UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND

A F R I C A N   S T U D I E S   I N S T I T U T E

African Studies Seminar Paper
to be presented in RW
4.00pm JULY 1977

Title: 'Underdevelopment' and Cheap Labour Supplies in Southern Rhodesia, 1923-1953.

by: C F Keyter

No. 053

African Studies Institute
African Studies Seminar

Paper for Monday, 4th July, at 4 p.m.
A.S.I. Seminar Room
1977

C. F. Keyter

'UNDERDEVELOPMENT' AND CHEAP LABOUR SUPPLIES IN SOUTHERN RHODESIA, 1923 - 1953

- A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK -

Any study which seeks to explore the causes of 'underdevelopment' in a colonial or ex-colonial territory, is bound to be confronted with the challenge of deciding where capitalism stands in relation to the problem. Stated in unambiguous terms, the basic issue which analysts have been trying to resolve is whether capitalism is fundamentally beneficial or harmful to a developing country.

Those who assume (either explicitly or implicitly) that capitalism is a positive force, postulate a kind of 'dualism' generally associated with the 'cultural pluralists' (1). Within this dualist framework, 'underdevelopment' becomes synonomous with an 'original' condition of low-productivity 'subsistence', based on outmoded traditional practices which are progressively 'modernized' through increasing contact with a more dynamic capitalist sector, the initial contact being seen to occur through the voluntary migration of workers from the 'subsistence' to the capitalist sector (2).

The 'dualist' frame of reference also influences the manner in which the 'liberal capitalist' school perceives the problem. For if, despite the increasing contact with the capitalist or 'money' sector the indigenous economy fails to develop, then according to this school of thought, the causes can be found in certain restrictive practices, flowing from racial discrimination, which create 'blockages' and 'income inequalities', as detrimental to capitalist growth in the long term, as they are to the subsistence economy in the short term (3). Implicit in this approach, is the notion that the solution to 'underdevelopment' involves no structural changes, merely requiring political changes (i.e. the removal of racial restrictions) in order for the economic benefits of capitalism to permeate more effectively through the social structure, to the advantage of all.

It has been left to Marxist scholars, using empirical evidence to try and show that there is indeed a structural connection, or causal relationship between discrimination and capitalism; that discrimination and capitalist growth have been perfectly compatible; and indeed, that the technological, economic and political 'distance' between colonizers and the colonized was less an 'original' state, than it was the outcome of capitalism itself. Notable among these is Giovanni Arrighi who shows how, in the Rhodesian instance, rising subsistence needs of African rural dwellers (through destruction of indigenous handicraft industries and increasing reliance on European goods), declining crop yields (through enforced movement of Africans into less fertile and remote 'Reserves'), falling crop prices (through progressive curtailment of African competition in the grain market), along with compulsory payments (like poll tax, dipping fees etc.), all had the effect of reducing the pre-capitalist sector to a state of dependency on the capitalist sector. Such dependency, Arrighi argues, was reflected by the 'necessary'(rather than 'voluntary') participation of Africans in the capitalist sector, indicating certain 'structural changes' in the economy which enabled the capitalist sector to employ labour at below-subsistence wage levels, and by this means, grow at the pre-capitalist sector's expense (4).

Arrighi, however, stretches his conclusion too far. For even if it can be shown that capitalist growth coincides with pre-capitalist underdevelopment' ('<u>un</u>development' may be better description), this is no justification for claiming that capitalism <u>itself</u> is the cause of such 'underdevelopment' (or 'undevelopment). For clearly, there is a difference between the <u>non-economic</u> discriminatory measures - Arrighi calls them 'non-market mechanisms" (5) - which create the state of dependency, and the <u>economic</u> forces of capitalism which benefit from, but are not in themselves the original cause of such dependency. Otherwise stated, dependency in the Arrighian frame of reference, has a non-economic, and not economic origin.

The flaw in Arrighi's perception is that he manages to see only one structural connection between exploiters and exploited, notably the super-exploitation of labour. Though this is thoroughly within the Marxist tradition, the inevitable consequence of such a one-dimensional, labour-orientated view of the connection between the pre-capitalist and capitalist sectors, is to regard the 'backward' or 'exploited' sector as <u>a single amorphous entity</u> (the prime, indeed sole, function of which is to supply cheap labour), and to measure the 'contraints' or 'squeeze' placed on the indigenous sector in terms of the latter's 'separation' from, or 'denial of access' to the modern markets, modes of transport, and superior technology available to the capitalist sector. Thus, Arrighi merely serves to deepen the dualism he is trying to explain away - by, for instance, stressing that such discriminatory measures as the Land Apportionment Act of 1930, and the Maize Control Acts of the Great Depression period in Rhodesia sought to create "the division of the economy into non-competing racial groups" (6).

The same emphasis on the 'separation' of the two sectors is implicit in Brett's study, in which he sets up peasant production and capitalistic settler production as "sharply antagonistic modes" (7), and in which he forwards the notion that the "plantation structure" in Kenya produced "a subsistence sector disconnected from the market" (8).
We are thus presented with a capitalism which flourishes, not through a process of domination, but of exclusion; not by removing 'dualism' in order to facilitate more effective exploitation, but by accentuating it. In this context, 'underdevelopment' (or undevelopment') is not so much the consequence of capitalist penetration, but of a type of dualist 'separation' not very different from that put forward by the liberal capitalist school.

This is not to deny Arrighi's very real contribution in revealing the compatability between racial discrimination and capitalism (in contrast to the 'incompatability' stressed by the liberal capitalists). But, in failing to come to proper grips with 'dualism', he falls short of establishing how capitalism itself can cause 'underdevelopment'.
One way out of this difficulty is to see, as Frank does, capitalism penetrating into every corner of the indigenous economy, and totally integrating the latter into the capitalist structure, specifically through the medium of trade or 'commercial capitalism' which, by means of 'unequal exchange', is able to siphon off surplus value from the less advanced sector, and in this way, create the dependency of one sector on the other (9). On the basis of this argument, the indigenous sector becomes capitalist' from the moment it is penetrated by the merchant, so that, in Frank's eyes, the distinction between 'capitalist' and 'non-capitalist' becomes meaningless.
As Laclau shows, however, 'capitalism' in Marx's meaning of the term, is a mode of production which, by definition, excludes 'merchant capital' (10), or what Frank calls 'commercial capitalism'. And as Bettelheim has shown, even 'unequal exchange' is merely the symptom of "the inequality of development of the productive forces" of the parties involved in the exchange (11).

If we are going to prove, therefore, that capitalism causes underdevelopment, we would need to look at the manner in which modes of production - capitalist and pre-capitalist - interact with one another; how the capitalist mode penetrates into the pre-capitalist mode to form horizontal ties and alliances which maintain the exploitative structure as a whole; and how production in the pre-capitalist is geared and channelled to the advantage of the capitalist.

This, in turn, means taking a radically different view of the colonial state's role, which must be measured not only in terms of 'separatist' techniques (i.e. elimination and land and crop competition) needed to secure the base for capitalism, but also in terms of moves towards re-integrating the two sectors, in order to sustain capitalist growth.

Even as one traces the interaction between the two sectors, the careful distinction which Marx makes between the process of capital accumulation preceding capitalism (i.e. 'primitive accumulation'), and the capitalistic mode of production itself, would also have to be noted. On this basis, 'primitive accumulation' would embrace both the acquisition of capital through trading (i.e. Frank's 'commercial capitalism' or Laclau's 'merchant capital'), and dispossession of the peasantry of certain capital claims through the denial of sufficient land and easy access to markets, and through the state's use of coercive measures (as shown by Arrighi). The capitalistic mode of production, on the other hand, comes to embrace the utilization of both the capital thus accumulated, and the labour-power of the dispossessed peasantry, with the specific aim of producing 'surplus value' in its own right.

Moreover, as Dobb shows (12), capitalism as Marx defined it, is not simply a system of production for the market, but a system under which labour-power "itself becomes a commodity" i.e. where work for the capitalist producer becomes the only source of livelihood for the labourer. Capitalism, in this context, only comes into operation after the person selling his labour-services has been deprived of his own means of production or subsistence, and thus cannot be held responsible for that deprivation, and the lack of development which follows in its wake.

Now if, despite these conceptual difficulties, one still wishes to argue that the "modernity" of the capitalist sector is a "function of the backwardness" of the pre-capitalist sector (13), then one is forced to postulate a mode of production which links the 'primitive accumulation' process to the capitalistic mode of production by containing, within itself, the elements of both i.e. a production mode which both appropriates capital at the pre-capitalist sector's expense, and employs wage labour in a capitalistic-type endeavour.

In the colonial situation, such a link comes to be provided by the White settler farming mode - or what Laclau identifies as "the feudal mode" or "agrarian capitalism" (14). Such a mode can be described as 'feudal' in character in the sense of :

(a) concentrating the ownership of property into its own hands, at the expense of the peasantry; while
(b) siphoning off surpluses from the peasant sectors; while
(c) increasing servile obligations which turn peasants into serfs; thus
(d) unleashing a 'primitive accumulation' process which dissolves

the old order and strengthens the base for capitalist endeavour. On the other hand, White settler agriculture can be seen as 'capitalist' in the sense of :

(a) transforming serfs into full-time labourers, notably by changing tenant-landlord agreements into wage-labour agreements; and

(b) utilizing the capital it has accumulated for the large-scale production of commodities (principally for export markets); while

(c) seeking to conserve those elements of pre-capitalist production which contribute to cheap labour and which help to keep down production costs.

In forwarding this notion of 'feudalism' with 'capitalist' objectives, we are not suggesting that feudalism everywhere leads to capitalism. As the Russian Revolution bears out, nothing is inevitable in history. Nor need it have been inevitable in the British case. But, given the role of the colonial state in backing these capitalistic objectives, and given also, that colonization, in the Rhodesian case, was carried out through the medium of the B.S.A. Company, with undisguised capitalist intentions of finding a 'Second Witwatersrand' (15), occurring at a stage when capitalism in the Mother Country was already in full flower, there can be no doubting the direction in which feudalism was headed.

Even so, one must resist the temptation of linking the B.S.A. Company into a vertical chain of capitalism, stretching from London and Cape Town to Rhodesia, which automatically incorporated pre-capitalist Ndebele and Shona communities into a world system of capitalism. Such a link did undoubtedly exist, but the incorporation of these African communities into an international system of capitalist domination was by no means automatic.

It was the distinctive feature of colonial penetration into Rhodesia, for instance, that the settlers who came there brought very little capital with them, and precious little capitalist know-how. As miners, they carried out essentially small-scale operations, generally on borrowed equipment (16); and when disillusionment with mining forced them into agriculture, they were initially little more than "subsistence cultivators indistinguishable.. from the African peasantry around them" (17). This meant that capital had to be raised internally through the process of 'primitive accumulation' previously described, and that internal structures of domination had first to be established before the link-up with world capitalism - notably through the export market - could occur.

Once this 'internal accumulation' got underway, the settlers could oppose, with growing confidence, the BSA Company's monopolistic stranglehold, by putting successful pressure on the Imperial Government to deprive the Company of its ownership of unalienated land in 1918 (18); by winning control of the Company's railway interests through the establishment of a Railways Commission in 1925 (19); by gaining responsible government in 1923 (20); and finally, by securing the Company's mineral rights in 1933(21).

The fact that capitalism can acquire an internal momentum of its own, should stand as a warning against the temptation of perceiving 'underdevelopment' in terms of one 'country' exploiting another 'country', or even one 'race' another 'race'. For as Bill Warren hints (22) and Bettelheim shows (23), capitalism is more a 'class' phenomenon than an international or racial one. Just as White settlers in Rhodesia emerged as a distinct capitalist 'class', so too was an independent 'class' of African 'master farmers' allowed to emerge in the African sector, thereby creating horizontal ties with the more advanced European sector, and so helping to sustain the 'dependency' relationship.

Indeed, the crux of that 'dependency' relationship in the Rhodesian case, was the colonial state's encouragement of African crop production which did not compete with European production, but was nevertheless needed by Europeans for keeping down their own production costs, and which sometimes contributed to overall national growth in areas of the export market which was considered too risky for Europeans to enter. The colonial state's role, in this context, was therefore not only one of 'dissolution', but also on 'conservation'.

It is precisely the importance of 'conservation' which has been totally overlooked by Arrighi, Brett <u>et</u> <u>al</u>. And yet, 'conservation' is necessary, not only to ensure a supply of cheap foods, but also a continued supply of cheap labour.

For instance: it is the essence of feudal capitalism in a colonial situation that it exploits the peasant sector by employing labour at <u>below</u> the cost of its own reproduction i.e. below the cost of subsistence necessary to support <u>both</u> the labourer <u>and</u> his family. As Marx shows, family subsistence becomes necessary so that the labourer's children may perpetuate the supply of labour in the market (24). Since it is precisely this cost which the feudal capitalist fails to meet, it becomes necessary for the state to conserve the rural base on which the peasant family relies for its subsistence, while the worker is away.

But it is not 'conservation' in the sense that Wolpe (25) means it i.e. the total exclusion of capital from the African areas in order to preserve these in their pristine traditional form. For, with the introduction of cash obligations into the pre-capitalist sector (through trading operations, and with the introduction of poll tax, dog tax, transport charges, levies, and the like), it becomes necessary for the peasantry to meet at least part of these obligations through the production of cash-crop surpluses, over and above subsistence production. For this reason, at least some intrusion of capital and capitalism into the pre-capitalist sector, albeit on a carefully controlled scale, becomes necessary sooner or later. The problem then becomes one of what to do with the cash crops so produced, and the challenge one of channelling supplies and controlling prices in such a manner that African production works to the benefit of, and not to the detriment, of White feudal capitalism.

Obviously, in meeting the requirements of feudal capitalism in various stages of its growth, and in reconciling the conflicting demands of various modes of feudal production (such as the ranching, crop-producing, small-scale farming, and large-scale plantation modes), the state's policy must be carefully orchestrated to tune in with an ever-changing situation.

If the demand is for capital claims, then policy will tend towards 'dissolution'; if the challenge lies in maintaining growth, then the emphasis will tend to shift towards 'conservation' and 'rationalization.

We thus arrive at Bettlheim's description which holds that:

> " ...within a capitalist formation, the non-capitalist forms of production, before they disappear, are restructured (partly dissolved) and thus subordinated to the predominant capitalist relations (and so conserved)" (26).

Because there is a process of conservation involved, Cardoso's notion of 'dependent development' (27) perhaps comes closest to describing the condition which Marxists call 'underdevelopment'.

To sum up thus far, the processes involved in the creation of a state of 'underdevelopment' may be categorised as follows:

(i) There is a process involving the initial accumulation of capital and capital claims through land seizures, plunder, trading speculation, and barter, (which can be referred to as EXPROPRIATION)

(ii) there is a process involving extra-economic pressure in the form of cash obligations, labour recruitment, service contracts etc., designed to extract cheap labour from the peasantry; (COERCION)

(iii) there is a process of pre-capitalist disintegration and adaptation, in response to the forces of 'primitive accumulation', which weakens the pre-capitalist sector and makes it dependent on the capitalist; (DISSOLUTION)

(iv) there is a process whereby 'primitive accumulation' is rationalized and integrated by the state into an overall system of exploitation, in order to reconcile conflicting demands by various modes of feudal capitalism; (REINTEGRATION)

(v) there is a process of preserving the rural subsistence base to ensure a form of 'dependent development' beneficial to feudal capitalism and to the economy as a whole (CONSERVATION)

(vi) there is, finally, a process whereby efficient peasant producers are separated out from the less efficient, and the latter from dispossessed or partly dispossessed (marginalized) peasantry, thereby creating horizontal relationships which help to sustain and maintain the overall exploitative structure; (DIFFERENTIATION).

While these processes obviously interact, it seems necessary to define them separately, in order to distinguish between those which help to secure the base capitalistic exploitation (expropriation, coercion, and dissolution), and those which help to sustain the exploitative structure as a whole and ensure its continuity (reintegration, conservation, and differentiation).

Through all them, however, the manner in which capitalist-inspired decisions influenced the peasant sector remains a constant theme, and it is this aspect which emerges with some clarity, when analyzing the Rhodesian experience.

In summarizing the process of expropriation, for instance, there can be no denying the commercial nature of Rhodesia's occupation by Whites and the close association with international capitalism of the period. The 1893 War, which saw the Ndbele deprived of most of their land and cattle, was partly engineered to arrest the fall of the BSA Company's shares on the London Stock Exchange (28). Of some 15,8m acres of land thus expropriated, some 9,3m acres were passed over into the hands of companies formed by Rhodes' well-connected friends. Of the 200,000 head of cattle in Ndbele hands prior to 1893, the Company laid claim to 125,470 after the war, about half going to itself, and the other half to officers and men who had fought against the Ndbele. (29) These confiscations laid the basis for a future ranching industry.

The expropriation of land at African expense continued intermitently until 1902, when the Imperial Government saw fit to reserve about 20m acres throughout Rhodesia for Africans who wanted to live in tribal society, while nevertheless guaranteeing Africans the right to acquire land individually, on the same footing as Whites, if they so wished (30).

But while in theory Africans had the same chance of individual property ownership as Whites, the Company's decision to promote commercial farming in 1906, to compensate for mining's lack of promise, held out three important implications:

(a) First, its decision placed a commercial value on land, which, initially, was sold off very cheaply - at 8½d per acre for ranching and 3s.9d. per acre for crop land (31) - to aspirant farmers, the majority of whom purchased their farms on capital borrowed from the Land Bank, established in 1909.
With Africans being denied similar access to Land Bank loans, and with the average land price being allowed to float upwards to 7/- per acre by 1920 (32), the chances of Africans owning their own land on an individual basis were therefore progressively reduced. The process of excluding Africans in this way, finds its equivalent in Marx's description of the role of property in 'primitive accumulation', when he explains that what was chiefly necessary as the historical agency of the accumulation of wealth in bourgeoise hands, was some influence which would depress the value of whatever happened to be the object of hoarding by the bourgeoise during the phase of acquisition, and increase its relative value during the phase of realization. (33).

(b) The second repercussion to flow from the decision to embark on agrarian production, was the imposition of rentals, grazing fees, and dipping charges on the peasantry living on unalienated and alienated European land. These exactions became necessary both to increase the labour supply (34) and (perhaps more significant) to raise capital for meeting the purchase price of the farm. (35)

(c) The decision also influenced the 1925 Land Commission in its allocation of land for African and European ownership. Because of the preference for binding African tenants to European landlords, for reasons noted above, the Commission deliberately avoided a 'segregation' solution by deciding not to provide Reserves in Matabeleland. Instead, it decided to create African purchase areas elsewhere, so as to absorb those Africans who would not be needed on European land, and to provide "a nearby source of comparatively skilled labour" (36). And finally in order to ensure that there would be enough land available for the future growth of European agriculture, the Commission decided to allocate 72 per cent (i.e. 17.42m acres) of available land to Europeans, on the understanding that if commercial farming was unsuccessful, the Whites would be anxious to sell to Africans and the law could be amended (37).

Because of settlers' economic needs, total segregation of Africans and

Europeans was never the intention, either of the 1925 Land Commissioners, or the promulgators of the 1930 Land Apportionment Act. As Prime Minister, H. U. Moffat, argued when introducing the 1929 Bill on the latter, "total segregation would have implied an intention and an objective to remove all Africans to the Reserves ... but this is not the intention, either in the short or long run" (37). Nor was the 1930 Act concerned with 'reserving' separate areas for Africans, in order to protect them from European competition: as Rifkind shows (38), the need for 'reserves' had already been established under the 1898 Order in Council, while the reserve areas themselves were entrenched in the 1923 Constitution. What the 1930 Act was concerned with, was 'protecting' European land rights and determining the conditions under which Africans could be allowed to occupy land in European areas. Thus, out of 76 provisions in the Act (excluding the 'miscellaneous' section), no less than 43 were directly concerned with stating these conditions. As such, the Act merely entrenched the system whereby the bulk of the burden imposed by the accumulation of capital in White hands fell, not on Africans living in the Reserves, but on those living on European and Crown lands.

For instance: a comparison made in 1923 revealed that, whereas an African peasant living inside the Reserve could expect to pay £2.10.0. per annum in poll tax, dog tax, and dipping fees etc., his compatriot outside the Reserve could pay £5.5.0 per annum or more. Moreover, whereas the Reserve peasant could expect some reimbursement on his contributions in the form of state expenditure on development, conservation and extension programmes, the peasant outside received back exactly nil (39). The result was that non-Reserve peasants were the first to offer their services as full-time labourers for Europeans, while Reserve peasants were able to resist this the longest.

In the latter regard, provisional calculations based on figures given in Native Commissioner annual reports suggested that the highest labour migration rates (of over 50 per cent of able-bodied males in 1945-46) were recorded in such predominantly European-occupied districts as Inyanga and Sipolilo, while the lowest rates (of below 10 per cent) were shown by remote reserves of the Gwanda, Ndanga, Bulalima-Mangwe, Belingwe, Bikita and Nuanetsi districts.

Much more work needs to be done to establish the broad trends in African labour migration. But already it is becoming obvious that the Arrighian connection between increased segregation and increased labour migration is

in need of some revision.
This is not to deny that the 'segregated' reserve areas were also expected to supply cheap labour. The process of coercion, identified on page 10 and more than adequately discussed by van Onselen, Mackenzie, Steele et al (40), testifies to this. What is often ignored, however, is that in addition to labour, African-grown produce from the reserves not only represented cheap farming input costs for European producers (as discussed earlier), but also an important source of capital accumulation by European traders, who acted as middlemen in the African maize trade.
Thus, African-grown maize could be bought for 10/- a bag by traders in the Charter area, and resold in Salisbury and Hartley at 37/6; maize acquired in Victoria district at 12/- a bag could be resold for about 25/- in the township itself, and for 50/- to 60/- to mines in the Selukwe area. One way of extracting the maximum profit from peasants was to offer only trade goods and refuse to pay cash for maize, thus enabling traders to make what in effect amounted to a 'double profit'. Many farmers, in order to supplement their farming incomes, also set themselves up as traders: or moved into the business of cattle speculation, by buying up African cattle in times of drought and disease, or simply seizing African stock trespassing on their lands, and reselling these at a profit after fattening them up.(41).

The forces of expropriation and coercion from part of a general ensemble of direct and indirect pressures which altered traditional agricultural practices and weakened the peasantry's subsistence base, through a process of dissolution. Not least among these, was the dissolving impact of European crop production itself, the consequences of which may be summarized as follows:

(i) As European crop production began to expand at a faster rate than export markets could absorb it, forcing down local prices between 1908 and 1920 (42), the African peasantry responded by increasing their own crop acreages, merely in order to maintain the same level of incomes (43). This, in turn, led to the increasing use of ploughs, and a gradual departure from the traditional method of cultivating with hoes. The change was not always for the better. For, whereas the use of the hoe entailed some regard for the ecology (i.e. the top soil was ridged in order to protect crops from flooding, while trees were retained so that there branches could be burned for fertilizer ash), the use of the plough involved no such concern (i.e. trees were stumped, and plough lines failed to follow contours). The result was that the yield from a ploughed land was often only half that from hoe-prepared land, especially in very rainy seasons (44).

Even so, the plough enabled more land to be put under cultivation, more quickly, and on balance, ensured increased production - but at the expense of land availability.

(ii) Increased acreages, in turn, put pressure on the amount of grazing land available, leading to overstocking (45).

(iii) Acreage expansion also upset the ratio of arable to grazing land, reduced the amount of manure available for fertilizing, and thus contributed to declining yields (46).

(iv) Pressure on grazing land; along with compulsory dipping; and the constant and often unnecessary enforcement of quarantine regulations in the reserves, to isolate hardier and better adapted African stock from disease-prone European cattle, cross-bred with foreign stock, led to the overconcentration of African stock in certain areas, and therefore a decline in their condition which, in turn, lowered stock prices. To compensate for these lower prices, Africans simply increased their crop acreages, thereby completing the vicious circle (47).

(v) The more efficient use of African labour on European farms, and consequent eviction of surplus squatters, led to population movements into the reserves, which merely aggravated the problems of overstocking and declining yields (48), to produce a vicious and expanding circle of destruction (49).

(vi) Declining yields, overstocking, low prices, and overcrowding in some reserves, in turn produced a rising spiral of rural poverty which, in <u>its</u> turn, led to Africans pledging their future crops and cattle to traders, and thus to rising indebtedness which simply aggravated that poverty, and put pressure on the peasantry to offer their services as labourers(50).

The situation arose, therefore, where increased African crop production, necessary for meeting cash and tax obligations, coincided with the growing inability of the peasantry to meet even basic subsistence needs. Despite this, European farmers found themselves in the anomolous position of suffering from periodic labour shortages, due to the peasantry's own commitments at times of planting and harvesting, and to the African preference for earning tax and rent monies by working in towns and on larger mines, where wages were higher (51).

On top of all this, when the Great Depression broke, shattering European agriculture's export base, European farmers started pressing for a return large enough for them to continue farming and live according to 'civilized standards' (52)

The government attempted to meet these problems by an elaborate set of conservation and rationalization measures which took the following forms:

(i) To help solve the labour shortage problem on the farms, it made provision under the 1930 Land Apportionment Act for farmers to enter into firm 'labour agreements' with their tenants, and to get rid of excess squatters on their land. However, since the reserves were clearly incapable of absorbing all the surplus population due for eviction, the process could only be a gradual one (53). In those instances where removals went ahead, the Native Purchase Areas, adjoining the European Areas, tended to be used as dumping grounds (54). The effect was to restrict, even further, the opportunities for individual Africans to own property, since leasehold had to be introduced in a number of purchase areas to allow groups, rather than individuals, to occupy the land (55).

(ii) To raise the carrying capacity of the reserves, and to guarantee peasants at least a subsistence level of living, the Native Department embarked on a policy of 'centralizing' the reserves (i.e. demarcating land into fixed arable and grazing areas) and of improving agricultural methods through trained 'demonstrators' (56). At first, the aim was to spread the agricultural demonstration net as widely as possible, to benefit the greatest number; but by 1941, efforts began to be concentrated on the more efficient producers, who also had favoured access to the best land. The result was the emergence of a small and elite class of 'master farmers' who were responsible for the major portion of African cash crop production (57).

(iii) A complex price control system ensured that all African crop sales would subserve European needs. Under the Maize Control and the Beef Bounty and Levy Acts of the Thirties, levies were imposed on African Maize and cattle sales, and the levy incomes used to subsidize the maize and beef export losses of European producers.

The actual manner of subsidization involved some highly complicated pieces of legislation which are too long to explain in a paper of this nature. The effects of the levy system, however, may briefly be outlined as follows:

(a) Since the maize levy was payable by traders handling African maize, the effect was to reduce opportunities for speculation by these so-called 'trader-producers', and to convert 'commercial capital' (as represented by profits on maize trading) into 'production capital' (as represented by subsidies to European growers).

(b) Exporters of chilled beef (called 'chiller-producers'), along with farmers needing cheap rations for their labourers (called 'farm-consumers') were permitted to buy African maize at less than the Local Fixed Price, but for this privilege, they also had to pay a levy, which represented a further source of income for subsidizing large-scale exporters (58). (The price paid to the African, plus the levy, worked out at about 1/- to 1/6 less than the Local price of some 9/- a bag during the Thirties).

(c) Chiller-producers received a further benefit, in the form of beef 'bounties' payable on exports, the bounty income being raised by a levy on all stock slaughtered, both African and European. In theory, any stock owner, whatever his race, was entitled to export bounties; but since these exports were of high-quality European origin, low-grade African producers were, in effect, being made to subsidize Europeans through payment of a levy for which they received nothing back in return (59).

(d) The beef levy was payable by butchers who, in order to minimize its impact, preferred to buy only the best quality African stock. For instance: since the levy was the same, irrespective of the weight of the beast, a butcher naturally preferred buying a single beast of, say, 1000 lbs for which the levy was 10/-, than two or three beasts totalling the same weight, for which he would be liable to pay 20/- or 30/-.

This, in turn, led to the accumulation in the reserves of poorer quality African stock which could not be sold, contributing in its turn, to overstocking and a decline in stock quality (60).

(e) Both trader-producers and butchers passed on their levy deductions to the African by offering lower prices. Since the levies were flat charges, irrespective of distances from the market, African producers furthest from marketing outlets received the lowest prices. The effect was to discourage the growing of maize in remote areas which, under Depression circumstances, is what the government and farmers wanted (61).

(f) From 1940 onwards, however, European producers were once again in a position to export profitably. So the levy system was altered, to restimulate African production in remote areas. Levies previously used for subsidizing Europeans, were now used to subsidize the transport costs of remote-area growers, so that all Africans would receive the same price, irrespective of distance from the market. In effect, efficient African producers were made to subsidize the less efficient, the aim being to achieve an overall increase in African production, in order to meet local needs which Whites were no longer interested in supplying. At the same time, income from levies was also used for improving and expanding marketing facilities in the reserves, and in order to raise the maximum amount of income for this purpose, levies were imposed on other crops as well (62), such as sorghum, groundnuts, beans, and small grains.

In these ways, the state was able to bring the African in as a supplier of local needs, thereby enabling the European producer to concentrate his main efforts on export markets. That the state had no small measure of success, is born out by the fact that by 1950, Africans were accounting for 97 per cent of the country's groundnut production (needed for the vegetable oil manufacturing industry), 65 per cent of beef, 57 per cent of wheat, and 54 per cent of maize (63).

(iv) Finally, the state rationalized and institutionalized the time-honoured habit of speculating in African cattle. The Cold Storage Commission, set up in 1938, acted as a residual buyer of all eligible slaughter and non-slaughter stock in the reserves, the non-slaughter stock (comprising about a third of the total purchased) then being placed on agreement with European farmers, who fattened them up and took a profit on their improved condition when they delivered them, in due course, to the Commission's abattoirs.
At the same time, the beef levy made way for a slightly more subtle form of subsidizing European beef exporters : in guaranteeing prices for slaughter cattle, the top grades of meat were fixed at a level which involved the CSC in losses on both local and export sales; on the other hand, producer prices of the lower grades, comprising all of the African output, were manipulated to allow the Commission to make an offsetting profit (64). The technique was not dissimilar to that used by the Maize Control Board up to 1940, when high prices paid to Europeans, involved the Board in losses which it offset by the profits earned by direct buying and selling of African maize, supplemented by the levies (65).

In overall terms, it will thus be seen that the agrarian capitalist structure in Rhodesia was sustained by transforming and integrating the peasant mode of production into an overall system of exploitation. The exploitative structure was supported and reinforced by the penetration of capitalism into the African peasant sector itself, to produce a labour-employing class of 'master farmers' and 'irrigation plotholders' on the one hand; a class of self-supporting 'co-operators' in the middle (comprising about 30 per cent of all African farmers in 1950); and a majority of 'marginalized' peasants at the other end of the scale, who were forced to supplement their farming incomes by the custom of 'Mariksha' (i.e. by working for other Africans), or by offering their labour services to Europeans (66).

This process of differentiation among the peasantry was a natural consequence of the state's 'Native Development' policy, of which the 1953 Land Husbandry Act was the supreme expression (67). But destocking programmes in the Forties, which hit small stock-owners hardest (68), and increasingly excessive demands for 'lobola' in the marriage custom, along with the inclination of chiefs to allocate land to favourites (69), also played their part in concentrating wealth into fewer and fewer hands.

In conclusion, capitalism and capitalistic growth was a function both of the 'backwardness' and 'dependent development' of the peasant sector.

****

FOOTNOTES

(1) J. H. Boeke, "Economics and Economic Policy of Dual Societies", New York, 1953.

M. G. Smith "The Plural Society in British West Indies", Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1965.

(2) W. A. Lewis
(a) "Economic Development with Unlimited Supplies of labour", Manchester School, May 1954.
(b) "Unlimited Labour: Some further notes", Manchester School, January 1958.
(c) "Reflections on Unlimited Labour" in L.E.D. Marco(ed), 'International Economics and Development', Academic Press, New York, 1972.

W. J. Barber "The Economy of British Central Africa: A Case Study of Economic Development in a Dualistic Society", OUP, 1961.

S. Enke "Western Development of a sparsely populated country: the Rhodesias", in American Economic Review, Vol 1, 1960.

(3) G. S. Becker, "The Economics of Discrimination", University of Chicago Press, 2nd Edition, 1971.

L. C. Thurow, "Poverty and Discrimination", Studies in Social Economics, The Brooking Institution, Washington, 1969.

K. J. Arrow, "Economic Theory and Racial Discrimination", Marshall Lectures, University of Cambridge, 1970 (mimeo)

J. Barber "The Road to Rebellion", OUP, London, 1967.

T. Bull, "Rhodesian Perspective", Michael Joseph, London, 1967.

P. Keatley, "The Politics of Partnership", Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1963.

S. Williams "Central Africa: The Economics of Inequality", Fabian Commonwealth Bureau, Research Series No. 25, London, 1960.

M.L.O. Faber, "Income Distribution by Race in Southern Rhodesia", in RACE, 2,2,1961.

(4) G. Arrighi "Labour Supplies in Historical Perspective: A Study of the Proletarianization of the African Peasantry in Rhodesia", in Journal of Development Studies, 6,3, 1970.

(5) Ibid, p.222

(6) G. Arrighi, "The Political Economy of Rhodesia", Mouton, The Hague, 1967, p.32.

(7) E. A. Brett, "Colonialism and Underdevelopment in East Africa. The Politics of Economic Change 1919-1939." Heineman, London, Nairobi, and Ibadan, 1973, p.168.

(8) Ibid, p.289

(9) A.G. Frank "Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America. Historical Studies of Chile and Brazil", Monthly Review Press, New York and London, 1967, p.5

(10) E.Laclau "Feudalism and Capitalism in Latin America", in New Left Review, May-June 1971, p.21.

(11) C.Bettelheim "Theoretical Comments", Appendix I in A. Emmanual, "Unequal Exchange", Monthly Review Press, New York and London, 1972, p.275.

(12) M.Dobb, "Studies in the Development of Capitalism", Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1959, pp 7-8.

(13) Laclau, op.cit, p.31

(14) Laclau, op.cit, p.28

(15) L. H. Gann, "A History of Southern Rhodesia. Early Days to 1934", Humanities Press, New York, 1969, pp.83-95.

(16) Ibid, p.159

(17) Arrighi, 1970, op.cit, p.209.

(18) Gann, op.cit, p.231

(19) Ibid, pp 255-256.

(20) Ibid, p.249

(21) Ibid p.292

(22) Bill Warren "Imperialism and Capitalist Industrialization" in New Left Review, No. 81, Sept-Oct, 1973, p.44.

(23) Bettelheim, op. cit, p.290

(24) K. Marx, "Capital. A Critical analysis of Capitalist Production" Vol I, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1961, p.172.

(25) H. Wolpe "The theory of Internal Colonialism", in "Beyond the Sociology of Development. Economy and Society in Latin America". Ivar Oxaal, Tony Barnett, David Booth (eds.), Routledge and Kegan Paul, Boston and London, 1975, pp.248-249.

(26) Bettelheim, 1972, op.cit, p.297.

(27) F.H. Cardoso "Dependency and Development in Latin America", in New Left Review, No. 74, July-August, 1972, p.94.

(28) R.H. Palmer "Aspects of Rhodesian Land Policy 1890-1976", The Central Africa Historical Association, Local Series 22 , 1968, p.7-8.

(29) Ibid, p.18.

(30) M.L. Rifkind "Land Apportionment Act in Perspective", in Rhodesian History, 3, 1972, pp 53-54.

(31) R.H. Palmer "The Agricultural History of Rhodesia", History Seminar Paper No. 5, University of Zambia, 1973-74,p.12.

(32) Ibid, p.18

(33) Dobb, op.cit, p. 180.

(34) Palmer, 1968, op. cit, p 25.

(35) Report of the Chief Native Commissioner for the year 1926, National Archives Salisbury (NAS).

(36) Report of the Land Commission, 1925, (NAS) p.12.

(37) H.U. Moffat, Legislative Assembly Debates, Southern Rhodesia, Vol 8, April 24, 1929, col 72.

(38) Rifkind, 1972 op.cit, p. 53.

(39) S235/501, Report of the Native Commissioner, Bubi District, 1923 (NAS)

(40) C. van Onselen "Chibaro. African Mine Labour in Southern Rhodesia 1900-1933, Pluto Press, London, 1976.

J.M. Mackenzie "African Labour in South Central Africa 1890-1914 and 19th Century Colonial Labour Theory", Ph.D. thesis (unpubl), University of British Columbia, 1969.

M.C. Steele "The foundation of a 'Native Policy', Southern Rhodesia 1923-33, Ph.D., Simon Fraser University, 1972.

D.G. Clarke "The Political Economy of Discrimination and Under-development in Rhodesia with special reference to African workers 1940-1973", Ph.D. thesis (unpubl) St. Andrews, 1975.

D. B. Jupta "Labour Supplies and economic development in Rhodesia," M.SC thesis, London and UCRN, 1966-67.

(41) I.R. Phimister "Peasant Production and Underdevelopment in Southern Rhodesia 1890-1914", in African Affairs, Vol 73, No. 291, 1974, p.224.

S235/507 N/C Lomagundi, 1929 (NAS)
S235/510 N/C Chilimanzi, 1932 (NAS)
S1563 AsN/C Fort Victoria, 1937(NAS)
N9/1/21 N/C Insiza 1918
N9/4/37 N/C Insiza 1919
Report of the Native Production and Trade Commission, 1945 (NAS)

(42) Annual Reports of the Director of Agriculture, 1908 to 1920 (NAS)

(43) M. Yudelman, "Africans on the Land", Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1964, Appendix B

(44) S235/507 N/C Mrewa, 1928

(45) S235/510 N/C Gutu, 1932

(46) S1563 N/C Bikita, 1937 (NAS)

(47) S1563 N/C Bikita, 1939 (NAS)
S1563 N/C Chibi, 1936 (NAS)
S235/510 N/C Chilimanzi, 1932 (NAS)

(48) S1563 N/C Selukwe, 1946 (NAS)
S1563 N/C Bubi, 1946 (NAS)

(49) Reports of the Chief Native Commissioner for the years 1926, 1928, 1932, 1946.

(50) S235/506 N/C Amandas (NAS)

(51) M.C. Steele, "The African Agricultural Labour Supply Crisis, 1924-28" Labour Seminar Paper No.6, Dept of Economics, University of Rhodesia, 1973.

(52) D.J. Murray "The Governmental System of Rhodesia", Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1970, p 80.

(53) R. H. Palmer "The Making and Implementation of Land Policy in Rhodesia 1890-1936", Ph.D thesis (unpubl) London University, 1968, pp.405-412.

(54) Ibid p402

(55) Ibid p403

(56) Report of the Chief Native Commissioner, 1932

(57) Reports of the Chief Native Commissioner, 1941 and 1942.

(58) S1215/1090/5 to 319 (NAS)

(59) S1215/SC74/132 to 148 (NAS)

(60) S235/514 N/C Makoni, 1935 (NAS)

(61) S1542/A2 to M2 (NAS)

(62) H. Dunlop "Efficiency Criteria in Primary Marketing. An Analysis of African Marketing Policies in Rhodesia", *in* The Rhodesian Journal of Economics, Vol 4, No. 3, Sept 1970, pp 10-20.

(63) SNA/CNC/DND, 1950 (NAS)

(64) Dunlop, 1970, op. cit, p 15

(65) C.F. Keyter, "Maize Control in Southern Rhodesia 1931-1939. The African Contribution to White survival", unpubl dissertation, University of Rhodesia, 1974.

(66) Report of the Chief Native Commissioner for the years 1948 and 1950.

A.K.H. Weinrich "Evolution and Revolution in African Agriculture", Private Paper No. 319, Dept. of Sociology, University of Rhodesia, undated, p 5.

(67) Report of the Chief Native Commissioner for the year 1961.

(68) S1542/N2/1-5-33 N-S

(69) S1542/N2 7-6-33 E-F