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## Review Article

# Too Soon to Tell? Land Reform in Zimbabwe

Roger Southall

Ian Scoones, Nelson Marongwe, Blasio Mavedzenge, Jacob Mahenehene, Felix Murimbarimba and Crispin Sukume (2010), *Zimbabwe's Land Reform: Myths and Realities*, London: James Currey, ISBN 978-1-84701-024-7; Harare: Weaver Press, ISBN 978-1-77922-110-0; Johannesburg: Jacana Media, ISBN 978-1-77009-985-2, 272 pp.

Morgan Tsvangirai (with T. William Barongo) (2011), *Morgan Tsvangirai: At the Deep End*, Johannesburg: Penguin Books, ISBN 978-0-14302-682-2, 564 pp.

**Keywords:** Zimbabwe, domestic policy, agricultural reforms, land tenure

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On being asked what he thought of the historical importance of the French Revolution, Mao Zedong is reputed to have said, "It is too early to tell." I am reminded of this apochryphal story by the controversy that arose around the Fast Track Land Reform Process (FTLRP) initiated by President Robert Mugabe and his Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) regime in Zimbabwe. As Kirk Helliker has pointed out, the debate on Zimbabwean land reform is polarized between a minority position that argues that the radical restructuring of agrarian capital has served as a progressive tendency that has opened up opportunities for black small-scale farmers, and a majority position that insists that land redistribution has dramatically undercut agricultural production, thereby severely compromising

food security for most Zimbabweans. This latter position “brings to the fore violent state action in instigating land occupations and in thwarting political opposition to ‘fast track’” (Helliker 2011). It is not a coincidence that the former position overlaps with a Zimbabwean nationalist perspective which offers a cautious endorsement of the FTLRP, even if critical of the motivations, means and manner of ZANU-PF’s post-2000 land reform programme. On the other hand, the latter position is largely associated with progressive scholars, African and Africanist, who have strongly criticized ZANU-PF’s transformation of postcolonial democracy into a brutally authoritarian regime at war with the majority of its people. There can be no easy closure of the gap that divides these two poles, for the debate is as much about the nature of the Zimbabwean state as it is about land, and how it pans out in the future will in turn reflect what happens in coming decades in Zimbabwe. Picking one’s way through this debate can therefore be a difficult task, but the prime volume under review here, *Zimbabwe’s Land Reform: Myths and Realities* by Ian Scoones, Nelson Marongwe, Blasio Mavedzenge, Jacob Mahenehene, Felix Murimbarimba and Crispen Sukume, attempts to do that, and it does so with considerable success. Nonetheless it may be argued that the authors fail to locate their work in the wider political context.

Prior to arguing that case, however, it is worth reminding ourselves that the Fast Track Land Reform is something of a misnomer, for it is probably better regarded as a *Revolution*. Consider some bare facts: The inequality in land holdings as a result of colonial dispossession in Zimbabwe was dramatic. The Land Tenure Act of 1969 reserved 15.5 million hectares, largely in the most productive areas, for some 6,000 farms, owned by both individual white farmers and large estates; 16.4 million hectares for 700,000 black families; and 1.4 million hectares for 8,500 black small-scale farmers. By the end of the war, 42 per cent of the country was owned by white farmers, and inequality had been exacerbated by the Bush War, as thousands of Africans either left to escape the fighting or were forcibly relocated into “protected villages” (De Villiers 2003: 6). Upon independence, white commercial farmers were providing 90 per cent of the country’s marketed food, with the independence constitution offering them the investment security they deemed necessary for their farms by its adoption of a “willing-buyer-willing-seller” (WBWS) agreement.

As is now well recognized, early efforts by the newly independent government of Robert Mugabe to address inequalities in land holdings were not wholly unimpressive, yet they failed to meet early land redistribution targets. The government blamed the slow pace of reform on the constraints of the constitution, lack of finance to purchase farms, a post-independence rise in

land prices, the tendency of white farmers to offer only marginal land for sale, the serious drought from 1982 to 1984, and a general lack of financial resources. In 1982, the government proposed that some 162,000 African households be resettled within two years. However, by 1990 just 70,000 families had been resettled, and by 1996 just 3.39 million hectares had been acquired. Subsequently, with land reform shooting up ZANU-PF's political agenda, two land acquisition acts which eased constitutional constraints on the compulsory purchase of land and increased the government's ability to accelerate the identification of land for acquisition were passed (one in 1992 and one in 1996), and by November 1997, some 1,488 farms covering a total of 3.8 million hectares had been identified for purchase. A proposed budget of 1.9 billion USD was drawn up for the entire exercise of acquisition and settlement of some 150,000 families by 2004. Nonetheless, despite the radicalized agenda, by the year 2000, a total of only 75,000 families had been resettled, desperately short of the target of 1982.

There were many reasons for the slow progress, including something of a hijacking of the land reform process by the political elite – who were more concerned about acquiring farms for themselves than they were about resettling land-hungry peasants – as well as disputes between the Zimbabwean government and international donors (the former citing broken financial promises, the latter worrying about declining commitment to WBWS and requiring that aid be underpinned by macro-economic stability and good governance). Suffice it to say that after the electorate rejected a draft constitution put together under the auspices of ZANU-PF – which would have relieved the Zimbabwean government of any financial obligation to pay for the compulsory acquisition of land for resettlement – Zimbabwe hurtled into the complex crisis that continues to define its contemporary existence.

Spearheaded by “war veterans”, land invasions gathered pace throughout the country as the government, in turn, lacking any legal basis, launched its “Fast Track Resettlement Programme” on 1 July 2000. The initial targets were to acquire 1 million hectares and resettle 30,000 families, to be followed rapidly by an additional acquisition of 4 million hectares on which a further 120,000 families would be settled over three years. ZANU-PF, by this time confronting major economic crisis and extensive popular disillusionment, thereafter stood in the 2000 parliamentary election under the slogan “Land is the economy, the economy is the land”, a phrase designed to bang the drum of national liberation in the face of the challenge made by the newly formed Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). Then, in November 2000, despite the proposed new constitution having been rejected, the Land Acquisition Amendment Act was pushed through parliament, declaring that should Britain not establish a compensation fund, compensation by the

Zimbabwean government would be payable only for improvements to the land. Other provisions in the act generally eased the measures whereby land could be acquired. In July 2002, notices were served on 2,900 out of the 4,500 remaining farmers to stop all farming activities by 8 August, whereafter they had to vacate their land without any compensation. Further measures followed as the pace of land invasions stepped up; the obstacles that the courts put in the path of the FTLRP were brushed aside by an executive assault upon the independence judiciary, and uncooperative judges were sacked.

Within four years, the number of individual white farmers had dwindled significantly, although some 250 large farms and estates mostly owned by South African-based companies remained – notably, Triangle Sugar Corporation and Hippo Valley (Sugar) Estate – as well as a number of others owned by European and domestic concerns (with the state itself also being a significant owner of land) (Moyo 2011). Overall, according to Sam Moyo, approximately 70 per cent of agricultural land is today held by 1.3 million peasant families within the communal areas and by FTLRP beneficiaries, while about 20 per cent of farming land (outside the communal areas) is occupied by approximately 30,000 middle-scale black farmers, with land sizes ranging from 50 to 200 hectares. Finally, alongside the remaining large estates, there are some 3,000 individual farmers, operating on one-third of pre-2000 average larger-scale landholding sizes. Eighty per cent of these are blacks, “including urban and rural-based professionals, public and private sector executives, other petty bourgeoisie elements and black capitalists” (who may, he says, be labelled “land grabbers”) (Moyo 2011: 261).

The scale and pace of the transfer of land, implemented by the state and pushed through with often brutal levels of violence, has been dramatic. Mahmood Mamdani has referred to this, the “greatest transfer of property in southern Africa since colonization”, as a “democratic revolution”, in “social and economic – if not political – terms” (Mamdani 2008: 18). In this, he is surely far more right than wrong, for whilst – as we shall see – the foundations are being laid for new forms of social differentiation between African peasants and middle- and larger-scale African farm owners, this constitutes a fundamental change in the class relations established in colonial Rhodesia. Yet as Mamdani has also allowed, a very heavy price has been paid. The rule of law and the independence of the judiciary have been swept away; there has been massive repression of the media and opposition forces; approximately 150,000 farm labourers, traditionally drawn from migrant labour, have been displaced and, to the extent that they have rallied behind the MDC, brutally hounded. Meanwhile, the urban poor, identified by the regime as supporters of the MDC, have likewise been subject to massive repression, including Operation Murambatsvina (a 2005 assault by the secu-

rity forces upon informal settlements in Harare whose stated mission was “driving out the trash”). Finally, it is worth noting that food production has plummeted as a result of the land invasions. Zimbabwe, formerly a food surplus country, was by 2003 lacking both food and foreign exchange to buy imports, and half the population was dependent upon food aid. Nonetheless, as Mamdani also notes, what the overall outcome of radical land reform for Zimbabwe is and will become remains highly controversial and difficult to determine. This brings us to the work of Ian Scoones and his associates in Masvingo Province, as they seek to distinguish *myths* from *realities*.

## Myths and Realities

The starting point for the analysis of Scoones et al. (2010) is the assertion that the invasion and seizure of Zimbabwe’s largely white-owned commercial farms has been reported in monochromatically lurid terms by a global media which has largely observed from a distance. The predominant themes have been the deployment of state violence, the destruction of property, the abuse of human rights, the displacement of farm workers as well as farm owners, the environmental degradation, the collapse of food production, and the allocation of former white farms to political cronies. Meanwhile, images of race have never been far away, with struggles between white farmers and black land invaders being played out on television screens internationally. Yet, the authors argue the “story is far more complex than the generalizations of media headlines”, and the book “looks at the realities behind the headlines”, tackling with “a hard look at empirical data” the myths that have sprung up. The aim is not to deny what has happened, “including some appalling violations and abuses”, but to address misinformation and misunderstanding, and to offer a more nuanced story (Scoones et al. 2010: 1). The five particular myths they seek to address are:

- Myth 1: Zimbabwean land reform has been a total failure.
- Myth 2: The beneficiaries of Zimbabwean land reform have been largely political “cronies”.
- Myth 3: There is no investment in the new resettlements.
- Myth 4: Agriculture is in complete ruins, creating chronic food insecurity.
- Myth 5: The rural economy has collapsed.

After setting the scene by briefly reviewing the experience of land reform and resettlement after 1980, Scoones et al. arrive at an account of *jambanja*, the period of land invasions in 1999 spearheaded by war veterans, which the

authors are reluctant to categorize as either “a ground up social protest movement” or a “process set up and manipulated by ZANU-PF”. Their argument is rather that

each farm “invasion” had a different character: different origins, different people involved and different forms of external support [...]. The story of *jambanja* – this notorious period of invasion, occupation, associated with chaos and confusion – is complex,

and generalizations “are impossible to make” (Scoones et al. 2010: 23). The rapidly concocted FTLRP was an attempt to “retrospectively impose a legislative framework and policy of the *jambanja* period”, notably featuring a distinction inherited from colonial and postcolonial plans between A1 and A2 farms, the former tending to be smaller and the latter larger commercial farms according to agro-ecological region (Scoones et al. 2010: 24). The authors then provide a synopsis of how, in the wake of the failed policies of structural adjustment of the 1980s and 1990s, a

potent mix of economic mismanagement, foreign military and mining extraction adventures in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and growing corruption amongst the political, security and business elites

led the country into a period of economic meltdown and political crisis, culminating in the 2008 combined parliamentary and presidential elections in which ZANU-PF “fared badly” (Scoones et al. 2010: 28). In fact, ZANU-PF lost both elections, although Scoones et al. do not explicitly say that, though they do note that to secure a win for Mugabe in the second round of the presidential election, “voters who had dared to cast their vote in favour of the MDC and (its leader, Morgan) Tsvangirai earlier were punished” through beatings and deployment of terror (Scoones et al. 2010: 28). Nonetheless, the political stalemate that resulted ended with a compromise political settlement in February 2009, which established a coalition government in which ZANU-PF was constrained to sharing power with the MDC. “Not surprisingly”, they note, “one of the main policy items in the inclusive government’s in-tray is the land issue” (Scoones et al. 2010: 30).

Significantly, the Global Political Agreement, which laid the basis for coalition, recognized the social inequities of “colonial-racist land ownership patterns” and accepted the irreversibility of the land acquisitions and redistributions of recent years. Destroying myths by careful assessment of empirical realities is therefore an important step to charting a way forward, with the book seeking to make a “modest contribution to the rebuilding of Zimbabwe” (Scoones et al. 2010: 31).

The authors’ *modus operandi* was to undertake a long-term case study of the province of Masvingo, in Zimbabwe’s southeast. In 2000, Masvingo had

a total of 623 large-scale commercial farms, covering 2.1 million hectares, these being indigenous-owned, white-owned, church-owned or state-owned. By 2009, a total of 176 farms had been acquired under the A2 model, and a further 244 under the A1 model. In terms of area, 23.7 per cent of acquired land was allotted to A2 farmers and 76.3 per cent to A1 farmers, with the number of officially recorded land beneficiaries (although deemed by many scholars an underestimate) being distributed among 33,766 households, or, over 200,000 people. In addition, some 8,500 people resided in informal settlements not registered under the programme.

The authors take us through a meticulous study of how the new settlers have fared, an important feature of their presentation being the rendition of numerous individual stories regarding backgrounds, motivation, ambitions, livelihood patterns and so on. Many of these stories are heartwarming, and even for non-land specialists like myself, they are fascinating, and well worth the effort of ploughing through the extensive empirical detail. Overall, they provide a firm basis for the countering of “myths”:

Instead of Zimbabwean land reform having been a total failure (Myth 1), the Masvingo experience suggests that not only has there been an extensive redistribution of land, but also that, considerable variations in performance notwithstanding, “there is a strong dynamic of ‘accumulation from below’” through a combination of agricultural production and off-farm activities. A new agrarian structure is fast emerging, and an important “middle farmer” group is cutting across A1, A2 and informal scheme types and is rooted in “successful commodity production”. Zimbabwe’s land reform has created “challenges and opportunities” but “cannot be characterized as an abject failure” (Scoones et al. 2010: 238).

Although there has been a substantial element of political patronage in the allocation of land since 2000 (Myth 2), the new settlements in Masvingo are not dominated by a rich, politically connected elite. Such a group certainly exists, and is influential beyond its numbers, but those who benefit from “accumulation from above” and patronage relations are in stark contrast to the majority, who are relatively poor people in need of land. A new social and economic order is emerging which will require carefully tuned policy support to foster the undeniable (but still unrealized) potentials for development, taking into account divisions and contestations arising around class, gender and across generations (Scoones et al. 2010: 238).

Contrary to media images of destruction and chaos (Myth 3), there has been significant new investment in farming, almost all of it private (the substantial damage that has been done to the basic infrastructure of commercial agriculture notwithstanding). New settlers have “cleared land, built homes, purchased farm equipment and invested in livestock”. On average, over

2,000 USD has been invested per household in a range of assets and improvements. Again, there is considerable variation across households and sites, with some having embarked onto an upward livelihood trajectory, others doing far less well. Further, the investment picture on the new A2 farms is less encouraging, with few A2 farmers having managed to develop new enterprises. Nonetheless, the overall level of investment remains too low, and the key policy challenge for the future is how to support existing processes of accumulation from below “through a combination of livelihood strategies, and involving a diverse mix of small-scale capitalist farmers, petty commodity producers and worker-peasants” (Scoones et al. 2010: 239).

Contrary to Myth 4 – that agriculture has collapsed– there is “a very positive dynamic of productive agriculture by 40 to 50 per cent of households”. Due to the commercial agriculture having diversified away from food production during the 1990s, the output of exports has crashed, but – despite operating below potential – the production level of cereals and cottons has been sustained, while some crops, like edible beans, have boomed. Middle farmers are successfully accumulating from below in mixed farming systems, although there is less success to be seen in the A2 schemes. “Here a complementary specialized, capitalized agriculture has yet to emerge, and the area-based synergies with the A1 farmers are as yet mostly only potentials.” A key policy challenge must be to facilitate the take-off of commercial agriculture, while avoiding a re-creation of the dualistic production structures that reigned under colonialism (Scoones et al. 2010: 240).

The formal economy may have been in dire straits for most of the past decade, but in contrast to Myth 5 – that the rural economy has collapsed – a new dynamism characterizes the agricultural sector. “Unlike the old dualities of the past, where large numbers were excluded from participation in the agricultural economy, the processes of accumulation from below mean that new players are involved, benefits are being more widely distributed and economic linkages are more embedded in the local economy.” A new policy focus is required which will seek to capitalize on new linkages and multipliers generated by the land reform, while avoiding capture by “elite interests and powerful players” (Scoones et al. 2010: 240).

Having, in their view, successfully debunked myths, the authors then proceed to sketch out ten priorities for policy (relating to land administration; land security and tenure; input supply; water, wells and irrigation; etc.) to promote the way forward in rebuilding Zimbabwe’s rural economy. A reframed discourse, they insist, must avoid simplistic polar opposites. Nor can the present impasse be resolved by technocratic measures alone. “Only with the required political debate can land be viewed once again as a source

of livelihood and economic wealth, not simply as a source of political patronage” (Scoones et al. 2010: 253).

## Avoiding Politics?

There can be no doubting the importance of this groundbreaking book. It successfully challenges the polarities of debate and is likely to reframe the entire discourse on land reform in Zimbabwe, despite the authors’ correctly cautious warnings that it is dangerous and unwise to generalize from case studies (Scoones et al. 2010: xii, 45). Above all, the book provides hard evidence of the “accumulation from below” being undertaken by an emergent class of middle farmers, who have seized their opportunity to use former white-owned land to promote locally relevant production and to improve the livelihoods of themselves and their families. This finding should not surprise Africanists schooled in the extensive historical literature on the colonial state’s imposition of all sorts of restrictions upon African farming communities in order to limit competition to white commercial agriculture. Interesting, too, is the hint – not discussed explicitly – carried in descriptions of the land allocation process in Masvingo that something of an administratively capable and coherent civil service continues to operate insofar, at least, as it is able to avoid direct political impositions by ZANU-PF. So, in short, this strongly argues that, however much we may declare that ZANU-PF only arrived at radical land reform as a result of self-serving political exigencies, and however much we deplore the awful excesses of violence meted out by the ruling party against its opponents, we cannot judge the present outcome of the FTLRP only through narrowly ideological and moral lenses. History, the authors seem to be saying, is messy, even if they avoid explicit Leninist intimations that to make an omelette, it is necessary to break eggs. But do they, in so arguing, effectively abstract land reform from the wider politically tumultuous context of Zimbabwean reality? Do they, in practice, propagate a new myth about gently heroic middle farmers who are going about their business of reviving the agrarian economy regardless of the political context around them? This is the substance of a valuable critique by Blair Rutherford, who argues that “the authors’ positioning of the book as a detached promotion of the empirical realities contradicts their textured analyses of contested histories and masks their own politics” (Rutherford 2012). It is interesting, in this regard, to note that three of the authors, Blaise Mavedzenge, Jacob Mahenehene and Felix Murimbarimba, are themselves beneficiaries of the land reform, the first being a civil servant and A1 resettlement farmer, the second a communal areas farmer who also has a new settlement plot in an informal area, and the

third a former civil servant and now a full-time A2 sugar cane farmer in the Hippo Valley. There is certainly nothing wrong with this, and the research probably would have been impossible to conduct without their ability to negotiate the political and administrative landscape. But it does raise the question of whether their backgrounds shaped, blunted or constrained the political judgements of the research team as a whole.

This takes us back to the controversy aroused by Mahmoud Mamdani, who challenged conventional wisdom by arguing that while there is no denying Mugabe's authoritarianism and his willingness to tolerate the violent behaviour of his supporters, "he has not ruled only by coercion but by consent", meaning that his land reform measures have won him considerable popularity not just in Zimbabwe but throughout southern Africa (Mamdani 2008: 17). He argues that the liberation war was centred on land, and thus it should have come as no surprise that radical reform should attract broad-based support. When the draft constitution was put to the electorate in February 2000, it was defeated, with only 45 per cent of voters in favour – yet only just over 20 per cent of the electorate had voted, votes coming largely from the urban areas, and voting in the countryside was marked by large-scale abstentions. The War Veterans' Association, formed in 1988, claimed membership from across the country, in contrast to the Zimbabwean Congress of Trade Unions. ZANU-PF had little choice but to side with the former against the urban-based trade union federation in the power struggle that was to rip Zimbabwe apart. In the years that have followed, whereas civil society activists have characterized ZANU-PF as promoting an "exhausted nationalism", ZANU-PF nationalism has been able to withstand civil society-based opposition because it is "supported by large numbers of peasants" (Mamdani 2010: 17).

Mamdani's critics have vigorously challenged his argument that ZANU-PF has ruled by consent. In responses to his article in the *London Review of Books*, prominent academics argued 1) that he systematically underplays the level of violence deployed by ZANU-PF and the military against its opponents, notably in the rural areas; 2) that the land invasions were not a popular uprising but rather orchestrated by the military and the security services; and 3) that the collapse of food production and the effect of violence has seen 4 million people flee the country and 5 million face starvation (e.g. Ranger 2010). Yet whilst this is true, Mamdani argues that for all the violence entwined with the land reform process, it has enjoyed considerable popularity amongst the landless and provides a continuing body of rural support for Mugabe and ZANU-PF. For a start, there have been a significant number of beneficiaries of the reforms, these being good reasons the

MDC has not even suggested reversing them (even though it has called for their “rationalization”).

The work of Scoones and his associates would appear to endorse this judgement, adding weight to the view that while the land reform process has been heavily driven by political considerations, it has also benefitted a wide range of Zimbabweans – not just committed ZANU-PF supporters. This is clearly an important corrective to some of the more simplistic arguments that the land redistribution process was little more than a process of the allocation of land to cronies. Nonetheless, there are grounds for arguing that perhaps the focus of Scoones and his associates on Masvingo has led them to significantly underestimate this aspect on a national scale.

In late 2010, a study was published that drew information from government documents and audit reports which indicated that 2,200 politically connected elites control close to half of the land seized from white farmers, with President Mugabe, his wife, ZANU-PF cabinet ministers, senior military officers, provincial governors, senior party officials, chiefs and judges owning nearly 5 million hectares of agricultural land, including wildlife conservancies and plantations (ZimOnline 2010). At the top of the pile, according to the report, were Mugabe and his wife, who themselves owned some 14 farms (extending to 16,000 hectares); his deputy, Joyce Mujuru, her late husband, former army general Solomon Mujuru, and their close relatives owned at least 25 farms; and Constantine Chiwenga, the Defence Forces commander, had two farms near Harare, including the 1,200-hectare Chakoma Estates, which his wife seized at gunpoint.

Overall, 90 per cent of the nearly 200 officers from the rank of major to lieutenant general in the army had farms; this pattern replicated throughout the air force, police and prisons service and Central Intelligence Organisation, to the point where there are in total some 400 officers from the security forces who are known to have received farms covering 250 hectares, while many lower-ranking officers had smaller holdings. Similarly, all ZANU-PF cabinet ministers, 56 politburo members, 98 members of parliament and 35 elected and unelected senators had been allocated former white-owned farms, with many owning more than one; all 10 provincial governors had seized farms – four owning more than one farm – and 65 per cent of the more than 200 mostly partisan traditional chiefs had also benefitted from the land reforms. Likewise, 16 Supreme Court and High Court judges, including Chief Justice Chidyausiku, owned large farms ranging in size between 540 to 1,380 hectares. Forty current and former ambassadors and over two-thirds of bosses of parastatals also owned large tracts of land. Meanwhile, no high-profile civil society or MDC officials benefitted, with the sole exception of Welshman Ncube, the secretary-general of the splinter

MDC. Even smaller beneficiaries, argued the report, had accessed their land only by virtue of their possession of ZANU-PF membership cards.

The accuracy of this study needs to be confirmed (although it links individual names to individual farms and farm size). However, it would seem to offer a very different picture than that provided by Scoones et al., even if it would tend to endorse their implicit judgement that the relative failure of A2 farms can be explained by the predatory nature of their ownership. If, in turn, the *major* portion of land *has* gone to the political elite, is it not likely to shape their political behaviour? But just how important is the countryside politically?

## Land and Politics

One of the more curious aspects of the recent autobiography of Morgan Tsvangirai, the leader of the MDC and since 2008 prime minister of the transitional government, is that the land issue scarcely features. Indeed, neither the word “land” nor the phrase “Fast Track Land Reform” are listed in the index. Perhaps, pace Mamdani, this is just a demonstration of the MDC’s inherently urban orientation, and the silence on the topic tells us far more about the opposition party than it does about the actual political salience of land reform. But perhaps it is also telling us something about the character of the present political stalemate.

I am not attempting to provide an overall review of *Morgan Tsvangirai: At the Deep End*, save to say that – the tendency of the text to glide over its story without much depth notwithstanding – it is a book that offers valuable insights, not just into Tsvangirai’s own personal development and considerable bravery, but also into his perspectives of the differences between running a trade union movement and a political party, the emergent factionalism within the MDC and the reasons for its split, and most fascinating of all, his pungent criticisms of Thabo Mbeki’s mediation of the Zimbabwean crisis (depicted as strongly biased in favour of ZANU-PF) and of course his views on Mugabe himself (presented, as we might expect, as brutal, intolerant and cunning, yet paradoxically eager for respect and approval). The book centres, unsurprisingly, on the extent to which ZANU-PF state power has been ruthlessly deployed to confront the challenge posed by the MDC, and on how the various elections since 2000 have been grossly manipulated to entrench the ruling party in power. It takes the story beyond the signing of the Global Political Agreement, and it records Tsvangirai’s frustrations concerning the limitations of coalition government with a partner determined to cling to power. Zimbabwe, he concludes, is undergoing a “tenuous transition”, and “power-sharing agreements hardly resolve conflicts in a holistic way” (Tsvangirai

2011: 552). Following an analysis of ZANU-PF's effective takeover by the security apparatus, the book necessarily ends on a note of supreme uncertainty, despite a closing assertion that "with another nail-biting election in the air", Tsvangirai's message is that "tomorrow will be better" (Tsvangirai 2011: 552). It is with no disrespect that we might aver, in the immortal words of Mandy-Rice Davies, "Well, he would say that, wouldn't he?"

But my particular interest is Tsvangirai's treatment of a land reform process which, for all the outside world's obsession, is remarkably limited. True, he proposes that "no one in Africa would argue against attacks on colonialism or resolving the land question", pointing out that "ZANU-PF used its liberation credentials as a perfect cover for black-on-black oppression" (Tsvangirai 2011: 274). In the chapter entitled "Land, Votes, Food", Tsvangirai regales us with an account – which has been endorsed not merely by a myth-making media, but by systematic accounts provided by bodies such as NGOs, churches, observer groups and human rights organizations – of how the land reform issue was used not only to seize white farms, but also to launch attacks upon the MDC and their supporters: teachers, civil servants and farmworkers in the rural areas. Violence was used to "force the peasants to 'fall in love' with ZANU-PF", and "land reform was used to justify a concerted campaign against political opponents, and it involved murder, assault, torture and the destruction of property" (Tsvangirai 2011: 266). In turn, in 2005, Operation Murambatsvina constituted a highly deliberate attack upon the urban poor, who were deemed to constitute the core of the MDC's support. The operation aimed to drive that constituency into the rural areas where ZANU-PF could control them "through violence and partisan food handouts" (Tsvangirai 2011: 441), although the fact that ZANU-PF was to suffer yet another defeat in the 2008 elections indicates that such attempts at controlling contrary elements overall failed. Nonetheless, despite his portrayal of the brutality that ZANU-PF inflicted on the countryside, Tsvangirai fails to address the important issue of where land reform sits politically. So, in conclusion, let us try to tease out some important issues arising from a reading of these two very different books:

First, the fact that the MDC has accepted the irreversibility of the land reform process suggests that it recognizes not only that it will have to live with the general outcome, but also that the FTLRP has reshaped the countryside and created new sets of class interests which will need to be appeased if not actively attracted if ZANU-PF's political control in rural areas is to be undermined.

Second, while Mamdani's point that the granting of land to numerous beneficiaries is likely to have provided a considerable basis of support for ZANU-PF is well taken, no one cannot automatically assume that new

farmers will gravitate to the ruling party. As long as they are assured that an MDC-led government will not seek to take their land away, their vote may well be open to determination by a host of other factors.

Third, while Scoones and his associates have offered a firm challenge to Myth 2 (that the beneficiaries of Zimbabwean land reform have been largely political cronies), this does not negate the indications that huge tracts of land, perhaps as much as half that seized from white farmers, is now owned by the ZANU-PF political and military elite. What remains to be explored is how the political and economic interests of this elite relate to those of emergent middle farmers, and likewise what their relations are likely to be with more marginal farmers and, not least, farm labourers and the still landless. How this is likely to work out politically constitutes a major topic for investigation.

Finally, while Scoones et al. have provided convincing evidence of the potential dynamism of the restructured rural economy, there can be no certainty that it will move forward on an upward trajectory. Ultimately, the future will be determined by politics: by whether the present transitional phase results in a stable and hopefully more democratic outcome, or whether the country relapses into further bouts of interminable conflict. In other words, despite the potentially historically progressive nature of ZANU-PF's highly contentious land reform, it is still far too early to tell what its long term implications will be.

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