

# Class Struggle, Resistance and the Revolutionary Pressures of Crisis in Post-Colonial Zimbabwe

by

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## Abstract

The current socioeconomic and political impasse, and the accompanying deep-seated social mobilization, movement and crisis it generated in post-colonial Zimbabwe, speaks very eloquently of the very sharp contradictions inherent in the socio-economic formation of the independent states of Africa, and the tortuous, complex and long processes involved in resolving these challenges, or holding them in abeyance. The increasing economic misery in Zimbabwe, the struggle by Zimbabwe's ruling class to keep afloat in the midst of a drowning global economic downturn, the struggle to hold on to state power, the depoliticization of faction a of the ruling class and the masses generally, and the clever but clandestine manoeuvre of the Western powers to perpetuate her economic, social and political agenda, are some of the dynamic social forces which are fomenting the revolutionary consciousness and the revolutionary pressures that has put Zimbabwe on the path to its second phase of *chimurenga* (social revolution) . Using the class analysis model, this paper argues that this social movement presents a classical case of both intra and inter class struggle which are more or no less than a revolution. The character of the struggles, the paper posits, runs counter to the classical notion that social revolution was only possible on well-developed productive forces. In instead, Zimbabwe's second phase of revolution arose out of the serious contradiction in the country's post colonial liberal and neoliberal economic policies, the subsequent growing socio-political and economic alienation of the mass of Zimbabwe's working class and peasantry, and the development of consciousness among this marginalized faction of the populace and the factionalized unit of the hegemonic ruling class in Zimbabwe. The paper concludes by noting that what emerged from the crucibles of the crisis is but a specific kind of reactionary, de-radicalized revolution, which has only eventuated into recreating and reproducing the old social order and class system.

## Introduction

Class struggle and social transformation of a social system is both a continuum and a dialectic social process. Thus, the current crisis which engulfed the landscape of Zimbabwe over the past few years or so was an inevitable one; thus a continuum of an age-long socio-political and economic revolution and counter-revolution (*chimurenga*) of a transitional society. Drawing from Amilcar Cabral (1979) analysis, the crisis is but the consequence of an “unfinished business”, the business of a total and genuine national liberation of the Zimbabwe’s people.

Amilcar Cabral (1979 and 1984) in his outstanding contributions to the theory of national liberation struggle explained that the struggle for national liberation consists of a national and a social phase, with the latter being more crucial, and a final harmer to its ultimate denouncement. Furthering his analysis, Cabral (1984) expatiated that the national phase is primarily concerned with the quest for national sovereignty or independence, and the social phase is one in which the very question of genuine liberation is honestly posed. That is, the social phase honestly poses the question: has the sovereignty really benefited the gross of the mass populace economically and socially? And is the new nation truly free to take its destiny into its own hand? According to Ntalaja (1986) referring to Cabral, the second phase of the national liberation (called social liberation) is, more decisive and complex because it usually involve the ultimate question of a radical transformation of the structure of the economy and the state.

Amilcar Cabral’s (1979) argument is that during the national liberation phase, the most urgent concern is usually on how to torpedo the prevailing foreign rule. Once this is done, the moral unity of anti-colonial alliance or national front burst asunder, and gives way to apparent and intense class struggles. This development is, according to Amilcar Cabral (1979), when the popular masses begin to demand their fair shares of the gains of independence. And the petty bourgeoisie leaders at this point are confronted with a daunting choice: either betray the revolution by switching alliance with imperialist capital, or remain faithful to the anti-imperialist goals of the struggle (a kind of suicide mission) as a class in order to be reborn as revolutionary workers, completely identified with the deepest aspirations of the people to which they belong.

Within the context of Amilcar Cabral's seminal analysis, the open and bitter inter and intra-class struggles in post-independent Zimbabwe, and the surreptitious fuelling of the crisis by Western powers, offer the tools for underscoring and addressing the contradictions inherent in the march towards accomplishing the social phase of the national liberation in Zimbabwe. This social phase of revolution is a classical case of a class-based struggle against neocolonialism which grips post-colonial Zimbabwe. Makamure (1980: 75) rightly noted that it was only after independence in 1980 that revolutionary elements started coming into the fore in terms of the nature of society. This was the period when, for the first time, important questions for social transformation of the skewed economic structure in Zimbabwe were genuinely confronted.

Using Ake's (1978:9) analyses, however, it can be argued that the struggles which occasioned the crisis in Zimbabwe is all about the global class struggles between what he referred to as "proletarian" and "bourgeoisie" countries. The argument of Ake recast runs thus: by integrating Zimbabwe's economy into the global economy, the country became entrapped in an unhealthy competition with the established Western bourgeoisie countries. And Zimbabwe has also been at the receiving end of this competition, even as it remains an independent country. Ake's remark does not, however, undermine the fundamental nature of the current struggle in Zimbabwe: the fact that it is a struggle within the bourgeoisie class on the one hand, and between the Zimbabwe's bourgeoisie class and their mass of proletariats (working class and peasants) on the other hand. In either of these struggles, each group and class appears to dexterously employ an ideology which reflects its interest and the means which has a wide appeal and sympathy.

This paper attempts to posit that it is the synergy of these global and internal class struggles which is generating the revolutionary pressures that underlie the current mass social mobilization and movement in Zimbabwe. The strategic approach of the paper is a critical analysis of the crisis in post-colonial Zimbabwe state as part of the dialectic of class struggles. By this approach, the crisis is presented as related to the nature of the neocolonial state of Zimbabwe, which is both an externally-and-internally-pressured state, on an inevitable course towards achieving a true and complete national liberation.

The built-up argument of the current paper is that: first, there is the hidden agenda of the West and U.S to perpetuate their selfish capitalist interests in the political economy of Zimbabwe. Second, there is the inevitable clash of interests within the Zimbabwean ruling class. Third, there is the failure to meet the people's aspirations of independence, or quench their revolutionary aspirations for a better life (see also Melber, 2008). Consequently, a schism ensued and has caused mistrust and instigated a pressure for change.

The class struggles approach debunks the consensus ideology of the Western social sciences which favours a parochial, simplistic and unilineal approach to the complex nature of the current social mobilization and crisis in Zimbabwe. One clear quintessential of this Western-backed approach to the crisis in Zimbabwe is the remark of the International Crisis Group ([www.crisisgroup.org](http://www.crisisgroup.org), 2002) that the Zimbabwe crisis of leadership is the sole and primary cause of its socio-economic downturn, food emergency and impliedly, all other problems in the country. The class struggles-based approach instead prefers conflicts and contradictions as endemic, inevitable and thus the vehicle of change and progress in transitional societies such as Zimbabwe (see also Ake, 1981:5-6, Ekekwe, 1986).

Therefore, the dialectic of class struggles, arising from the contradictions in the Western industrial capitalist system, led to the colonization of Zimbabwe alongside and other African countries. The same dialectic of class struggles and contradictions of the colonial economy led to the struggle for political independence, and have continued to shape the general course of social transformations. These include the rate and nature of development, political instability, further class struggles, religious bickering, ethnic cleavages and the general crisis, conflict, violence, youth restiveness, etc across much of Zimbabwe's landscape. With the aid of this Marxian class analysis approach, this paper prognosized and illuminates the nature of the crisis, and document the state of post-crisis Zimbabwe.

### **The Political Economy of Postcolonial Zimbabwe State**

The current conflict and crisis which eventuates into social mobilization and movement in Zimbabwe cannot be fully grasped without an adequate understanding of the economic foundation of Zimbabwe's society. Marx and Engel wrote centuries ago, "It is not consciousness that determines life, but life determines consciousness" (cf. Ekekwe, 1986:3). No other aspects of Zimbabwe's life could be better understood without understanding the nature of the material conditions which confront her.

By 1890 what started as a mere expedition by the British conquerors has turned into a total occupation, and the subsequent incorporation and co-optation of Zimbabwean society into the emerging world capitalist system. Makamure (1978: 71), reported that by 1923, the landscape of Zimbabwe was caught up into the wave of capitalist revolution, and that by the 1960s, a strong colonial capitalist system, with all its inherent contradictions, were already established in the country. However, Zimbabwe's society also acquired an additional reputation: alongside neighbouring societies in the region (Namibia, South Africa, and to an extent, Zambia and Botswana) as the country most deviously proclaimed as a settler colony.

Thus, capricious transformation of native Zimbabwe a new capitalist system of production was done by brute and speed, even as the transformation was nothing more than pseudo, built on the cheap labour of the Africans, and primarily on harnessing the raw materials for use by the metropolitan capitalists (see also Makamure, 1987; Gwisai, 2002).

This new Western industrial capitalist system distorted native Zimbabwe's social structure of production which was predicated mainly on land; it also entrenched a definite "class system" with accompanying class differences, contradictions and struggles. This is in addition to significantly altering its indigenous political system, social values and cosmology. So, at the heart of the current crisis and the subsequent social mobilization in Zimbabwe, lies the plausible contradiction inherent in capitalism. Parenti (1999) in his explosive book: *LockDown America. Police and Prisons in Age of Crisis* vividly captured these contradictions when he intoned that capitalism needs the poor and creates poverty, intentionally through policy, and organically through crisis. The same capitalism is also directly and indirectly threatened by the poor.

Notwithstanding these distortions, it is important to note that in the immediate years following Zimbabwe's independence, her socio-economic structure wore an encouraging outlook (see Makamure, 1987:71). Zimbabwe had a well-developed and elaborate Western structures and institutions. Economically, the country was no less regarded as the food basket of Africa. Zimbabwe was exporting food to all other countries around the globe, and was certainly seen as a reference point for economic growth and development and general prosperity for Africa so much so that it was also being regarded as the "jewel in the crown of Africa" by former Tanzania president, Julius Nyerere (see Melber, 2008).

Analytically therefore, it is unambiguous to describe Zimbabwe's colonial and postcolonial economy as basically a regular source of raw materials which are needed to service the metropolitan industries (see also Ake, 1981). It is, also however, a recipient market for the ever-growing surplus manufactured products of these metropolitan cities who were desirous to accommodate their surpluses within an expanding cut-throat competitive Western capitalism. Today, Zimbabwe's economy, like all other post-colonial economies, is poorly, dependently, lopsidedly and distortedly developed to the disadvantage of the indigenous people of Zimbabwe (see also Ake, 1981; Ekekwe, 1986). The condition and nature of this substructure of Zimbabwe has seriously impacted on other aspects of the Zimbabwe's life hence, the truncation of the political system and social values of the Zimbabwe people, and the subsequent mass mobilization and revolts across the landscape.

## **Land Revolution and Mugabe's Antics, the Role of Britain and International Bodies and the Crisis in Zimbabwe**

Land remains a crucial issue in the political economy of Zimbabwe and the subsequent on-going mass revolutionary pressures in Zimbabwe's socio-economic and political order. The uniqueness of land rests on the fact that it is not only a factor of production to an average Zimbabweans; it is also as a unique social amenity: a secure form of holding wealth and gaining social and political advantages and food security (see Riad El-Ghonemy, 1999). Given the nature of colonial settlement and the uniqueness in access to land in Zimbabwe and other Southern African counties, land is thus, a very sensitive issue in Zimbabwe because it deals with the fundamental question of justice and fairness about how best to broaden and democratized land use and ownership to a majority of Black Zimbabweans, who for centuries, were pushed to the brink of land disadvantage (see International Crisis Group, 2002).

In Zimbabwe, a sizeable portion of the land is in the hands of a few White commercial farmers, leaving the bulk of the Blacks at the margin (see also Gwisai, 2002). The author explains that access to land was overwhelmingly skewed and uneven to the advantage of the minority Whites. According to Makamure (1987:71), in Zimbabwe, national independence did not in any way challenge the already established skewed social structure built on land and the platform of a racist capitalist mode of production. This apparently remained one of the greatest undoing of Robert Mugabe who acted very slowly in fulfilling one of the cardinal promises of the anti-colonial struggle, which was greater access to land to the bulk of rural Black Zimbabweans (see Otu, 2010 in press).

Even after independence, it did not dawn on the White commercial farmers and their clique of emerging Black petit bourgeoisies that maintaining the status quo, with a small minority of farmers holding large chunk percentage of the country's land and controlling the economy was, fundamentally, unsustainable and untenable (see ICG, 2004; Otu 2010, in press). There was a complete failure on the part of both the White bourgeoisie class and their Black *petit* counterparts to appreciate the reality on the ground. However, it is crucial to state that the enabling ground for this lack of appreciation had been laid by Britain—the lord colonial masters of all time—during the drafting of the constitution for independence of Zimbabwe. Makamure (1987) thus noted that the explicit participation of the imperialists, especially Britain, in the making of the constitution for Zimbabwe, was a clear indication that capitalism in this society, consciously tied to land ownership, was being preserved and not challenged.

How then did Britain succeed in creating this dilemma? In making the constitution for the “new” Zimbabwe under the famous Lancaster House Agreement, the imperialists had hand-twisted the ZANU-PF leaders into agreeing that the constitution and aggressive land reform would not take place for the next ten years (Makamure, 1987:73). The overt argument of Britain was that Zimbabwe was on the right course, and that any fundamental interference in the social organization of the country would disorganize the natural order of things (Otu, 2010 in press). According to Makamure (1987), however, the real motive and reasoning of Britain and her allies was that such a period was sufficient enough to embourgeoisie more Africans, who expectedly on account of the good life and privileges to enjoy, would become disinterested in any kind of social transformation. In this manner, Britain and the imperialists ensured that their interests, and those of their local representatives, were dutifully protected. This motive of Britain apparently materialized as Mugabe, the emerging elites, including those in the labour circle, and a handful of intelligentsias began to favour the neo-liberal policies of the Western countries within the decade of independence (see also Gwisai, 2002).

In addition, the so-called “Lancaster Agreement” included the creation of a counterpart fund for the new state of Zimbabwe that would draw a gradual but sustainable land reform programme. This counterpart fund was to be greatly financed by Britain with assistance from other international bodies and donor agencies. It may have been partly due to world economic recession which began in early 1980s, the mounting huge debts owed to Western creditors, and Britain’s hidden agenda, that there was a renege on this great agreement. At the same time, Mugabe’s regime, new as it was, remained less threatened by both internal and external social forces so that embarking on serious land redistribution and restitution was relegated to the background in Zimbabwe’s policy issues. Meanwhile, as years roll back, Britain and its allies succeeded in shifting Zimbabwe’s land redistribution policy to IMF and World Bank—two institutions that are tenaciously and linked to market liberalization and free market determinism. Indeed, as Gwisai (2002) noted, after 1990, as the economy stagnated, Zimbabwe ruling elites adopted the World Bank-IMF neo-liberal economic policy when it christened the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme. Riad El-Ghonemy (1999:1) explained that this market liberalization, also known as structural adjustment programme, requires as part of their conditionalities, that adjusting governments do not regulate the working of the market, including the land market.

The spiral effects of the tactic shift in land tenure policy in Zimbabwe from that of Redistributive Land Reform (RLR) meant that poor *kulaks* and landless Zimbabweans—who account for a large proportion of the rural and urban people—could not afford the market-driven prices of land. This *laissez-faire* land policy, inspired by the World-Bank and IMF, also led to cuts in government spending in health, education, security, or public investment in rural road construction and irrigation expansion. This further made it difficult for these classes of Zimbabweans to afford basic human necessities which resulted from the conversion of essential public services to marketable commodities.

The second fault lines arising from the contradiction of the neo-capitalist Zimbabwe economy was that Zimbabwe capitalism hit a dual economic and social crisis in the second quarters of 1990 (see International Crisis Group, 2001). Again, this crisis was a spillover from the world capitalist system to which Zimbabwe's economy is savagely attached to economic decline and social chaos means a fast eroding of the veneer of legitimacy, integrity and loyalty and the hastening of the revolutionary liquidation of the leaders. Unfortunately Mugabe who symbolizes the political leadership, was not ready to read his political obsequies or was he just abstrusely stubborn to make a paradigm shift.

To cope with this threat to his hegemonic leadership, Mugabe had to choose a more accessible option which is all about championing the cause of the Zimbabwean poor masses (International Crisis Group, 2002). According to Ake (1981; 1976), this is a “rhetorical progressive” or “radical ideology” position which is often phrased in terms of inequality, exploitation, and a struggle between the haves and the have-nots. To play out this ideological game and political rhetoric, Mugabe had to pounce on the sensitive issue of land. Accordingly therefore, the International Crisis Group (2005) noted that the ZANU-PF 2002 election slogan was “The Land is the Economy; Economy is the Land”.

However, as Marxian analysts had observed (see for instance, Ake, 1978; Ekekwe, 1986) the values of such an ideology are always antithetical to the maintenance of existing production relations in Africa. So when Mugabe seized the option of a radical ideological propagation, little did he know he was creating an unpleasant situation for himself?



How did Mugabe find himself in this awful situation? Beside the land seizure by the veterans, the majority who are ZANU-PF and Mugabe supporters, the Mugabe government in December 2003 introduced the Amendment in Land Acquisition Act which allowed it to acquire, in a nationalized form, large commercial agro businesses. In April 2004, the government evicted about 1500 farm workers and hundreds of their families when it compulsorily acquired the multi-million Kondozi farmland in eastern Zimbabwe (see IGS, 2004). Consequently, Zimbabwe was not only facing rising unemployment but also increasing food shortages and other essential supplies. As is a common knowledge, poverty—measured in concrete falling standard of living—remains a foremost and immediate catalyst for revolutionary consciousness.

There was another troubling development—the rising crime waves which Colonel Nicholas Rudziak (1966 cf. Parenti, 1999:18) described as precursor to revolution. So Mugabe's maladministration was perhaps a Freudian slip which revealed a deeper truth: land seizure and grab was not working; it was failing to put the genie of social change, economic crisis and political instability back in the bottle. In fact, to say the least, it was making matter worse. Land seizure and grab, and the repression of oppositions to the regime of Mugabe that accompanied it and the unsoothing of Mugabe's political rhetoric—like the tear gas so liberally dispensed at demonstration—was blowing back into the man's own face.

### **Class Character and Class Structure in Zimbabwe**

For analytical purpose, in this paper, the definition of class by Lenin remains most appropriate. Lenin (1965: 421) defined classes as large groups of people differing from each other by the place they occupy in a historically determined system of social production, by their relation (in most cases fixed and formulated in law) to the means of production, by their role in the social organization of labour, and, consequently, by the dimensions of the share of social wealth of which they dispose and the mode of acquiring it.

From this seminal definition, it becomes convenient to propose that two distinct classes can easily be identified in Zimbabwe's socio-economic formation. These classes are the one that produces surplus, and the class that effectively appropriates the surplus. That is, the class of bourgeoisie and the class of proletariat. However, since Zimbabwe is a pseudo-capitalist, where the pre-capitalist mode of production combines with the capitalist mode of production, the resort to reducing classes in Zimbabwe to these two classical classes becomes problematic. Ekekwe (1986:7) rightly opined that in concrete analysis, the class structure of anyone society does not always take the polar form described above. Even Shivji (1976:18) acknowledged that there are no classical class divisions between the bourgeoisie and proletariat with the "middle classes" on the fringes in Africa, as in Europe.

So, in Zimbabwe, the various classes that could be identified include the local bourgeoisie which comprises two categories: the local White bourgeoisie and the local African bourgeoisie. They are mainly the big commercial farmers (their African counterparts emerged after national independence in 1980) and the small industrialists. Both are comprador in nature because they merely play an auxiliary role to the metropolitan bourgeoisies. These two classes, therefore, constitute the so called petty or *petit* bourgeoisie, and they form the bulk of the ruling class in Zimbabwe. And also, they join forces with some of the small business owners, mainly in the distributive sector of the economy (see Makamure, 1987:72).

Another kind of social class that apparently exists in Zimbabwe is the working class. This is unarguably, the second largest social group in the country because Zimbabwe is basically more of a manufacturing and industrialized state than most other African states (see Gwisai, 2002). This class comprised the few millions in Zimbabwe who are basically urban-residents, working in both public and privately-owned industries. The hundreds of thousands of civil servants of the state bureaucrat and parastatals, and the growing workers in the manufacturing and service industries in the country, are also members of the working class. Also included here are the many Zimbabweans that work in the large, medium and small scale commercial farms which are the mainstay of the economy.

Then, there is also the peasantry who are a few Zimbabweans that retained ownership of infinitesimal land, as their means of livelihood. They are relatively few in numbers because of the aggressive land policy of the White settlers who brutally, and by means of subtle legal manoeuvring, seriously delanded most indigenous Zimbabweans of their rights to land. The peasantry is equivalent to the Kulaks class identified by (Shivji, 1976) in his class analysis of the Tanzania's social structure. Finally, there is the class that may be described as the lumpen proletariat. This is the class of people that oscillates between in-and-out of employment, the qualified but unemployed, and those who survive at the mercy of the working class and peasantry by means of alms, assistances, and reliefs. It is, however, important to state as Ekekwe (1987: 7) rightly observed that within this identifiable classes even in Zimbabwe, there exist strata and factions which cannot be wished away.

Reflecting on the class character and nature in Zimbabwe (Campbell and Kwayana, 2008), there are four main competing interests in Zimbabwe, as it is today. First, but not in order of importance are the interests of the ruling party (ZANU-PF) and its supporters that cut across ethnic and classical class line. These are followed by those of the opposition, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) and its supporters which also like the ruling class cuts across ethnic and class line. Next are the vested interests of the White minority settlers supported heavily by the United Kingdom and the neo-conservatives of the Bush administration in the United States. Finally, but first in rating, there are the interests of all the producers (workers, poor peasants, farm workers, traditional healers, cultural workers, students, traders, hawkers etc.) in Zimbabwe. And according, this last group has been rendered poor and powerless by the present government of Robert Mugabe and the ruling party, the Zimbabwe African National Union, Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF).

These classes are objective in concrete terms and within them lies their subjectiveness which is significant in generating the revolutionary consciousness that is the hallmark of current Zimbabwean's second phase of socio-political and economic transformation. For as Marx noted, the mere objective existence of these classes was not necessarily enough to effect the desired social change; the classes must develop the consciousness that is imbued with revolutionary zeal for the change to take place.

## **Revolutionary Pressures and Social forces and the class struggle in Post-colonial Zimbabwe**

Conventionally held viewpoint holds that revolution occurs when the productive forces are fully developed to the point it can no longer contain the dynamic of the social relations of production (see Karl Max, 1867). Though in post-colonial Zimbabwe, the productive forces are still in the rudimentary stage, there are, however, strong revolutionary pressures in the country mobilizing and galvanizing the Zimbabwe's people toward achieving a more egalitarian Zimbabwean society. That is to say that the revolutionary pressures in Zimbabwe are inherent in her very conditions of uneven and underdevelopment which are historically determined. Earlier on, Ake (1978:76) explained that there are strong revolutionary pressures and social forces in Africa which arise from the need to maintain the existing exploitative class relations and the very survival of the African bourgeoisie.

Revolutionary pressures, in all intents and purposes, are the social forces which spur the growth of class consciousness; and a strong predictor and pre-requisite to ultimate resistance and or revolution. Ake (1976:96) explained that the force which promotes class consciousness will tend to get stronger in the long run, while some of those which mitigate it will tend to grow weaker as time goes on. This is a classic scenario, and with the steady decline in the economic fortunes of post colonial Zimbabwe state, especially beginning from the 1990s, and more recently, her growing political uneasiness and attendant social problems.

But what are these objective conditions in Zimbabwe which generate these pressures? First, it was the struggle for national liberation by the nationalist movement during which many Zimbabwean Marxist-Lennists were embedded into the struggle which fostered a great deal of political consciousness (see Makamure, 1978:72). The political awareness aroused in the masses was indeed radical, and the mobilizing ideology against colonial rule in Zimbabwe was basically harped on equality, freedom and emancipation from exploitation. Added to this is the Zimbabwean revolutionary community (intelligentsias, students, radical labours and activists), being formidable, and their quest to counter the imperialist attack on the revolutionary fever and fibres of the working class.

Second, with the economy of Zimbabwe being in virtual freefall, Mugabe and the ruling ZANU-PF party, as revolutionary petty bourgeoisie, was now confronting a moment of truth. This point is particularly important and needs a bit of elaboration. A brief moment after independence in 1980, Robert Mugabe, with his revolutionary zeal and Marxist ideology, was caught in between and betwixt. Was he, as Cabral (1979) aptly put it while describing revolution in Guinea, “to give free rein to its natural tendencies to become more bourgeoisie, to permit the development of a bureaucratic and intermediary bourgeoisie in the commercial cycle in order to transform itself into national pseudo-bourgeoisie”, that is to negate the revolution and ally itself with imperialist capital. Or as Ake (1976:100) put it “...capable of committing suicide as a class in order to be reborn a revolutionary worker, completely identified with the people to which they belong”?

Two alternatives have been the choices of Mugabe. First, he has tended to substitute rhetoric for bread and faith for progress. Second, he has tended to dramatize his heroic achievements against imperialism and continued to whip up ideology which harps more on a total extrication of Zimbabwe from the clutches of Western imperialism. It seems to me, therefore, that the oscillatory behavior of Mugabe and his henchmen in ZANU-PF ruling party can best be explained from this quagmire that they found themselves. Thus, after independence, Mugabe in all his wisdom, allowed Britain and other Western powers to bamboozle him over the land issue, and only to momentarily adopt a *volte-face* on the land matter when his grip for power became estranged, which suggests he was merely being confronted by this moment of truth.

Third, the revolutionary pressures in Zimbabwe and the harshness of poverty as a neo-colonial economy in the physical sense created low living standards and a lack of basic necessities. Second, in the social sense, the living standards of the workers lagged behind social wants. Third, poverty is about being conscious of the preceding two social facts, and thus a direct and subtle hostility towards groups and institutions responsible emerge. Thus, poverty in Zimbabwean is in sharp contrast to the great expectations of the people, and to their awareness of the relative affluence of others. Ergo, via economic depression looms stagnation and recession which creates a catalysts for effective revolution, because the impulse for radicalization is rooted in economic indices (see Ake, 1981).

## The Road Map and Character of the Zimbabwe's New Social Revolution

Under a growing economic crisis and grinding poverty, the middle classes and sections of the workers began to stir, agitate and cause uneasiness for the government of ZANU-PF. The genesis of these agitations may, however, be traced to the late 80s and early 90s unilateral adoption of free market policies by the Mugabe-led regime, including the vicious neo-liberal Amendments of Labour Relations Act which allowed for easier dismissal of workers (see also Gwisai, 2002). This situation was radicalizing the working masses, and was occasioned by sporadic demonstrations, isolated strikes and presumably riots. However, the December 1995 riots in Harare against police brutality appeared to have set the stage for what would eventuate into full scale mass mobilization and movement for socioeconomic and political change in Zimbabwe.

Thus, Zimbabwe's *biennio rosso*(intifada) (see Zeilig, 2008) of 1996-8 saw a two-year revolt by students and workers. For about three weeks starting from August 1996, thousand of government workers joined a strike that was spontaneously started by nurses and doctors. This strike was in protest against poor working conditions. In January 1998, housewives orchestrated a "bread riot" (a term that stemmed from agitation against rising cost of bread) that became an uprising of the poor living in Harare's township. However, the protests, strikes and campaigns were directed against the government's programmes of structural adjustment introduced at the instances of World Bank and IMF.

Conversantly, people were inspired by the success recorded by the largely urban-based working class movement, the rural poor and veterans of the war for independence, already stocked with accumulated penchant over a lackluster land distribution policy of the Mugabe-led government, started to invade White-owned farms, even as some Black bourgeoisie's farms were tangentially expropriated. Initially, the regime evicted the "squatters" and arrested the movement's leaders but had to acquiesce to their explosive demand for land. According to Gwisai (2002), the 1996 strikes witnessed two major developments which were to later have profound impacts on the new social movement. One was the emergence of radical rank and file who became the *de facto* leader of the movement, drawing up a radical programme uniting all workers. Second was the intervention of a revolutionary socialist group, the International Socialist Organisation (ISO).

In 1997, there was explosion of strikes and demonstration in Zimbabwe. Workers, war veterans and peasants came out to protest against the declining standard of livings. Gwisai (2002) explained that this development buoyed others such as the students who revolted in a scale unimaginable before. This particular revolt by the students led to the June 1998 closure of the University of Zimbabwe in Harare for five months, a development that further pressured the students to start demanding that the opposition forces be organised into a national political party—a workers’ party. The revolt in Indonesia in 1998 against Suharto inspired those protesting in the streets.

Realizing the danger of been swept by the momentous rising political and social movements in the country if they dillydally further in identifying with the people, a section of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Union (ZCTU) leaderships led by Morgan Tsvangirai decided to join forces with the striking students. These years of popular mobilization and political debate were described by one activist as a “sort of revolution” (see Zeilig, 2008).

Reflecting the growing consciousness of class and the demands of the students, economic demands were soon complimented by increasing demands from many workers for ZCTU to directly take up the political challenge of Zimbabwe. Eventually, the series of revolt of the late 90s gave way to the formation of the Movement for Democratic Change in September (MDC) 1999. The new party was formed by the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions.

After the formation of MDC, Mugabe-led ZANU-PF government embarked on a facilitated intensive repression and depoliticization of this faction of the Zimbabwe bourgeoisies. This “facilitated repression”, as it were, further radicalized and intensified opposition on the hegemony of the Mugabe- ZANU-PF faction of the ruling class so that a kind of vicious circle of opposition and repression became the new political norm in Zimbabwe. Ake (1976:104) explained that the intra-class competition which results in the radicalization of a faction of petty bourgeoisie would be the immediate social force that triggers off the revolution.

The now Morgan Tsvangirai-led MDC quickly understood that their ambition to state power can only be realized when the struggle is given an apparent revolutionary outlook. Tsvangirai and his MDC were, thus, able to mobilize, organize, coordinate and direct more urban working class and peasants to give a lifeline to the already weak revolutionary class waging the struggle against the hegemonic Mugabe ZANU-PF party and class.

The opposition (factional class of this bourgeoisie led by Morgan Tsvangirai) was also able to appeal to common identities such as profession, ethnic affiliations, religious group and geographical areas which cut across class lines, to beef up the struggle. By this the political system was altered and consciousness among the people began to spread. Curiously, members of the new party now came to believe that they all belong to the exploited class, and by so reasoning, making the struggle to look like a real revolutionary struggle.

At this point in the struggle, the MDC appeared to be resolutely pro-poor, formed by the working class and for them, but only providing the needed leadership. As Job Sikhala, a founding member, explained, “It was basically a party of the poor with a few middle class” (see Zeilig, 2008). For many of those urban workers, veterans, rural peasants and landless Zimbabweans, who had been involved in the exuberant protests that had rocked Zimbabwe, and who saw a parallel line between the revolution in Indonesia and the protests in Zimbabwe, the new MDC party offered a secure platform to bring about the badly needed radical change, and perhaps the much sought socialist transformation.

Therefore, it is important to note that even though the marginalized faction of the ruling class is in the forefront of the new class struggle in Zimbabwe, the most vicious and virulent of this struggle is, by and large, the struggle between the shrinking privileged Zimbabweans and the mass of the less-privileged working class and the peasantry. The accumulation of riches and privilege by the Zimbabwean bourgeoisie class has taught the working class and peasantry the hard reality of class society which they have braced up to challenge. This was further accentuated by the capitalist crises that was eating deep into the Zimbabwean economy on yearly basis—a development that was emblematic of the deepening global capitalist system. Thus, as many working class and peasantry continue to develop a sense of disillusion about the system, their agitation for more egalitarian, equal, transparent and just society intensifies.

By and large, as the opposition movement grew, ZANU-PF started to show apparent worry with panicky steps. From being a government lauded by Western leaders, its leader was dined by the queen, the regime made a “left turn” in an attempt to outflank the new party. War veterans, excluded for years from the independence settlement, were encouraged to invade white farms and were famously paid off through the War Veteran Levy in 1997. This partial shift to the left included implementing measures like price controls, land reform and food subsidies.



Apparently, Mugabe became tough in his talks, and talked of the third *Chimurenga* (anti-colonial uprising). He pontificated and boasted about correcting a historical wrong by redistributing the land to the poor and dared the imperialists to meddle into the internal affairs of Zimbabwe so that the people can go back to their trenches. By this, Robert Mugabe who most Zimbabweans perceive as the epitome of the national liberation struggle appeared to be on the side of the working class and peasantry. This posture reflects what Ake (1976:101) described of African leaders as mere “socialist rhetoric” that were characterized by ideological fuzziness and kinks.

The mass social movement in general and MDC in particular, had another added advantage. For in the unfolding political scenario, other radical individuals and groups who constitute political forces began to flock to the MDC. It was now seen by respectable NGOs, some White farmers and the middle classes as a force that could appease foreign interests and replace ZANU-PF with a government that respected property rights and business interests. So, under the influence of these groups, the MDC did not attack the hypocrisy of the regime but instead allied itself to those whose farms had been seized and who saw a continuation of structural adjustment as the solution to Zimbabwe’s woes.

### **ZANU-PF-Mugabe’s Politics of Brute and De-politicization: Deepening the Class Struggle**

As the opposition to the regime mounts and becomes intense, Mugabe and some cohort members of his party were poised towards preserving their bourgeoisie privileged position. To this end, Mugabe’s actions was aimed at containing the intra bourgeoisie class fractionalization and bickering, while providing an opportunity for people from the ranks of the liberation struggle to emerge as aspiring capitalists. This is because without a relative stable political order, the overarching role of the state as avenue for primitive capital accumulation cannot simply be guaranteed.

To enthrone a relative political order and preserve his privileges and those of his cabal of loyalists, Mugabe had to employ the politics of repression and outright de-politicization of the Zimbabwean people. De-politicization entails stifling and muzzling up of oppositions to a political process by intrigues, deceit, manoeuvre, and in most cases, with violence and arbitrary use of force (see Melber, 2008). Ake (1981) explained that its damaging potentials are often more telling on members of the ruling class.

Mugabe's policy of de-politicization is reinforced by the fact that the ambition of all the factions of the exploiting class is focused primarily on capturing state power, if nothing else, for its basic survival. Given the absolute importance of the state—as a major avenue for wealth accumulation—the preoccupation of members of the ruling class in state control was to expand and consolidate the state's role in the economy. Consequently, the state becomes a prized commodity (see Ntalaja, 1976). Hence, power, especially state power in underdeveloped economy such as Zimbabwe is a zero-sum game, since being in or out has serious socio-political and economic consequences for one's well being, as well as for life itself. Ineluctably, Zimbabwe becomes not only the key object of interclass struggles, but also an object of intra-class struggles. Makamure (1976: 73) clearly noted that class struggle was being fought in Zimbabwean society and that it also exists inside the dominant party ZANU-PF.

However as the hegemonic faction which is championed by Mugabe and the ruling ZANU-PF mounts vicious attack on the particularism of the opposition MDC, it did so without obliterating the objective conditions of this particularism. In the main, political instability surfaces and remains so that the options for resolving the logjams drastically restricted. This process of politics, economic and social milieu thus supports the depoliticized faction, and their followers continue to acquire more consciousness (see also Ake, 1976:78-79), which underlie a new social revolution in post colonial Zimbabwe.

## **Conclusion**

The recent social movement/resistance or revolution in Zimbabwe of recent may be described as a quasi or pseudo-revolution. It is not a classical peasant-based or workers-based social revolution; however, it is apparent that the consequence of resolving the contradictions which often arise among the ruling class in a capitalist-structured economy is clear. Thus, as mentioned above, it appears that there is more “unfinished business” in the politics of *Chimurenga* for post-colonial Zimbabwe.

Seen and understood in this light, the present class struggle and resistance in Zimbabwe can therefore be dissected from three perspectives. First, the resistance is a reaction to the failure to meet the people's expectation of independence; second, it is a clash of personal interests between and among members of the different social classes bounded together during the struggle for independence, and third, it is a reaction to a clever imperialist strategic calculations to weaken the revolutionary zeal of the Zimbabwean people.

The schism and break down of alliance formed during the independence struggle (see also Ntalaja, 1978:8), the astonishing longevity of the Mugabe regime, and the neo-liberal economic policies of the 90s with its attendant consequences of Zimbabwe's society, are all parts of the objective contradictions in Zimbabwe, which a warped and poorly articulated national struggle against colonial rule failed to extricate (see Amilcar Cabral, 1979).

The current [r]evolution in Zimbabwe, therefore, did not arise out of important questions often asked of social transformation in Africa generally, and in Zimbabwe in specific. The question is whether there is little chance that a classical type of socialist revolution will occur in Africa (Ake, 1976:106). To this question, Makamure (1978:76) while describing the possibility of revolution in Zimbabwe explained that it is often wrong to assume that one can have revolution without a revolutionary party, theory, or a revolutionary class. These elementary requirements are, no doubt, conspicuously absent in Zimbabwe today.

A critical analysis of the on-going social movement and resistance in Zimbabwe, as probable a second phase of social revolution, reveals first, that it is essentially a reactionary one. That is, this mass social movement only aims at recreating the old order now to be superintended and managed by new members. Having being co-opted into power, it is expected that the marginality and alienation of the leaders of the social revolution will disappear, and their consciousness change accordingly. Indeed, no one expect Tsvangirai and his members who have been given some plum positions to occupy in the recreated state of Zimbabwe to continue in their radical postures. They will surely revert to their petty bourgeoisie mentality and de-radicalized the movement and party they supported to acquire the present status.

Second, the emerging result of the crisis and social movement in Zimbabwe has not shown any indication that it will impact existing social relations of production. Instead, it has immediately rallied round bourgeoisie countries to stabilize the country and thus return to a social order wherein it can perform its functions of supplier of raw materials to the established capitalist system of the world. To this end, aids, donations and loans are being assembled bail out Zimbabwe, both in quagmire and quandary.

Third, it seems that what was obtained in pre-crisis Zimbabwe was a protracted policy of economic stagnation, social problems and political logjam, conditions for revolution, albeit, these conditions are themselves strong catalysts to engage conditions for revolution. This observation is made in light of the manner the uprising and the desperation of the masses of Zimbabwe people was contained by the state. Hence, punitive measures were invoked to deal with the insurgency and mass movement wherein striking workers were harangued, intimidate and chastised with brute and repression, causing many of them to disassociate themselves from the struggle.

Clear plausible lessons that are learnt from this second *Chimurenga* uprising in Zimbabwe is that giving all objective conditions, the development of revolutionary consciousness, and the ultimate social revolution are as follows: first, it is not axiomatic that revolution must necessarily erupt out of effective development of the productive forces. Second, conditions frame a dilemma for the African bourgeoisie which in a bid to maintain its class domination may never adopt a radical ideological position capable of radicalizing the masses, and promoting revolution. Third, the massive repression and the process of de-politicization, and particularly the faction of the ruling class via the hallmark of the Robert Mugabe-led government has contributed to the growth of consciousness of the masses, and exploited classes.

Having been properly reabsorbed into the mainstream power, the marginality and alienation of the leaders of this supposedly revolution will disappear, if it has not already done so. Accordingly, Morgan Tsvangirai may revert to his petty bourgeoisie or pre-crisis mentality and even de-radicalize the revolutionary pressure. And in unity, Mugabe too may scale down his anti-imperialist defensive radicalism rhetoric that has characterized his leadership, especially as the crisis peaks.

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