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LAND REFORM IN ZIMBABWE, 1980–1990

ROBIN PALMER

Introduction

ON 18 APRIL 1990 Zimbabwe celebrates the 10th anniversary of its independence. Simultaneously, the famous Lancaster House Constitution expires. The Zimbabwean Government will then at last be able to tackle the contentious and highly politicised land question unhindered by the constraints imposed by Britain in 1979/80. The issue of land reform, so high on the political agenda a decade ago, but over which a curious silence fell for much of the 1980s,¹ bounced back into the limelight in 1989 and will certainly have featured prominently in the election which Robert Mugabe has called on the eve of the 10th anniversary. But there is every sign that the British Government is striving behind the scenes to perpetuate Lancaster

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1. The literature on land in the 1980s is now quite extensive. It includes: Michael Bratton, 'The Comrades and the Countryside: the politics of agricultural policy in Zimbabwe'. *World Politics*, 39 (1987), pp. 174–202; Ray Bush and Lionel Cliffe, 'Agrarian Policy in Migrant Labour Societies: reform or transformation in Zimbabwe?', *Review of African Political Economy*, 29 (1984), pp. 77–94; Lionel Cliffe, *Prospects for Agrarian Transformation in Zimbabwe*, University of Leeds, African Studies Unit/Department of Politics, Southern African Studies, 7 (1988); Lionel Cliffe, 'The Prospects for Agricultural Transformation in Zimbabwe', in Colin Stoneman (Ed.), *Zimbabwe's Prospects* (Macmillan, Basingstoke, 1988), pp. 309–25; Lionel Cliffe, 'Zimbabwe's Agricultural "Success" and Food Security in Southern Africa', *Review of African Political Economy*, 43 (1988), pp. 4–25; John Cusworth and Judy Walker, *Land Resettlement in Zimbabwe: a Preliminary Evaluation*, (ODA, Evaluation Report EV 434, London, September 1988); Michael Drinkwater, 'Technical Development and Peasant Impoverishment: land use policy in Zimbabwe's Midlands Province', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 15 (1989), pp. 287–305; FAO, *Policy Options for Agrarian Reform in Zimbabwe: a technical appraisal* (FAO, Rome, 1986); Sam Geza, 'The Role of Resettlement in Social Development in Zimbabwe', *Journal of Social Development in Africa*, 1 (1986), pp. 35–42; B. H. Kinsey, 'Emerging Policy Issues in Zimbabwe's Land Resettlement Programmes', *Development Policy Review*, 1 (1983), pp. 163–96; B. H. Kinsey, 'Forever Gained: resettlement and land policy in the context of national development in Zimbabwe', *Africa*, 52 (1982), pp. 92–113; Sam Moyo, 'The Land Question', in Ibbo Mandaza (Ed.), *Zimbabwe: the political economy of transition 1980–1986* (CODESRIA, Dakar, 1986), pp. 165–201; Clever Mumbengegwi, 'Continuity and Change in Agricultural Policy', in Mandaza, *Zimbabwe: political economy*, pp. 203–22; Barry Munslow, 'Prospects for the Socialist Transition of Agriculture in Zimbabwe', *World Development*, 13 (1985), pp. 41–58; Terence Ranger, 'The Communal Areas of Zimbabwe', Symposium on Land in African Agrarian Systems, University of Illinois, Urbana Champaign, 10–12 April 1988; Terence Ranger 'Matabelerland a year after the Amnesty', Britain Zimbabwe Society, 27 September 1989; Roger Riddell, 'Zimbabwe's Land Problem: the central issue', *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, 18 (1980), pp. 1–13; Daniel Weiner, 'Land and Agricultural Development', in Stoneman, *Zimbabwe's Prospects*, pp. 63–89; Daniel Weiner, Sam Moyo, Barry Munslow and Phil O'Keefe, 'Land Use and Agricultural Productivity in Zimbabwe', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 23 (1985), pp. 251–85; Whitsun Foundation, *Land Reform in Zimbabwe* (Whitsun Foundation, Harare, 1983); World Bank, *Zimbabwe Agricultural Sector Study* (World Bank, Washington, Report No. 4491–ZIM, 1983).

House beyond April 1990 and so prevent significant land reform from taking place in Zimbabwe. There is also a struggle within the Zimbabwean Government over the issue which is very far from resolved.

This article looks at the history of the land question in Zimbabwe over the past decade, examines why and how it has recently sprung back into prominence, and ends by focussing on the current controversies and suggesting some possible future scenarios.

In 1977 I concluded my historical study of the politics of land in what was then still, just, Rhodesia with the very safe prediction that:

the most acute and difficult question confronting the first . . . Government of . . . Zimbabwe, whatever its ideological hue, will be that of land, bedevilled by its past use as a political and economic weapon by the whites, and by the consequent mythologies to which this has given rise. The problem will not be an easy one to resolve. The continuing stranglehold of the land division of the 1890s, the fact . . . that Rhodesia is part of the Southern African regional economic system, and the lessons to be drawn from the agricultural failures of neighbouring Zambia, will all impose constraints on future land and agricultural policies.²

On 20 December 1989 *The Herald* of Zimbabwe reported Robert Mugabe as saying that for his government, 'the biggest single problem it is yet to resolve is that of land distribution'. It was 'the most vital question we face today in our economic development activities'. He promised delegates to the first united (ZANU/ZAPU) party congress that, with Lancaster House soon coming to an end, his government 'simply must' deal more effectively, speedily and decisively with the land question.³ This will prove difficult if the British Government has its way.

Lancaster House

The iniquities and inequalities of the Rhodesian division of land, and of 90 years of land policies designed to further the interests of a handful of white farmers, have long been recognized. There is an extensive literature on the subject.⁴ The whites had, quite literally, their pick of the land; they commanded the 'White Highlands' of the central part of the country and the

2. Robin Palmer, *Land and Racial Domination in Rhodesia* (Heinemann, London, 1977), p. 246.

3. 'Land distribution still major problem', *The Herald*, 20 December 1989.

4. See the bibliography in Palmer, *Land and Racial Domination*, pp. 283–98. Among the more important works published since that book are: Roger Riddell, *The Land Problem in Rhodesia* (Mambo Press, Gwelo, 1978); Richard Hodder-Williams, *White Farmers in Rhodesia, 1890–1965: a history of the Marandellas District* (Macmillan, London, 1983); Paul Mosley, *The Settler Economies: studies in the economic history of Kenya and Southern Rhodesia 1900–1963* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1983); Henry V. Moyana, *The Political Economy of Land in Zimbabwe* (Mambo Press, Gweru, 1984).

most favoured agro–ecological zones. They had been greatly assisted over the years by an extensive communications and marketing infrastructure and by massive state subsidies and loans. Blacks by contrast were allocated land once called (with some accuracy) ‘native reserves’ and, especially after the Second World War, they had been evicted by the hundreds of thousands from white farms and packed into the resource-starved reserves. The end result of this historical process was that by the time of independence, in 1980, population densities were over three times greater in the black than in the white areas, and some 42 per cent of the country was owned by 6,000 white commercial farmers, most of whom had fought tooth and nail to prevent Rhodesia becoming Zimbabwe. This racial division of the land was also highly visible.

Not surprisingly in this context, black protests over land have a very long history.⁵ During the political struggles of the 1960s and the guerrilla war of the 1970s, both main nationalist political parties, ZANU and ZAPU, committed themselves to radical land reform on achieving political power. They attracted widespread popular support from rural peasants as a result. Moreover, as Mugabe told the new, united ZANU (PF) party faithful in December 1989, ‘the land question was at the centre of the factors that propelled us to launch our war of national liberation’.⁶ On coming to power in 1980, his government had promised ‘to re-establish justice and equity in the ownership of land’.⁷ The British Government was set to play a key role in this quest.

In Kenya, where there had been a comparable land problem and a guerrilla war (‘Mau Mau’) fuelled by land grievance, the British Government had sought to defuse the situation by offering to buy out white farmers who were reluctant to continue living in the country after independence. This was duly done, and there were hopes that a similar solution would be adopted at the time when Rhodesia finally became Zimbabwe. The British Government clearly recognized the political need for land reform in Zimbabwe and, to some degree, its own responsibility for purchasing land and for compensating white farmers who wanted to leave. This was because the majority of companies and individuals who owned land in Rhodesia were of British origin.⁸

In the mid-1970s, during the constant round of diplomatic manoeuvres aimed at settling the Rhodesian question, the notion of an Anglo–American ‘Zimbabwe Development Fund’, to which Britain agreed to contribute at

5. Palmer, *Land and Racial Domination*.

6. *The Herald*, 20 December 1989.

7. House of Commons, Sixth Report from the Foreign Affairs Committee, Session 1980–81, *Zimbabwe: the role of British aid in the economic development of Zimbabwe* (HMSO, London, 1981), p. viii.

8. Foreign Affairs Committee, *Zimbabwe: British aid*, p. viii.

least £75 million, was placed on the negotiating table.⁹ The fund would help buy out white farmers and so, hopefully, bring a speedy end to the war. This idea attracted broad support at the time, not least from the ZANU/ZAPU 'Patriotic Front'.

By 1979, however, when the contending parties sat down at Lancaster House to hammer out an independence constitution, there had been a change of government in Britain. The earlier proposal was dangled before participants as a bait to reach agreement, but it was ultimately put back on the shelf, not without Zimbabwean complaints of British chicanery.¹⁰ In its place Britain offered a compromise under which, in return for the Zimbabweans guaranteeing existing property rights, the British would underwrite half the costs of a resettlement programme. Land could change hands only on a 'willing seller, willing buyer' basis. Thus whites who wished to keep their farms were free to do so; there would be no expropriation of land. Only 'under-utilized' land, which was required for resettlement or other public purposes, could be compulsorily acquired by the new government, but this would have to be paid for immediately and at the full market price. In a last minute amendment, it was agreed that compensation in such cases had to be remittable in foreign currency.¹¹ The ZANU/ZAPU alliance, which was under enormous pressure from the Frontline States,¹² had little choice but to accept. It was a 'crucial capitulation'.¹³ So, the hands of the new Zimbabwean Government were to a large extent tied by the Lancaster House agreement, which was due to last until April 1990.¹⁴ They were tied also by the immediate need for post-war reconstruction.

The last few years of the war had been devastating in the countryside. Around one-fifth of the entire rural population had fled their homes. Nearly half a million had flocked into the towns to escape the war; a quarter of a million had left the country; while some three-quarters of a million had been rounded up into so-called 'protected villages' by the Smith regime.

9. Foreign Affairs Committee, *Zimbabwe: British aid*, pp. viii–xi.

10. Zimbabwe Project, *News Bulletin No. 5*, March 1981, pp. 11, 20, citing *Proceedings of the House of Assembly*, Parliament of Zimbabwe, 24 July 1980, and *The Herald*, 22 January 1981.

11. Colin Stoneman and Lionel Cliffe, *Zimbabwe: politics, economics and society* (Pinter, London, 1989), p. 33. In practice, it has proved extremely difficult legally to define 'under-utilized' land.

12. Crucially, the Zimbabweans were pressurized into accepting Lancaster House by Samora Machel's threat of withdrawing Mozambican logistical support for the war.

13. Julian Cobbing, 'The Imperialising of Zimbabwe', *Transformation*, 9 (1989), p. 85.

14. As Mumbengegwi writes, 'This agreement so compromised the character of the new Zimbabwean state that it was constrained from acting decisively in the interests of the peasants, especially over the land issue . . . Whereas during UDI the state had used the armoury of legislative, political and economic instruments in the interests of . . . the commercial farmers to the detriment of the peasants, the post-independence state found itself reduced to the role of mediator between the conflicting interests of the two agrarian classes. The commercial farmers demanded continuity while the peasants expected change'. Mumbengegwi, 'Continuity and Change', p. 219.

In addition, various anti-disease control measures had broken down and the people had lost perhaps a third of their cattle.¹⁵ The result, inevitably, was a very severe dislocation of peasant production.

Historically, there had always been bitter competition for land and resources between black and white farmers in Rhodesia, with the state providing extensive and crucial support to white agriculture. But, in some more favoured areas at least, peasant farmers had remained resilient. They were encouraged to produce maize for the home market during periods when white farmers were concentrating on export crops like tobacco. But the Unilateral Declaration of Independence in 1965, and the subsequent international sanctions imposed against the Smith regime, made it harder for Rhodesia to export agricultural commodities, so the white farmers switched back to domestic markets at the expense of peasants.¹⁶ This factor, combined with the severe rural dislocation caused by the war, meant that at the time of independence in 1980 the white commercial farmers were producing some 90 per cent of the country's marketed food requirements. At this precise and important moment in time, they seemed crucial to Zimbabwe's economic survival.

This situation was reinforced by the strong advice which the new Zimbabwean Government received from its staunchest wartime ally, Mozambique. When Frelimo eventually fought its way to power in 1974/5, there followed a mass exodus of Portuguese settlers from Mozambique. Frelimo, which had done nothing to discourage this exodus at the time, soon came to regret it, and the very firm advice given to Mugabe's new government in 1980 was that it should strive hard to retain white expertise and skill, notably on the land. The recent experience of famines in the Sahel further underlined the wisdom of food self-sufficiency. It also seemed more sensible to earn valuable foreign exchange by exporting food rather than having to spend it on food imports. All this combined to produce a policy of national reconciliation, which Mugabe unveiled to the nation on the evening of his huge electoral victory. The white farmers, who only a few months earlier had been the targets of guerrilla attacks because of their secondary role as a crucial part of the regime's security forces, had suddenly become almost a protected species.

Resettlement

Given that the constraints of Lancaster House ruled out any significant redistribution of land, the question of land reform for much of the 1980s tended to be confined very narrowly to the issue of resettlement: of moving black families or cooperatives, in a carefully planned manner, onto land

15. Foreign Affairs Committee, *Zimbabwe: British aid*, pp. xiv–xv.

16. Terence Ranger, 'Growing from the Roots: reflections on peasant research in central and southern Africa', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 5 (1978), pp. 119–20. See also Terence Ranger, *Peasant Consciousness and Guerrilla War in Zimbabwe* (James Currey, London, 1985).

willingly sold by whites. It is true that a number of plans were also drawn up to rehabilitate the overcrowded communal areas (the erstwhile 'native reserves') and/or to promote reform of land tenure within them. Some of these plans were irreconcilable, while a few were reminiscent of the Land Husbandry Act of the 1950s, which had provoked widespread black resistance. But, for the most part, these plans have yet to be turned into reality on the ground, though they have certainly caused much friction between peasants and technocrats.¹⁷

Resettlement pre-dated Lancaster House; it was conceived within Rhodesia's Ministry of Agriculture during the Muzorewa era.¹⁸ Bearing in mind the racial division of land, the uneven population densities and the high political expectations aroused, it was obvious in 1980 that something had to be done, for reasons of both social justice and ecological equilibrium. The British Government agreed to assist financially, convinced that an 'orderly and planned' programme of land resettlement would promote 'political stability' and allow people 'to normalise their lives as quickly as possible'.¹⁹ The costs of resettlement, as it was envisaged in Zimbabwe, would involve both the purchase of land from white farmers and the development of the necessary infrastructure to help the new 'settlers' establish themselves. The British Government agreed to meet half of these costs (other governments could not be persuaded to take an interest in buying land), provided the Zimbabwean Government matched it pound for pound. If the Zimbabweans should falter (as they soon did), the British would not step into the breach. Britain duly pledged an initial £20 million in 1980. (Mrs Thatcher promised more during her visit to Zimbabwe in March 1989).

Initially, two different schemes were proposed for the resettlement areas: Model A, where individual households were to receive 5–6 hectare plots of arable land plus access to common grazing, varying from 20 to 200 hectares according to region, and Model B, in which abandoned farms would be taken over *en bloc* by producer cooperatives. In practice, despite the Zimbabwean Government's ideological preference for Model B, the majority of would-be settlers much preferred Model A, and this has encompassed over 80 per cent of those resettled during the 1980s.²⁰ Later, a pastoral

17. Ranger, 'Communal Areas'; Drinkwater, 'Technical Development', pp. 289–92; Bush and Cliffe, 'Agrarian Policy', pp. 81–6. See also Lionel Cliffe, 'The Conservation Issue in Zimbabwe', *Review of African Political Economy*, 42 (1988), pp. 48–58. An exception is in parts of Manicaland, where the government has responded to the security threat posed by MNR incursions by introducing a policy of 'villagisation', which bears more than a passing resemblance to the protected villages of the Smith regime.

18. Weiner, 'Land and Agricultural Development', p. 82; Roger Riddell, 'Prospects for Land Reform in Zimbabwe', *Rural Africana*, 4–5 (1979), pp. 26–7.

19. Cusworth and Walker, *Land Resettlement*, pp. iii, 1.

20. Cusworth and Walker, *Land Resettlement*, p. 74.

Model D, involving paddocked grazing areas, was developed as being relevant for Matabeleland, but it is currently surrounded by controversy.²¹ As Weiner has pointed out, the average allocations of land per household have been far more generous in Zimbabwe than under the Kenyan scheme, reflecting the fact that they have been modelled on the very extensive patterns of land use prevailing on the commercial farms. This reduces the number of people who can benefit from the scheme.²²

In terms of targets to be reached, the Zimbabwean Government proposed in 1980 that some 18,000 households be resettled over 5 years; the following year it multiplied this target by three to reach 54,000 families, and, in March 1982, in a highly ambitious mood, it multiplied threefold again to reach the famous figure of 162,000 households, which it hoped to resettle as early as 1984. The British thought this figure totally 'impracticable' and 'unrealistic'.²³ The British were right; it has proved something of a millstone ever since. By the end of June 1989, a total of 52,000 families, or some 416,000 people, had been resettled, which is 32 per cent of the notional 162,000-family target. By the same time a total of 2,713,725 hectares had been bought for resettlement, representing about 16 per cent of the area owned by the white commercial farmers at independence.²⁴ In 1980, 6,000 white farmers had owned 42 per cent of the country. By October 1989 the number of commercial farmers (no longer exclusively white) was 4,319, and they now owned 29 per cent of the land.²⁵ The actual progress of land purchase and resettlement was however extremely uneven, as Table I reveals.

There are a number of inter-related factors which help to explain this pattern and why the whole land question went so quiet in the mid-1980s, and also the apparent anomaly of why there has always been more land available for resettlement than the Zimbabwean Government has been able to acquire.

The initial burst of buying in 1981–3 comprised virtually all the whole farms which had been abandoned during the war years, mostly in the war zones of the north-east, plus the farms belonging to those who feared the worst from the new black government and decided to sell up and leave just before or just after independence. Not all of the land purchased at this time was suitable for resettlement. After this brief 'boom', very few entire farms or blocks of land became available, which obviously made advance planning much more difficult. There was also an increasing tendency on the part of

21. Ranger, 'Matabeleland', pp. 6–7. For the little used Model C, a nucleus estate system with a core commercial estate and settler outgrowers, see Kinsey, 'Forever Gained', p. 100.

22. Weiner, 'Land and Agricultural Development', p. 82.

23. Cusworth and Walker, *Land Resettlement*, pp. 4, 19.

24. 'Govt's resettlement programme comes under fire at Book Fair workshop', *Financial Gazette*, 8 September 1989.

25. 'The Land Issue remains unsolved', *Parade*, October 1989, p. 8.

TABLE 1
Land purchased for resettlement in Zimbabwe, 1980/81–1987/88

Financial year	Land hectares	Gross purchase price in Zimbabwe \$	Average price: Zimbabwe \$ per hectare
1980/81	223,196	3,517,198	15.76
1981/82	900,196	18,803,158	20.88
1982/83	939,925	22,009,187	23.42
1983/84	159,866	4,536,168	28.37
1984/85	75,058	2,966,849	39.53
1985/86	86,187	4,444,610	51.57
1986/87	133,515	3,898,335	29.20
1987/88	20,319	1,874,200	92.24
TOTAL	2,538,262	62,049,705	24.45

Source: *Parade* (October 1989), p. 9, slightly amended by author.

the white farmers who stayed on after independence to hold onto the productive core of their farms and to offer for sale only the most marginal parts, which they were happy to dispose of, especially when land prices steadily began to rise as a result of political stability.

But the statistical figures above do not, of course, reveal the complete picture of land transfers. Any white farmer wishing to sell land was legally bound first to offer it to the government, which could then decide to inspect the land. If the government decided, for whatever reason, that it did not want the land, it issued a 'no present interest' certificate, which was valid for a year and left the owner free to sell on the private market. A significant number of farms, totalling well over one million hectares, changed hands in this way, many to senior members of the government and the new black ruling elite.

A very prominent actor in the whole land question has been Zimbabwe's most dynamic and successful trade union, the Commercial Farmers' Union (CFU). The CFU has been largely responsible for the fact that the position of the commercial farmers appears more secure in 1990 than at almost any time previously. The CFU has assiduously courted the government over a whole range of issues, notably producer prices.²⁶ Some of its leading officers often travel abroad with Mugabe and his ministers and it has ensured that its voice is listened to attentively, most notably in the Ministry of Lands and Agriculture. The CFU has lobbied successfully in favour of slowing down the whole process of resettlement, playing skilfully on the divisions within government.²⁷ Its basic argument, put forward regularly in the pink

26. Bratton, 'Comrades and Countryside', pp. 183–6. It is not wholly irrelevant to point out that Dennis Norman, the Minister of Agriculture from 1980 to 1985, was a past president of the CFU's predecessor, the Rhodesia National Farmers' Union.

27. At one point, no less than 8 ministries were involved in the resettlement programme. Kinsey, 'Forever Gained', p. 96.

pages of the local *Financial Gazette* and often endorsed in the British financial press, is that too rapid land reform would undermine white confidence, in both the agricultural and the business community, threaten vital export earnings of strategic crops and result in 'significant job losses. These are arguments which are not easy to brush aside in Zimbabwe's current economic situation.

A recent regional initiative nicely illustrates this theme. In December 1989, the president of the CFU, John Brown, addressed the CFU's Namibian counterpart, the South West African Agricultural Union, and said that land remained the key issue in Zimbabwe, and that, while the government wished to speed up resettlement, 'great care had to be taken not to drastically reduce the overall productivity of the agricultural sector'. The resettlement of 52,000 families had been a significant achievement, he said, and, despite the loss of a nearly a quarter of their land, the commercial farmers had increased their overall productivity. Brown paid tribute to the policy of reconciliation, which had stabilized the country after independence and removed all the suspicion and antagonism resulting from the armed conflict. Zimbabweans had soon got together to work for a common cause and its commercial farmers now enjoyed a good relationship with government. This endorsed the opinion of one commercial farmer, given five years earlier, that Mugabe's was 'the best government for farmers that this country has seen'.²⁸ The South West African farmers were left to draw their own conclusions.²⁹

From the Zimbabwean Government's point of view, the crucial turning point came in 1983, when the country's domestic budget came under great pressure, with the government being urged to tighten its budget deficit by the World Bank and by the British and other Western governments. In the circumstances, it was more politic to cut back on a resettlement programme which was still largely on the books than to starve the newly established schools and clinics of funds.

Compounding the economic recession were the severe droughts of the mid-1980s, which also had the effect of putting the breaks on, as some people who had moved into resettlement areas returned to the communal areas in search, literally, of greener pastures. The droughts, which led to considerable government expenditure on relief, also served to reinforce the 'hands off' policy towards the commercial farmers.

There were additional reasons. The effects of the famous post-independence boom in peasant production misled the government into believing that a sustainable increase in communal area production capable of meeting welfare needs might be possible without extensive resettlement.

28. Bratton, 'Comrades and Countryside', p. 186.

29. 'Land – Zim's main issue Brown tells Namibians', *Financial Gazette*, 8 December 1989.

In fact, the boom masked huge inequalities.³⁰ While the peasant sector's contribution to crop sales rose dramatically from Z\$12 million in 1979 (4.5 per cent of the total) to over Z\$300 million in 1988 (22 per cent of all crop sales),³¹ the bumper yields were very largely achieved in the more favoured parts of the Mashonaland *highveld* by a small minority of better-off peasants, who were able to respond to improved price incentives and to the provision of credit, extension and research facilities, once offered to white farmers alone.³² Moreover, as Stoneman and Cliffe point out, 'the "success" of peasant surpluses has tended to be trumpeted to counter arguments for more land redistribution and for any restructuring of the C[ommunal] A[rea] system of farming'.³³

Incentives for people to move to the resettlement areas were often not great; the new settlers received only conditional, annual permits of occupancy and had the disincentive of losing the right of access to land in the communal areas. The resettlement areas were often characterized by a degree of bureaucratic control which was all too reminiscent of past colonial schemes. There was also rivalry between ministries as to which should control the resettlement programme, and the planning ministries frequently lacked the staff to support the programme adequately, a situation which is still prevalent today.³⁴

A major problem was that of paying for the infrastructure needed for resettlement. Zimbabweans have claimed that, while the British Government was prepared to put up money for the purchase of land, the conditions it laid down (in terms of detailed planning and surveying before resettlement could take place) were far too strict. Zimbabwe simply did not have sufficient surveyors to work at the levels necessitated by such restrictions. There were those, too, who argued that British stipulations were particularly onerous in the case of the Model B schemes, because of disapproval of the cooperative ethic, which appeared dangerously reminiscent of socialism. The British in turn argued that the Zimbabweans had always been slow to match the money which Britain has provided, and it is this which has slowed progress. Zimbabweans countered that it was precisely because they had created political stability that land prices had risen, making it more difficult to buy land. At any event, the upshot was that far too much of the money allocated to the programme was spent on buying the land, rather than on the 'follow-through' costs of resettling people.

30. On inequalities, see *inter alia*: Weiner, 'Land and Agricultural Development', pp. 69–74; Cliffe, 'Zimbabwe's Agricultural "Success"', pp. 5–6.

31. Tony Hawkins, 'Peasant success amplifies call for land redistribution', *Financial Times*, 21 August 1989.

32. Though it should be noted that agricultural extension workers, brought up under the old regime, tended to be distrustful and contemptuous of peasant capacities and initiatives.

33. Stoneman and Cliffe, *Zimbabwe*, p. 134.

34. 'Minister Karimanzira says resettlement programme prohibited by financial constraints', *Financial Gazette*, 4 August 1989.

There have been a number of academic assessments of resettlement;³⁵ here I shall be concerned solely with government reactions, since these have direct relevance to the current political controversies over land. Officials within the Zimbabwean Government involved in the resettlement programme have generally been self-critical both privately and publicly about the initial problems and about the lack of adequate ongoing infrastructural and staffing support for it. They also recognize the need for continuing technical assistance.³⁶ But they reject the ideological criticism widely held privately and sometimes voiced publicly by the commercial farming lobby, that the whole programme is fundamentally misconceived.

The British Government's current official position is that the programme has been 'broadly successful so far'.³⁷ This appears to endorse an ODA evaluation of the Model A schemes by Cusworth and Walker published in September 1988. In this report the authors state that, while ODA had accepted the political imperative behind the programme with some sympathy for the principles involved, it had never viewed land redistribution in itself as a means of development. They report that the orderly settlement of so many families in such a relatively short time 'must rank as an impressive achievement for a new regime'. Generally, the programme had 'made impressive strides towards achieving its principal objectives'; thus far it had 'proved a considerable success'. In particular, it 'undoubtedly achieved its short run political objective of contributing to post war reconstruction and stability'. The majority of families resettled had benefitted from increased opportunities for income generation and from the availability of health and educational facilities. It had provided an economic return of approximately 21 per cent, which, as *The Economist* commented, 'would make it one of the most successful aid schemes in Africa'.³⁸ Cusworth and Walker conclude that 'The whole exercise has been a very worthwhile investment from the perspective of the national economy as well as the settlers'.³⁹

35. See *inter alia*: Bratton, 'Comrades and Countryside', pp. 187–93; Bush and Cliffe, 'Agrarian Policy', pp. 86–9; Cliffe, 'Prospects for Agricultural Transformation', pp. 314–17; Cliffe, 'Zimbabwe's Agricultural "Success"', pp. 16–22; Geza, 'Role of Resettlement'; FAO, *Policy Options*, pp. 47–51; Kinsey, 'Emerging Policy Issues'; Kinsey, 'Forever Gained'; Moyo, 'Land Question', pp. 183–7, 192–3; Ranger, *Peasant Consciousness*, pp. 307–15, 334–8; Weiner, 'Land and Agricultural Development', pp. 79–85. See also *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Agricultural Industry* (Government Printer, Harare, 1982), pp. 67–9. In addition, some of Terence Ranger's current postgraduate students are working on local studies which include an examination of resettlement, for example Jocelyn Alexander in Chimanimani District.

36. 'Minister Karimanzira', *Financial Gazette*, 4 August 1989. See also note 53.

37. Lynda Chalker, Minister of Overseas Development, to Government of Zimbabwe, November 1989.

38. 'Land-hungry', *The Economist*, 28 October 1989, p. 90. This mirrored the evaluators' view that 'by comparison with other planned developments in Africa, [the programme] must rank as one of the most successful'. Cusworth and Walker, *Land Resettlement*, p. 20.

39. Cusworth and Walker, *Land Resettlement*, pp. ii–iii, 2–3, 13, 37–9.

However, there had been problems. Resettlement had made little impact on alleviating problems in the communal areas; some settlers had benefitted far more than others; the position of some women gave cause for concern; and insufficient productive services had been provided to settlers. Nevertheless, ODA could be 'satisfied with its involvement in the resettlement programme, particularly in ensuring that it took place in an orderly and planned fashion'. If solutions to these problems could be found, 'then it would be both equitable and economically sound to continue with further resettlement provided such resettlement is directly linked to Communal Area rehabilitation'.⁴⁰ Such were the views expressed just before land once again surfaced as a topic of major political concern.

The land issue resurfaces

When land re-emerged as a political issue in 1989,⁴¹ it did so in a changed local situation in which a number of politically powerful individuals had become large owners of land, in the Kenyan manner. The well-informed and generally reliable journalist, Karl Maier, reported in October 1989 that

40. Cusworth and Walker, *Land Resettlement*, pp. ii–iii, 39–40.

41. For the journalistic coverage see, in reverse chronological order: 'Zimbabwe Govt draws up comprehensive Policy to solve the Land Problem', *Financial Gazette*, 5 January 1990; 'Land distribution still major problem', *The Herald*, 20 December 1989; 'Land – Zim's main issue Brown tells Namibians', *Financial Gazette*, 8 December 1989; Psungwadzei Tagwireyi, 'Frustrated Peasants in for a Long Wait', *Africa South*, November/December 1989, pp. 16–18; 'Land settlement study praises Zim's record', *Financial Gazette*, 10 November 1989; 'Land-hungry', *The Economist*, 28 October 1989, p. 90; Karl Maier, 'Zimbabweans grapple with the law of the land', *The Independent*, 28 October 1989; 'Lands issue must be addressed urgently: Gapare', *Financial Gazette*, 27 October 1989; 'The Land Issue remains unsolved', *Parade*, October 1989, pp. 8–9, 51; Gift Siphosiso, 'Row over Zimbabwe landless', *New African*, October 1989, p. 32; 'Zimbabwe: back to the land', *Africa Confidential*, 22 September 1989, pp. 5–6; '“Land for all” is not possible', *Financial Gazette*, 15 September 1989; 'Anti-squatting committees set up to combat illegal settlers', *Financial Gazette*, 8 September 1989; 'Govt's resettlement programme comes under fire at Book Fair workshop', *Financial Gazette*, 8 September 1989; Tony Hawkins, 'Mugabe puts land issue at forefront of political agenda', *Financial Times*, 5 September 1989; 'Land debate is the most important issue since 1980', *Financial Gazette*, 25 August 1989; Tony Hawkins, 'Mugabe to allow takeover of white-owned land', *Financial Times*, 21 August 1989; Tony Hawkins, 'Peasant success amplifies call for land redistribution', *Financial Times*, 21 August 1989; Nicholas Woodsworth, 'Resettlement: what the war was about', *Financial Times*, 21 August 1989; Colleen Lowe Morna, 'A huddle of tents on a hill sums up Zim's land crisis', *Weekly Mail*, 18–24 August 1989; 'Extreme caution should be taken while solving land issue – Rosenfelds', *Financial Gazette*, 10 August 1989; 'Govt won't grab land from commercial farmers – Nkomo', *Financial Gazette*, 10 August 1989; 'Minister Karimanzira says resettlement programme prohibited by financial constraints', *Financial Gazette*, 4 August 1989; Julian Borger, 'Mugabe push to give fallow lands to blacks', *Weekly Mail*, 4–10 August 1989; 'Govt is using lands issue for political gain', *Financial Gazette*, 21 July 1989; 'Land-settlement plan must precede land allocations', *Financial Gazette*, 21 July 1989; 'Minister Kay told not to “worry” about lands issue', *Financial Gazette*, 21 July 1989; 'Tekere speaks out on land issue', *Financial Gazette*, 21 July 1989; 'Land issue', *Sunday Mail*, 16 July 1989; 'Land issue is complex and highly political – Brown', *Financial Gazette*, 14 July 1989.

at least ten government ministers were known to be members of the CFU.⁴² There are now said to be 500 black members of the CFU. Thus the debate which emerged, hugely stimulated by the forthcoming election and by the expiry of the Lancaster House Constitution, was certainly complicated by the fact that the white farmers now potentially have more powerful local allies than they did ten years earlier. For some members of government, indeed, land redistribution might now signify taking land for themselves, rather than giving it to peasants.⁴³

In 1989, with an election due the following year, there were votes to be won, and the government desperately needed an issue on which it could try to regain some of the popularity it had lost in the course of the notorious and long-running corruption scandal known as ‘Willowgate’. It also felt threatened by the emergence of a new political party, ZUM, formed by the maverick Edgar Tekere, which sought to exploit a number of highly sensitive issues, including land.⁴⁴ The government could scarcely ignore the land question, and what better way to stir the pot than a little intransigence on the part of the British Government?

Ironically, it was Joshua Nkomo, effectively now a roaming ‘minister for development’, but ambiguously also renowned as a very extensive land-owner, who made much of the political running. The general thrust of his approach was to try to persuade white farmers to negotiate with the government to sell off their under-utilized land and make it available for resettlement. If negotiation failed, the government would have to find other means of resolving the problem. Perhaps surprisingly, the *Financial Gazette* initially urged a positive response, arguing that ‘[i]t would be unwise for the commercial farmers not to respond to the call for more land for the *povo* [people]’, and that ‘It would not be sensible to wait for the legislation to be passed before adopting . . . attitudes that face up to the realities of a situation of major political and social change’.⁴⁵

42. Karl Maier, ‘Zimbabweans grapple with the law of the land’, *The Independent*, 28 October 1989. Some are rumoured to be in debt to the CFU. Gift Siphosiso has written that ‘Leading ministers and politicians are known to own vast amounts of land in the form of farms throughout the country and many are said to be underutilised’. Siso, ‘Row over Zimbabwe landless’, *New African*, October 1989, p. 32. Psungwadzei Tagwireyi has written of ‘avaricious politicians, keen to acquire land as a symbol for wealth and status’. Tagwireyi, ‘Frustrated Peasants in for a Long Wait’, *Africa South*, November/December 1989, p. 16.

43. As one disaffected member of the public wrote: ‘The question that must be asked is whether . . . the redistribution of land to the landless . . . is no longer a Government priority. People are beginning to wonder whether or not the apparent lack of interest in these issues by the Government is a reflection of the extent to which the erstwhile champions of the disadvantaged have distanced themselves from the struggle of the *povo*. Is this apparent about-face by our leaders due to their now obvious tendency towards accumulation of personal wealth, especially their purchase of the same land originally intended to be redistributed to the land hungry and the unemployed?’ Letter to *The Herald*, 18 November 1988, by Jonathan Pedzisai.

44. ‘Tekere speaks out on land issue’, *Financial Gazette*, 21 July 1989.

45. *Financial Gazette*, 7 July 1989.

Nkomo opened his campaign in Plumtree in July,⁴⁶ but his major intervention occurred when he addressed the CFU's annual congress in August. Urged by the chairman of the Matabeleland branch of the Union, Max Rosenfels, that extreme caution needed to be taken because of the sensitivity of the issue,⁴⁷ Nkomo responded by saying that the situation inherited in 1980 had been 'morally unacceptable, economically unjustifiable and politically untenable'. It was also one which encouraged under-utilization of resources in the commercial sector and gross degradation and over-utilization in the communal areas. Government was not convinced that all land in the commercial sector was being effectively used and it could not stand by while 400,000 displaced people needed land. It would not go around grabbing land, but land had to be found to relieve the overpopulated and overgrazed communal areas. Since the signing of the unity accord, 'there has been a tremendous demand for land' in the two Matabeleland provinces and in the Midlands. The resettlement programme alone would not solve all the problems; there was also a need to reorganize the communal areas as part of a wider programme of agrarian reform.⁴⁸

Robert Mugabe then, in Tony Hawkins' phrase, 'climbed aboard the land acquisition bandwagon',⁴⁹ at one moment promising 'a revolutionary land reform programme, to distribute land without inhibitions',⁵⁰ while at another seeking to allay white fears by saying that 'land acquisition should not be vindictive, nor should it be a wanton land grabbing exercise'.⁵¹ The CFU was alarmed by some of this rhetoric, but was privately reassured that the politicians were merely playing politics and that no radical changes in policy were envisaged. At this juncture, the new British High Commissioner to Zimbabwe, Kieran Prendergast, became involved. Clearly convinced by the CFU's basic line of argument, he warned Mugabe not to seize land from commercial farmers when the Lancaster House Constitution expired.⁵²

46. This provoked an editorial in the *Sunday Mail* which said that 'The land issue in Zimbabwe is a monumental national scandal' and called for 'a policy whose principal goal should be to overhaul the whole national pattern and system of land ownership to break and end with the deceptively cultivated myth that only the commercial farming sector of our society is capable of delivering the goods as far as agriculture is concerned'. *Sunday Mail*, 16 July 1989.

47. 'Extreme caution should be taken while solving land issue - Rosenfels', *Financial Gazette*, 10 August 1989.

48. 'Govt won't grab land from commercial farmers - Nkomo', *Financial Gazette*, 10 August 1989. Most of the land for many miles around Bulawayo was seized by the colonial victors following the 'Matabele War' of 1893. There has been an acute land problem in the area ever since. The much wider question of agrarian reform is another matter altogether; it is not really on the agenda yet in Zimbabwe.

49. Tony Hawkins, 'Mugabe to allow takeover of white-owned land', *Financial Times*, 21 August 1989.

50. 'Zimbabwe: back to the land', *Africa Confidential*, 22 September 1989, p. 5.

51. *The Chronicle*, 8 December 1989.

52. *Africa Confidential*, 22 September 1989, pp. 5-6. In similar vein, see 'Minister Kay told not to "worry" about lands issue', *Financial Gazette*, 21 July 1989.

This proved somewhat counter-productive, as it provoked Mugabe into one of his most radical pronouncements.

Prendergast's undiplomatic and unprecedented intervention formed part of a private quarrel between the Zimbabwean and British governments which began simmering in September 1989 during negotiations over the future of the resettlement programme. The Zimbabweans, who have agreed to put up Z\$10 million and are asking the British for Z\$15 million, are very critical of the British stance in these negotiations.⁵³ It appears that the British Government is seeking, in effect, to perpetuate the Lancaster House agreement beyond 1990. But the situation, in the Zimbabwean Government's view, has changed fundamentally since 1980. The 'willing seller, willing buyer' compromise had originally been designed to reassure and protect white interests at a difficult time of transition. Ten years on, the Zimbabwean Government feels that it has provided an extraordinary degree of reconciliation and stability for the white farmers and that land prices have skyrocketed as a consequence,⁵⁴ and with them the costs of resettlement. What some within the Zimbabwean Government would like to do from 1990 is to be able to buy specific blocks of land for planned resettlement, preferably in the more favoured Natural Regions II and III, and ultimately by compulsory purchase if agreement cannot be reached.

This is not a view which particularly commends itself to Her Majesty's Government. The British are demanding that if the programme is to continue at all (and, despite the favourable ODA evaluation report of 1988, they are by no means convinced of the merits of this) the principle of 'willing seller, willing buyer' must be maintained if they are to part with the Z\$15 million requested. Yet they know that Mugabe is on record as saying that this will have to be dropped in 1990⁵⁵ and that its maintenance is likely to be unacceptable politically to many in Zimbabwe. The British are also urging that land for resettlement be chosen only in the marginal Natural Regions IV and V, adjacent to the communal areas. However this may be decked out in technical considerations, it would amount in practice to perpetuating the century-old pattern of land distribution which provoked the comments from Nkomo cited above and which virtually everyone, including the CFU, now acknowledges to have been patently unjust. Moreover, to the considerable

53. The section that follows is based upon interviews I conducted in Harare in December 1989 with some of the officials involved in the negotiations with Britain over the resettlement programme.

54. This was endorsed by an editorial in the *Financial Gazette*, which acknowledged that 'immediately before the 1980 general election . . . the morale of farmers was at a low ebb, and properties were being sold at bargain prices because many did not have any faith in a future in Zimbabwe. The picture is now quite different, and land values have soared in direct relationship to the political and economic stability that exists today. For this, the government must be given full credit'. 'Land debate is the most important issue since 1980', *Financial Gazette*, 25 August 1989.

55. Hawkins, 'Mugabe to allow takeover', *Financial Times*, 21 August 1989.

irritation of the Zimbabweans, the British are also encouraging other donors to raise questions about Zimbabwe's capacity to support and maintain the resettlement programme.

The British, for whom ideological issues tie in neatly with concerns over 'kith and kin', clearly appear to be afraid of losing control over the whole process. It appears that they have been lobbied successfully by the CFU. The Union, bolstered recently by the second biggest tobacco crop in the country's history, continues to maintain that any serious land reform would undermine white confidence, reduce valuable exports and employment opportunities, threaten the business community and the recent drive for foreign investment (with the much-heralded new investment guidelines), and lead to a white urban exodus. At which point the tap of British, and other Western, bilateral aid, as well as multilateral aid, would almost certainly be turned off. The Zimbabweans, about to embark on a home-grown structural adjustment programme, are acutely conscious that they have to be seen to be acting reasonably and rationally over the land issue, lest they be penalized financially elsewhere.

There is a strong feeling in the countryside, acknowledged by virtually all, that something must now be done about land. Early in December 1989, the Zimbabwean Government was attempting to finalize and agree a policy paper to take to the united ZANU (PF) Congress, which was to meet just before Christmas, but the paper was not agreed in time. At the Congress, Mugabe stressed that land was the most important problem still to be resolved and he promised that the entrenched clauses would be amended to give the government greater flexibility 'to solve the land question more effectively and speedily than before. So there cannot but be an enhanced push to our resettlement programmes from now on'.⁵⁶ The policy paper had been finalized by early January 1990, but had still to be ratified by Cabinet. Details of it, however, were apparently leaked to the *Financial Gazette* and appeared in its edition of 5 January. It would seem to be something of a compromise, leaving a number of battles still to be resolved.

The paper recommends, that when the Lancaster House Constitution expires in April 1990, 'the government should, where necessary expropriate commercial farmland and pay the owners in local currency'. However, and seemingly in contradiction, the 'willing seller, willing buyer' proviso would remain. Government would, as now, have the right to purchase land for public purposes, and it intends to buy a further 6 million hectares for resettlement. The Land Acquisition Act of 1985 would be amended to give the government the power to designate any land for resettlement. Government should control agricultural land prices, either by fixing 'at a

56. 'Land distribution still major problem', *The Herald*, 20 December 1989. The congress was dominated by the issues of the appropriateness, or otherwise, of Marxism-Leninism and a one-party state for Zimbabwe.

realistic price per hectare by natural regions', or 'on the basis of the original purchase price of land, with the addition of the value of permanent improvements on the farm'. A land tax should be imposed 'urgently', based on calculated production potential per hectare by ecological region. Government should immediately legislate to limit the ownership of more than one farm by individuals or companies; those owning more than one farm should be encouraged to sell excess farms. Absentee landlords would not be allowed to own land in Zimbabwe, except in cases where the land was fully utilized. Foreign investment in agriculture would only be permitted in activities where local technology and expertise were still lacking.⁵⁷ Within a week of this report appearing in the press, the CFU had sat down with Mugabe and the two unions representing black farmers to discuss the future.⁵⁸

It remains to be seen how, if at all, this policy is to be implemented, assuming that it, or parts of it, receive Cabinet approval. An additional 6 million hectares might have a popular electoral appeal, but attempts in the past to fix land prices or introduce a land tax have not been conspicuously successful. The response of the CFU will also be important. The signs are that it will lie low, waiting for the politicians to let off steam and for the election to pass over, hoping that its allies in government will eventually win the arguments on the usual pragmatic basis of economic efficiency, technological capacity and the need to protect strategic export crops. Later it may adopt a higher profile and volunteer to offer up to government some of the large amount of under-utilized land known to exist in the commercial farming areas,⁵⁹ and to gather the political kudos which would accrue to it.

Some questions were answered in early February, when Lynda Chalker, the British Minister for Overseas Development, paid a one-day visit to Zimbabwe *en route* to a SADCC meeting. While there, she announced that Britain was now prepared to continue its support of the resettlement

57. 'Zimbabwe Govt draws up comprehensive Policy to solve the Land Problem', *Financial Gazette*, 5 January 1990.

58. *Financial Gazette*, 12 January 1990.

59. There is, and always has been, a great deal of controversy surrounding the question of the extent of under-utilized land within the commercial farms in Zimbabwe. Lionel Cliffe reviews this 'numbers game' in FAO, *Policy Options*, pp. 125–7. In Weiner's view, the land owned by commercial farmers 'is grossly under-utilised . . . Millions of hectares which could potentially be cultivated are being grazed or not used at all'. Weiner, 'Land and Agricultural Development', pp. 75, 83. But, as Tagwireyi points out, 'under-utilization' is likely to catch out the new part-time emergent Zimbabwean farmer. If restrictions are to be imposed against absentee landlords, he asks, how will this affect the 'large numbers of senior civil servants, politicians and other influential Zimbabweans' who are now landowners? Tagwireyi, 'Frustrated Peasants', p. 18. In 1984/5 the Zimbabwean Government briefly supported using a tax mechanism to try to force through the sale of under-utilised land, but it soon dropped the idea. More recently, attempts to investigate the extent of such land have been blocked by a combination of the CFU and the Ministry of Lands and Agriculture.

programme with a further Z\$15 million, 'on the understanding that the willing seller, willing buyer provision will be retained'. She had been assured, she said that the Zimbabwean Government would not repeal this guarantee when the Lancaster House Constitution expired in April, and she did not believe that there would be any nationalisation of land, as had been threatened in some circles. She was particularly keen to see an improvement in the infrastructural development of the resettlement areas.⁶⁰

Immediately following Mrs Chalker's announcement, what was supposed to have been a high-profile conference on 'Land Policy in Zimbabwe after Lancaster' took place in Harare on 13–15 February. Its timing had been approved by the President's Office a year earlier and its university organizers had hoped that it would 'contribute towards the formulation of a truly Zimbabwean land policy'.⁶¹ But it was effectively undermined by last minute government discouragement, non-participation and the withdrawal of papers (surely not unconnected with Mrs Chalker's statement) and by the absence of two of the three farmers' unions, including the CFU.⁶² Thus, in the event, the conference became a beleaguered, low-key and largely academic affair, in every sense of the word. Its recommendations were that: (i) 'willing seller, willing buyer' be abandoned, as this meant excessively exorbitant market rate compensation; (ii) legitimate compensation be offered only for original price plus 'unexhausted improvements', not for land itself; (iii) redistribution of land be accelerated to reduce pressure on the communal areas; (iv) the present preoccupation with 'economic rationality' arguments be tempered by the *povo's* call for 'historical justice' and 'historical compensation'; (v) land ceilings be placed on farm holdings; and (vi) a land commission be established to consider these views and thus lift the current veil of secrecy and broaden the public debate. This last point is crucial, for my Oxfam colleagues in Zimbabwe strongly confirm the belief that the land issue has now effectively been depoliticised and withdrawn from public view and debate. Successful pressure from the commercial farmers, they say, has resulted in land becoming regarded as a technical question to be settled

60. She also thought settlers should be allowed tenure so that they could have collateral and thus be able to borrow from commercial banks. 'Government assures Britain on Land Issue', *Financial Gazette*, 9 February 1990. For some of the infrastructural problems, see 'Povo and land suffer in struggle to resettle', *Parade*, November 1989, pp. 6–7, 46; 'Back to the Future', *Front File*, January 1990, p. 8.

61. 'Land Issue: new policy to be explored', *The Chronicle*, 7 February 1990. See also 'Land reform in Zimbabwe must be analysed in a broader perspective than has been done in the past', *Financial Gazette*, 16 February 1990.

62. John Brown, President of the CFU, told Oxfam: 'I am not going to the conference. We think it's daft and highly undesirable that the university should be the forum where a public debate on an issue as vital to Zimbabwe as land is held. I live land and discuss it with the presidents of the other two farmers' unions, the Minister of Agriculture and the President; those are the places where I discuss agricultural land and we have a very common attitude. We don't negotiate in public'. Interview with John Brown, 8 February 1990. See also 'CFU confident of continued success, but wary of European single market', *Financial Gazette*, 9 February 1990.

by professional experts and overseen by civil servants in private, and certainly not to be debated by the general public.⁶³

As these words are being written, in early March, the ZANU (PF) candidates for the 28–29 March election are being vetted by the Central Committee. It will be interesting to see whether any of them feel able to give voice to popular pressures for land reform,⁶⁴ or whether they too will acquiesce in the veil of secrecy and silence. This may well depend on how much opposition they face in their constituencies. But if Zimbabwe does move firmly in the direction of a one-party state, as Mugabe wants, despite much opposition to this within the country⁶⁵—not to mention the lessons being drawn from Eastern Europe elsewhere in Africa—one may reasonably predict that silence will become the order of the day.

As for the British Government, which has taken such an intimate interest in the land question and whose financial support for the resettlement programme is crucial (at least for as long as Zimbabwean resources continue to be so heavily tied down in the war against the MNR), it appears determined that, by perpetuating the spirit of Lancaster House, it will ensure that the feeble flame of socialism still flickering in Zimbabwe in 1990 will be snuffed out. So it seems likely that peasants will have to wait much longer for land reform. South Africa is next on the agenda.⁶⁶

63. This paragraph relies on Peter Nyoni, Oxfam Country Representative Zimbabwe, to the author, 16 February 1990.

64. ‘There is little doubt that popular pressure for land distribution will have to be addressed by the government in the next few years, if the situation is not to get out of hand’. Chris McIvor, ‘Land reform a pressing issue’, *The Herald*, 16 February 1990.

65. ‘Bishops speak out on one-party state’, *Sunday Mail*, 26 November 1989; Jonathan Moyo, ‘Delegates opposing one-party state need “ideological training” says party presidency’, *Financial Gazette*, 5 January 1990; Jonathan Moyo, ‘The forge of unity’, *Parade*, February 1990, pp. 8–9, 18–19, 23, 36; Ibbo Mandaza, ‘Democracy in the African Reality’, *Southern Africa Political and Economic Monthly*, 3, (February 1990), pp. 26–9; ‘One-party systems lead to inertia, sluggishness, corruption and lack of decision making’ [citing Byron Hove], *Financial Gazette*, 16 February 1990; Luke Mhlaba, ‘Democracy eroded by one party state’, *Parade*, March 1990, p. 37.

66. Daniel Weiner, ‘Agricultural Restructuring in Zimbabwe and South Africa’, *Development and Change*, 20 (1989), pp. 401–28.