANU PF wave of occupations. Armed police squads in riot gear came from Harare to disperse the demonstrators who had locked up the settled war veteran who had driven the farmer out against the wishes of the land movement actors (Personal observation Gaisford Farm, Concession⁷).

The state, as an actor, intensified occupations and targeted critical white commercial farmers to break the backbone of MDC. Both MDC and ZANU PF engaged in violent political clashes during the electoral period and this was clouded the land occupations. MDC, in alliance with white commercial farmers, actively organised gangs to attack occupiers in their bases and even at their homes. The first deployment of occupiers was attacked such that in many areas occupations were postponed until reinforcement was mobilised from elsewhere

⁷ See also Selby 2006:299. However Selby did not have accurate information. Removal of Ngwenya was organised by war veterans from Concession who mobilised youths and land occupiers for this purpose. The Gaisfords were particularly defended from the beginning of occupations because of their role in supporting community health and education. They sought donations for clinics, hospitals and schools and were sitting in the board of Concession hospital (Interview DTM 2003, war veteran leader and former civil servant). Failure to acknowledge the role of war veterans does not show the dynamics of the movement. A similar defence by the war veterans as well, was of Hawks, next to Collingwood farm.

(interview DTM 2000). However some MDC members supported land occupations⁸. For example Munyaradzi Gwisai openly and publicly supported them and he was removed from the party for his utterances. Another person was Learnmore Jongwe, then spokesman for MDC who went with a group of MDC supporters to join occupiers in Nyabira (interview DM, 2001).

Although the FLRP was started in mid 2000 it took time for it to be felt on the ground and even more time for the state to ultimately control the land movement. By end of the year the state had failed to penetrate the movement and bring it under control. Instead it met with stiff resistance from the land movement prompting the state to convene a high powered meeting between some war veterans and the state on 18 December 2000. The meeting was aimed at disempowering war veterans to enforce the authority of the task force structures.

Nevertheless, the land movement actors continued to resist state manoeuvres. With imminent presidential elections (in 2002) the state and ZANU PF proceeded cautiously with FTLRP fearing that war veterans would mobilise voters against voting for Mugabe.

After presidential elections of 2000, which were won by Mugabe the state now implemented its fast track programme in full throttle changing drastically the situation in the farms to control the movement. ZANU PF leadership at the local level, chiefs and civil servants were mobilised by the state against the war veteran leadership. Civil servants and local leaders started to target war veterans for removal from the farms. The Presidential Land Review Committee (Utete C.M.B. 2003:35) observed that although War Veterans were happy that the government at last 'had heeded the call for land redistribution ... [however] their members had not benefited as promised ... [and] land was allocated on regional lines...' From 2002 the state had managed to usurp the leadership of the land movement from the war veterans, marking the end of the occupation period⁹.

⁸ Some supporters of MDC from the rural areas also participated in the land occupations but they had to disguise themselves partly because of their party position and partly because they feared the reaction of ZANU PF supporters. This shows that land demand and the propensity to occupy cut across political divide.

⁹ To give more details, 2001 was the transition from occupation to full fast track operation.

The Fast Track Land Reform Programme

The FLRP was an immediate strategy formulated by government and ruling ZANU PF to deal with the land movement. At this time the state shifted its role from one of the actors of the movement to that of a power above the movement exercising the authority of 'legalizing and regulating the occupations' (Haar van der G. 2005:5). However, latently its objective was to usurp control of the land movement from the war veterans' leadership and sway it from its original objective of land redistribution to the land hungry. Through FTLRP the state regained legitimacy and assumed authority to take charge of and structure the land occupations. However, state support favoured the rising petty bourgeoisie (Moyo S. 1995; Kinsey B.H. 1999a; 1999; Sholtz D. 2004), enhanced during ESAP in the 1990s.

Implementation focused on attacking and weakening the land movement leadership.

Organisationally the FLRP had a national task force to study the movement, create structures and re-establishing state control. Provincial committees were created and similar structures were set at district level. District committees were frontline structures of FLRP, in direct confrontation with war veteran leadership of the movement.

The first manifest clash between the state and the land movement was based on the new structures imposed by the state. At national level there was neither representation of war veterans nor any actors of the movement. At provincial levels war veterans employed by government were used to represent land occupiers despite the fact that these might have had nothing to do with the occupations. At district level the DA and the committee sidelined the actual war veterans who were leaders of the land movement, and replaced them by some hand-picked individuals that they preferred to represent the land movement constituency. Many such tactics were used but the land movement actors resisted, resulting into serious clashes which at times, degenerated into physical assaults (Sadomba 2008).

FTLRP involved land assessment to determine carrying capacity, demarcation into plots, settler selection and followed placement. Three tier tenure systems resulted where A1 plots were based on a communitarian policy and A2 was for commercial farming; communal lands remained unchanged. The objective of the land movement was in line with the A1 model where as many peasant farmers as possible would be resettled through the scheme. It turned out that the A2 model became very controversial as it was distributed for patrimonial reasons, handled directly by the Minister of Lands and Agriculture.

Scholars on both sides of the line have not attempted to distinguish the different phases of the land reform processes in Zimbabwe (Hammar A. and Raftopolous B. 2003; Moyo S. and Yeros P. 2007). This is erroneous in that failure to distinguish the various phases conceals many factors that help us understand the dynamics of the movement in space and time. The land occupations differed markedly between the nature, approach, objective and motive of war veterans-led occupations and state and ZANU PF led occupations during the fast track period. These occupations were mainly carried on occupied land, dispossessing occupiers in order to give it to ZANU PF elites, civil servants or relatives of those in the system. War veterans dubbed this wave of occupations *jambanja*¹⁰ on *jambanja* meaning that they were occupations of occupied land. The fast track was not about bringing order to a disorderly operation but the contrary, it started to introduce disorder and new waves of occupations.

The process of the FTLRP was summarised in a document presented to the Provincial Stakeholder Dialogue held from 23 to 24 August 2004, organised by African Institute of Agrarian Studies. War veterans wrote:

Arrests of land occupiers has been orchestrated and well planned so much that strategies are made to create crimes where war veterans [are] fast-tracked to cells, court and jail. It's a well organized syndicate of officials from the mass that is used ... police details who arrest, magistrate and his public prosecutor who make sure you [go] to jail. When others [occupiers] realize this humiliation, they ... go back to [their] towns of origin, and the so-called politicians become happy and celebrate. But can we say they will have solved the problem? No! ... Already there is political discontent and distortion in the Agrarian Revolution. (Mashonaland West War Veterans Association 2004).

As soon as the fast track took root, it started to weed out war veterans and other land occupiers, opening for commercial farms for the elite. These were mainly government officials, party loyalists and the ruling oligarchy who were given whole farms to themselves as opposed to subdivision applying to A2 farmers. They chose prime land with good infrastructure and farm houses, chasing away the land movement actors. Moreover the

¹⁰ “Jambanja” is a colloquial Shona word which connotes simultaneous expropriation and suspension of the law.

government input scheme favoured these large scale farmers than the small A1 farmers. For example A1 farmers, occupying 98 percent of the resettled land, got at most one eighth of the funds, with the balance going to commercial farmers on A2 farms. In the 2006 Government budgeted about ZW \$1 trillion for '2005-6 season crop input finance to support A1 and communal farmers' forming more than a million farmers, to be conservative. A2 farmers got, through the Central Bank programme called Agricultural Sector Productivity Enhancement Fund (ASPEF), 'ZW \$7 trillion and other private financing schemes' (World Bank 2006: 59).

Many no longer had the energy to fight and they simply returned to their houses in towns or their rural homes. The fast track was marked by many violent clashes between the state and the land movement. The state used Moreover many of those who were given the land, for large scale A2 commercial farming wherefrom land movement actors had been removed, were not capitalist farmers and were accused of asset stripping¹¹ (War veterans Grievance document 2004).

Murambatsvina¹² Period

This paper argues that the decade of war veterans land movement is a tale of class conflict within the liberation movement. Class antagonisms reached their climax during the Murambatsvina phase. In this section we examine the position of the land movement in the Murambatsvina period from mid 2004 to 2008. Many scholars and analysts have looked at Murambatsvina in partisan terms arguing that it was retribution on MDC supporters. This paper disagrees with this analysis and it argues that Murambatsvina was an attack on the land movement. It further argues that Murambatsvina occurred both in rural as well as urban areas and it started before 2005. Murambatsvina was imbedded in an overall strategy to deal with the land movement that had been developed by the state from the rupture in 2000.

¹¹ For example these new A2 farmers started to remove parts like plumbing materials, fancy lamp sheds etc. from the farm houses and sell or replace similar parts of their houses in town.

¹² Murambatsvina is a Shona word which literally means "one who rejects dirt or garbage". It was coined on environmental health technicians because of their message of refraining from dirt. *Mu* is class one noun prefix *ramb* is a verb root meaning "refuse" or "refrain from" *tsvina* is noun meaning dirt or garbage. However *tsvina* is also euphemistically used to mean human excrement, but in this context excrement, as Judith Todd (2007:102) interprets, is a misnomer.

The state designed a strategy comprised three options for formal intervention into the land movement. The first option was simple cooptation of the movement through ZNLWVA leadership structures aimed to diffuse the movement's autonomy and to subdue it. The second option was to create parallel state structures that would antagonise those of the land movement in the hope that the later would succumb. The third and last option was to smash the movement violently and dissipate it. The fast track was a process of executing these three options in that order and Operation Murambatsvina was a culmination of that long term strategy. During execution the options overlapped although they remain distinguishable and severable.

The attempt to co-opt the land movement failed for a number of reasons including but not limited to, complex horizontality of movement organisation, localisation, divisions within state organs¹³ and effective negation of land movement structures that continuously made war veterans suspicious about the actual agenda of the state and ZANU PF elites..

Operation Murambatsvina/Restore Order began much earlier than 2005, as continuation of clashes between state organs and the land movement, particularly war veteran leaders. In Mashonaland west and Central for example there were continuous brutal evictions of occupiers by the state at Little England and Gomba to mention but the some publicised ones. Tactically, government postponed widespread violent onslaught on the land movement until the general elections of 2005¹⁴. It is notable that ZANU PF won the elections

¹³ Dumiso Dabengwa, former Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA) intelligence supremo, then Minister of Home Affairs, sent police to evict occupiers in March and April 2000. Joseph Musika, acting as President while Mugabe was out of the country, did the same later. In August 2000, Minister of Lands, John Nkomo, announced that occupations had to stop. War veterans actually clarified their position telling prospective members of parliaments that "... if government was saying 'land to the people' as a political gimmick, we were on our part, serious." (interview DM, 2000). Around March 2000 war veterans locked ZANU PF Provincial Offices and demanded audience with Mugabe, complaining that the ruling party and government were not pushing government and ZANU PF to unequivocally support their land occupation initiative who sent Didymus Mutasa and Joseph Musika for negotiations (interview DM, 2000).

¹⁴ Government is always tactical the closer to elections the timing is; e.g. they only intensely executed fast track after 2002 presidential elections.

overwhelmingly, reflecting the effect of land movement both in rural and urban areas (Masuko L. 2008; Sadomba W.Z. 2008)

As a long term strategy to consolidate the land movement, War veterans decided to take over the political leadership of ZANU PF by mobilising support through the land movement. Their first step was to strengthen ZNLWVA. To do so they had to identify a courageous leader for the association, after the death of Dr. Hunzvi. Jabulani Sibanda, then chairman of Matebeleland Province, had emerged as a fearless leader when he publicly denounced the 'old guard' politicians of Matebeleland. The state and ZANU PF ruling elite backed Joseph Chinotimba. The Joint Operations Command tried to influence the choice of war veterans but to no avail and Sibanda became the new Chairman. However he also was later coopted, foiling the plans of the association and the movement.

The second step of war veterans was to get into Parliament in massive numbers. Many registered for ZANU PF primary elections but were removed from the list by the party elite and were replaced by other individuals. Ironically, war veterans campaigned for these imposed candidates in the general elections and for the first time a Harare South seat (influenced by high concentration of housing cooperatives) was reclaimed from MDC, getting Zhuwau (Mugabe's nephew), into Parliament. The vision of war veterans and their political tactics are in this sense, baffling. Why did they not insist on getting into Parliament when ZANU PF was at its weakest point and they (war veterans) were powerful? Indeed this weakened the land movement. This is where Moyo and Yeros (2005) criticism is relevant. War veterans, despite ideological clarity and long term-strategies, were tactically sterile. A retreat at this point was tantamount to bolstering the position of ZANU PF elites giving them the tactical advantage which they were quick to exploit and swiftly smashed the movement by Murambatsvina. This tactical error grossly and dearly cost the land movement.

Soon after the general elections in 2005 the postponed 'violent retribution by the state' (Borras S.M. 2001:548) on the land movement was commenced¹⁵. There was no attempt to seek audience with the affected parties considering the population that was going to be

¹⁵ The main characteristic feature that distinguishes Murambatsvina period are is retributive violence, epitomised by state coined operations, namely: *Operation Murambatsvina*, *Operation Chikorokoza Chapera* (mainly rural) and *Operation Mavhotera Papi*?

affected. The operation started by demolishing houses of cooperatives in the urban areas.¹⁶ The demolition was done by local authority operatives using earth-moving equipment accompanied by the police and army. Illegal structures in high density properties were also razed to the ground as were the established informal sector production sites and workshops. As there was no warning property was lost, and worse still means of urban livelihood were destroyed as tools and equipment for the small scale manufacturers were destroyed in the process. Above all the operation was life threatening as it left many families without housing and the effect on the urban land movement was clear as Masuko (2008:204) writes, ‘... in doing so (government) dashed the hopes of the low income urban homeless and of one of the most radical housing developments ever initiated in Zimbabwe. However ... the occupiers remained on the occupied farms minus all the structures that they had built ...’

War veterans, feel that Operation Murambatsvina was directly targeted on them specifically, and the land movement generally. Operation Murambatsvina was not the only operation of this period. There another one was Operation Chikorokoza Chapera that was carried in 2006. This was a rural operation that focused on specific occupied farms and mineral exploitation that had become the new source of livelihoods for dispersed Murambatsvina victims. Although Chikorokoza Chapera was countrywide, the most severe attacks were in Chimanimani gold mines and Chiadzwa diamond mines, both in Manicaland, where the state killed people to remove victims of Murambatsvina.

Structural reconfigurations also occurred during the Murambatsvina period. The state, ZANU PF and Mugabe, realising the cruel attacks they had made on the land movement and war veterans, it decided to forge a new alliance. This time it chose the traditional leaders to replace the mobilisation role of the land movement actors. The countryside was not being democratised by going back to traditional authority. Rather, this structure was being elevated and entrenched into an elite ‘to dominate rural polity’ and with state resources and delegated powers could ‘use extensive patronage networks that combine (partial) provision of daily

¹⁶ One of the most widely publicized cases of Murambatsvina was the destruction by a bulldozer of Chinx Chingaira’s house. Chingaira, a prominent singer, was a war veteran and had acquired a stand through the housing cooperatives. He tried to stop destruction of his house by standing on top of it but was pulled down and severely beaten by the police, warning the rest that the state meant business.

subsistence needs of rural poor households with the threat and/or actual use of violence’ (Borras S.M. 2001:550).

First, chiefs were allocated prime land with good farm houses and infrastructure. In addition they were given grants of seed and chemical fertilisers. They were also given double cab vehicles for personal transport and administrative personal including secretaries and messengers. Powers of traditional leaders were also increased and they were given more functions as commissioners of oaths. In 2006 new agricultural programmes were initiated by the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe. These included many schemes for seed, fuel, livestock, money, farm equipment like tractors and combine harvesters. Chiefs were not only beneficiaries but also distributors of these things giving them extra advantage of distributing them to their social networks. However this caused high inflationary pressures on the economy as it distorted prices and as the things were not channelled for production¹⁷.

Much has been written and debated¹⁸ about the evil nature with which Operation Murambatsvina was carried out by the state (Tabajuka A.K. 2005; Toriro P. 2005; Mahoso T. 2008; Masuko L. 2008; Mhiripiri N. 2008; Mlambo A. 2008; Moore D. 2008; Vambe M. 2008; Vambe M. 2008) but little or no analysis has been offered on the class nature of the state operation. As a result the analysis is at best shallow and at worst confused. For example simple empirical facts are contested, like who was targeted by Murambatsvina. Vembe (2008:3) argues that ‘both rural and urban areas; ZANU PF supporters and MDC supporters and non-aligned, were targeted’. However others see the operation as partisan, attacking MDC city strongholds as ‘punishment’ for ‘voting for MDC’ and desire of the ruling party to unwind time of the urbanites to ‘year zero’ rural homelands’ (Moore 2008:28). In desperate defence of state action, Mahoso (2008:160) tried to separate Murambatsvina from the land movement itself saying ‘the African land reclamation movement [was] rural and [had] little to do with urban slum clearance’. These authors failed to grasp the class conflict in Murambatsvina and its linkage to the overall land occupation movement.

¹⁷ In many cases fuel was resold on the parallel market and production vehicles like tractors were converted into taxis for desperate commuters (personal observation 2005-2008).

¹⁸ Research in Zimbabwe has largely mimicked the political polarity thereby clouded with non-academic pursuits by scholars.

This paper argues that the land movement of Zimbabwe for the past ten years has seen the climax of especially class but also racial conflict. Politics of power at this juncture transcended partisan interests as the real bone of contention was protection of class interests and class domination by ZANU PF elites and petty bourgeoisie. Political power was under formidable threat from the land movement that had now mobilised both urban workers and peasants. At no point in Zimbabwe's liberation struggle had such a powerful alliance of urban working class and rural peasants been forged. ZANU PF ruling elite, petty and rising national bourgeoisie were worried of the imminent power shifts threatening to take place in favour of the land movement and war veterans. The myth that war veterans were incapable of leading the Zimbabwean society had been utterly dispelled. Leadership capabilities of war veterans had been demonstrated by organising the land hungry, homeless, informal sector producers and farm workers, sending unequivocal signals that it was only a matter of time the movement was to take over state power. This of course sent shivers to the ruling elite who immediately took the third option - the real 'hidden dimension of operation Murambatsvina' – a violent class attack of the urban and rural poor of the land movement. The impact of the housing cooperatives and Unions are illustrative of this new and rising power of the peasants and workers with marginalised war veterans as vanguard, against both capital and elitism.

A question that has been debated is whether or not the land movement dissipated and disintegrated after Murambatsvina. What became of the land movement and what is its status today? This question can be answered by viewing the agency of the land movement actors from 2005. Many war veterans that were interviewed in connection with Operation Murambatsvina, were bitter. More than 10 000 properties at different stages of development were destroyed including and especially those of the war veterans. Members of the land occupation movement were scattered across the country as a result of operation Murambatsvina and Operation Chikorokoza Chapera¹⁹. Counter strategies by war veterans included ousting ZANU PF elites in 2008 elections (interview Muchaneta 2006). Dispersal

¹⁹ The whereabouts of Murambatsvina victims and their impact wherever they went is yet to be studied. I carried out some research in 2006 in Zvimba, in 2007 in Marange (Chiadzwa diamonds mines) and 2008 in Uzumba, assessing Murambatsvina outcomes. It showed that Murambatsvina victims are spread in all social groups of the country and in all areas. In some cases the victims were allocated land by local leaders, establishing whole communities (personal observation Nyabira 2006, personal communication with victims Uzumba 2008, interview war veterans and traditional leaders of Marange and Chiadzwa 2007)

of the land movement actors – Murambatsvina victims - effectively spread widely mobilising agents against the ruling ZANU PF elite, Mugabe and their bourgeois counterparts.

Strategically war veterans mobilised the ZANU PF electorate to be elected towards Parliamentary elections of 2008. However, the politburo sought ways of weeding out war veterans by applying stringent qualifications, outlining that a candidate had to have been in the provincial executive for at least five years. In 1980, at Zimbabwe's independence ZANU PF had issued a directive that barring war veterans the leadership posts of the party, which condition was only lifted during the occupation period. It was impossible that under normal circumstances one would have risen through the ranks to occupy a provincial level post, so this was clearly to exclude war veterans²⁰.

Many war veterans lost their meagre income campaigning to be parliamentarians, only to be weeded out²¹. The sheer numbers of the land movement 'constitute[d] a political threat to [the] regime overlooking their interests, either through elections or through non-electoral agency' (Das R.J. 2007). Jabulani Sibanda, who tried to silence war veterans sidelined in the primary elections, was viciously snapped at in meeting of war veterans. The angry crowd threatened the doom of the party in the 2008 elections. Some of the war veterans candidates, for example in a Marondera constituency and Mutasa, refused to step down with disastrous consequences to the ruling party. Others took the primary elections irregularities to the High Court but many others simply withdraw like war veterans in Goromonzi, Zvimba and Harare (personal observation, 2008).

The ballot became the new weapon of the weak, now mobilised by the Murambatsvina victim scatterings. War veterans and land movement actors were disgruntled by the process and the sidelining of land movement candidates. This anger, disillusionment and mobilisation by Murambatsvina victims changed the traditional voting behaviour in the rural areas leading to ZANU PF defeat generally. Mugabe was also defeated in by Morgan Tsvangirai in the March 29 elections. With panic, the state reacted by unleashing retributive violence on both the rural and urban electorate in a military operation code named Operation Mavhotera Papi?

²⁰ However, noting that there were other elites who had to be included but did not satisfy the condition, an exemption clause was put for such members as those who had been on diplomatic missions.

²¹ Personal observation (Goromonzi, Chinhamora, Mutasa and Harare South constituency, 2008).

(Operation whom did you vote for?). The army was engaged as was done in Murambatsvina, explaining that the state had terminated its alliance with war veterans. A re-run of the presidential elections was marred by organised state organised violence resulting in Morgan Tsvangirai's withdrawal from the race and seeking refuge with the Dutch embassy in Zimbabwe. Murambatsvina had pushed partisan but especially class contradictions to their height.

War veterans heavily criticised regimentation, threats and violence against the electorate in the run up to the presidential run-off²². The elections, that put Mugabe back into power, have been widely considered scandalous and were condemned. However, ZANU PF conceded to forming a Government of National Unity with the two MDC parties²³. However, as I write there is political impasse caused by dispute over sharing of ministries in the government of national unity against the backdrop of much suffering of the electorate. Sanctions advocated for by the MDC during the occupation period continue biting, with reportedly more than 5 million people threatened with starvation and cholera outbreaks reported in cities like Harare. Inflation, which is the highest in the world and highest experienced in the modern world, is officially pegged at more than 230 million percent. People are desperate.

Conclusion

Zimbabwe now celebrates a decade of war veterans led land occupations. From the time veterans led the land movement it transformed from localised and isolated actions to a national cause encompassing urban and rural across partisan dichotomies of ZANU PF and MDC. This had wide political ramifications threatening seizure of power by the marginalised classes of peasants, farm and urban workers. Leadership of war veterans also changed the land movement in terms of tactics and long term strategies. With clearer ideological exposure the land conflict rose beyond race to class.

²² Personal observation Concession (April-May, 2008). At a meeting organised by the Zimbabwe National army war veterans challenged them diffusing the violent plots in the area.

²³ MDC split into two with one led by Arthur Mutambara and the other by Morgan Tsvangirai. The Mutambara party is known as MDC while the Tsvangirai party is referred to as MDC-T.

The class conflicts that continued in occupied lands necessitated the inception of fast track land reform programme that aimed at negating the land movement objectives. The state had failed neither to co-opt nor to thwart the movement. Its last resort, to deal with the surging movement, was violence epitomised by three national operations of military style: Operation Murambatsvina, Operation Chikorokoza Chapera and Operation Mavhotera papi? All three were rooted in state reaction to land occupation movement which threatened political power in the hands of ZANU PF elites and black bourgeoisie.

However current academic analysis has ignored the issue of class in the land occupation movement, tied as they are to partisan views. This has made the debate shallow and confusing. Grounded research reveals that the war veterans-led land occupation movement in Zimbabwe has much wider ideological as well as political consequences which scholars have yet to grapple with in their quest to unravel the unfolding social phenomenon. It is worthwhile to bear in mind that at the core of it, is class contest for state power, as Das (2007:4) argues

Just as the neoliberal society is a class society, so the neoliberal state is a class state. In short, neoliberalism had made no difference to the fact that the state must protect capitalist property relations. Indeed, government policy is much rather about the restoration of class power, and increasing capitalist control over society's material resources (Das R.J. 2007:4)

The onslaught on the land movement (urban and rural) through the three national operations, the land tenure policy entrenching capitalist farming, elite protection and economic support from state resources all bears testimony to this class struggle and domination of the poor.

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