

**ZIMBABWE IN 2001: THE LAND QUESTION, FARM WORKERS,
AND THE SEPTEMBER CONFERENCE SEASON**

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1. INTRODUCTION

2001 was an *annus horribilis* for Zimbabwe. As it drew to a close, the annual inflation figure had just topped 100%, a vicious pre-election campaign (described by Mugabe as a 'real war') was underway, attacks on all opposition and independent voices had intensified, and the Human Rights NGO Forum reported that in the first eleven months of the year 'more than 70,000 farm workers have been displaced and countless others have been beaten and tortured whilst others lost their homes in arson attacks' - while the police stood by and did nothing.¹

In September 2001 I visited Zimbabwe briefly, for the first time in two years. It was a sign of the times that, before doing so, my children were concerned for my safety, and that a number of Zimbabweans I had met at conferences in Denmark the same month said how ashamed they now felt when traveling abroad, in contrast to the pride they once had in their country and its achievements. The conference I attended in Harare was concerned with farm workers in Southern Africa. There it was noted, with some sense of historical irony, that tens of thousands of Zimbabweans have now been forced to flee their country as economic migrants. Many of them had been reduced to working as casual labour on farms just across the Limpopo in the Northern Province of South Africa, and there was an ongoing row between the two governments over South African attempts to deport them.²

Having attended conferences on and in Zimbabwe, it seemed worthwhile trying to reflect on them, not least because my own historical work, notably the book *Land and Racial Domination in Rhodesia*, continues to have some resonance.³ Indeed, versions of a history I had played some part in helping to create were selectively retold by speakers of different political persuasion at a public forum in Copenhagen. This was a slightly unnerving experience! Everyone agreed that history mattered profoundly in Zimbabwe, but what was included, what was excluded, and where you began your history were - and are - extremely significant.⁴ The use of language is similarly contested.⁵

¹ Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum, *Political Violence Report November 2001* (Harare, December 2001).

² A recent report noted that 10,000 Zimbabweans who had worked 'illegally' in the Northern Province had been sent back, while a further 5,000 were being retained on permits of between 3 and 12 months 'and then they will be phased out.' *The Namibian*, 19 December 2001.

³ Robin Palmer, *Land and Racial Domination in Rhodesia* (London: Heinemann, 1977). It was cited in over half the papers presented at the Copenhagen Centre for Development Research seminar on *Rethinking Land, State and Citizenship through the Zimbabwe Crisis*, 4-5 September, and was similarly profiled in a special issue of the *Journal of Agrarian Change*, 1, 4, October 2001, devoted to 'the new agrarian politics in Zimbabwe'.

⁴ My book, according to Eric Worby (Yale University) who edited the special issue cited above, had 'documented in a more or less definitive way the process of land alienation over the first half century of colonial rule.' Eric Worby, 'A Redivided Land? New Agrarian Conflicts and Questions in Zimbabwe', *Journal of Agrarian Change*, 1, 4, October 2001, 478 n.3. I documented a history of oppression the main details of which are not in doubt. The general trend of politicians' versions of this history in Copenhagen, however, was to compress, telescope and

I was invited to three events on Zimbabwe organised by the Centre for Development Research (CDR), Copenhagen, from September 3-5, on the themes of land, politics and aid; rethinking land, state, and citizenship; and the governance crisis and civil society participation.⁶ I was also invited to a *Southern Africa Regional Conference on Farm Workers' Human Rights and Security*, organised by the Farm Community Trust of Zimbabwe, in Harare, on September 10-14, at which I gave a regional overview paper on the invisibility and vulnerability of farm workers in Southern Africa.⁷

The Copenhagen events focussed on the current crisis on Zimbabwe. They brought together a number of leading politicians, academics and researchers. There was a public conference addressed by Zimbabwean politicians, followed by a research seminar for Zimbabwean and international researchers. Thirdly, in a context in which Denmark had recently cut all official aid (mainly in health) to Zimbabwe and re-channelled it through NGOs, there was a public workshop aimed at Scandinavian NGOs and solidarity movements. (Most Danes felt that the cutting of aid had more to do with right wing domestic politics than with Zimbabwean realities). All three events - though distinctly different in style, content and audience - were characterised by serious attempts to develop nuanced understandings of a complex, highly dynamic situation, involving a variety of issues around governance, human rights, exclusion (particularly of farm workers), citizenship, the role of civil society and, of course, land reform, which has become so highly politicised. Copenhagen offered neutral ground and space for some creative thinking, which was greatly appreciated by the vast majority of participants. I would like to add my personal thanks to the CDR for organising the whole three day event.

The Harare conference on farm workers, long planned by the Farm Community Trust of Zimbabwe (FCTZ), with support from the Catholic Institute for International Relations (CIIR) and Save the Children UK, could hardly have come at a more opportune time, given the thousands who have been driven into likely destitution by the farm invasions in Zimbabwe. It was attended by representatives of a wide variety of trade unions and NGOs from across the Southern African region. Again, people sought to address seriously key issues of marginality, exclusion, relative powerlessness and a failure or incapacity to implement what progressive legislation was in place. Delegates recognised the need to address farm worker issues regionally, given the fact that the majority of farm workers in all countries were once of foreign origin, and that various threats had been made to expel them back 'home'.

Below I discuss some of the issues which were raised at the conferences I attended, followed by comments on an important new book on farm workers in Zimbabwe.

2. SOME KEY ISSUES RAISED IN THE VARIOUS MEETINGS

simplify, and to assume that whites easily moved blacks off land as soon as they had acquired it – rather than it being (as it was in reality) a much longer and more contested struggle.

⁵ Eddison Zvobgo spoke of the colonial occupation of the 1890s as a form of 'fast track' land reform. In my paper for the farm worker conference I referred to the post-1945 settlement in colonial Zimbabwe of white war vets from the Second World War. The terms frequently used of late, such as 'land grab', 'farm invasions', 'farm occupations', and even the use of 'settlers' to describe those who have moved onto commercial farms, are all highly contested.

⁶ For details, see <http://www.cdr.dk/seminars/zimbabwe/>

⁷ Robin Palmer, 'Off the Map - Farmworkers in Southern Africa: some partly Historical Thoughts on their Invisibility and Vulnerability', <http://www.oxfam.org.uk/resources/learning/landrights/PRsaFW.rtf>

I. THE PUBLIC CONFERENCE – *The Zimbabwe Crisis: Land, Politics and Aid (3 September 2001)*

This took place in a large, packed, royal room and was dominated by presentations from Zimbabwean politicians. A group of ZANU-PF MPs, sent to Europe to win over hearts and minds, made its presence felt in what seemed a somewhat counter-productive manner.

Eddison Zvobgo (a founding father of ZANU but now a somewhat maverick member of ZANU-PF) suggested that the early colonial occupation in Zimbabwe had been a form of ‘fast track’ land reform, and rightly stressed that there had not been much justice or rule of law before 1980. He argued that the Government had never intended to abrogate the law. We all want peace and justice, but land has always generated violence, was the substance of his view. He confessed that, as the relevant Minister, he had made a huge mistake in drafting the 1992 Land Acquisition Act, making it far too esoteric and complex, and quite overlooking that Government lacked the capacity to acquire land in the ways it prescribed. It had then proved all too easy for the Commercial Farmers’ Union (CFU) to stultify the whole process in the law courts.

Mandivamba Rukuni asked rhetorically whether Zimbabwe was confronted by a land crisis or a political crisis. (Most people in Copenhagen felt it was the latter). He recalled that, when he was Chair of the Land Tenure Commission, not a single meeting had suggested that the land question was a racial issue requiring fast track solutions - rather that it needed rational thought. In his opinion, Zimbabwe needed a government of national unity and a new Constitution before the forthcoming elections (now scheduled for March 2002).

Paul Themba Nyathi (of the MDC and a former project partner of Oxfam GB when Director of the Zimbabwe Project) responded that politicians lacked the courage to form a government of national unity. In his view, state-sponsored violence was now seen to be legitimate in the search for power, with economic resources being spent on trying to crush the opposition. A once proud country was now humiliated by economic decline. He openly confessed that the MDC had little idea of what to do about farm workers.

In the general discussion, all the politicians (including *Margaret Dongo*, who said she became an independent MP because of her dissatisfaction at how the land issue was being handled) agreed that there was need for much greater thought on farm workers, who were the most vulnerable section of society. It was one of the most painful questions for Zimbabwean society as a whole to come to grips with, and it would not just go away. Some farm workers had been in the country for 30 to 40 years, but had originally come from neighbouring countries. Many became (and had been encouraged to become) voters, and politicians had benefited thereby. But yet they were still regarded as a separate entity and largely ignored by trade unions. It was wrong and immoral, *Eddison Zvobgo* agreed, to drive them off the farms because the Government was now allocating land. There had been an undertaking that they would be taken into account in this process, but unfortunately this had been broken.

In closing the conference, *Ben Cousins* (Programme for Land and Agrarian Studies, University of the Western Cape) stressed that Zimbabwe was of immense significance to the Southern African region, because it threw up questions right across the political spectrum. In his view, neo-liberal economic policies, addressing poverty and inequality, and liberal democratic politics just did not sit easily together. The challenge was to find a rapid and equitable form of development that produced results. There was a real need to deepen democracy, and he

believed that a great deal for the region as a whole hung on the forthcoming elections in Zimbabwe.

II. THE RESEARCH SEMINAR – *Rethinking Land, State and Citizenship through the Zimbabwe Crisis (4-5 September 2001)*

This was an impressive event, attended by an interesting range of researchers, and for which over 20 papers had been written in advance. The Centre is hoping to publish some as a book, presumably at the leisurely pace customary in academic publishing.⁸ Given the volume of papers produced, there had to be a mix of plenary sessions and eight parallel workshops. Discussions ranged widely and what follows is inevitably a personal selection of some highlights.

It was generally agreed that land was an important, but by no means the only part of the crisis. There was a need to look at rights and redistribution, at who was included, who excluded and also a need to disaggregate categories. There was an enormous diversity of struggles for land, with multiple and competing alliances, and overlapping forms of tenure and use. A return to the old blueprints was thought highly unlikely. The new rhetoric gave people the opportunity to press old claims for land, and there was a complex playing out of local histories. Too many people had become involved in the farm invasions for them to be written off simply. Research by *Nelson Marongwe* (ZERO) showed that less than a third of farm invasions had been carried out by war veterans. So a whole host of factors came into play. There was for example a generational struggle in Matabeleland North, where the MDC was the party of youth, while the war vets and ZANU-PF represented the old. There were some suggestions that the war vets represented a masculine assertion in the context of loss of jobs and roles as a result of economic decline. Certainly it was stressed that ESAP⁹ had led to diminishing options, the state coffers were now bare – and the only commodity left with which to purchase votes was land.

It was noted that all the politicians in the earlier public meeting had carefully referred to white farmers as Zimbabweans, but had described farm workers as foreigners! There was a long tradition of seeing them as ‘belonging’ to the farmers – and another long tradition of excluding people by burning their huts (as had happened to farm workers). Whereas in some areas farm workers had joined the war vets, elsewhere they defended the farmers. Those without any rural home off the farm were said to be the most vulnerable, and many had fled to peri-urban areas. There was an urgent need to rethink the citizenship and land rights of farm workers, especially in the light of potential threats in the new Citizenship Act. It was pointed out that ‘foreign’ urban workers had ceased to be ‘foreign’ during the 1950s. Eddison Zvobgo said that the majority of farm workers were offered Zimbabwean citizenship in the 1980s, but had refused it. There had not been a problem, as the white farmers were not then involved in politics and did not mind ZANU-PF coming onto the farms.

It was thought to be a strange situation of Government unravelling its own state structures, giving up on its modernisation project, inventing a new rule of law to justify itself and using the unemployed in its structures, in the process disabling some formal trade union structures. But

⁸ My own strong prejudice is for the immediate posting on a website of papers dealing with such controversial and fast-moving current issues. The Centre will however shortly publish a brief Issues Paper, *Zimbabwe in Crisis*, on its website.

⁹ The Economic Structural Adjustment Programme, formally introduced in 1991.

the ruling elite was thought to be very fragile in terms of sustaining itself, hence its recourse to violence and the abuse of state power.

In Matabeleland North, the capacity to control violence within communities was said to have lessened after the 2000 elections, as teachers had left and outsiders came in, and it was feared that the capacity to sustain space for containing difference might further decrease in the future. People could no longer go to the police, as they had done even in very bad times in the 1980s. So it was hard to be optimistic right now – this was a generally shared feeling. There could be long term loss of faith in constitutional ways of doing things, leading to violent opposition.

Commercial farming could look very different in the future; there was a need to avoid ‘freezing’ it conceptually. More broadly, it was also crucial that researchers keep re-thinking the key issues which were raised at the seminar.

III. THE CIVIL SOCIETY WORKSHOP – *The Governance Crisis and Civil Society Participation in Zimbabwe (5 September 2001)*

This workshop was dominated by a rather grim presentation from *Richard Saunders*, author of a book on the history of Zimbabwe’s civil society with the (currently sadly ironic) sub-title, *Zimbabwe’s Growth towards Democracy, 1980-2000*.¹⁰

Saunders detailed the attacks on all autonomous institutions and the violence against any organisation not seen as part of the ruling coalition. There had been a deepening and disturbing disruption of structures created in the 1980s and 1990s which had then supported engagement between government and civil society, and a physical invasion and sealing off of large parts of the country. There had been a deliberate withering of security institutions and local bureaucrats, and a refusal to call upon the law. Attacks on the Supreme Court and the High Court had undermined confidence in them. The past two years had seen clear setbacks to the progress made in earlier years. The resilience of civil society was very limited, and it needed new support. Many valuable organisations were being destroyed. The economic crisis had meant that the costs of running NGOs had skyrocketed. Membership-based organisations relying on voluntary workers were particularly vulnerable. Over half the country’s 1,500 NGOs were no longer operating because of funding problems. Most NGOs had been slow to respond strategically, so they had been easy to destabilise and were having to spend all their time trying to catch up. There were now no truly national civic organisations, covering both urban and rural areas except ZANU-PF, and perhaps the labour movement, but the latter was being eroded by economic decline. The donors had not helped; they showed little flexibility and had placed an emphasis on projects, rather than on the sustainability of organisations. They claimed to support human rights and democracy, but issues such as poor orphans and environmental degradation had fallen off their agenda, which threatened to undermine the gains that had been made. Once institutions withered, it was very difficult to rebuild them. There needed to be very clear, targeted support from outside for organisations and networks which were continuing to work creatively in Zimbabwe.¹¹

¹⁰ Richard Saunders, *Never the Same Again: Zimbabwe’s Growth Towards Democracy* (Harare: Edwina Spicer Publications, 2000).

¹¹ This is also very much the view of the Britain Zimbabwe Society. ‘BZS and its friendship with Zimbabwe’, *BZS News*, November 2001, 1-2.

Brian Raftopoulos (Institute of Development Studies, University of Zimbabwe)¹² stressed that it was essential for outsiders, including international NGOs, to monitor the forthcoming elections - before, during and after they took place. If they proved to be fraudulent, this could undermine democracy elsewhere in Southern Africa. People wanted to see an accountability over violence, as there had been far too much immunity; people *did* know who is responsible – and many academics had shown irresponsibility and moral cowardice in not standing out against the violence which now permeated the country.

IV. THE REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON FARM WORKERS – *Southern Africa Regional Conference on Farm Workers' Human Rights and Security (10-14 September 2001)*

This conference brought together for the first time from across Southern Africa (excepting Angola) a large, interesting and representative range of civil society and trade union activists with experience of working with farm workers, and also some farm workers themselves. It was extremely well organised by FCTZ, the Farm Community Trust of Zimbabwe. It was both ambitious and long in the planning, but extremely timely given that farm workers were being displaced in huge numbers by the so-called 'fast track' land reform programme in Zimbabwe, and it was proving extremely difficult for FCTZ, or anyone else, to gain access to them.

There was a succession of country presentations outlining the current position of farm workers in the region. Collectively, they painted a pretty bleak picture. Overall, there seemed little improvement in the position of farm workers since colonial times, and even where governments had sought to redress things through legislation, unaltered power relations on the land - epitomised by the slogan 'Namibia stops here' (at the farm fence) - coupled with workers' ignorance of their rights, prevented their enforcement. Attempts by trade unions and NGOs to redress matters had very largely proved unsuccessful. Unions seeking to represent farm worker interests historically have never been strong in Southern Africa, have always had to fight uphill battles, and - in sharp contrast to employers - have found it hard to gain access to top officials. As for governments, 'what do labour inspectors inspect?' was a frequent conference cry. On the whole, farm workers remained as marginalized as they had always been, lacking access to basic health or education facilities. So my challenge to participants was – given all these things, don't you need to think more radically about what new approaches might be more effective than the traditional lobbying of governments etc?

The issue of citizenship naturally loomed large, given Southern Africa's long history of cross-border labour migration. There were often conflicts, as in the Northern Province of South Africa, in which immigrant farm workers (in this case Zimbabweans) were accused of undercutting the livelihoods of local workers. Tenure issues were much discussed, as was the difficulty of gaining access to land off the farm, and the fact that farm workers were always ignored in current land reform programmes. Women workers were especially vulnerable on farms. They were normally employed only as casuals, despite the fact that some would prefer full-time work, while men were often employed on the assumption that their wives (and sometimes their children) would also come to work on the farms. Child sexual abuse and HIV/AIDS were both said to be highly prevalent. There was generally a rigid hierarchy on the

¹² Brian Raftopoulos has since written an excellent review of the year: 'Mugabe ends year a lost man', *The Financial Gazette*, 20 December 2001.

farms, with managers and supervisors at the top and single women at the bottom. ‘Farm work makes us grow old’ was the refrain of one worker.

Most conference delegates went on a visit to three farms in Goromonzi and Macheke, where FCTZ had worked in the past. One South African reaction was disbelief that conditions on any farm could be so good; he had seen nothing like that back home. In general, the experience of a week in Zimbabwe appeared to bring about a considerable cooling of some earlier South African enthusiasm for fast track solutions as being in the interest of farm workers. It was suggested that countries which did not yet have a comparable crisis should learn from Zimbabwe’s experience and act while there was still time.

It is still premature to judge the impact of the conference,¹³ but serious attempts are being made to ensure that it did not remain just another talking shop. It is to be hoped that NGOs and trade unions can find ways of working more collaboratively in this area than has been the case in the past, though there are obvious obstacles to this. Attempts were made to cross traditional boundaries, but in the end it was agreed to form separate regional networks of trade unions and NGOs. Participants recognised the need to engage in capacity building and networking, and in sharing research, communication and fundraising, with the aim of empowering farm workers. In a final communiqué, delegates noted the continued marginalization and exclusion of farm worker communities, and made a series of recommendations concerning working conditions, weak and discriminatory labour legislation, citizenship and basic human rights, women workers, HIV/AIDS, child labour and child abuse, globalisation, debt cancellation, xenophobia, land reform, and the need for a future regional summit.¹⁴

3. A NEW BOOK ON FARM WORKERS IN ZIMBABWE

While in Harare, I bought a fascinating new book about the history of farm workers in Zimbabwe, written by *Blair Rutherford* (Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada), entitled *Working on the Margins: Black Workers, White Farmers in Postcolonial Zimbabwe*.¹⁵ The author attended the Copenhagen conferences and gave a paper there.¹⁶ He acknowledges that, at such a highly politicised moment, anything he writes on this topic is in danger of being massively misconstrued. It was an indicator both of economic decline and the gap between official and unofficial exchange rates that in Harare the book cost me the equivalent of a mere US \$4.00.

Rutherford’s book is illuminating in a variety of ways and clearly makes a major contribution to what is a remarkably sparse literature on the subject,¹⁷ though a new collection, written by

¹³ See the conference report at

http://www.oxfam.org.uk/resources/learning/landrights/downloads/fctz_housing_and_tenure_security_fws

¹⁴ For the full communiqué, see

¹⁵ Blair Rutherford, *Working on the Margins: Black Workers, White Farmers in Postcolonial Zimbabwe* (Harare, London and New York: Weaver Press and Zed Books, 2001).

¹⁶ He has also addressed the issue of farm workers and the land occupations in his ‘Commercial Farm Workers and the Politics of (Dis)placement in Zimbabwe: Colonialism, Liberation and Democracy’, *Journal of Agrarian Change*, 1, 4, October 2001, 626-51.

¹⁷ Before Rutherford began publishing, the only major works of substance in this field were D.G. Clarke, *Agricultural and Plantation Workers in Rhodesia: A Report on Conditions of Labour and Subsistence* (Gwelo: Mambo Press, 1977) and Rene Loewenson, *Modern Plantation Agriculture: Corporate Wealth and Labour Squalour* (London: Zed Books, 1991).

Zimbabweans, has just appeared.¹⁸ Rutherford writes about the dynamics of the farm on which he lived and researched in Hurungwe District in northern Zimbabwe. He employs the term ‘domestic government’ to describe the various and complex ways in which workers are governed on the farm and the different hierarchies that exist on it (and other farms he studied), which historically have proved so effective in resisting such ‘outside’ influences as nationalism and trade unionism – not to mention government officials. In so doing, the book illustrates very tellingly many of the issues discussed at the Harare conference and the serious obstacles confronting those who seek to champion and support the interests of farm workers at even the best of times. These are clearly not the best of times.

Rutherford sensitively documents changes over time. Domestic government, which depended essentially on force in colonial times, after Independence came increasingly to rely on the strategic (or paternalistic) use of credit to reward or penalise workers. Under the ‘rule of law’ that existed in colonial times (in fact the draconian Masters and Servants Act), it was virtually impossible for farm workers to get authorities to intervene against white farmers, however oppressive their actions. In 1993, when a worker had his wages withheld and the author responded that this was against the laws of the country, he was told that it was part of *mitemo yepurazi*, the laws of the farm, which workers were still powerless to change. These laws have now, of course, been directly challenged in the farm occupations, which have also challenged the farmers’ mantra ‘keep politics off the farm’ - and the CFU’s traditional line ‘keep politics out of the land question’.¹⁹

Rutherford seeks to disaggregate farm workers in order better to understand the power dynamics on the farm – such as the use of foremen (‘boss-boys’ in colonial times) and how they enforce the laws of the farm, rewarding some and penalising others; conflicts between permanent, seasonal and contract workers and among senior workers; strong conflicts between married and single women over access to resources, including men; and how struggles which are ‘domestic’ are yet governed by the rules of the farm. He reveals, interestingly, that many farm workers in his area of study were able through various unofficial means to acquire land in neighbouring Communal Areas; it would be interesting to know how atypical of Zimbabwe this was.

He challenges the belief that women do not want to be permanent workers but on the 14 Hurungwe farms he surveyed, the average ratio of male to female permanent worker was 71:1 while permanent workers comprised only 59% of the total work force. Single women were more able to flout the laws of the farm and appeal to outside authorities than were married women, but in other respects they were far more vulnerable, and could not even easily use public space on the farms, such as the night school which Rutherford and his research assistant set up.

He is strong on the various narratives which have been constructed since the 1940s, which have seen farm workers as being not part of the modern, development project, but as backward, as

¹⁸ Dede Amanor-Wilks (Ed), *Zimbabwe’s Farm Workers: Policy Dimension* (Lusaka: Panos Southern Africa, 2001).

¹⁹ This was strongly promoted through the 1980s. See Robin Palmer, ‘Land Reform in Zimbabwe, 1980-1990’, *African Affairs*, **89**, 1990, 163-81, at <http://www.oxfam.org.uk/resources/learning/landrights/downloads/zim1980s.rtf>

‘belonging’ to the farmer, and of course as ‘foreign’ – while those who were clearly not ‘foreign’ were depicted as lazy and unable to work for themselves, as a true peasant should.

Finally, on the NGOs seeking to help farm workers, such as FCTZ, he notes that if they are to forge alternatives to existing power arrangements, they will meet stiff resistance from farmers (perhaps less now than when he wrote), and will need to take account of differences between farm workers. ‘To achieve such change, needless to say, requires strong and persistent struggles with and against workers, farmers, their organizations, government officials, and NGOs themselves.’²⁰ Even the ‘model’ farmers who (in working with FCTZ) publicly promote the good deeds they do for their workers, can, he feels, unwittingly reiterate colonial stereotypes. Rutherford argues the need for domestic government to be radically rethought by all. It is a daunting challenge.

4. CONCLUSION

Domestic government on the farms is of course being challenged now in Zimbabwe, along with much else, in the course of a highly contested political struggle, in which there remains almost no ground for neutrality. The year 2001 saw the publication of a fascinating book by *Catherine Buckle*, sub-titled *The Zimbabwe Land Invasions*.²¹ It is a personal history of the invasion during 2000 of her ungazetted, undesignated farm in Marondera by people claiming to be war vets. It can, and doubtless will, be read in many ways. It can be read as a dramatic historical narrative of one farm invasion; as a case study of the violation of human rights; as a representation of an unreconstructed, paternalist mindset; or as liberation struggle. I think in this context it is particularly interesting in revealing a direct and unequivocal challenge to *mitemo yepurazi*, the laws of the farm. As the story unfolds, Catherine Buckle, accustomed to being firmly in control of her farm, finds that control increasingly challenged and, worse still at a psychological level, is quite unable to anticipate what the war vets might do next. Eventually she is forced off her farm.

Recent reports from many parts of Zimbabwe speak of farmers being prevented from planting by occupiers who lack either the resources or the inclination to produce, and of a belated Government appeal for emergency aid for over half a million people at risk of starvation receiving, unsurprisingly, a poor international response. On the last day of 2001, *The Herald* published a list of 1,000 names of people who are to be allocated land, a list to be expanded to 100,000. This is very clearly part of an election strategy. Whether or not it succeeds will be known soon enough.

What we know from experience elsewhere is that for such a ‘fast track’ land reform programme to have any chance of success, it will require sustained and coordinated support to those newly acquiring land. Recognising this, *The Zimbabwe Mirror* calls on the Ministry of Finance to revisit its budget and to set up an Agrarian Reform Fund, and for the financial sector to be mobilised into ‘an orchestrated support system for both agrarian reform and the related activities that will no doubt make a substantial dent on unemployment, poverty and the spiralling cost of living.’ This may prove a little difficult because it admits that ‘the current

²⁰ Rutherford, *Working on the Margins*, 238..

²¹ Catherine Buckle, *African Tears: The Zimbabwe Land Invasions* (Johannesburg and London: Covos Day, 2001), 137.

land reform and resettlement programme is attuned less to the need to address the economic fundamentals than to the immediate political agenda.²²

To conclude with some of the themes that have recurred throughout this short review. The forthcoming elections in Zimbabwe will certainly prove crucial both for the country and for the region, as Brian Raftopoulos and Ben Cousins have stressed, and this is even more the case following the disputed December 27 elections in Zambia. All the issues around farm workers clearly need to be seriously rethought and debated across the political spectrum. There also needs to be an immediate humanitarian response to the plight of the 70,000+ displaced farm workers. Other countries in the region would be wise to learn from some of the mistakes Zimbabwe has made. Land is clearly a major part, but still only a part, of a much wider crisis of governance – and in this regard ZANU-PF is following a long Rhodesian tradition of using land as a political weapon. Finally, I would echo the call by Richard Saunders (and the Britain Zimbabwe Society) for the need for concerned organisations and individuals outside to continue to offer clear and targeted support to those in Zimbabwe who are struggling, against enormous pressures and often extreme violence and intimidation, to retain the values which once made Zimbabweans so proud of their country.

²² 'The year ahead', *The Zimbabwe Mirror*, 3 January 2002.