

**‘Personalization or fictionalization of national history in Zimbabwe?’
A re-evaluation of the Political careers of Ian Smith and Ndabaningi Sithole**

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ABSTRACT

The historiography concerning the making of Zimbabwe as an independent nation has been written from various perspectives and by using different sources, both primary and secondary ones. The study constitutes a re-evaluation of the political careers of Ndabaningi Sithole and Ian Douglas Smith against the background of their autobiographies as forms of primary resources of national history for Zimbabwe. It will be noted that autobiographical writing is a fruit of an arduous process of human construction, de-construction and re-construction done in the shadow of some interlocking interests, fears and pressures that surround the autobiographer. The present study contends that every personal engagement in the writing of history of a particular people or nation is a moralizing crusade or enterprise, whether by default or by design. Evidently, that is how the characteristic elements of objectivity and subjectivity come to the fore vis- a- vis the status of autobiography as a source and resource of national (or patriotic) history.

Introduction

It is a generally accepted view that the writing of national history is a moralizing crusade or enterprise. It is shaped by prevailing personal beliefs and philosophy. As is widely noted, one cannot write the history of a society or nation outside the pressures of one’s vested interests. As cited in Taylor (1976:7), it was the British historian, J.H.Plumb, who observed that “history is not to be equated with any one version of the past. The past is always a created ideology with a purpose, designed to control individuals or motivate societies or inspire classes. Nothing has been so corruptly used as concepts of the past.” In our day, the foregoing insight provides a truism which serves to show that the kind of history which is eventually narrated and recorded in the annals of a nation and so passed on from generation to generation reflects a deliberate process of social construction, de-construction and re-construction in the hands of certain influential men and women who are in the corridors of power. Vambe (2006:54) argued that “narration is a conscious application of certain words. It is a willed creative process....Because narration is neither neutral nor fortuitous; it is therefore constructed from certain points of view and other options. It is ideological.” This insight is helpful because, in essence, this is how the enigmatic issue of the personalization of history or its fictionalization comes into sharp focus.

On one hand, the study posits that the issue of the personalization of history takes place when the history of a people as a corporate group is literally ‘hijacked’ and written by an individual, especially in one’s capacity as a dominant leader, to elevate and sentimentalize the achievements of that individual. Other people’s actions or contributions in the history-making of a nation are eclipsed or outshined by that of the dominant leader. On the other hand, and by implication, the dominant leader is guilty of fabricating the history of a people or nation. This latter insight is what is captured by the notion of fictionalization of history as advanced in the present study. As the study proffers, one fundamental way in which the twin evils of personalization and fictionalization of history writing is done, is through an autobiography.

The research looks at the autobiography of Ndabaningi Sithole (1920-2000), first president of ZANU who was deposed at the helm by Robert Mugabe in 1976 but was denied hero status. The study also examines the autobiography of Ian Douglas Smith (1917-2007), leader of the Rhodesian Front who is famous for saying that blacks could never attain majority rule ‘in a thousand years’. He continued being defiant, maintaining that he was right but was betrayed by various people with vested interests on the Rhodesian question. The study interrogates the extent to which Ndabaningi Sithole and Ian Smith saw themselves as the embodiments or rather the gatekeepers of national

history and how, in the process, they peripherize other political players on the national political arena in the context of the armed struggle for the liberation of Zimbabwe.

The Efficacy of Autobiographical Writing

Broadly defined, an autobiography is a story of a person's life written by that person. This type of story is characteristically anchored on self-reference and captured by the use of 'I' and 'me'. The use of the two pronouns delineates different relationships between the narrator and the world because individual identity, consciousness and sagacity of the self are possible only through showing how one is different from other people. The 'I' is therefore meant to separate the self from someone who is not 'I', unless you think of someone who is a 'you'. By its very nature, autobiography fuses two narrative genres in the form of *fiction* and *history* because historical material is mediated by imagination. It is these two narrative genres that seek to impose and tinker around with definitions and what is supposed to be both the contents of history and literature. Owing to the fact that it is mediated by imagination "...every autobiography is a work of art, whether it claims to be true to life or not; it is a rearrangement and so is bound to omit and emphasize in ways that life itself is not; retrospect grants insights that were not available when the events being recounted took place"(Wright,1997:15).In this way, and maybe because of this, autobiography embodies the convergence of history, memory and imaginative acts in search of individual and group identities.

The autobiographical narrative is meant to project individual identity or self image, for example where the narrator was born, the living conditions of the writer and the growing consciousness towards a particular cause are given graphical detail. This is why the autobiographical details are imbued with significant shades and contours of meaning for that process of becoming. Pascal (1994:74) observes that "autobiography is...an interplay, a collusion, between past and present :(but) its significance is indeed more a revelation of the present situation than an uncovering of the past" (Wright, 1997:15). It is essential to note that different types of autobiographies like the ones to be analysed in this research are amenable to verifiability in nationalist history and therefore the fictional part maybe understandably covert and subtle. Commenting on this aspect Trouillot (1995:8) has observed that:

(N) owhere is history infinitely susceptible to invention. What has happened leaves traces, some of which are concrete-buildings, dead bodies, monuments, diaries, political boundaries-that limit the range and significance of any historical narrative. This is one of the many reasons that not any fiction can pass for history."

That this genre involves self-authentication and self-validation means that autobiography cannot completely denude itself of the fictional aspects even as it deals with historical fact. The overarching assumption in writing this narrative is that historical record or fact is being set right and that some representation from the standpoint of the self is being made. The major problem in dealing with autobiographies is the problematique of the authority of the narrator. The narrator cannot be everywhere every time. One could not be in Zambia to know what was happening in the ZIPRA camp (military wing of the Zimbabwe African People's Union), at the same time be in Mozambique to know what was taking place within the ZANLA camp (the military wing of the Zimbabwe African National Union) and still have firsthand knowledge of the goings-on within the Smith regime in Rhodesia. Besides, even if for a moment, one assumes the narrator has some knowledge of all dimensions of his/her subject matter(which is not often possible)this can easily be muddled by certain attitudinal nuances to certain aspects that can humanly lead to suppression, elevation or indifference to other aspects. Accordingly, Wright (1997:15) argues that autobiography "postulates a preoccupation with the self that may and often does, deteriorate into vanity, complacency, and self-indulgence." The personalization, and in some instances, the fictionalization of history, locating the self and relocating others has profoundly animated "a deepening pattern of partisan dichotomies, producing crude polarizations that entrench certain types of (historical)

antagonisms and foreclose productive (historical) dialogue” (Hammar et al, 2003:26). This is done by dint of legitimizing the autobiographers’ personal positions and in the process destabilizing the roles and achievements of adversaries. In this project the use of language is crucial in indefatigably handholding the reader to begin to view the writers as hard done by and, in the process, canalizing the reader to perceive others as charlatans on the historical stage.

Autobiographical narratives employ mainly the focalization technique. This narrative technique privileges the writer-narrator’s discourses and ways of seeing over those of other national players whose stories are made subsidiary to the narrator’s own. It locates the self at the centre of history and trains the eye and judgment on other players in history. To that end, this mode of narrating history suffers from solipsism and navel gazing such that it cannot represent an accurate, detached and disinterested account. To the extent that it elides certain information about the self and the significant Other in history, autobiography is unreliable. Wright (1997:15) describes it as “necessarily self-justificatory, egocentric and vaulting.” This is because, according to Starobinski in Olney (73-83):

The past can never be evoked except with respect to the present: the ‘reality’ of by-gone days is only such to the consciousness which, today, gathering up their present image, cannot avoid imposing upon them its own form, style.

In other words the autobiographer dredges up events of the past steeped in the circumstances of his/her peculiar contemporary context in order to claim a stake in history. This amounts to seeing the self as the embodiment of history. Nonetheless, in concentrating on the ‘I’ an autobiography offers some insights which can easily be hidden under the debris of patriotic history. This is because patriotic history deals with hyperbolized party history. In the Zimbabwean context, and in particular, in the case of ZANU PF, political luminaries who played a significant part in the history of the armed struggle but are deemed miscreant or deviant, are often not written about or the historical material is manipulated so that they appear villainous. For instance, one has only to look at the way Ndabaningi Sithole was vilified as a renegade, the manner in which Joshua Nkomo was regionalized and how Ian Smith was depicted as a one-dimensional character that was irredeemably evil. Therefore, autobiographies, despite the limitations of the focalization technique, provide alternative ways of seeing and appreciating the wider national historiography from the claustrophobia of partisan accounts fed on Zimbabweans today.

Ndabaningi Sithole: A hero who never made it

Ndabaningi Sithole was born in 1920 at Nyamandhlovu in Bulawayo. He belonged to the Ndaue ethnic group of Chipinge district in south eastern Zimbabwe. He went to school in the 1930s and completed Standard 6 at Dadaya Mission in 1939. at the top of his class in 1939. Sithole then trained as a teacher at Waddilove Mission and afterwards was deployed to teach lower classes in the surrounding rural areas. He was then transferred to Dadaya Mission to teach Standard 5. Sithole studied and earned a Bachelor of Arts degree with the University of South Africa through private study. In 1953, Ndabaningi Sithole went to teach at Mount Selinda Mission in the Chipinge district, where the white missionaries were impressed by his deep religious disposition. We are told that the Reverend Frank Meacham intimated to Sithole, thus: ‘Ndabaningi, you are not a teacher. Your place is in the ministry. I am not joking’ (Sithole, 1959:15). This is how Ndabaningi Sithole crossed the Atlantic Ocean and went to study theology in the USA in the 1950s where he obtained a Masters degree in Divinity in New Hampshire. He returned to be ordained a UCCZ Congregationalist Minister at Mount Selinda Mission among the Ndaue people in Chipinge district in 1958. Sithole attracted international attention when he wrote the now classical political book *African Nationalism* (Cape Town, 1959). The book called for an end to racial segregation in Africa and stimulated initiatives towards de-colonization in Rhodesia. Nevertheless, despite his towering contributions, especially by pioneering and providing leadership to ZANU, Sithole failed to climb to the ‘top of the greasy pole’ in the fluid politics of Zimbabwe.

Ndabaningi Sithole's political career began when he abandoned teaching and the pastoral ministry to enter the turbulent terrain of politics in 1960. In that year, Sithole joined the National Democratic Party (NDP) which was initially led by Michael Mawema and later by Joshua Nkomo. Sithole was appointed to serve the movement as its Treasurer-General. When the NDP was banned by the supremacist white Rhodesian government, Sithole joined ZAPU which was led by Joshua Nkomo in 1962. Nevertheless, the two nationalists soon quarreled about how to spearhead an armed revolution to dislodge colonialism. Together with other Zimbabwean revolutionaries like Herbert Chitepo, Morton Dizzy Malianga, Edgar 'Two boy' Tekere and Robert Mugabe, Sithole was the brains behind the formation of a breakaway political movement, Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) on 8 August 1963. He served this revolutionary party as its founding president, with Leopold Takawira as Vice President and Robert Mugabe as Secretary-General. However, Smith's government went on to detain the leading nationalists by locking them into jails for ten years, 1964 to 1974. This is the historical and political setting of Sithole's autobiographical writing, sketched in his *Obed Mutezo* (London: 1970) and *Letters from Salisbury* (Nairobi: 1976).

Sithole begins his narration of the momentous days of the 1960s by emphasizing his incarceration and the long spell he had in prison. Those heady days were a result of the collective action of most Zimbabweans. Nevertheless, Sithole privileges his own account and stresses the point that the 'clarion call' was signed by 'me'. He does not explain fully what this entailed, who was involved and in what ways it affected other players. All he does is train the readers' attention to his imprisonment and the spurious and non-sticking charges against him. This is meant to project the image of a potentially powerful and destabilizing person who had to be domesticated through imprisonment. Sithole tries unsuccessfully to use the pronoun 'we' but falls back to using the narcissistic 'I' to dramatize the view that he embodied popular black sentiment. The only time he uses the 'we' is when he makes mention of what he considers the cream of his organization, the history makers. He says that "in this section of the remand we had a courtyard of about 5 yards wide. We had African warders...We were locked" (Sithole, 1976:2). However, immediately after that, Sithole relapses to the 'I' to distinguish himself as president of the party.

The impression that Sithole gives after his release from prison is that he was a trailblazer who knew what to do and at what stage. This assumed political sagacity and acumen is captured when he states self-congratulatorily that after his release "for two-and-half months I made it a point to visit as many places as I could and made sure to tell the people that what we wanted was Majority Now, for which I soon earned for myself the nickname "Reverend Majority Rule Now"(Sithole,1976:3). This may appear facetiously couched and tongue-in-cheek but there is a dismaying ring to it in that it tends to confuse the cause with the person and vice-versa. This cult of personalism creates an aura of indispensability in that the absence of the many bespeaks the weakening of the cause. The reason could be because, according to Wright (1997, 15), like its narrator "autobiography itself has a past: it is rooted in the individualism that became possible at the beginning of the eighteenth century, against the grain of, and in part, to the intensified organization of the communal state." The validation of this observation finds expression when Sithole carves out space for himself in history when he says that:

I repeated my tune of "Majority Rule Now" over and over throughout the country, in order to Keep our supporters on the correct line. An unhealthy tendency among some of the ex-detainees had settled in and they seemed quite ready to accept something less than majority rule to avoid being sent back into long detention (p3).

Sithole is implying that where others dithered and vacillated, he remained resolute to the cause of independence. He is dichotomizing the 'I' as distinct from others who were not made of sterner stuff like himself. The problem here is that Sithole does not mention any names or personalities who appeared ready to compromise in order to authenticate his assertion. One cannot help but conclude that he fears that, because history leaves sediments and can be corroborated, he may be

found on the wrong side of historical accuracy. Nevertheless Sithole goes ahead and buttresses his view of the self versus the others by giving meticulous mention of the countless times he was imprisoned for the black cause. Hence, the insightful sentence “there was uproar inside and outside the country when I was re-detained” (Sithole, 1976:4). This goes together with the strategy of infusing personal, family letters with the political activities of the narrator. It is a tear-jerking strategy that is meant to make the reader to emotionally sympathize with Sithole. The impression one gets is that Sithole was a nationalist *par excellence* who was able to balance family affairs and still be able to ingenuously lead the party while inside prison. This is why he says “I did not have the benefit of consulting with my colleagues, but the job of directing our colleagues and the Party in Lusaka had to be done and I did as best as I could”(Sithole,1976:6). This is a top-down leadership model in which the leader is assumed to personify the party and the party as the leader so that other party members have to be taught the party- line. In this way the brief of the rank and file is to carry out instructions from the leaders (Fanon, 1965). Whilst this is absolutely necessary in a liberation movement engaged in fighting the racist white settler regime, it can be a trifle anachronistic in circumstances of governing an independent nation. In this case, what it does is to centralize decision making in the person of the president of the party. This smacks of the Orwellian politics in which some animals are more equal than others.

Despite the solipsism of autobiography, one notices the incisive and passionate way with which Sithole’s politics is based. It is on the ideals of freedom as shown by the keen way he analyses the issues on the ground. Sithole was a nationalist motivated by the desire to dismantle colonial rule. He would not accept window dressing and cosmetic reforms less than genuine majority rule. This is why Sithole defiantly and meaningfully states that if Africans accept being second class citizens he would rather quit politics. He says:

As far as I am concerned, if our people say ‘yes’ to these evil and iniquitous Proposals, I shall never again remain in the liberation movement. To liberate who? I shall go back to Freedom Farm(his farm) and settle down and never again utter one single political word for the rest of my life(Sithole,1976:67).

It must be noted that Sithole was beginning to feel that his sacrifices as a leader were going to be betrayed if the Africans gave in to the façade of solving the Rhodesian question. To that end, Sithole’s nationalism cannot be seen to be less than that of those that not only deposed him, but also denied him hero status after independence. He played his part to the best of his abilities in very difficult prison conditions. Those that took over from him after 1976 wanted to justify their legitimacy by diminishing and even criminalizing his political role in the armed struggle. Today in patriotic history, Sithole is rarely, if at all, mentioned in Zimbabwe’s political discourses. To be ZANU PF through and through is to be right and therefore heroic. Sithole clung to the leadership of ZANU-Ndonga and was persecuted after independence. Thenjiwe Lesabe left ZANU PF after the revival of ZAPU in 2009 and was denied hero status after death just like Sithole and later Welshman Mabhena who was seen as too critical of the party during his stay in ZANU-PF.

Ian Douglas Smith: A diviner with an immoral political message

Ian Smith was the 8th white Rhodesian Prime Minister from 1965 to 1980. He was born in 1917 in Shurugwi. In his early career, Smith served as a pilot in the British Royal Air Force in 1939 and fought alongside the British soldiers against the Nazi German forces in the Second World War (1939-45). After the war, Smith attended Rhodes University at Grahamstown in South Africa where he eventually graduated with a Bachelor of Commerce degree in 1948.

Smith’s political career began in 1948 when he was elected to the Southern Rhodesian Legislative Assembly under the ticket of the Liberal Party (Rasmussen and Rubert, 1990: 339). Smith quickly rose to the post of government Whip. Over the years, Smith was known for cultivating radical views in support of entrenching white supremacy over the blacks whom he described in pejorative terms as ‘kaffirs’. In 1962, Smith helped form a radical white political movement working for

whites-only independence from Britain. This was the Rhodesian Front (RF). The Rhodesian Front party was elected to form a government in 1962 under the leadership of Winston Field and Ian Smith was appointed to serve as the Deputy Prime Minister. Smith later made a 'palace coup' and replaced Winston Field as Prime Minister on 13 April 1964. He pledged to secure Rhodesia's independence under white dominion at any cost. He blustered that there would "never be African majority rule in his life time, never in a thousand years" (Rasmussen and Rubert, 1990:339). This political pledge was transformed to become a white myth, a white vision and a white political philosophy which guided the conduct of the day-to-day business for Smith's cabinet. It must be mentioned that it was in order to fulfill this pledge that Smith shuttled across the country to meet fellow white citizens in their farmlands, halls, clubs, meetings and in hotels in order to propagate the myth and vitality of white supremacy. This could be realized once Rhodesia cut off the constitutional 'Gordian knot' with Britain once and for all. Smith made it clear to his white audiences that the only way of severing those relations with their kith and kin in Britain was through a constitutional rebellion. Clearly, this is the background that scholars who reflect on Ian Smith's political career must appreciate. This is a vital background which shaped Smith's own subjective autobiographical writing.

Accordingly, it was during Smith's tenure of office (1965-80) that Rhodesia experienced some watershed events which have become seminal points of reference in the political history of Zimbabwe ever since. For instance, the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) in 1965, the Pierce Commission in 1971, the United Nations declaration of sanctions in 1972, escalation of the Chimurenga war of liberation after 1975, Muzorewa's Internal Settlement in 1978, the Lancaster House Conference in 1979 and the ultimate election which led to the transfer of power from the white settlers to the black majority in 1980. These events are delicately associated with the political career of Ian Douglas Smith. The relevant fundamental question for the study, however, is: How did Smith himself perceive those landmark events from the vantage point of a white individual who served as Prime Minister of a country which was sliding into the chaos of the war of black liberation? In attempting to address the foregoing question, the study posits the view that Ian Smith, as the last native-born white politician, presided over a white community like lone a 'diviner with an immoral message' to put across to a restless black population.

Ideologically, Smith was overtly pro-colonial and anti-black. The Pioneer column, a group of men who were hired by Cecil John Rhodes to spearhead the occupation of Zimbabwe, is looked at as being on a mission to spread commerce and civilization. Smith describes pre-colonial Zimbabwe in pejorative terms. For example, Smith opines that the Pioneer Column got in to an unchartered country, the domain of the lion, elephant, buffalo and other inhabitants of the wilderness. Smith also claims that not only did the Pioneer Column move into a bushy country, but that Mashonaland as a whole was a no man's land (Smith 1996). The implication is that the blacks had no prior claim to the land that was invaded and occupied by the white settlers. Smith's account of the occupation of Zimbabwe is fraught with weaknesses. He remains tight-lipped on why the Pioneer Column was excited to colonize Zimbabwe. Explanations like the need to exploit minerals, especially gold, to thwart initiatives of Afrikaners from establishing a Boer Republic between Limpopo and Zambezi Rivers and the need to create a British Dominion from Cape to Cairo (Mukanya 2000) are not given any critical interrogation.

Smith presents a false picture of the black-white labor relations during the early days of white occupation of Rhodesia. He argues that blacks knew nothing about mining and were fascinated by seeing the white men digging for gold and other minerals. He pontificates that blacks voluntarily joined the white men in the digging of minerals. It must be realized that the local blacks joined the labor market as mine workers because of the artificial poverty that had been created by the white settlers. Furthermore, Smith forgets to note that the local Africans had participated in mining for several centuries before the advent of white occupation of Zimbabwe. For instance, classical medieval states such as Great Zimbabwe, Mutapa, Rozvi and Ndebele were sustained by mining

and mineral trade among other branches of their economies. In addition, it was this mining which also sustained the inter-regional and international trade between the Portuguese and pre-colonial states which existed between the Limpopo and Zambezi Rivers where modern Zimbabwe is situated (Mudenge, 2008).

A closer look at Smith's book reveals the way he fictionalizes how he was not prepared to hand over power to the black majority and the subsequent UDI in the 1960s. Smith posits the view that Southern Rhodesia was a hub of economic efficiency, modern constitutional practice and a model of a responsible government since 1923. To cap it all, Smith claims that 'his blacks' were the happiest subjects in Africa (Johnson and Martin, 1981). He argues that Rhodesia as an autonomous country deserved complete independence from Britain. However, the reality was that white Rhodesians were not prepared to abandon the colony because of its vast mineral wealth, fertile agricultural soils and healthy climatic conditions, particularly in Mashonaland and the eastern Highlands in Manicaland province (Mukanya 2000). The reality, however, is that everywhere where settlers were established, they fiercely resisted the de-colonizing agenda. For example, in Kenya, the whites only came to terms with the reality of de-colonization due to a protracted fight which was mounted by the Mau Mau guerillas (Kenyatta, 1968; Smith and Nothling, 1993).

Smith also stigmatized as dangerous communists a number of African leaders who supported Zimbabwean African nationalists who were fighting for independence. For instance, Julius Nyerere of Tanzania and Samora Machel of Mozambique, both founding Presidents of their respective countries, were described as political evil geniuses. Both were frontline supporters of the African cause for liberation but were described by Ian Smith as stumbling blocks to "a peaceful settlement on the Rhodesian crisis" (Smith 1996). He brands Presidents Nyerere and Machel as having a contagious 'communist virus' which he did not want blacks in Rhodesia to catch. In particular, president Nyerere is lambasted for supporting Robert Mugabe. Mugabe had replaced Sithole as head of the fighting guerilla forces after 1976 and he was perceived as holding radical communist views and so would be potentially dangerous to regional peace and stability once he came to power in a post-war dispensation. The whites widely feared that Mugabe would introduce the dreaded communism upon gaining power in Zimbabwe.

An examination of Smith's book also reveals that he is a fair-weather politician. In his diplomatic statesmanship, Smith did not have permanent friends in Africa. He relied on South Africa to sustain the Rhodesian economy for much of the 1970s when the African armed struggle intensified. At first South Africa worked hand in glove with Smith's Rhodesia. For instance, South Africa under Prime Minister John Vorster did not support the international call to impose sanctions on Rhodesia (Raftopolous and Mlambo, 2008). Moreover, white South Africa also fought alongside the white Rhodesian forces against the military intransigencies of both Zimbabwean and South African nationalists. However, as time passed South Africa could no longer continue to underwrite the escalating Rhodesian war. South African military budget could not sustain the war both in South West Africa, now Namibia and Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe. This is how Smith was militarily and logistically ditched by the white Afrikaners in South Africa at a time when her support was needed most. Many historians and political analysts agree that it was due to white South African policy of 'smart' abandonment which was very decisive in bringing Ian Smith to his knees. This is the same political-military situation which made Ian Smith to agree to go for round table talks in London which culminated in the signing of the Lancaster House Conference agreement (1979).

The Lancaster House Conference of 1979 which preceded the independence elections of 1980 is viewed by Smith as part of the big conspiracy against him. He argues that Lord Carrington, the British Foreign Secretary, Malcolm Fraser, the Australian Prime Minister and the leaders of the Frontline States pressurized Margret Thatcher, The British Prime Minister, to abandon her plan to recognize the Abel Muzorewa led Zimbabwe-Rhodesian Government which had been formed in March 1979. Smith opines that the Frontline states, notably Mozambique, Zambia, Botswana,

Malawi, Angola and Tanzania, were desperate for a peace settlement in Rhodesia for economic security reasons. He argues that countries like Zambia and Mozambique were military targets of the white Rhodesian cross-border raids and their economies were cracking owing to the Rhodesian war which was escalating year in and year out for much of the 1970s. Therefore, African countries which shared international borders with Rhodesia were desperate for a peace settlement. However, Smith says nothing about Rhodesia's precarious economic and security situation because of his intransigence on serious diplomatic talks with his neighboring countries. For instance, previous conferences such as Geneva (1976), Malta (1978) and Victoria Falls (1975) failed because Smith was not prepared to move an inch to accommodate the interests of the revolutionary blacks with Marxist leanings who were fighting Rhodesia from the Frontline countries, especially Zambia, Tanzania and Mozambique (Rasmussen and Rubert, 1990:336).

But Smith's participation in the Lancaster House Conference (1979) was an indication that he had been hit hard both by the escalating guerilla war and the international sanctions. For example, Muzorewa's Internal Settlement of 1978 dismally failed to achieve international recognition (Rasmussen and Rubert, 1990:337). Even Ndabaningi Sithole, the putative initiator of the armed struggle in the 1960s also failed to stop the guerilla war in 1978. This is why and how Sithole can be viewed as Zimbabwe's hero who failed to end the war of liberation. To make matters worse, the Rhodesian economy could no longer sustain the war. For instance, the economy was reeling as Smith was almost using \$1 000 000, 00 to sustain the war effort every day in 1979 alone (Tshuma 1997). Against this backdrop, Smith falsifies reality on the ground. Smith does not admit this much but rather claims that he eventually lost the war because he was 'stabbed in the back' by South Africa, Britain and the Commonwealth countries. Smith asserts that he took part in the Lancaster House Conference deliberations in December 1979 as a result of diplomatic pressures that were brought to bear upon him. Smith is critical of the Commonwealth leaders for setting in motion a number of diplomatic events that culminated in the Lancaster House Conference in 1979 in London. Smith is partly right but he downplays the military pressures exerted by the black guerilla fighters from outside Rhodesia. In fact, Smith tried to stifle the guerilla efforts through some sordid bombings of the external guerilla military camps at Mkushi in Zambia, Nyadzonya and Tembwe in Mozambique. Smith shows 'no human face' in the massacre of hundreds of refugees in Zambia and Mozambique. Rather, Smith says that "the most successful raid of this year was on 9 August against Nyadzonya one of the terrorist main camps" (Smith 1996:195). Though he claims that the camp housed ZANLA combatants many argue that it was a refugee camp. This explains why the bombing at Nyadzonya was internationally condemned.

In addition, Smith is also conspicuously silent about the vital clauses of the Lancaster House Conference (1979). This 1979 Constitution, among other issues, tied down and limited the powers of the future democratically elected government (Tshuma 1997). For example, it reserved 20 parliamentary seats for the whites. The land question which had been the number one grievance throughout Zimbabwe's colonial history was not properly resolved by the Lancaster House Conference. The Lancaster House Conference negotiators agreed that land would not be compulsorily acquired. Instead it had to be acquired on the basis of willing-buyer and willing-seller. But the principle of the willing-buyer and willing-seller later proved to be a white ploy to prevent the seizure of land by the black government. The situation on the ground later turned awkward as many white farmers were unwilling to sell their large tracts of fertile land in areas that were most productive. The constitution served to freeze the structure of the society and to give an aura of respectability and legality. This, however, perpetuated social injustice in the post-independent political dispensation because the historical imbalances on land distributions were not corrected. Past land reforms were based on white violence on blacks and a framework of legislative racial discrimination.

In line with the above insights, it is interesting to note that Ian Smith is an ardent supporter of the past violent seizures of land by the white settlers. Those past seizures began, roughly, from 1890

when the Pioneer Column members ‘flooded’ the country and expropriated land from indigenous black hands. Three years later, in 1893, the first black reserves were created at Gwaai and Shangani in the western Matabeleland province of the country. And then Smith falsifies history. What does he say? Smith argues that reserves were for the ‘executive’ utility of the indigenous blacks. Smith disregarded the environmental degradation and the abject poverty which the black majority had to contend with in the crowded reserves. Neither does Smith acknowledge the Land Apportionment Act (1930) and the Land Husbandry Act (1951) as monster legal enactments which created artificial poverty and social injustice on the generality of the blacks in Rhodesia. These two legal instruments gave 49% of the country’s prime land to 30 000 whites while more than a million blacks were given poor land in communal areas consisting of about 28.9% of the total land of the country (Moyana 2002).

Whilst Smith supports the Land Apportionment Act of 1930, he diminishes the post-independent land reform programmes, especially that which was code-named, Third Chimurenga (war for the restoration of land). He views Mugabe’s thrust on land re-distribution as communistic. Smith contends that it is not fair to settle new blacks farmers in former commercial white lands that were efficiently run. Some reasons for the contention are that the contemporary land reform programme has led to devastating consequences for the country. He further notes that there has been a marked decrease in the number of full-time jobs in the agricultural sector. Furthermore, food production (maize, wheat and small grains) has gone down. Commercial dairy and beef production has also dropped by over 50% in both communal and commercial farms (Moyo 2008). On the eve of the much disputed presidential election in March 2008, the inflation rate had skyrocketed. The cumulative impact was that the national economy melted down. The inflation rates over the years are indicative of the foregoing claim. In 2000 inflation rate was 420%, in 2005 inflation had risen to 856%. A year later in 2006, inflation was 1070% and then leapfrogged to 1 200 000%. But, gloomy as these figures are, Smith does not appreciate the linkages between the Land Apportionment Act of 1931 and the Lancaster House Constitutional impediments on the land question in contemporary Zimbabwe. If Smith was fair in his analysis he would have pointed out that both the colonial and post-colonial land management policies were intended to mitigate particular problems as they affected certain sociological sections of the Zimbabwean society (Maposa, Hlongwana, and Gamira 2010).

It must be noted that the post-independent political developments have not escaped Smith’s attention. He has chronicled the post-independent civil war which ravaged the Matabeleland and Midlands provinces. As a country, Zimbabwe was left shocked and shaken by the effects of the destabilization. According to historian Bhebe (2004), the civil war pitted the North Korean-trained Fifth Brigade and the perceived dissidents who were mostly viewed in state media to be the former Zimbabwe People’s Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA) guerillas. The ‘civil war’ resulted in untold suffering. There was loss of human life. Property and developmental projects were shelved during the ‘civil war’, especially in the affected western provinces of Matabeleland and Midlands where the Ndebele-speaking people live. Smith sympathizes with the defenseless Ndebele people who bore the brunt of this sad episode. In spite of the fact that most historians estimate that those who perished in the civil war were about 20 000, Smith’s figure stands at 30 000. Smith may be exaggerating in order to tarnish the image of Mugabe.

In fact, it cannot gainsaid in Smith’s autobiography that he sees nothing positive about Zimbabwe’s independence. This is why he says that “today it (Zimbabwe) is a total disaster, absolute chaos. The country is bankrupt, the people are denied basic freedom and justice intimidation of the opponents of the government is rampant with assault, torture and even murder being common place. Furthermore.... basic food is in short supply and expensive with children going to bed hungry at night” (Smith 1997: X). What is clear here is that Smith does not appreciate the policy of reconciliation which Robert Mugabe enunciated in 1980 to forgive war-time enemies. As a person who presided over the war-time cruelties on the black people, Smith was a big beneficiary of the

policy of reconciliation. But Smith's conspicuous silence is therefore an act of egregious ingratitude on those who wanted to draw a curtain of forgetfulness on war time excesses. Smith condemns the independence government for putting the economy to a halt and at the harrowing effects of the international 'smart' sanctions. He opines that due to the government's poor policies the country experienced de-industrialization, mass unemployment, high brain drain which worked to create the country as a landmass of abject poverty (Hammer 2003). Smith itemizes the factors which brought Zimbabwe's misery. Some of those factors which led to the country's economic hemorrhage are: corruption, participation in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) war, and payment of war veterans' gratuities which was unbudgeted for and the chaotic Land Reform Programme. Although Smith's analysis is informative and useful to the overall understanding of post-independent economic and political challenges that faced Zimbabwe he however hardly explains that Mugabe's government suffered from the structural sins of the colonial past. For example, the massive social programme on health, social security (pensions) and education that were undertaken to address the colonial imbalances turned out to be liabilities as they drained the fiscus (Mlambo). These factors were worsened by the effects of the sanctions on the economy. Sanctions, whether smart or targeted, were imposed by the United States of America, European Union and Australia. They, sanctions, among other things prohibited some investors from doing business in Zimbabwe.

Some critical reflections

In general, the writing of an autobiography provides a window through which to view the presences and absences in Zimbabwe's rendition of national history today. Reading Sithole's autobiography one begins to appreciate fully the Machiavellian manipulation of history in which the political leaders want it to rotate around themselves to suit certain expedient ends. This is why national history in today's Zimbabwe rotates around Robert Mugabe whereas in the 1960s and 1970s Sithole believed he was the epicenter of the nationalist liberation movement which was executing the armed struggle for the creation of an independent Zimbabwe under black majority rule.

Smith's presentation of historical facts about the Rhodesian crisis and later of independent Zimbabwe is almost entirely subjective. From the day he replaced Winston Field as Prime Minister in April 1964, Smith perceived himself as the personification of Western civilization and white supremacy in Rhodesia. Smith came to configure a political philosophy which was anchored on unrepentant racial discrimination and unyielding racial domination. This political philosophy can be symbolized in a 'rider and horse' analogy in which the dominant Whiteman was the 'rider' whereas the powerless Blackman was the 'horse'. Evidently, the syntactic ethos of Smith's autobiographical writing was patterned on this unbalanced human relationship. Hence, there is every justification in seeing Smith as a sort of a 'diviner with an immortal political message'. As things were, Smith's main concern in writing his autobiography, *Bitter Harvest: The Great Betrayal* (1997) is to moralize his long administration (1964-1980) which was steeped in structural racial discrimination. Smith's political 'oracle' that blacks would not achieve independence for a 'thousand years' was mistaken. Africans fought a protracted war of liberation for 15 years and got independence in 1980, with Robert Mugabe at the helm.

6.0 Summary

The autobiographies of Ian Smith and Ndabaningi Sithole continue to fascinate scholars who research on Zimbabwe's struggle for independence. The study has shown that Smith wrote from the perspective of an unrepentant white supremacist. This was revealed in the way he literally 'romanticized' the earliest generations of white settlers as, despite enacting some discriminatory laws, heroes who carried the 'white man's burden' to introduce the values of the western heritage and to civilize blacks in Zimbabwe. In a word, Smith only presented white Rhodesian history and not Zimbabwean history. The subjective nature of history writing is equally discernible in Sithole works. The ethos of Sithole's writings breathes the air of revolutionary politics of the 1960s and 1970s which produced him. In evaluating both autobiographies together, we have come to realize that no history writing endeavor is neutral especially in fiction. History comes from the people as

individuals or corporate society as they interact with the environment. Sociologically speaking, it is this environment which 'writes' experiences in people's minds and thereby making any writer to be a prisoner of that environment.

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