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ABSTRACT

In the human rights narrative, the Third Chimurenga violence in Zimbabwe between 2000 and 2008 is categorised as senseless and self-preserving violence used by ZANU-PF to retain power through cowing the electorate and intimidating the opposition MDC. This article revisits the violence of the era through problematizing this Human Rights articulation. Using the historical genealogy of land expropriations and shortages among the blacks, I attempt to answer the question: To what degree was the violence that accompanied the Third Chimurenga senseless? I argue that while there could have been cases of extreme violations of human rights of certain citizens on the whole in Shurugwi district, it had the overall result of correcting historical wrongs. The article begins by problematizing the human rights discourse as it can be applied to the farm takeovers in Shurugwi district. In the second part, I discuss the genealogy of land shortages as well as coercive policies such as centralisation that was piloted in Shurugwi and the introduction of the plough in entrenching structural violence in the district. This enables us to view the build-up to the 2000 onwards land invasions and accompanying violence.

Keywords: Senseless violence, Human rights, Centralisation, Chimurenga, Shurugwi, Structural violence.

In the human rights narrative, the Third Chimurenga violence between 2000 and 2008 is categorised as senseless and self-preserving violence used by the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) to retain power through cowing the electorate and intimidating the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). This article revisits the violence of the era through problematizing this Human Rights articulation. Using the historical genealogy of land expropriations and shortages among the blacks, I attempt to answer the question: To what degree was the violence that accompanied the Third Chimurenga senseless? Primarily, I argue that while there could have been cases of extreme violations of human rights of certain citizens on the whole in Shurugwi district, it had the overall result of correcting historical wrongs. Simultaneously, it empowered the majority of those who acquired pieces of land for farming. The article begins by articulating and problematizing the human rights discourse as it can be applied to the farm takeovers in Shurugwi district. In the second part, I discuss the genealogy of land shortages as well as coercive policies such as centralisation that was piloted in Shurugwi and the introduction of the plough in entrenching structural violence in the district. This enables us to view the build-up to the 2000 onwards land invasions and accompanying violence.

Violence as Human Rights Violations

The human rights violation discourse on the Third Chimurenga violence proffered differentially by NGOs, the MDCs and the Western Liberal Nations looks at the 2000-2008 violence in Zimbabwe as having been aimed at intimidating the electorate to vote for ZANU-PF and the elimination of a strong opposition to ZANU-PF and to President Mugabe.

They provided detailed accounts of alleged human rights violations by the ZANU-PF led state. This construction of the effects of the violence rooted in the liberal conception of the relation between the individual with rights and the state, perceives the violence as “a mechanism of repression” (Foucault, 1980: 90).

In the above mode, the violence is perceived as a constitutive component of the Zimbabwean “crisis”. The crisis, which coincided with the emergence of the MDC, was exhibited in multivalent ways, including:
Confrontations over land and property rights; contestations over history and meanings of nationalism and citizenship; the emergence of critical civic society organisations campaigning around trade union, human rights and constitutional questions; the restructuring of the state in more authoritarian forms; the broader pan-African and anti-imperialist struggles in Zimbabwe; the cultural representations of the crisis in Zimbabwean literature; and the central role of Robert Mugabe (Raftopoulos, 2009: 201).

Under these conditions, violence was used broadly as an “instrument of dehumanisation” (Sachikonye, 2011: xviii), as well as “systematic campaign of intimidation aimed at crushing support for opposition parties…” (Krüger, 2003: 196), for political “dividends” (Sachikonye, 2011: 1-2). Additionally, it was an attempt by the state to “forestall major constitutional reforms that [would] offer greater scope for democracy and political reform” (Rukuni and Jensen, 2003: 246). Other developments cited under the human rights school included the violent reorganisation of the judiciary to ensure that it became pro-ZANU-PF arm, the enactment of repressive legislation namely POSA and AIPPA that proscribed the operations of the opposition parties, the militarisation of the state including the adoption of military-style operations, the increasing violation of the Urban Councils Act, the browbeating of civic groups and the increased deployment of violence against the opposition at election times (Raftopoulos, 2009: 213-227). On the whole, violence is perceived to have “been institutionalised to build an authoritarian state that [was] contemptuous of citizen rights” (Sachikonye, 2011, xviii).

A genealogy of the violence is also proffered in a continuum running from the gukurahundi in the parts of the Matebeleland(s) and Midlands provinces through to the failures of Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP). Regarding the gukurahundi, Alexander, et al, (2000) posit that the Government engaged in an indiscriminate and “grotesque repression against civilians and more selectively against [ZAPU] party activists” (Ibid: 15), leading to property violations and affecting the victims’ children’s access to citizenship (Sachikonye, 2011: 16-17). The gukurahundi violence is also represented as targeting ethnic (Ndebele) cleansing (Alexander and Magregor, 2003: 122).

Following was the repressive state violence against the labour, civic, women and student-led food riots, strikes, collective action and stayaways in response to an economic collapse that was triggered by the failure of the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP), corruption, the gratuities to war veterans and the cost of the DRC war in the 1990s (Raftopoulos, 2009: 204-206& 219).

The latest phase in this teleology followed the rejection of the National Constitutional Commission (NCC) draft constitution in February 2000. The defeat, which marked the “first major political defeat” for ZANU-PF (Raftopoulos, 2009: 210), served a warning to ZANU-PF that this defeat could be replicated in the forthcoming June 2000 parliamentary and March 2002 and presidential elections (Bond and Manyanya, 2003: 74). Faced with such apocalyptic prospects, President Mugabe aligned himself with the militant war veterans to violently expropriate farms under the jambanja and later under the formalised as the Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) (Madhuku, 2004: 137).

Furthermore, the state was reorganised along the Schmit (2007:19) “friend-enemy” binary in which the distinction between citizens and non-citizens of Zimbabwe was absolute. In this way, the MDC, urbanites and civic societies and whites, were cast as “enemies of the nation”, “outsiders” and “Western surrogates” (Raftopoulos, 2009: 213), or as totemless people (Mujere, 2007: 13) and were increasingly blamed for the failings of the state (Bond and Manyanya, 2003: 74). Because non-ZANU-PF supporters were cast in the language of “enemies, and therefore illegitimate”, they were browbeaten (Muzondidya, 2009: 176) through forced dismissals from work, disenfranchisement, threats, exclusion, physical assaults, displacement and property destruction, among others. These policies eventually “invited” sanctions by the USA, the European Union, Australia, and Canada.

With this construction of the “political”, the violence was cast as the Third liberation war (Chimurenga), which served, first, to affirm ZANU-PF’s legitimacy in the face of diminished electoral returns (Raftopoulos, 2010), and second, its “doctrine of ‘permanent revolution’” of “leaping from Chimurenga to Chimurenga” (Ranger, 2005: 8). To Ranger, this was a “doctrine of violence because it [saw] itself as a doctrine of revolution” (Ibid).

PROBLEMatisING THE HUMAN RIGHTS NARRATIVE: TOWARDS A “THIRD SPACE”

Having spelled out the human rights discourse on the violence, I now turn to address its critique. My aim is to conceive ways to imagine it alongside, and not averse to, the historical structural inequalities that have lingered in Shurugwii and have been evoked by ZANU-PF. As Raftopoulos (2004: 1) says, we should not dismiss too quickly the redistribution agenda simply because of its articulation by ZANU-PF, and neither should we be quick to dismiss the human rights claims because of their apparent closeness to the “regime change” agenda (Raftopoulos, 2011). In doing so, I seek to project an instance that may generate a “new idea” (Woodward et al, 2002: xxv) in which to imagine the problematic of the new millennium displacements, farm and firm takeovers, emotional and physical torture and the stifling of the democratic space in Zimbabwe.

The central theme of the critique of the human rights discourse is neatly captured in the words of Shiviji, who states that:
Brown (1995: 89), further alleges that the discourse of human rights is situated in a complex paradox of emancipation and domination, and protection and regulation. To her the human rights discourse might not capture the full essence of inequalities in societies and may serve to normalise inequalities through propelling the rights of the powerful classes while simultaneously entrenching the suffering and exploitation of the weak classes.

With reference to the land issue in Zimbabwe, the language of human rights may be wanting in addressing the impact of the colonial heritage in promoting racialised land and other resource inequalities. It is not sensitive enough to the impact of structural violence that also engendered social and economic inequalities. To this extent, the skewed land distribution patterns in Zimbabwe since colonisation in 1890 (Palmer 1977) have constantly reproduced tensions and intermittent land invasions, in both the colonial and post-colonial state (Marongwe: 2003: 157), including, the Tangwena people's struggles over the Kaerezi ranch, the Ndadu claims over Chirinda forest and Chief Manhenga's claims over the Gambuli farm (Ibid: 172 & 186). The post-colonial Government also used force to evict land occupying communities on government or private farms in the 1980s and 1990s (Muzondidya, 2009: 182). It is also beyond debate, that land imbalances were a key grievance of the liberation struggle and a deal breaker that stalled the negotiations at Lancaster in 1979 (Moyana, 1984: 22-3).

Shurugwi district shares in some of these struggles over access to land by the local communities. These include the 1920s disputed relocation from, and constant trekking back as rent-paying settlers or "invaders" to the Tokwe Ranch by people under Chief Banga (NAAZ, S235/505-508). The land shortages in the district's communal area are succinctly captured in the words of the Native Commissioner for Selukwe (Shurugwi) that: "[f]rom the figures relating to the population and stock on the reserve at any disposal, it was apparent to me that under the system in vogue, the reserve was overcrowded - in fact, I marvelled that so large a number of people were able, under the conditions to be self-supporting" (Ibid, 1929). In fact, Shurugwi reserve with 76 000 morgen (about 152 000 acres) (NAZ, S235/505-508, 1929) and a population of about 19 889 people by 1934 (NAZ, S235/505-508, 1934), which translated to approximately 9 acres per personfare comparatively worse than most reserves which had an average of 30.49 acres (Moyana, 1984: 47). Because of the acute land shortages in Shurugwi reserve, the district was selected to pilot the "centralisation" programme, a technical-scientific method meant to maximise production from the land and simultaneously conserve it.

Notwithstanding the resettlement efforts, land shortages in Shurugwi and other communal areas continued largely unresolved right up to the start of the jambanja in 2000. However, this was due to a concoction of the government receiving marginal farms for resettlement, the corrupt allocation of acquired farms to "chiefs", shortages of finances and capacity for the land reform, a rise in population, the impact of ESAP, donor fatigue, and the government's involvement in other programmes (Rukuni and Jensen, 2003: 249-253). Because the land problem remained unresolved, it remained an emotive political issue. It was on the basis of this that ZANU-PF rode on this emotion to instigate the jambanja, and later the FTRLP.

From the foregoing discussion, it follows therefore that the human rights paradigm, while important, nonetheless has to factor in politico-historical inequalities that were ushered in by the moment of colonisation and the embedded structural violence rooted in the racially skewed legislation and policies. This makes it imperative to tie the understanding of human rights for any particular group to the understanding and even the redressing of historical wrongs (Spivak, 2004: 530). As an example, "the natural Rights of Man were contingent upon the historical French Revolution, the Universal Declaration upon the historical events of the Second World War" (Ibid). In order to avoid abstracting human rights in Zimbabwe, the human rights should incorporate the effects of colonisation and the attendant project of land alienation, and other policies of racial discrimination in the economic and political spheres that reverberated across to other facets of people's lives which also introduced and sustained inequalities between races (Epel and Raftopoulos, 2008: 5-6).

It is also pertinent to think through Marx's critique in On the Jewish Question of the human rights discourse (and liberalism in general), to understand the limits of this paradigm. He warns that this discourse has the potential of obscuring the emancipation of the real human by abstracting realities, which leads to the return to the "old society" of inequalities (Marx, 1844: 32). To him, rights in this situation remained at the transcendental level mediated by the hierarchical relationship between man and human rights, which always required an intercessor (Ibid).

In the Zimbabwean case and in relation to our discussion, among others, is the issue of farms as private property that was violated. The flip side is that offered in ZANU-PF discourse, which argues that the majority of the citizens of Zimbabwe needed access to the land. As such, this brings to issue two important views on rights that are difficult to balance. These are contestations ultimately on what constitutes emancipation. Is it the
protection of the “negative rights” or redistributive rights? In other words, and in a question that begs a nuanced analysis, is freedom for the majority to be found in the land redistribution, indigenisation and other affirmative actions, for which the violence is explained in ZANU-PF discourse or in the protection of rights in the liberal sense? While both discourses have purchase which cannot be ignored and which has to be put together to formulate a more holistic discourse for Zimbabwe, they, however, have been strategically deployed to solicit certain emotive and political reactions.

The above bifurcation of views on human rights has produced a profound divide between positive and negative freedoms (Berlin, 1958) along the ZANU-PF and MDC poles respectively. Under “negative” freedom, the first generation rights on the civil and political claims that guarantee individual liberty, such as property rights and freedoms of: movement, religion, speech, and association among others, should be jealously guarded from interference by the state (Ibid). On the other hand “positive” freedom, ballasted in second generation rights, that is freedom to, is mainly concerned with the primacy of group interests over individual rights leading to higher attainments for the society/group, in terms of self-mastery, self-determination and self-mastery. These are supposed to lead equality of treatment and economic freedom (Ibid).

ZANU-PF’s emphasis on redistribution, indigenisation and national sovereignty points to “positive” freedom where the farm invasions under the fast track land reform programme were supposedly intended to complete the independence of Zimbabwe through ensuring that the majority blacks participated in the economy of the country (ZANU-PF 2000-2008 Manifestos). As Berlin, however, contends the danger with “positive” freedom is its compatibility with authority, where the ideals of taking control, self-mastery, self-determination and self-realisation may end up being adulterated to promote the goals of the leaders while oppressing the desires, aspirations and individual liberties of the ruled (Berlin, 1958).

Notwithstanding the value of the arguments against the human rights paradigm in the Zimbabwean crisis, it should be stated that such issues should not also be relegated to a secondary role. The need for the observance of political and civil rights was certainly not at the bottom of the issues that coalesced into the nationalism that dethroned the settler regime by 1980. In this regard, human rights organisations such as the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace fought hard to highlight human rights abuses by the colonial state in the 1970s (Ranger, 2003: 9).

Criticising the human rights is not again to demean their essence in shaping Zimbabwe history. Rather as Neocosmos, in Raftopoulos (2011) says, “such interventions are meant to contextualise the current import of the human rights debate and to take note of its limitations and disabling elements in the interpelation of people as juridical rather than more broadly political subjects, and as part of the language of the new form of imperialism”. Also, notwithstanding the arguments against the human rights discourse, we need to state that in the current era of the domination of Western liberal thought, the idea of a citizen is determined by access to basic rights.

SHURUGWI LAND ISSUE IN PERSPECTIVE

Land problems based on racially-based, skewed land distribution patterns have remained a lingering issue in the district since the colonisation of the country feeding into the structural inequalities and structural violence against the localsthat demanded recourse in equitable redistribution of that important resource. As Zizek (2008: 1-2) says, structural violence is rooted in economic, political and social systems of selective inclusion and exclusion. Building on the concept of structural violence, Assefa, in Marongwe (2003: 160), sums up the impact of this violence as leading to the generation of “repression, abject poverty, malnutrition and starvation for some members of society while others enjoy[ed] opulence and unbridled power.” Mccandless also argues similarly and says:

[T]he land tenure context upon which the land occupations [2000s] were predicated was one of extreme structural violence. In the absence of serious movement on land redistribution through willing-seller, willing-buyer approaches and numerous efforts to negotiate a way forward with both national actors and the donor community, it was only a matter of time before the situation would erupt into crisis.

As a result of this, time and again, nationalist mobilisation was primarily around land shortages in Shurugwi district, as in other many other rural districts of Zimbabwe. In this regard, nationalists consistently and rightly so, hammered on the negative impact of white settler land expropriations most notably the creation of reserves, which have been described as having been unfit for human settlement (Moyana, 1984: 14). Besides their smallness, poor soils and low rainfall, the reserves were also located away from railways and markets, with the result that they became factories for the rural poverty and proletarianisation of Africans (Ibid: 16). They also formed the earliest pillars for the economic and social differentiation in colonial Zimbabwe (Ibid: 51).

As shall be discussed below, the explosive issue of land in Shurugwi was epitomised by the selection of the district to pilot the centralisation scheme (Kramer, 1998: 83). This policy was extended to the rest of the reserves as the Native Land Husbandry Act in 1951. Basing on the annual Native Commissioners’ reports on Shurugwi in the late 1920s (NAZ, S235/505-508: 1926, 1928, 1929), it can be reasonably argued that the acute land problems led
to the policy of centralisation. In turn, the introduction of centralisation provides an important genealogy for subsequent land-related problems for Shurugwi.

The settler policy of creating African “reserves” (reserves), dating back to the Gwaii and Shangani reserves following the defeat of the Ndebele in the Anglo-Ndebele war of 1893, engineered land problems for Shurugwi. This policy was extended to most parts of the whole of the country after the 1896-7 risings. For Shurugwi, it can be traced to the 1898 Orders in Council, which stated that “the Council shall assign to the natives land sufficient for their occupation, whether as tribes or portions of tribes, and suitable for agriculture and pastoral requirements” (Chitiyo, 2000). As Chitiyo rightly points out, this was an euphemism for resettling Africans in reserves (Ibid) and to drive them from “European” areas(Moyana, 1984: 41). And, true to this, 60 reserves including Shurugwi were created by 1905 (Chitiyo, 2000), with their persistent land shortages.

Shurugwi had asmall reserve of about76 000 morgen (about 152 000 acres) (NAZ, S235/505-508, 1929). Land problems in the reserve worsened between 1923 and 1928 in which the reserve saw a dramatic rise in population from 5 400 to 11 400 (Mcgregor, 1991: 83). By 1934, the population in the reserve had increased by a further 32.5 percent to 16 889 (NAZ, S235/513, 1934). This rapid growth of population followed the streaming of people into the reserve following the introduction of a land tax for Africans staying on European land from 1907 (Kramer, 1997: 162), and the recommendations of the 1914-1915 Native Lands Commission/Reserves Commission that reduced the size of African reserves dramatically. The rise in population also followed the settling of Chief Banga and his two thousand subjects in the south-west part of the district after their displacement from the Tokwe ranch in the Mashava area around 1924 (NAZ S2929/7/6). In addition to this, fifty-four (54) small scale farms were also established for the successful Africans to the East and South-East of the district, in the Jobolinko-Rockford area and in the Gamwa area respectively, following the Land Apportionment Act (Ibid) adding to the already worse population situation. Overall, this led to increased pressure on the reserve of Selukwe.

The creation of reserves has to be seen in the wider context of the failure by the British South Africa Company (BSAC) to find the second rand-belt. It was also a part of the settler policy of coercive expropriation of the means of production. As part of the attraction to join the invasion group (“Pioneer Column”) organised by the BSAC, the settlers had been promised both 3 175 acres of free land and mining rights. Because of the failure to find the “Second Rand” many began to settle the land (Moyana, 1984: 43) and by1914 some 4 737 white farmers had settled the land nationally (Palmer, 1968 : 7), which necessitated the setting up of the 1914 Native Reserves Commission which recommended an ordinance to push Africans out of the European-designated areas. From 1912, the BSAC also began to encourage white farmers to occupy their farms and began to seriously enforce the one pound per year fee introduced in 1907 on Africans who sought to remain on European land (Kramer, 1997: 162). The post-World War One depression also encouraged Africans settled on “unalienated” land to also move to the reserves because it was increasingly becoming expensive to pay the land tax against the backdrop of reducing maize prices (Ibid).

CENTRALISATION

Centralisation, which was piloted in Selukwe reserve, was defined by Alvord, its chief ideologue, as a system that consolidated and demarcated grazing areas from arable lands in the rural areas. These lands were to be separated by a line of homesteads. Under centralisation,

…people under headmen [had] to centralise their scattered crop lands together into large arable blocs and to set aside large stretches of other land to be used as communal grazing lands where cattle can graze freely during the growing season. Then after the crops are harvested, the cattle could graze freely in the arable areas to clean up crop residue for a month or two while the grazing land had a rest (Kremer, 1998: 91).

The basic stated and official aim of centralisation was to improve agricultural production, both cattle production and crop production. The African agricultural methods which at times were based on shifting cultivation, scattered fields, scattered grazing lands and dispersed settlement pattern were perceived as outdated, wasteful and harmful to the environment.

However, the hidden aim was to “… avoid, as far as possible, the necessity for acquisition of more land for native occupation” (Chief Native Commissioner in Drink-water, 1989: 293). This was to be through promoting intensive crop cultivation, which entailed the use of African agricultural demonstrators (NAZ, S138/72), manure, and four-course crop rotation based on the Norfolk traditions; the adoption and extensive use of the plough; as well as allocating adequate pastures for the cattle. And, it was to be on this basis that “the foundation of permanent agriculture for the African [was to be] based”, that is, “on cattle production and crop cultivation” (NAZ, S2386). Suffice to also say, at this point, that this policy of centralisation first tested in Shurugwi together with its central, rational and rather impractical ethos of improving techniques of farming by the Africans, instead of availing more land, was extended, modified and adapted to other districts under the Land Husbandry Act codified
in 1951. It was also to be the central motor for all “native” agricultural planning during the colonial period, and into the first two decades of post-independence (Marongwe, 2003: 156).

Hence, like other settler policies, centralisation remained in its rational mode, especially as the African population in the reserve continued to grow, through natural increase and inflows of those Africans ejected from European areas. Annual reports by the NC’s illuminate the predicament. For example, in 1926, an NC wrote: “[i]n this district the only reserve is, even today, very thickly populated and the present occupants complain of having insufficient ground for cultivation and grazing” (NAZ, S235/504, 1926; see also NAZ, S235/505-508, 1929). Alvord also alluded to this fact when he wrote in 1928 that: “Selukwe Reserve at present is an old worn out Native land, heavily populated and greatly overstocked with cattle” (NAZ, SRGI/INT4, 1928). It should also be said that it was on this basis that the NC also vociferously called for agricultural demonstrators to try to contain degradation in the face of overflowing population (NAZ, S235/504, 1926).

On the whole, centralisation ushered in radical, wholesale and arbitrary alterations to human labour, settlement patterns and access to land and land usage. First, it did away with dispersed settlement pattern which allowed grazing and crop cultivation in close proximity. In its place, fields and grazing were consolidated, while homesteads were put in single lines. When further extended together with its attendant pillars of the Land Apportionment Act and the Native Land Husbandry Act, it also resulted in small individualised landholding, (Woolmer and Scoones, 2000) and compulsory de-stocking (Pandya, 1988: 35). In addition, the emphasis on maintaining and intensive crop rotation exerted tremendous labour requirements from the residents.

This situation was made worse by the consummation of the Land Apportionment Act of 1930, which resulted in another major streaming of Africans into the reserves. The NC for Selukwe wrote: “considerable number of natives reside on the alienated farms and crown lands in this district, specified in schedule 5 of the act for whom provision will have to be made when the allotted time arrives for their removal from these areas” (NAZ, S235/508, 1929). This repeated an earlier similar observation by the NC for Selukwe in 1921, who wrote that “a considerable amount of crown land has recently been taken over by European farmers and it is estimated that about 50% of the Natives residing thereon moved to the reserves, the balance remaining on the farms” (NAZ, N/1/24, 1921). This is the balance that continued to trek especially to the reserve and at times back to the European farms for either work or to seek settlement. On balance, as already discussed, Selukwe reserve fared much worse compared to other reserves in terms of acres per person.

The predominance of poor sandy soils in the reserve which derived from the parent granite rock (Madebwe and Madebwe, 2005: 229) compounded the situation. The Native Commissioner reiterated this when he pointed to the Superintendent of Natives in 1931 that “Selukwe Reserve [was] pure sandveld throughout” (NAZ, S1007/7, 1931). Additionally, he also alluded the overcrowding in the reserve (Ibid). This was in line with the national outlook where about 70 percent of the 32,900 square miles in Rhodesia, that comprised the area suitable for intensive production, had been set aside for European Agriculture (Machingaidze, 1991: 559).

It is also crucial to point out that while the centralisation programme had a measure of temporary success in the district in terms of mitigating against land shortages, it was nonetheless inadequate as a long term strategy. As Kremer plausibly argues, once the Land Apportionment Act was effected, the ethos of centralisation, that of reducing land shortages, was defeated because “the carrying capacity of the reserves needed to be increased to accommodate all those entering them” (Kramer, 1998: 86). Related also, is the fact that as the population increased in the reserve, the balance was lost because of the further subdivisions of the plots among the male children (Ibid, 93-95). Still Alvord remained completely fixed in his rational ideas that improving native Agriculture would solve the attendant problems of overcrowding, land degradation and land shortage (Alvord, 1948: 18-19).

From the foregoing, it can be argued plausibly that the actual basis for the implementation of centralisation and its subsequent rolling out in other districts of the country shepherded by Alvord, was to deny Africans in the reserves more land based on the unachievable scientific-technical standards of mixed farming. This comes out clearly in the words of the Prime Minister Coughlan who posited that “this [Rhodesia] is essentially a country where the white man has come and desires to stay, and he can only be certain of doing so if he has certain portions of the country; are made his exclusively” (Machingaidze, 1991: 558-559).

It was on the basis of such thoughts that the settler government at times turned to compulsion to make Africans comply with the strict land use and conservation demands. This contrasted significantly with the policy regarding white farmers, who besides being allocated huge tracts of land, had the benefits of “experimental stations, free expert advice, credit facilities, provision of fertilisers, seeds and stock at subsidised cost, irrigation works” and better roads (Ranger, 1970: 112). Moreover, the white farmers benefited from better prices at the market (Ibid).

In interviews, the elderly people have vivid memories of the nhamoyemakandiwa (enforced contour ridging) as a result of the 1951 Land Husbandry Act. One interviewee stands out on this issue when he told me that the peasants had to lie across contour ridges as a way to denote the width that was required of the contour ridge (Interview, 28 May 2010). The fact that the contour ridges had to be wide and meticulously maintained all the time, which exerted a great demand for manual labour from the Africans is confirmed by Mccgregor, who established that one colonial Land Development Officer for Selukwe, Mr Fisher, required that the width of these contour ridges be wide enough for him to drive his Land rover (Mccgregor, 1991:114).
Crucially, the issue raised above feeds into a trans-Africa colonial land conservation regime that was based on false perceptions to arrest land wasting in African areas (Carswell, 2003). It also speaks to the humiliations that Africans suffered under some colonial authorities. These contour ridges and the deep ridging plough, which for Shurugwi were colonial “inventions”, represent at another level, the deeper penetration of the environment which symbolised the deeper penetration of colonialism and showed the excesses of state power (Mcgregor, 1991: 114).

By depriving Africans of adequate land, centralisation, in its various faces like LAA and Native Land Husbandry Act (NLHA), transformed the relationship that African males had with land. All men were “traditionally” supposed to acquire pieces of land upon marriage, and under conditions of limited access due to overpopulation, the young were “cut off from the possibility of ever owning land” (Machingaidze, 1991: 571). And, this fear of being cut off from the land drove many to come back from towns into the already heavily populated areas or to engage in nationalist politics to confront the Rhodesian state (Ibid). The policy measures also contributed indirectly to the extraction of African labour to the settler capital economic sectors, notably industry, mining, agriculture; as well as domestic labour needs (Palmer, 1977).

Because of land problems, that is; shortage, degradation and poor quality, it was thus little surprise that the rallying point of African nationalism in Shurugwi and the rest of the rural areas in colonial Zimbabwe, was the NLHA of 1951. In Shurugwi, the basis of this was the initial resistance to centralisation by Chiefs Nhemu and Banga (Mcgregor, 1991: 278). There were also reports of “freedom ploughing” where residents went against the law to allocate themselves, plots even in unsuitable or in crown areas (S235/505-508, 1927). Africans also grew to realise that efforts at centralisation and the well-packaged project of the NLHA were rooted in discrimination and coercion by the colonial state (Mcgregor, 1995: 257-279), including the forced construction of pasture furrows, road contour drains, gully control measures, tree planting and fencing of area deemed critical (Chitiyo, 2000). This differed to the carrot policies used with the whites based on rewards, training and loans, already discussed.

The further subdivisions of land over time amongst sons increasingly made the desire to modernise African Agriculture untenable, political and to some extent populist-rational talk. What instead happened was that the land in Shurugwi became so overworked and overextended that agricultural production became difficult. To circumvent the problem, the people of Shurugwi reserve chose to seek paid employment in the agricultural off season (NAZ, S235/505-508, 1928). Some even began to aggressively expand their areas which generated land conflicts in the districts.

In interviews and discussions (January-July 2010) with residents of rural Shurugwi, I was made aware of land conflicts over both grazing areas and arable lands, between villages and also between people from the same villages. Of note is the fact that where a village’s arable land stopped, the neighbouring villages’ arable or grazing land started. Without properly fixed boundaries in the form of fences, but only physical landmarks, such demarcations became difficult to maintain.

There were also constant problems between villagers and white farmers whose farms were on village edges. In this regard, for example, some peasants lost cattle that strayed into neighbouring farms. People from Marira village told how they lost cattle and or goats that strayed into Muponda farm. If they did not lose their Cattle or Goats they would be totally beaten by the farmer himself or his workers. At other times, they were made to pay hefty fines by a farmer whom they nicknamed “Muponda” (murderer) because of the harsh way he related with the neighbouring villagers.

Without rehearsing the impact of colonial land policies and legislations on African nationalism, I wish to summarise these here in order to connect the methods that the residents of Shurugwi district employed to confront the CF government. It is generally agreed that the British African Voice Association (BAVA), was the forerunner of nationalist movements that tried to connect African urban and rural grievance (Burombo, 1989: 100). After the BAVA, the other urban-based movements such as the (United) African National Congress (ANC), National Democratic Party NDP), Zimbabwe African People’s Union (ZAPU) and Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) also combined and/or connected urban with rural (especially land and the NLHA) grievances into a unified African nationalism (Bhebe, 1999: 10-11).

The effect of this evolution was that rural people began to engage in various forms of passive resistance against government officers. In this regard, it was reported that people would disrupt government officials meetings in rural areas, ridicule agricultural advisors, demonstrators and chiefs; engage in civil disobedience against government instructions; burn dip tanks and engage in “freedom ploughing”, which entailed cultivation in unauthorised places (NAZ, S235/505-508, 1927). The early successes of these movements against the NLHA were seen in their banning as movements or their proscription from rural areas where they were accused by the colonial Native officials of undermining governance.

Whilst these early nationalist movements of the early 1950s tried to link urban grievances with rural land grievances, their impact in Shurugwi is not well documented. While there is this paucity in written accounts especially linking land problems in the district to the rise of African nationalism, it would be plausible to estimate that the district, one of the worst affected by land shortages going by the adoption of centralisation and reports of colonial officials, could not have escaped the connections. The “brutalising” (Moyana, 1984) effects of centralisation which were worsened by the Land Apportionment Act and its sequel the NLHA should have
conspired to generate some link. In fact the resistance by the Chiefs Nhema and Banga to centralisation, that we discussed earlier, also strengthens such an assumption.

It would appear, however, that there were various forms of “negative rather than positive class position” (Gramsci, 1971: 272-273). That is, uncoordinated individualised resistance in the district, which nonetheless were centred on confronting land shortages. There was no widespread peasant consciousness in Shurugwi in the mode as explained by Terence Ranger (1985: 177). Instead, the locals confronted the colonial power through tax evasions, avoidance of labour (Mcgregor, 1991: 83), freedom ploughing which entailed “injudicious settlement and cultivation of lands”, (NAZ, S235/505-508, 1927) and voluntary emigration to the less populated but nonetheless inhospitable areas such as Gokwe, Silobela and Nembudziya. In yet other cases they loaned out their cattle under the system of kuronzera to avoid compulsory de-stocking (Interviews, January-July 2010).

Of note is that the NLHA became the watershed of the centralisation policy, whence from it was universalised to all the other rural areas of the country. We ought also to recall that the NLHA was invoked against the background of intensive post World War Two white settlement in the country which put further pressure on the land, and on the reserves. The policy of attracting European settlement, regarded as a “second colonisation” of Rhodesia, resulted in new annual settler figures of about 14 000 per year towards the end of the 1940s and early 1950s (Machingaidze, 1991: 574). As a consequence, the white population rose dramatically, almost tripling, from 80 500 in 1945 to 219 000 in 1960 (Utete Report, 2003: 11). Of more significance is that the population of white farmers in Zimbabwe nearly doubled in this period from 4673 to 8632 (Ibid). This resulted in about 85 000 black families nationally being pushed out of European areas between 1945 and 1955, which put enormous strain on the reserves (Machingaidze, 1991: 561). Regarding Shurugwi, the Native Commissioner for the district wrote to the Provincial Native Commissioner (Gwelo), that he had 289 African “persons” displaced from the European section of the district that he needed to settle but could not so because there was no space in the reserve (Letter from Native Commissioner, 1946 in Machingaidze, 1991: 562). This worsened the plight of the reserves and furthered the nationalisation process (Wolmer and Scoones, 2000) because by 1955, half of the reserves were overpopulated (Pendered and Mermet, 1955:99).

While the NLHA was dissolved in the mid-1960s and replaced by the Land Tenure Act, its ethos was not abandoned and it was continued right up to independence where the concept of demonstrators continued to be used in African rural areas where people continued to make out a living on the ever-shrinking arable lands. The opening up of demonstrator colleges like Makoholi and Henderson kept that spirit alive (Wolmer and Scoones, 2000: 584).

THE PLOUGH

Centralisation was not the only radical intervention that had a profound impact in worsening land problems in Shurugwi. The plough which was introduced in the district between 1910 and 1930 became widely used in the reserve (Mcgregor, 1991: 78), with devastating effects. Because it enabled people to cultivate large plots, it brought an agricultural mini-revolution to the district, as in other districts. Many in Shurugwi began to cultivate large fields. In Shurugwi, by 1927, there was a fair adoption of ploughs. To this end, there were about twenty ploughs (NAZ, S235/505-508, 1927). No doubt, the figures rose dramatically with the implementation of the policy of centralisation from 1929. Whilst there are no direct accounts with figures on acreage in Shurugwi, Mcgregor says peasants elsewhere began to cultivate fields that ran into hundreds of acres (Mcgregor, 1991: 78). By extension, it can be possible that some peasants in Shurugwi began to also want larger pieces of land. However, in Shurugwi, because of the acute land shortages discussed already and introduction of centralisation, it is plausible to argue that they would not have been able to satisfy this demand for larger pieces of land.

Secondly, the plough demanded that peasants abandon the cultivation of wetlands for the drier top lands. The importance of the wetlands in pre-plough Shurugwi cannot be overemphasised as Chief Nhema displaced the Boroma Chiefancy precisely to take over the wetlands (Mcgregor, 1991: 73 & 78). The wetlands had been more suitable for the simple hand held hoes, and had been more secure from the Ndebele raids of the 19th century (Ibid: 78). Crucially, the introduction and widespread use of the plough introduced shifting cultivation in the district (Ibid: 79) before centralisation, a method that requires a lot of land per person. The method was favoured by the locals for its higher returns on labour, that is, it demanded less labour; enabled the people to get fresh fertile soils; and it was also a way of evading the marauding strigaasiatica or witchweed, a weed which could only be effectively controlled by constant field changes (Ibid: 78-79).

The introduction of the deep ridging plough had a disastrous effect on land degradation as compared to the earlier more traditional hoe, which only loosened largely the top soil hence causing minimum damage to the soil (Chitilo, 2000). Furthermore, deep ploughing encourages leaching of nutrients, which made the soil less fertile and less productive and consequently more expensive to work. As such, this desire for shifting cultivation, which required more land, and which was economic in many ways to the peasants, put them in direct conflict with the state authorities who sought to limit African access to land as seen by the creation of reserves following the end of the First Chimurenga, the adoption of the policy of centralisation in 1929, and the passing of such legislation as the LAA, the NLHA and the Land Tenure Act. It ought again to be noted that it was on the basis of shifting cultivation, among others, that the colonial authorities hinged their policy of centralisation, the harbinger of
more discriminatory and coercive agricultural legislation and policies, discussed earlier. On the whole, the adoption of the plough in the district came with it increased demand for land by the Shurugwi rural residents.

The introduction of the plough too introduced techniques of “male-dominated farming” that were centred on the use of ox-drawn ploughs, oxen and cash crop production (Schmidt, 1992: 5). The overall social impact was to worsen the domestic plight of women from whom increased labour demands were exerted (Ibid). Women also suffered increased patriarchal exploitation as men began to migrate in search of larger plots, as well as paid labour to pay taxes (Stoneman and Cliffe, 1989: 72), which freed them from kins-based regulatory controls regarding their [ill-]treatment of women.

Land degradation due to poor conservation worsened the land shortage problems. Primarily, land degradation was a function of both residents of Shurugwi and colonial capitalist ventures, especially mining. For the locals the practice that contributed most to land wastage was vlei cultivation or wet land cultivation. Vleis were largely utilised for the growing of rice, where seasonally wet and permanently wet lands were utilised (Mcgregor, 1991: 71-72). The mining concerns that operated in the district in the early years of the 20th century also significantly led to environmental degradation through the chopping of trees for power in the chrome and gold mines.

POST-INDEPENDENCE RESETTLEMENT

At independence, the situation of inadequate land among African farmers had not improved much quantitatively and qualitatively. Despite the fact that the Land Tenure Act of 1969 had led to the division of the country into two equal halves of 44.9 million acres, there still was overcrowding in the rural communities (Utete, 2003: 12). This meant that there were 6 000 whites owning 15.5 million acres of the best land, 8 500 small-scale black farmers on 1 400 000 acres, (Ibid: 14) and 700 000 communal farmers’ families on 16.4 million acres in marginal areas (Southall, 2011: 84).While the allocation was inadequate in 1969, it got worse as the African population in the reserves continued to grow to 3.9million by 1982, and 5.1 million in 1987 (Chitiyo, 2000 & Pandya, 1988: 34).

In post-independent Zimbabwe, the theme of emphasising “technical development” or scientific development together with its nerve system of maximising productivity in fact, remained part of the selection criteria for resettlement even during the most populist nationalist-liberation rhetorical phase that espoused unmitigated transfer of land to all the landless blacks in the early 1980s (Alexander, 2003: 84-85). The state also continued the policy of re-organising land use in communal areas in line with the imperatives of the “modernising state” that was embarked upon, which was however, “top-down” in its approach (Ibid: 85). It is also imperative to point out the fact that due to cash shortages, inadequate technical expertise, and other social programmes that absorbed it, the government could not adequately assist the resettled farmers. Neither did it meet the targets of “modernising” the agricultural sector.

The two successive commissions: Riddell (1981) and the Chavhunduka (1982) Commissions pointed to the acute land shortages in the country. The Riddell Commission (1981:34) reported that: “[t]he greatest problem facing the peasantry, is land. In practically every peasant area which the Commissioners visited, the first issue raised by the people was land shortage”, which was causing “a very pronounced degree of discontentment, frustration and often anger” (Riddell Commission, 1981:34). Despite the findings of these two commissions, the resettlement programme remained behind the demand. As an example, the Riddell Commission (1981: 34) reported that in 1981 a total of 219 000 families required resettlement but the government only targeted to resettle only 162 000 by 1984.

The situation remained the same up to 1990 as the government had managed to resettle only 52 000 families on 3.5 million hectares as opposed to its target of settling 162 000 families on 9 million hectares (Muzondidya, 2009: 172). The key factors for this slow pace of resettlement was the emphasis for technical-scientific based resettlement model, especially between 1980 and 1986 (Rukuni and Jensen, 2003: 249-250), the constraints imposed by the Lancaster House Constitution, shortages of capital as well as the Government’s adoption of the policy of resettlement centred on growth with equity or internal reorganisation (Mupawose and Chengu, 1982), the poor quality land that was availed by the willing sellers (Muzondidya, 2009: 172), and the drought of 1982 to 1984.

There was not much resettlement between 1990 and 1997 as the resettlement programme stalled considerably despite the passing of the Land Acquisition Act in 1993. Outside the problems highlighted already which still affected the programme, the introduction of the ESAP in 1990 brought with it a shift in government focus “from a primary emphasis on addressing landlessness” to the identification of “capable” small farmers and supporting large scale indigenous farmers (Rukuni and Jensen, 2003: 250). As a result of the slowdown, there was a general rise in “spontaneous” farm occupations across the country by the peasants up to 1999 (Marongwe, 2003: 163-165). However, the government did not support these and it forcibly evicted the invaders (Rukuni and Jensen, 2003: 250).
TONGOGARA-SMITH LEGACIES

Over and above the structural violence and coercive policies was the persistence of the contrasting and polarising legacies of Josiah Tongogara and Ian Smith in Shurugwi district since the Second Chimurenga. Both men who during the Second Chimurenga fought on opposite sides as Commanders for their respective armies, the Zimbabwe National Liberation Army (ZANLA) and the Rhodesia Front Army, respectively, hailed from Shurugwi district. The political symbolism of these competing legacies remained strong up to 2000 (and beyond) and made possible constant emotive electioneering in the district. Regarding the legacy of Tongogara, the ZANLA Commander, he embodied the ZANLA struggle and triumph against the Rhodesia Settler State. Smith on the other hand, who was Rhodesia’s last Prime Minister, epitomised the hallmark of Rhodesian far right conservatism and settler colonialism that featured prominently in ZANU-PF’s anti-colonial narrative. Up to the time of his death in 2007, he still maintained his farm in the district and he also remained a critic of ZANU-PF. On the whole, the strong polar influences of the Tongogara and Smith legacies made Shurugwi “special” and prone to political struggles. Crucially for ZANU-PF, because Tongogara hailed from Shurugwi meant that it would be a humiliation to lose the seat to the opposition.

CONCLUSION

From the foregoing discussion it can therefore be argued that the violence of the Third Chimurenga that rocked Shurugwi was not in all ways senseless. It was rooted in historical-structural inequalities, which made it possible for ZANU-PF to ride on them for its own political gains. Thus, such policies as centralisation which was later developed into the NLHA, and the coercive nature through which these were enforced and through the way they disadvantaged Africans made for a strong case for redress. Unfortunately the strategy of redress in the land policies and redistribution in the first twenty years were hinged on the major tenets similar to those of centralisation that is technical-scientific conservation. The result was that up to 2000, the pace of land resettlement, the harbinger of the new millennium violence, remained slow.

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