Two of the main articles in this issue, those by Clough and Vaughan, present material from case studies in northern Nigeria and southern Malawi. Case studies such as these are able to explore the complex ramifications of rural social and economic relations and to question the abstract generalisations regarding middlemen, households and gender relations advanced by studies with a more macro-societal focus. 'Peasant' studies have tended to base their analyses on the 'household', conceived as a unit of production and consumption. Clough and Vaughan show the importance of situating the study of agricultural production in the context of exchange relations and of examining the changing relations of household members, female and male, to others within and without the households (natal and marital) to which they are affiliated.

The articles by Williams and Clough are concerned with crop marketing in Nigeria. The internal food markets, studied by Clough, have largely been developed by African traders. The markets for the main export crops, considered by Williams, were dominated by European firms and, since the second world war, by state marketing boards. Williams locates the origins of marketing boards in the crises of colonial political economy in the 1930s and the need to shore up the British economy in the 1940s. He emphasises that their original justification was to regulate the internal marketing of export crops to defend 'peasants' from 'middlemen'. The result has been to create an instrument for taxing peasants, leading to the collapse of agricultural exports and conferring privileged access to funds and trading opportunities to clients of governments and of governing parties. Clough's study of the social relations of inter-rural grain traders shows that access to trading opportunities depends on the development of credit, information and personal contacts through the reciprocal if asymmetrical, relations of patrons and clients and through lateral friendship networks. Neo-classical models of market competition, however, ignore the social foundations of market transactions. Equally, Marxist models of the subordination of peasant to monopolistic middlemen and usurers fail to recognise the alternatives open to producers and traders, to debtors and creditors and to clients as well as to patrons. In the absence of state regulation, markets are certainly competitive but imperfectly so. The inter-rural marketing networks are more effective in distributing commodities at lower cost than are marketing boards for export crops in Nigeria, as in other West African countries or, it could be argued, than the food marketing parastatals in Tanzania and the Sahelian countries. The possible exceptions may be in countries where marketing boards were set up to support settler capitalists: South Africa, Zimbabwe and Kenya.

Today, paranoia against middlemen and, significantly, middlewomen, tends to be
used to explain away high prices and shortages of commodities, and to justify
government intervention in markets and the creation of costly parastatals and
marketing cooperatives. These extend government patronage but do nothing to
solve the problems of improving returns to producers or making commodities
available to consumers. Socialists, in Williams’ view are unduly susceptible to
appeals for state intervention in the market. He argues that, in the contemporary
Nigerian context, socialists should reject ‘statism’ and support ‘free trade’. Sceptics
might wonder whether, in an established capitalist economy like that of Nigeria,
such and appeal to laissez-faire principles is likely to find favour among policy
makers in the absence of a revolutionary transformation of its entire political
economy.

Vaughan’s article uses material from two extended case studies to explore the
transformation of gender relations in the household in the process of the
development of peasant commodity production in southern Malawi. She argues
that the concept of the peasant household as a unit of production and
consumption, its members jointly controlling access to resources, is misleading.
Inter-household relations between kin and non-kin are equally important for
understanding strategies of resource management and the consequences of the
development of commodity production. So too are the interventions of the colonial
state in the structuring of relations of production under capital. Her comparison of
cotton production by the Mang’anga of the Lower Shire Valley and of tenant
tobacco production on the privately owned Bruce Estates in the Shire Highlands
illustrates the processes through which women’s access to key resources has been
transformed.

Three of the Debates pieces also focus on the transformation of agrarian
economies and on agrarian policy. Heald and Hay comment on the article by
Buch-Hansen and Marcussen, published in ROAPE 23, on contract farming and the
peasantry in Kenya. They question the grounds on which Buch-Hansen and
Marcussen argued that there had been no immiseration of the peasantry and the
criteria they used to determine the existence of class divisions within the
peasantry. Abdelkarim’s contribution refers to O’Brien’s article, published in
ROAPE 26, on the formation of a national agricultural labour market in Sudan.
Abdelkarim introduces empirical evidence to argue that no such national labour
market has yet emerged. Simon elaborates further on the problems of land reform
policy in Zimbabwe raised by Bush and Cliffe in ROAPE 29.

Two other Debates pieces offer interpretations of politics and class struggle over
the last few years in Nigeria and in Ghana. Olukoshi and Abdulraheem provide a
brief post mortem on the short-lived Buhari regime. Initially welcomed by the
public, it proved to be the most oppressive regime since Nigeria’s independence,
allowing free rein to the Nigerian Security Organisation. It combined an economic
offensive against workers with the imprisonment of its critics, draconian laws and
the patriotic moralising of the ‘war against indiscipline’. Its sectional biases
provided new opportunities for the self-appointed guardians of regional and ethnic
interests. It exemplified the narrowest of military visions of society’s problems and
their solutions.

Yao Graham makes a further contribution to the understanding of the ‘process’ in
Ghana since Rawlings returned to power. His interpretation differs markedly from
that of Zaya Yeebo whose contribution was published in ROAPE 32. Graham
argues that the 1981 coup introduced a progressive rather than a revolutionary
government and the ‘process’ has to be understood in these terms. He describes the
two broad areas of class struggle which have exemplified the ‘process’ over the last
three years — against internal reactionaries and imperialism and amongst the classes represented by the coalition leadership.

In our final Debates piece, Wellings and Sutcliffe challenge two views advanced by 'friends of South Africa' to justify the continuation of foreign investment. The first is that 'blacks themselves do not want disinvestment'. They argue that Schlemmer's survey of black male production workers does not establish the points it wishes to make on this issue, let alone the wider claims made for it by politicians in Britain and the USA. The second is that disinvestment or divestment would reduce employment for black South Africans, as Mrs Thatcher recently argued — ironically in the face of her government's record in Britain; Wellings and Sutcliffe point out that it is not self-evident that the sale of foreign assets will increase unemployment by itself. A different lesson, however, may be drawn from the collapse of the rand and South Africa's inability to meet its debt commitments in the past year. South Africa is extremely vulnerable to falls in the prices of its mineral and agricultural exports which have to pay, amongst other things, for its rising military and security budgets. Hence it is heavily dependent on access to foreign public and private bank credit and on the need to secure a new inflow of foreign investment. It is not black workers but the South African government which is most vulnerable to the effects of a successful disinvestment campaign.

The campaign by opponents of South Africa abroad to support the struggles of South Africans is important. Two Briefings in this Issue, however, describe the intensity of those struggles against the brutality of the South African regime. The regime thought that by signing the Nkomati agreement (which Mozambique has adhered to even though South Africa has not) and by carrying their campaign of terror into neighbouring countries, they could suppress internal resistance and external opposition to apartheid. Since Nkomati, the people of South Africa have sustained and intensified their resistance in the face of a campaign of murder and imprisonment by the South African security forces. Brutal attacks on collaborators, real and suspected, have undermined the regime's hopes of co-opting supporters from among the subject people. Thus far, conflicts have tended to concentrate in black areas and the victims on both sides have usually been black. Recently, the wages of riots and demonstrations have spilt over into the central areas of Johannesburg and Cape Town. They are still a long way from threatening the regime's control of state power. On the other hand, it is clear that Botha has been unable to formulate the programme of reform which his friends and supporters hope for, so that they can continue their 'policy' of 'constructive engagement' — that is, to protect the South African state and capitalist investment in apartheid. The Briefings describe different aspects of the opposition to the state and to capital in South Africa. Haworth assesses the lessons, and limits, of the recent unionisation and strike action by the National Union of Mineworkers. A participant in the campaign to mobilise student and community opposition in the Western Cape describes the continued resistance by the predominantly 'coloured' people to the policy and army.

Pepe Roberts
Gavin Williams

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Reply to the ROAPE office as soon as possible.
Since their inception, Nigerian marketing boards have been used to serve various interests and purposes, hardly any of which have benefited the producers. They originated in the Second World War and were perpetuated after the war by a Labour government so that they might play their part in ‘meeting British needs’, to cite the title of a forthcoming study by Mike Cowen and Bob Shenton. Nigerian politicians found them a ready-made instrument for taxing farmers, enriching themselves and financing their political activities. Their pricing policies discouraged farmers from producing export crops, thus rendering the boards redundant though not, regrettably, ensuring their abolition. Nigeria is fortunate in that, until recently, marketing boards have not bought food for sale in domestic markets and have no monopoly, in form or in fact, over the purchase of crops, other than cotton, for sale within Nigeria.

Discussion of the Nigerian marketing boards has tended, rightly, to focus on their monopoly of the legal export of certain crops, on their pricing policies and on the use to which governments put the funds which they derived from the trading profits of the boards. Less remarked on, the boards also structured the internal marketing system for the commodities they export. Indeed, when the commodity marketing boards were established in 1947 the main justification given was the need to change the internal marketing system for export crops, ostensibly in the interests of protecting the producer from the ills of middlemen in an unregulated market. These arguments for state intervention in, and regulation of, produce marketing, in Nigeria as elsewhere in Africa, have found sympathy among socialists who have been all too willing to take statism as at least offering a foundation for socialism. This article examines the provenance of the marketing boards and of the arguments which justified their inception during the crisis of the colonial economy in the 1930s.

**Marketing Boards as Export Monopolies**

In 1939 the British government agreed to buy the entire cocoa output of British West Africa. In 1940, responsibility for purchases and sales was transferred to the West African Cocoa Control Board which in 1942 was extended to purchase groundnuts, palm produce and some other commodities as the West African Produce Control Board. Despite limited shipping space and restrictions on imports of cocoa to the USA between 1941 and 1942, the Board managed to accumulate a trading profit of $8.7m by buying cocoa cheaply and selling it dear. Of this $2.7m
MARKETING BOARDS IN NIGERIA

was allocated to Nigeria, the lion's share of the rest going to the Gold Coast.

In 1947, commodity boards were set up in Britain’s West African colonies to take over the export of crops from the Produce Control Board. They continued to set prices to the producer below the levels obtained on the world market. This reduced the demand from West Africa for scarce imported commodities and thus for dollar payments. This in turn restrained the rise in inflation and reduced the pressure on the government’s system for allocating imports and controlling prices. They forced West Africa producers to pay for part of Britain’s deficit in her trade with the USA. Marketing Board funds were invested in Britain in low-interest Treasury bonds. The nationalisation of the West African export trade made it into an imperial monopoly and excluded firms from the United States, the main market for cocoa, from purchasing directly in West Africa.

In the circumstances faced by the British government at the time, it is hardly surprising that they took this opportunity of exploiting colonial producers to shore up the crumbling defences of sterling and the imperial economy. However, these policies needed to be justified as serving the interests of the producer. Two justifications were offered. The first argued that the producers would benefit from a regulated system of marketing, in which government fixed crop prices for each season and licensed buyers to protect farmers from ‘abuses’. The second claim was that the boards would use their funds ‘to serve as a cushion against short and intermediate price fluctuations in the world market price’; some funds would also be used ‘for other purposes of general benefit to cocoa producers and the industry, such as research, disease eradication and rehabilitation of diseased trees, the amelioration of indebtedness, the encouragement of co-operation and the provision of other amenities and facilities to producers’ (Cmnd.6950, 1946, pp.2-4).

The 1946 White Paper (Cmnd.6950, p.9) insisted ‘that there will be no question of their [the boards] making a profit at the expense of West African cocoa producers.’ It did not explain how the boards were to set prices to stabilise inter-seasonal variations, nor how they could do so in the absence of foreknowledge of future trends in commodity prices. The White Paper rejected a proposal to impose a cess on cocoa when prices rose above a certain level and to pay a subsidy when they fell below this level. Peter Bauer (pp.271-5) presciently pointed out that if world prices continued to increase, then trading surpluses would have to stay high to ensure that producer prices could be protected against a fall in world prices. However, any drop in world prices would be likely to be met by an anticipatory drop in the prices paid to producers, lest world prices continue to fall.

In the 1950s, new justifications were offered by socialist economists and by the World Bank mission to Nigeria for the marketing boards and their accumulation of trading profits. It was argued that they could be used to tax agricultural producers and to pay for the infrastructural investments needed to promote industrial development, and even to invest directly in industry. Obviously governments need to raise taxes and export producers should make their contribution to state revenues. Apart from the disproportionate burden which fell on export producers, it is quite possible to tax exports without setting up the apparatus of government boards to export the crop and to regulate its marketing internally.

The consequences of taxing export producers to pay for government expenditures and industrial investments have now become apparent. While export volumes and revenues fall, as farmers and their children switch to other occupations or sell to smugglers, both government and the new industries depend on exports to pay for their net import costs. Taxation of export crop farmers has reduced demand for the goods they consume in favour of goods consumed by
governments and their beneficiaries. This may well have held back local industrialisation, by shifting demand to goods which cannot be produced locally, or which can only be produced at a high cost, and away from goods which are manufactured locally.

In 1954, Nigeria's commodity marketing boards were reorganised as regional marketing boards, providing a fiscal base for the politicians to whom control of the new regional governments was now devolved. They used them to pay for schools and roads, to fund their private business activities and to pay for their party political campaigns. Between 1947 and 1970, the tax rate for the five main export crops varied from 20 per cent (groundnuts) to 42 per cent (cocoa). In 1968 and 1969, low cocoa prices combined with rising taxes and petty extortion by government officials led to a rebellion by farmers in the areas of declining cocoa production, and to demands for higher cocoa prices.

In 1974 the federal government, flush with rising oil revenues, took over from the state (formerly regional) marketing boards the power to fix prices and declared that the boards should no longer accumulate trading profits. In 1977, the government dissolved the state marketing boards and returned to commodity marketing boards. These covered the crops which the old boards had exported (notably cocoa, groundnuts, palm produce and cotton) and created new boards for rubber, for grains and for tuber and root crops. The new food marketing boards have bought little, though they have bought up some of the surplus 'yellow' maize produced by absentee capitalist farmers in the northern states. The Boards retain a monopoly over the export of crops, though this was ignored in the case of grain exports to Niger, but they do not have a monopoly over the sale of crops within Nigeria, except in the case of cotton, which ginneries can only buy through the board's licensed buying agents (LBAS).

Marketing board prices for the major export prices were raised sharply in 1974 and 1975 and, again, in the case of cocoa, in 1978. Despite these price increases, their purchasing power in the 1970s was rather less than the purchasing power of the same commodities in the depression of the 1930s. Alternative opportunities for economic activity have increased since then! Not surprisingly, farmers and their children have turned to produce other crops and to non-agricultural activities, and marketing board purchases of all the major crops have continued to decline since 1965 (palm produce), 1967 (groundnuts) and 1971 (cocoa). Palm oil and groundnuts, which can be sold locally, are hardly exported at all.

For a time, Nigeria has been able to ignore the collapse of its agricultural exports because of the dramatic rise in oil revenues. It is now clear that oil revenues are extremely vulnerable to changes in the international economy and that they can no longer pay for Nigeria's commitments. In the long term, Nigeria will have no export industries, alternative to oil, to which to turn.

'Pools', 'Middlemen' and 'Abuses'
The origins of state marketing boards in West Africa are to be found in attempts by British merchant firms to organise monopolistic cartels to purchase produce. From the 19th century, the West African export trade was characterised by oligopolistic forms of competition: 'there have been recurrent phases of intense competition followed by market sharing arrangements: and there have been occasional spectacular attempts to keep out or destroy particular competitors'. Agreements to 'pool' the trade tended to break down in boom periods, and to be sought in slumps.

Between the world wars there was a sharp fall in the number of firms combined to form the African export-import trade. In 1919, several leading firms combined to
form the African and Eastern Trade Corporation to compete with the Niger Company, which Lever Brothers acquired at a very high price in 1920. In 1929 the two were amalgamated as the United Africa Company (UAC), controlled by Unilever, which henceforth dominated the West African export-import trade.

'Pool' agreements among the major European firms operated at various times for palm produce, groundnuts, cocoa and beniseed. They also regulated the market in the main lines of imports. The depression of the 1930s, combined with the dominant market position of the UAC, encouraged the formation of 'pools'. Their effectiveness was modified by a degree of evasion by firms competing for the favour of middlemen and, more importantly, by outside competitors, notably Levantine firms. Stricter enforcement of agreed quotas and prices required government intervention, which war-time controls provided.

Government sanctioned restrictions on trade much earlier in the case of cotton. The British Cotton Growers Association (BCGA), an association of cotton manufacturers who bought cotton but did not grow it, were concerned to encourage cotton production for export and to displace local cloth producers. The Colonial Office granted them monopoly buying rights in 1905 and they asked the merchant firms to buy cotton for them at fixed prices for a commission. 'Armed with this monopoly the BCGA aimed to curtail price fluctuations, speculation, competition between firms and other market uncertainties and to mount an at least united, if not always successful campaign against local competition' (Shenton and Lennihan, p.54). To this last end, government enacted legislation in 1916 to permit in certain areas only the planting of American Allen cotton seeds which were unsuited to the needs of local weavers.

Before 1924 firms, buying at a fixed price, competed by offering advances to farmers, to be recovered on the sale of their cotton. In 1924 the BCGA gave up its cotton buying monopoly. Now it was the firms' American buyers, who were paid on a commission basis, who tried to buy as much cotton as they could. Lacking first-hand knowledge of individual farmers, they extended credit through hamlet heads and traders. Farmers needed credit to pay their taxes, which fell due before the cotton harvest, for food and for other expenditures. In periods of rising prices, European firms with forward contracts to supply a certain amount of cotton would give their buyers permission to 'overbid' their rivals.

Both the firms and the government regarded the 'advance' system as an 'abuse' which deprived the farmers of the full value of their produce. Clearly there was scope for abuse. Hamlet heads might keep back part of the money advanced to pay farmers' taxes. Part of the advance might be in cloth or salt which the farmers would have to sell at a discount in order to get cash. Traders might give short weight for cotton to debtors. Creditors might seek to pay farmers less than the full value of their cotton. However, farmers might then insist on repaying the debt in cash. It was difficult to enforce debts. The main source of 'abuse' in the system was the demand for farmers to pay taxes before the cotton harvest and the powers of hamlet heads and other officials to extort money from farmers. Further, the sustained level of direct taxation during the depression forced many to sell their grain as well as cotton, to pay their taxes and to borrow money to meet their grain needs earlier in the year. Farmers surely benefited from competition for their custom in the form of advances.

In 1935 government sought to regulate cotton marketing. In 'market areas' firms were required to buy cotton directly from farmers at gazetted markets for the full price in cash. Only further afield, in 'buying areas' could 'middlemen' buy cotton from farmers for resale to firms. Growers were prohibited from accepting
advances. However, the firms needed the 'middlemen' to bring the cotton to market
and the farmers needed credit before the harvest so the regulations remained a
dead letter.

In the season 1935-36 cotton prices rose from 1.1d to 1.6d per lb of seed cotton,
and then fell again to 1.1d. Advances made in anticipation of the higher price could
not be repaid, causing the firms' buyers to bear substantial losses. It was in these
circumstances that the government asked L.C. Giles to report on credit and
marketing in Zaria Province and on the possibility of establishing co-operatives
there.* He argued that 'junior buyers and middlemen' could be replaced by carefully
nurtured co-operative societies. In this way, farmers would be protected from the
evils of debt, speculation and free competition!

Similar circumstances in the cocoa trade in the following year. 1936-37 led to the
formation of a new 'pool' agreement among the 12 major exporters to eliminate
'abuses' and protect the firms, and the producers, from the dangers of 'insane
competition'.

European firms purchased cocoa from a hierarchy of buyers and sub-buyers. Buyers
were paid salaries and commission; in periods of intense competition
additional commission was paid for 'tonnage' by firms seeking to maximise their
purchases to meet their own forward supply commitments. Firms advanced money
to buyers to secure purchases; buyers advanced money to sub-buyers, and
onwards to farmers. Cocoa was also bought and sold to the firms by independent
buyers. Fewer Africans were able to remain independent in the 1930s than
previously.

The 1938 Nowell Commission was told that farmers pledged cocoa to sub-buyers
at usurious interest rates, but also cited evidence (pp.84-88) 'that the intense
competition between produce buyers has led them in some cases to offer advances
at low rates or even without interest in order to secure an option on cocoa.'
Nevertheless it concluded that 'indebtedness among farmers is obviously
widespread and serious', whatever that means — perhaps that farmers should
meet all their annual expenditures from the previous year's sales without recourse
to loans.

The firms' buyers profited by speculating against price changes. When firms
announced changes in price, they would invite buyers to 'declare' their stocks.
Buyers would hold on to stocks on a rising market and 'over-declare' on a falling
one, going out to buy cocoa to make up the difference. In this way, the firms took
over much of the speculative risk from the buyers. It was worth each firms' while
to do so when they competed for 'tonnage' to meet their own speculative
commitments. Firms were also keen to maintain the goodwill of their own buyers,
and their own share of the market in anticipation of a future market-sharing
agreement.

A cocoa pool operated in the Gold Coast from 1929 to 1932, provoking a produce
hold-up in 1931; 'an agreement between three of the most important buying firms
was in operation [in Nigeria] for several seasons up to 1935, when it was
abandoned,' (Nowell, pp.101-02). In 1935-36, the price for Accra cocoa rose from

*The Colonial Secretary, J. Maybin, drew on his experience in Ceylon (Sri Lanka) to instruct
Giles 'To help the trader we can try to organise marketing so that at organised markets
and/or through properly organised sale organisations he can, without an advance system,
get in reasonable bulk, at the right time, produce of good quality. If some credit is required,
we must try to organise societies to give and control it, and to teach the grower thrift and
monetary sense.'
21s.9d (per 50kg) to 28s. It opened the season in September 1936 at 32s.3d and rose to 52s in January before falling back to 35s in June. This led to what the firms described as 'insane competition' and 'abuses', i.e. offering middlemen too high a price for cocoa, as well as 'excessive' cash advances and other 'inducements'. The United African Company lost money on its cocoa purchases in 1936-37, and purported to the Nowell Commission to have traded in West African cocoa at a loss for the whole period 1930-37. What they may have lost in 1937 on the cocoa swings, they certainly made up for on the import roundabouts and they paid a dividend that year of 11 per cent.

On 1 October, all the large European firms, except the English and Scottish Joint Co-operative Wholesale Society Ltd. signed a four-year 'pool' agreement in respect of cocoa purchases. On 24 September 1937, Frank Samuel of UAC and John Cadbury informed the Colonial Office of the agreements. The Secretary of State informed the Governors of the Gold Coast and Nigeria of the agreements on 7 October, saying that 'on a long view ...... the new arrangements will be as beneficial to the producer as to the exporting merchant.' (Nowell, p.53). This view was not accepted by the Governor of the Gold Coast, though he did not make his opposition public. Meanwhile the price for Accra cocoa had fallen from 37s.3d (September) to 28s.9d (October) and would go down to 17s.6d by June 1938. In November, farmers in the Gold Coast, but not Nigeria, organised a hold-up of cocoa and a boycott of imported goods (other than 'necessities'), themselves the subject of a 'pool' agreement.

The Government appointed the Nowell Commission on the Marketing of West African Cocoa in February and a 'truce' came into effect on 1 April 1938. Until 1 October, government would license exports; 94 per cent would be 'issued to regular shippers on the basis of their shipments in the last two years' (Nowell, pp.63-64). In effect, the pool was extended for five months under statutory authority. Even after the suspension of the poor, the firm agreed to 'co-operate with each other as fully as if a pool existed' (Winter to all John Holt agents, 22 August 1938, Shenton, p.110) and not to pay prices higher than those offered by UAC. Other pools continued to operate.

The firms stated their intention 'that the price to be paid to the African for his cocoa shall be based on the full current market value, from which only actual out-of-pocket expenses and a reasonable allowance to cover overhead charges and a reasonable profit shall be deducted' (cited Nowell, p.113). Calculation of 'expenses, ... charges and a reasonable profit' was in the hands of the firms. The determination of prices was left to J.W. Knight (UAC) and John Cadbury, and in practice left to E.C. Tansley. Firms sought to protect their profits by squeezing the margins of the middlemen and forcing prices down.

The Nowell Commission recognised that 'the legitimate interests of sellers were prejudiced by the suppression of competitive buying' and that 'the Agreement should be finally withdrawn' (Nowell, pp.149, 151). However, not content to leave well alone, the Commission accepted much of the firm's evidence regarding excessive competition and undesirable practices. These evils would be corrected by an ambitious scheme for 'the association of all cocoa producers on a statutory basis for the marketing of all their produce' in the Gold Coast (Nowell, p.158).* For Nigeria, the Commission accepted the proposals of Major E.F.G. Haig, the Registrar

*Dr Nkrumah was to introduce a similar scheme in Ghana. As Beckman shows, it proved to be an unpopular instrument for creating local trading monopolies in the hands of the clients of the Convention People's Party.
of Co-operative Societies (Nowell, pp.170-4), to encourage the expansion of the societies which in 1938 marketed only four per cent of the crop.

The Commission also recommended various other actions which government might undertake — providing information on crop forecasts, cocoa consumption and current prices; inspection of workers' conditions, of the quality of cocoa and of weights and measures. Debt should be tackled by thrift and credit societies and by 'economic instruction of an elementary kind to help farmers to form a clearer idea of the costs of production and to appreciate the effects of the employment of labour and of borrowing at high rates of interest upon their ability to make cocoa farming pay'. Most significantly, they recommended consideration of licensing both middlemen and buying stations 'and of attaching suitable conditions to the licenses with a view to limiting undesirable trade practices, and any undue expansion of the number of middlemen and of the firms' buying stations (Nowell, pp.175-5).

When statutory marketing of cocoa was introduced it took a form different from that advocated by Nowell. Government took over the external rather than the internal marketing of cocoa. Nevertheless, Nowell shared with the firms and the government many of the conceptions used to justify government marketing and market regulation in the name of the interests of the producers, though actually to their cost.

Central to these conceptions was an image of the 'middlemen' as a source of 'abuse' and 'disorder' in marketing and as an exploiter of the peasant producer. Its origins are to be found in a British Indian conception of the peasantry held in thrall by 'middlemen' and 'moneylenders'. 'Middlemen' and 'moneylenders' in Nigeria were always African or, possibly, Levantine. The term was never applied to the European firms, though they advanced credit and bought produce for resale.

Competition for the favour of middlemen was clearly costly to the European firms but advantageous to farmers for whose custom the 'middlemen' competed. Competition among middlemen made it more difficult for them to pay low prices for short weight or to reclaim credit advances. Nevertheless, the producer is supposed to be protected from the middlemen by government organisation and regulation of the market. This opens the way to the exploitation of producers through state monopoly pricing and through extortionate or monopolistic practices by government officials or licensees.

Marketing Boards and 'Organised' Marketing
The firms' response to the middlemen was circumspect. They might remove the 'middlemen' but they would also open the way for direct exports by the Gold Coast marketing organisation or the Nigerian co-operatives at their expense. Rawlings, a John Holt agent on the Gold Coast, suggested that we can show good will and give full co-operation, feeling that, sooner or later, a marketing scheme has got to be tried in West Africa' (cited Shenton, p.111).

The war changed the picture. The Produce Control Board placed the management of cocoa exports in the hands of the firms. Its original members were the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, the heads of the West Africa and Economics Departments of the Colonial Office, plus John Cadbury and E.C. Tansley, now the Board's marketing director. They could now organise the 'pool' on behalf of, and with the authority of, the imperial government. Quotas of purchases were allocated to firms in accordance with their 'past performances'. Additional allowances were made to accommodate competitors, notably A.G. Leventis, and the co-operative societies.
The 1946 White Paper justified the setting up of the statutory marketing boards by arguing that 'a return to pre-war conditions would be indefensible' (Cmnd. 6950, p.3). They cited the Nowell Report to advance the firms' view that 'the producer, through the practices of the trade and particularly the activities of middlemen in West Africa, failed to obtain a fair price for his crop while at the same time the trade in general became unremunerative to the buying firms ...' Prices would henceforth be fixed, as during the war, for a whole season. This would apparently eliminate indebtedness among producers, tempted to extravagance by rising prices and 'driven to the moneylender' when prices fall, and prevent the 'speculation and profit-taking by African middlemen ...' which deprives 'the farmer of the full return on his produce' (Cmnd. 6950, App.1, which is Nowell, par.473, pp.147-8).*

The 1946 White Paper denied that the government aimed 'at the creation of State monopolies' and then proposed to create one. Its functions would be: (a) to fix the seasonal prices payable to producers; (b) to determine purchasing arrangements and issue licenses to buyers; and (c) to set up and maintain the necessary executive machinery for purchasing, shipping and selling all cocoa purchased (Cmnd. 6950, p.4).

Only after outlining the Board's functions did the White Paper go on to discuss what its buying and selling policies would be and its intention to stabilise inter-seasonal prices.

Licensed Buyers, Cocoa and Cotton Marketing

The Nigerian Cocoa Marketing Board's first report defended the system of appointing licensed buying agents (LBAs) on the grounds that 'it was essential to ensure the continuance of orderly marketing introduced under war-time control schemes'. As Baldwin (p.19) remarked 'It is not at all clear what "orderly" means in the sense of convenient to the administrators of the scheme.'

Initially, licenses were allocated to the established exporters who continued to purchase most of the crop. The Board also gave licences to African buyers who had the money and transport to market sufficient cocoa (250 tons, a low figure). Table 1 shows the rise in the number of African LBAs and in their share of the crop purchased, especially after independence in 1960 when the UAC and other European firms, excluded from purchasing cocoa in Ghana, withdrew from the produce trade in Nigeria as well.

After the regionalisation of the marketing boards in 1954, produce licences became an important instrument of patronage in the hands of regional governments. With the licences, buyers could get access to bank credit to fund their produce advances. Produce licenses were handed out freely by the government of Chief Akintola to their principal supporters, produce buyers and new farmers unions, in the 1960s, somewhat devaluing the licences.

Initially, produce licences gave African businessmen access to a share of the trading opportunities which had previously been dominated by European firms. LBAs were assured a generous margin on their purchases and, collectively, a monopoly rent on all sales to the board. On the other hand, the fixed seasonal purchase price, known to all farmers, made it difficult to underpay farmers and prevented LBAs from speculating against price changes. Profiteering was limited by competition from other produce buyers and from co-operatives. Buying agents made several attempts to prevent co-operatives and other buyers from paying

*Cmd. 6950 (pp.5-11) also echoes a paper read to the International Cocoa Conference by W.M. Hood of Cadbury's a month before its publication.
Table 1 Nigerian Cocoa Marketing Board

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Expatriate N*</th>
<th>Expatriate %</th>
<th>African N</th>
<th>African %</th>
<th>Cooperative N</th>
<th>Cooperative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1940/1</td>
<td>99</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1947/8</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948/9</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953/4</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954/5</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960/1</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>22</td>
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<tr>
<td>1966/7</td>
<td>9*</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*8 were Levantine in all years, save 1947-8 when 9 were.

Sources: Baldwin, p.21, Beer, p.132.

above the minimum gazetted price, but these attempts to form 'pools' seem to have been unsuccessful.

A similar picture emerges from Clough's (unpublished) account of cotton traders in Malumfashi Division (Kaduna State) in 1977-79. In the northern states, cotton buying licences were often granted to district heads and other members of the aristocracy, thus combining official power with control of commercial resources. They relied on client traders (yaran LBA) to whom they advanced credit to purchase the cotton from local farmers-traders, the yaran baranda. Although the LBAs benefited from their 'monopoly rents' on sales to the marketing boards and their privileged access to credit, intense competition among the yaran baranda limited their own scope for profit-making. Cotton, like cocoa, is all bought within a short period, unlike grain much of which, as Clough shows in the following article, is stored against a price rise until the next harvest or beyond. Cotton advances, correspondingly, tend to be made for short periods, and for small amounts without interest. In the late 1970s grain production was increasing at the expense of cotton production and offered an expanding market with more chances, though at greater risks, of making large profits from credit transactions as well as from buying and selling crops. Similarly returns to cocoa trading were reduced by the decline in cocoa production in the older areas, such as Ibadan, and since 1970 throughout the cocoa belt. In these circumstances there is less likely to be competition among buyers, and co-operatives find it difficult to operate. LBAs have also had to wait longer for payment from the board than in previous years.

Meanwhile new and lucrative fields of investment began to open up, from the 1950s through to the oil boom of the 1970s, for those with the necessary contacts, skills or education and money, often provided from the trading surpluses of the marketing boards. By 1970, most Ibadan produce traders were elderly men, who had bought cocoa before the war for the European companies, who knew the produce trade well but had little experience outside it, and who sought to advance their children through education.

Farmers continue to borrow money from produce traders to buy chemicals and to meet various cash expenses. Cocoa farmers sell all their cocoa at harvest, but have to provide food for their families and any labourers they might employ, pay
some wages and the costs of other items of consumption and, possibly, family
funerals over the year. They may postpone the payment of wages until after the
harvest, when they provide 'gifts' to their wives in respect of their work in
producing cocoa, buy clothes and food for Christmas, pay taxes and school fees,
and repay loans.

The decline in the purchasing power of cocoa farmers since the 1950s has
increased their dependence on credit. In 1951/52, a year of high and rising prices,
cocoa farmers saved a large share of their incomes. About half the households
surveyed did not report any debts. A third of all loans were outstanding for more
than a year, mainly upward of 5 per cent per month. Advances for crop purchases
seem to have declined since the 1930s and to carry low interest rates, if any, where
several buyers competed for custom. Van den Driessen reported that in 1968, a
year of low produce prices, 52 per cent of farmers surveyed in Ife division had
debts of more than one year's duration, compared to 44 per cent from the places in
Ife and Ilesa reported on by Galletti et al. in 1951-52. By 1973-74, Clarke reported
from Ife Division that borrowing had become essential for almost all farmers to
meet their food needs as well as to pay for chemicals and hired wage labour.
Farmers spent almost all their cocoa earnings immediately after harvest and hardly
any farmers were building houses. The sums borrowed were modest: on average
N40 (c.£30) for members of the local community and N32 for the poorer, tenant
farmers.

Conclusion
Marketing boards have not eliminated 'middlemen', 'advances' or the other 'abuses'
of which the European trading firms complained in the 1930s. They have replaced
the European firms at the apex of the buying system and shaped it to serve the
needs of ruling parties, governments and the Northern aristocracy to expand and
consolidate their networks of patronage. They have tended to reduce, but not to
eliminate, the competition among traders to buy farmers' produce — by lowering
prices, as well as by fixing them for each season, by their tardiness in making
payments and by restricting direct access to the boards to their licencees. Less
competition to buy produce means less competition to advance credit to farmers.
Impoverished by the board's policies farmers, especially cocoa farmers with little
opportunity to earn money from other crops, found themselves more dependent on
credit to meet the claims of their declining resources.

In Nigeria, marketing boards found their justification in the view that the
peasantry was in thrall to middlemen and moneylenders. Hence the need for the
state to intervene to promote 'orderly marketing'. This conception was shared by
government officials and spokesmen for the European trading firms. Against all the
evidence, it maintains a strong appeal for bureaucrats, technocrats and,
regrettably, many socialists. Socialists have no business defending or reforming
such exploitative institutions. De jure state monopolies on the marketing of crops
impose high costs on producers, on government budgets and on consumers. They
create de facto monopolies for favoured and protected traders and the
opportunities for profitable collusion between businessmen and officials, civil,
police and military. Against such corrupt institutions and monopolistic
arrangements, socialists should support free trade.

Bibliographic Note
The article examines several British parliamentary papers, viz. Report of the Commission on
the Marketing of West African Cocoa (the Nowell Report), Cmnd. 5845, Sept. 1938; Report


For research material and ideas for this paper I am particularly indebted to Paul Clough, Bob Shenton and Piotr Dutkiewicz.
The Social Relations of Grain Marketing in Northern Nigeria

Paul Clough

Clough examines the social relations of the internal marketing of one crop in the northern part of Nigeria, guineacorn, through case studies of rural traders. He examines the relationships between traders of varying degrees of wealth and political power, the manner and extent of profit-making in the purchase and sale of peasant produce, and the particular social rules governing the interaction between the different levels of trader in guineacorn.

The area of field-work carried out between 1976 and 1979 embraced Malumfashi Division in the southern part of the Katsina Emirate, in Kaduna State; Danbatta weekly market, about 40 miles north of Kano City; and occasionally, the grain markets of Sokoto City and of Mai Aduwa, on the border between Nigeria and Niger. The research had a four-fold focus: firstly, the production and marketing of guineacorn in the hamlet of Marmara, eight miles from Malumfashi town; secondly, the grain trade in the weekly market of Kankara town, 22 miles north of Malumfashi, and the bi-weekly market of Yargoje village; thirdly, the retailing of guineacorn transported from Marmara hamlet in Danbatta market; and finally, the wholesale transfer of guineacorn between traders in these markets and also Sokoto and Mai Aduwa, much of it intended for Niger. It was a study of inter-rural marketing between the grain-surplus region of southern Katsina and grain-deficit regions to the north. Clough's case studies describe four trading relationships in the private, commercial marketing of grain: the relationship between a Hausa/Fulani aristocrat and Hausa rural trader; relations between urban merchants and an inter-village wholesaler living in the countryside; the connection between the inter-village wholesaler and a hamlet wholesaler; and between the inter-village wholesaler and a retailer in Danbatta market.

(a) Aristocrat-to-Rural Trader

R was a migrant from Daura to a rural town in southern Katsina. He started as a waterboy in the house of the Mai Gari, the village (in this case, town) head. Today, all complaints of or about waterboys in the town are brought to R. If we distinguish between ordinary clients (yara, normally translated into Hausa as 'boys') and all-purpose subordinates (barori, singular - bara) normally the bara of the Mai Gari. Within the village head's household, he became his trusted retainer, rising to the position of sarkin gandu (chief of the household). He is still responsible for the farms of the Mai Gari, giving the farm labourers their pay. At first the village head
gave him a Gayauna farm (plot given to the son or other dependent of the head of a household for his own use), but with time and success, he purchased many farms of his own. Eventually, he called members of his family from Daura, and his own household now numbers over 20.

\textbf{R} trades in grains and groundnuts on the private commercial market. Two sorts of transactions are characteristic of his commercial relationship with the Mai Gari. First, \textbf{R} receives 2000 naira (1978 values) during the October-December guineacorn and groundnut harvest, and buys these products on behalf of the Mai Gari for storage against a price rise, the proceeds of any sale being handed over to his master. Secondly \textbf{R} receives 2000 naira as a personal trading loan at harvest. This money is his to work with for one year until the following harvest. Then, the Mai Gari calls him to 'balance' (the word is used in Hausa), and upon producing the 2000 naira, it is returned to him as an annual trading loan. The relationship between the two men is so close that, during the intervening months, the master does not call his servant to inquire about the loan, or ask for its return. \textbf{R} distributes his loan among various family expenditures and productive investments. This is acceptable, because it is recognised that, if he loses money ('falls') in trade, he will sell his own farm produce at harvest in order to repay the loan, and thus renew the commercial association with his master for a further year.

The harvest-related nature of the personal loan cycle raises three interesting points. First, the personal commercial loan given by the patron to the client is an all-purpose one, in that part of the gains from dry-season trading will be invested in agriculture, and so repayment flows from both production and exchange. Secondly, the loan is partially secured through the possibility of repayment at harvest from the client's own produce. Thirdly, against the common notion in Nigeria that potential rural debtors 'have no collateral', trading loans such as the one received by \textbf{R} tend to be given to clients who, the creditors knows, have sufficient land to be able to repay the money from their own harvest produce if all else fails.

\textbf{R} never goes to the Mai Gari in order to divide profit with him. The idea seemed absurd to the Hausa traders with whom this was discussed: 'How can the boy (yaro) give the master of the house (Mai Gida) profit?' Furthermore: '\textbf{R} is in the house of the village head, and so how can he go to him with profit?' Actually as their relationship was described, the master first gave his servant a large personal loan. Satisfied after a year that his servant had 'balanced', he then gave him money to store produce against a price rise on his behalf, while at the same time renewing the personal loan. But this may be a reversal of the real chronology, a Hausa manner of stressing that the commercial service of the client (\textbf{R}) flows from the generosity of the master. In fact the patron is exploiting the labour-time of the client-trader. For the client spends much time buying, storing, and selling for his patron, in return for an interest-free trading loan. This case illustrates the existence of a flourishing 'capital market' in rural Hausaland, which is dominated by and ultimately dependent upon aristocratic or urban merchant capital. Accumulation is based on what F.G. Bailey calls a 'multiplex' relation, in which the superior purchases the all-purpose labour-time of the inferior with many types of 'help'-household security for the inferior and his family, farmland, and commercial credit.

While the Mai Gari keeps his keen commercial nose close to the ground, and his old head may be seen gliding with most un-aristocratic intent through the weekly grain market among the bended knees of the rural assembly, he gives \textbf{R} great liberty to establish what commercial contacts he chooses among his fellow traders. \textbf{R} engages in two types of network: 'in-market' and 'outward-bound'. He assembles
many grain measurers and porters at the weekly market to purchase grain and groundnuts from farmers and store these in his warehouse. And he makes friends with traders who come during the post-harvest period from the north to buy produce while it is cheap — from the Republic of Niger, Sokoto, Katsina, and Daura. He helps them find produce in the highly competitive buyers' market which then exists. Later, during the subsequent rainy season when produce prices have risen, he himself enters the market as a seller of stored produce. He then taps his northern friends who are still buying, in the competitive sellers' market which has now emerged.

Every Saturday evening R travels with other traders in a lorry full of produce the 140 miles to Danbatta, north of Kano, for the weekly Sunday market. Danbatta is in the middle of a large grain deficit area, the needs of which are replenished weekly by twenty to forty lorries which arrive from southern Katsina. Danbatta district used to be a major producer of groundnuts from southern Katsina. The people produce millet and guineacorn for home consumption. But during the dry season they tend to close their granaries and manage by selling livestock and fadama (floodplain) garden produce, using the money to buy guineacorn. R negotiates the sale of his supplies with three sorts of buyer: wholesalers operating with their own contract money, retailers selling by the measure and thousands of sacks transacted weekly within the market, and small traders buying several sacks and returning with them to the outlying villages. Sometimes he travels to the vast border market of Mai Aduwa where he is in a favoured position because of his many contacts from Niger. In Mai Aduwa, he sells both to private traders and to contractors using advances from the Government of Niger. He has travels intermittently to other northern markets, when price differentials between markets make this worthwhile.

The context of these networks and transactions is the circulation of price, demand, and supply information among the traders who meet in R's weekly home market from the wide area of northern Nigeria and southern Niger. Traders sit in groups of friends on top of or beside their sacks of guineacorn and groundnuts, adjusting and re-adjusting the folds in their robes. They joke, talk politics, pray, and arrange the potential sale of crops which they have kept in their village warehouses. One trader will promise to bring so many sacks on the next market day. Another calls a friend to come to his village and buy so many sacks of groundnuts claimed to be excellent in quality. And all ask those known to them from distant places, about the speed of their sales, the quantity of crops growing on the land, or the proportions of different crops planted by the peasantry, seeking to pry information about present and future demand and supply conditions. Much of this activity is aimed at forging links of trust through friendly discussion and communal Muslim prayer.

(b) Urban Merchant-to-Intervillage Wholesaler
Alhaji Z is an old man, perhaps seventy, short, strongly built, grey of beard, visage, and demeanour, simple and informal within his long, soiled, and loosely adjusted robes and pantaloons, wary and cautious of speech. He is a batalaka, or commor, who deals with aristocrats such as the Mai Gari, but unlike R, keeps a certain distance. Like many of the farmers and almost all the traders in his village, Alhaji Z is a migrant from Kano Emirate. In a different village, a local farmer said that 'our traders are Kanawa because they save their money, but we Katsinawa spend all of ours.' It may be significant that the newcomer is only partially embedded in local commitments, which may give him an advantage over the native born villager in
Fifty years ago, while only twenty, R entered the trade in potash (kanwa,) used in food and for animals, and formerly in soap-making) and the trade in locally woven cloth. Then, the commerce was conducted by fatauci, itinerant trading by donkey. The cloth was carried from producing villages in western Kano and southern Katinsa to northeastern Kano, Daura, and Borno. There it was sold and potash bought for transport south to central and western Kano. Around 1930 Alhaji Z decided to settle in Katsina, and began to farm. At the same time he became the madugu, or leader, of large trading caravans. He was joined by two brothers, and together they exploited a chalk mine near the village, tunnelling through the earth along with their workers, and transported the chalk to Zaria, originally headloading it, later by donkey.

In 1945, Z stopped trading in potash and local cloth. He continued in chalk, but transferred much of his energy and resources to the grain trade. At first, he traded guineacorn on fatauci from southern Katsina to Zaria City. With time, he built up a widening circle of mercantile and aristocratic contacts in Zaria and other towns and cities. Operating with advances provided by urban merchants and the Native Authorities, he bought and stored grain on their behalf, and received commissions in return. The geographical expansion of his trading routes and networks was aided by the development of roads and lorry transport. Around 1970, Alhaji Z discontinued chalk mining, and concentrated entirely on the grain and ground trade.

In some respects the transactions between Z as a client (yar) and the urban merchants who act as patrons are similar to those between the Mai Gari and his servant (bara), R. The client devotes his labour-time to finding, buying, and storing produce for the patron with the patron's money, and in return received an interest-free trading loan. But there are also differences. First, R's clientage involves all-purpose subordination. In contrast, Z's connections with his patrons are more strictly commercial. Secondly, in so far as Z's patrons are urban and often far away, whereas R's patron is himself rural, Z has more freedom of manoeuvre with other people's money than does R. For the Mai Gari as a rural patron is always aware of the prices which R pays for produce, whereas the urban patrons of Alhaji Z, in Kano, Sokoto, Katsina, Zaria and Kaduna, are not. And for that matter they do not much care.

Take the year 1975-1976 as an example. Alhaji Z quoted to them a harvest price of 25 kobo per large measure (tiya), or N10 per sack of 40 measures. A tiya is a large enameware bowl, of standard size in southern Katsina though of various sizes in Kano, which in Katsina contains roughly 6lbs of guineacorn. A sack of 38 tiya would weigh roughly 228lbs or 104 kgs; a sack of 40 tiya, 240 lbs, or about 110kgs. In fact, harvest prices in December in Kankara and Yargoje markets fluctuated around 20 kobo per tiya, or N8 per sack. Therefore, Alhaji was able to turn over the money given to him several times before late January. Then, he used it to buy grain for his patrons at the current market price of 25 koba per tiya. This was acceptable to the urban merchants. For they benefitted in two ways. First, they were able to use Z's storage facilities, and tap as well the rural stores of Z own circle of clients. Secondly, their objective in advancing money was to profit from the price differential which normally obtains between the rural harvest price and the mid-year rainy season urban price. From June through August, the merchants sent their lorries to collect the stored produce from Z or one of his designated rural clients. Alhaji's patrons also paid him a commission of 50 kobo per sack in 1975-76. Furthermore, Z paid porters to sew the sacks tightly with 36-38 measures
of grain though his urban advances were made on the calculation of sacks with 40 measures. Again, this is acceptable to those of his patrons who are government contractors, who deliver grain to schools, hospitals, and Local Authorities in sacks of 36 measures.

Thus, a lifetime of trade has involved Alhaji Z in five types of entrepreneurial activity. Firstly, exploiting the opportunities for making money from trading in different commodities, and shifting shrewdly between commodities as their earning potential changed. In this, his career illustrates the economic history of Nigeria. As demand for local cloth declined in relation to imported goods, and improved communications opened up new opportunities for satisfying food demands in grain-deficit regions, Alhaji shifted his investment of time, physical energy, commercial skills, and money, into the new commodities. Secondly, exploiting the possibilities for profit-making from the price differentials in space and time of various commodities. Thirdly, working in partnership with close kinsmen — themselves now wealthy traders — to combine their physical, mental, and financial resources. Fourthly, through accumulation; profits from any commodity were invested in expanding the volume of the commodity carried, and thus the total level of profits. This process of continuous re-investment should be associated with the austerity of Alhaji's life. Like other rural traders in the region, he is a devout Muslim. He has built onto the side of his house the biggest mosque in his village. He eats and dresses simply. He talks sparingly, with frequent reference to God and the Kuran. Fifthly, tapping the resources of wealthier men in the city to become wealthy himself in the countryside.

Since 1970 Alhaji has concentrated his resources in one specialisation — the grain trade. The total volume of his turnover, is a trade secret. During 27 March-7 April 1976, his total purchases were 393 sacks on 6 market days. Taking account of season variations, I would estimate his annual purchases at up to 10,000 sacks for urban merchants, 500 sacks for Local Government Authorities, and 250 sacks for himself. According to one of his clients, R has 4 kinsmen and 12 clients spread through 11 villages and small towns, who are also storing grain for him in their own warehouses.

Alhaji Z has also purchased land and labour-power to finance a process of agricultural expansion. Gradually, he has acquired 22 farms, including eleven large farms located up to 15 miles from his village, amounting to at least 100 acres. He employs many seasonal migrant labourers. They are mainly boys and young men from the drier parts of the north around Daura. On one of his largest farms, 50 labourers will be called for three weeks of weeding during which they are given food and sleep in his house. R owns three teams of oxen. He has five grain-grinding machines operating in four villages, and a Ford passenger bus. His younger brother, also a grain trader, owns a lorry.

The expansion of his trading and farming has led to the expansion of his household. Alhaji Z has three wives and ten live children. His oldest son is directly involved in his trading enterprise, carrying guineacorn to distant markets. Alhaji travels little himself now, except to Zaria, where some of his most important patrons live. His second son drives the bus. Three younger sons form a permanent labour force. There are also five daughters. Very old relatives, and several Kuranic mallams, also kept by Alhaji Z. Living in separate compounds but working permanently for his trading enterprise are three men: a younger brother, the younger brother of his father, and the son of his oldest sister. The first supervises the purchase and storage of grain at the big local markets of Kankara and Yargoje. The second is his garrulous all-purpose assistant, supervising farm labour and
running messages to and from Z's clients in the hamlets. The third handles his trade to Kano City and Sokoto.

Thus, we may also speak of Z's investment in his male kin. They represent a management team who can be trusted to handle his money. They supply him with reliable information. They help supervise his expanding commercial and agricultural operations. Each received 400 naira as a personal trading loan in 1978, apart from advances to buy and store grain on Alhaji's behalf. Furthermore, Alhaji Z pays the taxes of his sons, provides their families with food, and arranges and finances the many marriages of his sons and daughters. His brothers and cousins receive rance, supposedly short-term loans which in fact have very flexible periods of repayment. The costs of supporting so large a ‘family enterprise' are heavy. The commitments are sometimes uncertain. For example, he loaned his half-brother N1600 which he refused to repay, claiming that the money was payment for a second-hand grain mill, until two years had passed and Alhaji threatened legal action. But as much as patrons above him and clients below, these investments in social relations are at the heart of the success and scale of his trading and farming.

We end with a brief comparison of Z and R. Due to his close association with an aristocrat, R has greater economic security than Z. But Z has greater economic power and social prestige in the world of the rural talakawa, or commoners. The inter-village rural wholesaler occupies a different sort of social space from the big client of a rural aristocrat. A hierarch among his own rural clients, he is their nexus with the towns. He is the conduit of city money to fuel their affairs. Conversely, he is the channel through which surplus value is funnelled from rural producers to merchants and government contractors.

(c) Inter-village Wholesaler to Hamlet Wholesaler

M is a grain trader and farmer about 55 years old living in a roadside hamlet 10 miles south of Z's village. Like R and Z, he is an immigrant to southern Katsina. He frequently returns to his home hamlet near Kano City. In several ways he keeps a certain distance from the other farmers in the hamlet. First, his mother tongue is Fulani. He has kinsmen with large herds of cattle scattered through central and western Kano and southern Katsina. Secondly, he is aware of the fact that the son of his mother's brother is a village head in his home hamlet in Kano. Thirdly, he has built his house a mile away from the hamlet, rather than on its edge like other immigrants. Fourthly, he never owned more than 6 acres until 1978. In his own words, he went back to Kano every few months to greet his parents. He did not buy farms because he was planning to return and 'embrace' (rungume) his parents. When they died within 4 months of each other, there was nothing to carry him back home. Thereafter, he began to buy farms in the hamlet — 'but from behind, the price of farms had already risen'.

M has lived in the hamlet since 1960. In 1961 and 1962, he traded through a northern circuit of markets based on his home town in Kano. Since 1963, he has concentrated on buying guineacorn and rice in and around the hamlet and transporting it the 126 miles to Danbatta. Since 1972 he has been a client of Alhaji Z. In December 1975, Alhaji Z gave M money to buy and store 30 sacks of guineacorn, which were collected in April. In December 1976, he gave M money to buy and store 30 sacks of guineacorn, which were collected in April. In December 1976, he gave M N1600 to buy 100 sacks, which he collected in July 1977 and sold for N3000, when prices were much higher. In December 1977, he gave M N1200 to
buy and store 50 sacks, which were collected in August 1978, by one of Z’s business associates and transported to Jos.

At harvest, 1977, in return for his storage services, M was given a trading loan of N400. According to M, this money was to be returned before the rainy season. In fact, M used the money for farming and only returned it at the following harvest after selling maize from his own farm. Every few months Z would inquire after the money. In the middle of the rainy season, he called M and asked for the money. The following conversation took place:

Z: 'I gave you money so that you would turn it over. What have you done with it?'
M: 'Farming has eaten it all.'
Z: 'It is not thus that we arranged with you. Why did you not tell me this?'
M: 'Why should I tell you what you already know?'

The manoeuvering between patron and client is based on a mutual assessment of the other’s skills and trustworthiness. M compared his relationship to Z with that between R and the Mai Gari: 'If Alhaji hears that I have spent money buying farms, he is happy. Or if he hears that I am on my farm, he will bring out more money and give it to me. But if he hears that I am in my house, he will send his boy to get the money from me'. M nevertheless suffered much anxiety before the maize harvest enabled him to repay the loan. Z’s younger brother had a client-trader dispossessed by a court for failure to repay a loan. Furthermore, the situation of clientage leads to conflicting perceptions and feelings in the client. On the one hand, M is grateful to Z for his patronage, and very grateful for Z’s willingness to allow him to convert a trading loan into a farming loan. On the other hand, M is aware that his labour-time in buying and storing the grain enables the patron to make large profits in the order of 40 per cent return to his initial investment. And he is aware of the disparity between the N400 which he receives as a trading loan and the N1800 which, for example, Z made as gross profit on the basis of Afs labour in 1978.

Using his own accumulated savings as well as the money lent by his patron, M purchases grain during the post-harvest dry season of January-April and the early rainy season of May-July. He pursues two strategies: first, he buys and sells grain on a weekly basis in the long-distance trade to Danbatta; secondly, he builds up his own stored grain. He has two objectives: to augment his capital through weekly trading and profit making; and gradually to accumulate stored grain for sale when prices reach a peak in June or July. In August, the volume of his turnover in weekly long-distance trade slakens considerably. In southern Katsina, there is less supply; and in Danbatta, there is less demand. In southern Katsina, the richer farmers have completed planting, ridging, and weeding, and therefore do not need to sell grain to pay farm labourers. The farmers with sufficient grain to meet household needs are eating guineacorn from their granaries rather than sell it; the poorer farmers have exhausted their grain and rely on available labouring jobs or meet family needs by obtaining cash loans, to be repaid with grain from the next harvest’s produce. In Danbatta, village traders who had bought grain during the dry season are selling to needy villagers, fewer are buying in the market. Later in August and early September, Danbatta farmers harvest the millet which grows more readily in the sandier northern soil than in the black earth of southern Katsina.

From July, M turns to different investments. He distributes loans known variously as bashi (credit) and kudun buhu (the price of a sack), but chiefly as falle. Falle has the connotation of ‘cutting in half’. In July, creditors advance money to half the expected value of the crop with which they are to be repaid. Thus the debtor ‘cuts in half’ his harvest, giving one half over to the creditor. This grain is not
sold immediately, but is stored, to provide for future loans to the same debtors and for later sale at high pre-harvest prices.

Guinea corn prices and *falle* loans, Marmara, Southern Katsina, N per sack

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Peak July price</th>
<th>July est. of harvest price</th>
<th>Falle loans</th>
<th>Lowest Dec. price</th>
<th>Peak July price</th>
<th>Year</th>
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<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1978</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8-10</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1979</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Marmara village, some two-thirds of farming families had finished their grain supplies by August, and one-half of the families obtained *falle* to overcome this deficit. *Falle* was given by a variety of traders and richer farmers. The rate offered by creditors depends on their speculative judgement, their caution, their assessment as to whether a relatively high advance will result in a higher rate of repayment at harvest, and on the strength and length of their relationships with particular debtors. *Falle* agreements are said by farmers to be enforced in Muslim courts by the Malumfashi *alkalia* (judges), but most creditors are afraid to invoke these sanctions because of ill-will from kin and neighbours. Their major sanction is the debtor's expectation that he will need help from the creditor in the following months.

The actual incidence of repayment is less than suggested by the express terms of the *falle* agreement. Some debtors repay with full sacks, some with sacks of only 30-40 measures. Others repay with cash, adding some interest to the money advanced, others with the money principal only. The cost for the debtor and return for the creditor on *falle* transactions taken on their own is often much lower than the nominal rate of interest. The ability of the creditor to secure full repayment depends on their willingness to accept more general responsibilities of a patron towards a client. The client may call on a patron's resources when he wishes to finance a marriage or a naming ceremony or pay for local medicines. The client will require *rance*, short-term non-interest loans. However, the creditor may still profit by reselling the grain he does acquire through *falle* loans at a higher price later in the year. For grain traders, *falle* is a means of purchasing crop futures.

The institution of *falle* thus functions in three ways: as a long-term patron-client relationship in which each party establishes claims on the other's resources; as a mechanism whereby the more successful can extract resources from the less successful; and as a form of speculation in grain futures. These three functions are inter-connected. The relationship between the two parties will only succeed as a speculation for the creditor if the debtor believes he is establishing a long-term claim on the creditor's resources, and so repays him the full 40 measures at harvest. Where the debtor judges he is unlikely to exert this claim on the creditor in the future, he simply will not repay the interest implied in the original agreement—he will only repay the sum initially advanced.

Returning to the trading year, in September rice is harvested. *M* carries it to Danbatta. October is the month of the maize and groundnut harvests. These products involve specialised traders of their own. In November and December, the
volume of M's trade is swelled by output from the main guineacorn harvest, as farmers sell guineacorn to pay tax and meet other harvest expenses. His main periods of trading activity are January-April, when farmers sell guineacorn to finance marriages, and May-June, when the richer category of farmers sell guineacorn from their surplus stocks to finance farming, especially the payment of labourers. In 1978, M transported to Danbatta around 20-50 sacks per week during the dry season of January to April. He increased it to 30-35 sacks per week during the rainy season of May to July, and reached a peak of 53 sacks on 2 July. Then he reduced it sharply to between 7 and 16 sacks per week during the late rainy season and the rice harvest of August to October. The sacks moved from October to December varied between 6 and 23 sacks.

Why does M combine the two strategies of storage against a price rise with weekly turnover trade? Why does he not simply invest his money in January grain against the maximum rise in July? First, M's investment funds — combining his own savings with the trading loan of his patron — are limited. While he is able to increase his weekly operating capital by obtaining short-term loans from friends, his finances are often decreased by his need to give out short-term loans to others. In some weeks his operating capital falls to the level of his patron's loan — N400 — and in other weeks rises to as much as N1000 — combining his own money, his patron's money, and short-term credit from his friends. He participates in the weekly grain trade in order gradually to augment his own investment funds and, over time, set aside grain for storage. In 1978, for example, M waited until late March before purchasing 20 sacks for storage.

M also uses earnings from trade to purchase cattle for quick re-sale to further augment his investment funds for grain. He buys cattle in the relatively cheap northern market of Danbatta. If he cannot sell these at the relatively expensive market of Kankara, he pays Fulani to herd the cattle from Kankara market on the Tuesday to Sheme market on the Friday. Sheme is an important cattle centre on the road-rail link with Zaria, and thus serves as an important evacuation point for traders in the Zaria-Lagos cattle trade. By participating in weekly grain trading, M is sometimes able to set aside money for cattle purchase. This would not be possible if he invested all his limited funds in January in storage. Reasons of security also inhibit M from investing his entire operating capital in storage. For example, while in 1978 the Danbatta wholesale price per sack rose from N24 in January to N34 in July, in the subsequent year, 1979, the price rose from N22 to only N24, and remained level in Marmara at N14. Thus grain storage is a risk investment, since the future pattern of prices is not known.

Finally, a very different sort of reason explains M's participation in weekly turnover trade. He buys grain with short-term loans which are repaid as soon as the grain is sold at the end of the week. He is not just adjusting his own funds (including the loan of his patron) between a policy of storage and a policy of weekly turnover in order to increase the absolute level of his weekly profit. During 1978, M was able to obtain up to N900 rance in most weeks; N300 from the village lorry owner, N200 from the chicken trader, N200 from a farmer in a nearby hamlet and N200 from other traders and creditors. At the same time, he was often called to give out up to N300 rance to two kolanut traders, two butchers and other traders and debtors. M has two clients, each in a different hamlet five miles behind the road. He gives them rance, and in return, he is able to use their storage facilities. The amounts obtained and lent would vary from week to week, but in a week of maximum credit and outgoings, M was trading with net short-term credit of N600. The fluctuations in the volume of his weekly grain turnover are largely to be
explained by the fluctuations between the amount of *rance* he receives and the amount of *rance* he gives.

This description sketches in bare outline the clientage and friendship relations of the hamlet wholesaler, the trading year through which he operates, and the techniques and principles on which his trading activity is based. We end by illustrating these principles with reference to *M*'s activity in the trading year 9 January 1978-7 January 1979. We must begin with his *falle* loans of August 1977. At that time, he gave out 40 loans to 17 people, at a rate of N10 in return for one sack of guineacorn at harvest. Only 7 of these 40 loans were repaid with sacks of grain at harvest, 21 loans were repaid with the principal of N10 in January 1978. At prevailing prices, he was able to use this money to purchase 9.5 sacks of guineacorn. Eight loans were repaid with the money principal of N10 in March 1978. At prevailing prices, he was able to use this money to buy 3 sacks. The final loan was repaid with N10 in May, with which he was able to purchase a third of a sack. On the basis of his initial investment of N400, he was able to store 19.8 sacks of guineacorn against the price peak of July 1978. In terms of sacks of grain, this represents a rate of repayment of just below 50 per cent. But let us calculate his rate of return in financial terms. On 2 July 1978, he sold 19.5 sacks of the stored grain in Danbatta when the wholesale price was N33.50 per sack. After deducting overhead costs of N2.20 per sack, his earnings were N31.30 per sack, for a total return of N620. Finally, in August 1978, he reinvested only N48 in loans to 4 former debtors from the previous year. His net return was therefore N620 less an initial investment of N400, a return of N220, or 55 per cent on his original outlay, which more than covered the four *falle* loans he offered for the following harvest.

The mean final retail price of guineacorn in the outlet market of Danbatta rose from N26 in November-December 1977 to N36 in May-July 1978, a difference of nearly 40 per cent. The differential between the hamlet wholesaler's buying price and his market selling price in any week varied from between 23 per cent and a low of 12 per cent averaging 16 per cent for the year as a whole. As a result, *M*'s mean weekly return to his investment varied from 16 per cent in the January-April dry season to 3 per cent in the October-November. It was 12 per cent for the year as a whole. The producers' share of the final retail price in weekly trade seldom averaged 80% for the year as a whole. The hamlet wholesaler's share of final retail price per sack averaged 4 per cent for the year as a whole.

It is within this context of narrow margins in weekly trade that *M* pursued his strategy of investment and storage. Operating within his own funds, his patron's loan and short-term credit, he gradually increased his turnover. In the first week of April, he purchased 53 sacks. This required him to spend most of his savings on 20 sacks of grain for N520. He set these aside for storage. The remaining 30 sacks bought with his patron's loan and short-term credits, he threw into the weekly trade. From May, he began to spend his patron's loan on farming, so that his weekly trade increasingly depended on short-term credits only. In July he brought out of storage the 20 sacks he had stored since April. To this he added the 19 sacks which he had stored from *falle* loan repayments, and used short-term credits to purchase 14 sacks of grain for N450. On 2 July he sold the 53 sacks for N1794. By the end of July, most of it had gone. He repaid his short-term credits. He paid labourers for the final ridging and weeding operations in July. He spent N600 on the marriage of his younger brother. Of some N1800 which he had earned, N1200 went on repayments, farms and family expenditure. By the beginning of August, he was reduced to the N600 personal funds with which he had begun the year. With this he continued to trade, his weekly investment rising or falling according to the
balance between the short-term credits which he received and those which he gave out. This account illustrates several important themes of rural Hausa economic activity. Firstly, the inter-connection between farming investment and other investments in the very long-term process of accumulation. In 1978, M dramatically increased his total farm holdings, by purchase or by borrowing, from 6 acres to 120 acres. As a result, his farm expenditures much depleted his available funds for trade. His farms expenditures yielded an output from 20 acres of 60 sacks of guineacorn and 20 sacks of maize. After repaying his patron N400 from farm earnings, the gross value of his output at harvest prices was N1440. The grain was available for meeting family needs, for storage against a price rise to sell and to meet farming costs in the subsequent year, and for use as stocks in trade. In the long-term, therefore, transferring funds from trade to agriculture will increase his earnings from both.

Secondly, the significance of marriage in Hausa rural economy. Financing his brother's marriage depleted his total trade earnings in July by N600, but his brother provides him with free labour. Therefore, marriage expenditure can be seen as a long-term investment in agriculture, or alternatively, as a delayed payment for labour performed. Thirdly, the connection between credit and commodity markets. What for a farmer is a loan at interest is, for a trader, a purchase of grain futures for storage and eventual sale.

Finally, the importance of short-term credits (rance) received from social equals in financing the process of accumulation. It is probably at least as important as the long-term credit (jali) received from social superiors. Hitherto, we have stressed the vertical ties between patron and client. But it is necessary to emphasize the lateral ties between friends and neighbours. It is true at all levels in trading networks. For example, Alhaji Z is able to use without charge large warehouses of important trading friends in the towns for his own storage. In a sense, Hausa traders 'accumulate together'. There is a social ethic of mutual help.

The ties of friendship, clientage, partnership between brothers, and family labour in production, all help sustain a process of accumulation. At the same time they provide a minimum security for poorer families, and lengthen the time needed to accumulate wealth for any one individual in the rural economy, because of the burden of commitments. It is difficult for one man or family to achieve a near-monopoly position in any locality, in either farming or trade. As we have seen farmers receive a high proportion of the final retail price in weekly movements of commodities. Although unequal, rural society is characterised by a certain social and economic balance.

(d) Hamlet Wholesaler-to-Market Outlet Retailer

L retails grain by the measure and by the sack in Danbatta weekly market every Sunday, and in Kazaure market every Friday. He is about forty-five years old. Born and raised in the area of Danbatta, he is the son of a salt trader. He left his father's house one year after his father, in his own words 'gave him' his first wife. He worked as a 'boy' (yaro), or all-purpose labourer, for one trader before he began to trade on his own. In 1966, he started trading on his own, in guineacorn. He began the year with capital of £20 (N300) by following a weekly circuit of markets. On Monday, he bought in Kano, and transported the grain at least fifty miles north to a village market in Daura Emirate, where he sold in on Tuesday. On Wednesday, he bought in villages of Kazaure Emirate. On Thursday, he rested in Danbatta. On
Friday, he sold Wednesday's grain at Kazaure market, twenty miles north of Danbatta. On Saturday, he again bought guineacorn in Kano, which he sold on Sunday in Danbatta market. Occasionally, he would travel to Dan Musa in central Katsina in order to buy guineacorn for sale in Danbatta. Later, L started selling grain in the villages around Danbatta, travelling by donkey. In 1975, he gave up travelling. He now purchases sacks of grain wholesale, for retail sale by the sack and by the measure in Danbatta market. What he cannot sell in Danbatta Sunday market, he sells in Kazaure Friday market.

L has been dealing with M, the hamlet wholesaler who brings grain weekly from southern Katsina, since 1973. L's reliance on M varies. In some weeks, he buys and sells little more than what M brings. In other weeks, L buys more than half of his stock from other sources. Relations of trust between M and L are important. L's reputation, and therefore his business, depend on his giving the wholesaler, at the end of the market day, the price agreed in the morning multiplied by the number of sacks sold. He is not expected to pay for unsold sacks, which are retained against the Friday market in Kazaure in the hope of selling them and giving M the agreed wholesale price on the following Sunday.

In his own words, "even if I make a loss (on the day's retailing), I always give the money to traders as I promised. I never say "no money"." While this statement is qualified in the description below, L's willingness to pay wholesalers the agreed price implies that he is able to estimate the likely behaviour of retail prices during the coming day, based on the quantity of stacked sacks in the morning, his knowledge of recent price movements in both Danbatta and Kazaure markets, and his accumulated experience of supply and demand tendencies in the same season in previous years. L must agree on a price which is sufficiently low to allow for a decline of retail prices during the day which might leave him with a loss. For example, on 30 October 1977, a number of retailers agreed to pay N30 per full sack of groundnuts because on the previous market day, the retail price had been 80 kobo per measure N32 for a full sack. However, on October 30, L insisted on a lower wholesale price of N27 in his dealings with M. Groundnuts fell to 75 kobo per measure during the day, giving a maximum retail revenue of N30 per sack. The room for manoeuvre is limited, because it is difficult to tell at the beginning of the day how demand will develop. This uncertainty helps explain — quite apart from the need for protection against wholesalers — the usefulness of measuring out guineacorn and millet with a smaller bowl than the tiya which was used by wholesalers in Katsina to fill their sacks. For example, on 11 December 1977, L sold for M 11 sacks of guineacorn at an agreed wholesale price of N23. However, the retail price dropped during the day from 60 kobo to 55 kobo per measure. By selling 44 tiya from each sack, he was able to make N24.20 on those sacks he sold at 55 kobo per measure.

L's costs are very limited. He employs an assistant whom he pays a small sum, and pays 20 kobo per sack as commission (ja'ada) to the dillali (market supervisor). L sells different crops, but guineacorn is always the main crop sold. The writer has complete information for six weeks during the first half of 1978 on L's sources of produce, breakdown of crops, quantities sold and relevant prices.

The table shows L's dependence on M's supplies. Thus, L's earnings tended to vary with the amount of grain that M brought to market. The weeks beginning 23 April to 23 July were exceptional. Normally, L's weekly sales were in the region of 20 sacks. Depending on retail prices his weekly earnings in 1978 fluctuated between N60 and N100. In 1979, retail prices were more stable, but much lower, than in 1978, fluctuating between 55 and 60 kobo per measure. L normally sold in
Sales and Earnings of Trader L, Danbatta Market, Jan.-July 1978

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week Begins</th>
<th>Sales Bought from Crops</th>
<th>Wholesale Price, bags</th>
<th>Retail Price, bags</th>
<th>Net Weeks Return Earnings to Cost</th>
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<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>ML</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>kaura</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>15 Jan.</td>
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<td>23 July</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

K=kaura, yellow ('red') guineacorn; M=mori, a type of guineacorn considered superior in taste and substance to kaura; ML=millet; G=groundnuts.

Return to costs are for all L’s sales less purchases and la’ada (market tax).

the region of 30 sacks, but because of lower retail prices, he seldom earned more than N170 per week.

When L buys and sells grain in the market, he aims at the very least to make sufficient earnings to meet to cover a series of needs during the week. Sometimes he is left with unsold grain. If L does not know the wholesaler well, he will give the wholesaler the agreed price for all sacks sold. This leaves L, who had expected to sell all his grain, with lower absolute earnings than he anticipated. However, if L is well known and trusted by his wholesaler, then he can protect his minimum earnings by asking that payment be deferred for some of the wholesaler’s sacks which were sold. On 17 February 1978, according to R (see our first case study) too much guineacorn was brought to market, and L could not sell all of either R’s or M’s supply. In this circumstances, L did not even pay R (saying that he ‘had no money’) until the following week. There are, on the other hand, occasions when L has paid for a whole consignment of M’s grain, even though he has not yet sold all the sacks. Thus the close and long-standing relationship between M and L is of mutual benefit. On 6 August 1978, only six of M’s 20 sacks arrived in time for the opening of the market. The remaining 14 were transported late from M’s hamlet and did not arrive until the middle of the day. During the morning L was not only aware of the fact that more grain would be arriving later. However, he resisted the efforts of other wholesalers from southern Katsina to sell him their grain. He only bought six sacks from them, and when M’s 14 remaining sacks appeared at midday, L undertook to sell all of them, at the prevailing wholesale rate for a full sack of 40 tiya, which he succeeded in doing by the end of the day. However, L asked M to allow him N124 — 19 per cent of the total owed — because of his domestic expenses arising out of the Muslim fast in the month of Ramadan. Given the social and moral importance of Ramadan and the Salla festival, M readily agreed.

Trading commitments and market arrangements are flexible. Having agreed on a wholesale price in the morning, the wholesaler still plays an occasional part in the disposal of his produce. Thus, when the retailer arranges a bulk sale of part of the grain, he can call in the wholesaler to discuss the price with the prospective buyer. For example, on 6 August 1978, L agreed to purchase from M one type of guineacorn (mori) at N33. During the day, one man wished to purchase 4 sacks of (mori). Rather than handle the transaction on his own, L called in M and acted as
his broker. $M$ insisted on N34.50 per sack, whereas $L$ firmly recommended N33. $M$ finally agreed with $L$. $L$ must balance two considerations: he wishes to make his own profit margin on sacks in his hand, but he undertakes to sell as much of $M$'s grain as possible, in a situation where there may be difficulty in selling all grain in hand. If a buyer offers to purchase a significant proportion of $M$'s grain, then $L$ will put first the consideration of clearing $M$'s stocks.

Most rural wholesalers are relatively short of investment funds and must therefore replenish their funds. So, if they have no trusted associate at the retail outlet point, their stocks may be passed over by potential buyers and their grain may be tied up at the market until the following week. $M$'s relation with $L$ enables him to sell quickly and get out of the market with a profit, instead of tying down his investment funds for a week or more. The retailer has access to knowledge of market conditions in the grain-deficit area, access to bulk buyers and regular customers who will purchase part of the wholesaler's supply and access to other market-places (in our example, Kazaure market) where unsold supplies can still be sold. The wholesaler for his part, is able to allow the retailer some regularity in his turnover and his income. The creation of personal ties and relations of trust between wholesaler and retailer, where knowledge over time engenders trust, is the establishment of those nodal points through which grain is moved long distances, and deficit areas are provisioned. Marketing through personal networks between wholesaler and retailer, reduces the uncertainty for both.

But there is an interplay between 'market forces' and the working of 'market networks'. Wholesalers are not locked into trading channels regardless of market conditions over a huge area and the relative returns from going to different destinations. In 1978, $M$'s trade was almost entirely concentrated on Danbatta. In 1979, when it became clear that Danbatta prices had fallen and demand was slack, $M$ diversified his trade. During the thirteen-week period from 7 January to 1 April, $M$ went to Danbatta on eight Sundays. He carried an average of nine sacks on each occasion. In the same period, he went to Funtua market (30 miles from the hamlet) on nine Mondays. He carried an average of eleven sacks on each occasion. He went to Sokoto market (250 miles from the hamlet) on six Thursdays, and carried an average of 25 sacks on each occasion. $M$'s marketing in Funtua and Sokoto itself proceeded through personal networks, and was based on the reputation he had cultivated for selling sacks which were full with 40 tiya. In Funtua, he was introduced to the wealthiest mai rumfa (owner of a warehouse and marketing shed) by his patron, Alhaji Z, who had being going regularly for years. As for Sokoto, the year before he had strongly supported his son's second marriage to the daughter of an old friend, Mai Gida T, who was a big weekly trader to Sokoto, often carrying 50 sacks a week, and had many contacts in that market. By 1979, T was aging and weakening and he asked his new son-in-law to take over the transport of his grain to Sokoto. This gave $M$ the opportunity to send his son to Sokoto with grain, and avail himself of Mai Gida T's personal networks. Despite this diversification, $M$ continued to carry grain to Danbatta. He did this in order to maintain his personal marketing channel through $L$. In June, with more favourable conditions in Danbatta, he increased his weekly shipments there to over 20 sacks a week.

We may summarise the interaction between market forces and market networks. The volumes which $M$ buys each week in the hamlet, and carries to any particular destination, will depend on the estimate of costs and revenues stemming from his over-all assessment of market forces in supply and demand areas. However, his distribution of shipments over various destinations will depend on his capacity to
develop personal networks in retail market outlets.

Relationships between wholesalers and retailers, of the type that exists between \( M \) and \( L \) cannot be categorised as a relation of patron to client. Certainly, \( M \) and \( L \) are dependent on one another, but not all types of dependence are components of clientage. Patronage exists when a capacity to command the services of others is maintained by rendering assistance to those whose services are commanded, and where the assistance is necessary to either the survival or the advancement of the subordinate. Neither, \( M \) nor \( L \) can command the services of the other. Hausa use the word 'ubangida'—translated as 'patron' with the express sense of 'master'—for that economic arrangement wherein the superior loans money to the inferior, either for shorter or longer periods of time. \( M \) is not a source of loan money for \( L \). In this, the relationship between \( L \) and \( M \) is qualitatively different from those between \( M \) and Alhaji Z and his urban backers, and \( M \) and his Mai Gari. Further, patronage implies that the connections between superior and subordinate do not just apply to one, but to several, or many, spheres of activity. Their interaction is limited to trade. Though both men are Kanawa, \( L \) knew absolutely nothing about \( M \)'s family, \( M \) had never spent the night at \( L \)'s house in his storeroom. Despite many years of business association, \( L \) had never travelled to southern Katsina to visit \( M \). Both sides—and especially \( M \) seem content to limit the relationship to trade.

Under clientage, however, the granting of a long-term interest-free loan (jali) in return for trading services appears to open up a broader social interaction. For example, \( M \) had for several years an ubangida, Alhaji J, who lived in a village near Danbatta. \( M \) would receive money to buy guineacorn for the Alhaji in southern Katsina, and once the relationship had developed, he could go to Alhaji J for jali. By 1978, Alhaji J no longer regularly required \( M \)'s services. Occasionally, \( M \) would apply to Alhaji for a short-term loan (rance), payable at the next market. But though their economic connection was almost dormant, \( M \) would still attend when Alhaji had a naming or wedding ceremony in his house. And when \( M \) sought a wife in Danbatta, he used Alhaji J as the go-between with the woman's family. In the summer of 1978, \( M \) stayed the night in Alhaji's zaure (the entrance-room to his compound), and used it as a meeting-place with the woman he was courting.

By contrast the relationship between \( M \) and \( L \) may be described as a lateral trading friendship between social equals. It is limited to the economic activity which joins them together. At the same time, it is based on a willingness to make allowance for the other's social as well as economic needs. A lateral trading friendship is marked by trust and flexibility. But it is not marked by personal friendship. This is expressed in Hausa by the different connotations of abokin ciniki and aboki. Abokin ciniki is literally a 'friend of (in) trade'. Aboki, as used in S. Katsina, refers to a close personal friend and has the further practical connotation that abokanai are expected to call upon each other for help in every type of social situation. Men related to each other as abokin ciniki are more distantly connected. What help they give each other flows directly from the commercial transactions between them.

To summarise the marketing channel from wholesaler to retailer: The available investment funds, or liquid capital, of most wholesalers and retailers are limited in relation to their marketing, agricultural, and household commitments. As a result, there is considerable competition among wholesalers to dispose of their supplies in the retail outlet market. A long-standing personal relationship between wholesaler and retailer gives both wholesaler and retailer a degree of security in an uncertain situation. Personal relations of this sort allows the social needs of both
wholesaler and retailer, grounded in a common religion, custom, and sense of social obligation, to be taken into account in economic transactions. Personal networks do not set limits on the way market forces affect prices or grain movements, nor do they guarantee profit margins against market forces. They facilitate the diversification of produce movements to other market places over a huge area. This is because traders become friends over the enormous area of Hausaland. Frequent information flows between them. The interplay between supply and demand is funnelled through social interactions and therefore depends on the creation and development of personal networks. The 'impersonal' market place of economic analysis and libertarian theory turns out to be a very personal place indeed.

The social meaning of 'profit' in the life of one trader \( L \) uses the word 'riba' to refer to the difference between his revenues and his costs. And he is intrigued at the possible 'riba' which attaches to any sort of production or purchase for money exchange. 'Riba' is the Hausa concept for calculating returns to expenditure in relation to other possible expenditures. However, 'riba' is made and spent in a particular social context, which influences the meaning of the term.

\( L \)'s weekly expenditures occur within the social context of Hausa polygamous marriage, and the sort of kinship ties which result from it. \( L \) had two wives in 1977, and married a third in 1978. In consequence, he had seven children — two of them boys — all of whom were too young to make any contribution to the household economy. Furthermore, Hausa polygamous marriage is often fragile, and divorce is common. In 1979, two of \( L \)'s wives divorced him. Consequently \( L \) would again be involved in the expenses of marrying more wives. And aside from the initial marriage payments to a girl and her parents, he would give continuously small money gifts of N1 or N2 to her parents in order to help cement the marriage, and much bigger help in the event of the marriage of one of their other children. \( L \) is committed to rising household expenses as the number of his wives and children increases, and has moral obligations to his several brothers and half-brothers, and therefore, in his own words. 'I have to give money to my boys and younger brothers, even if they do not work for me'.

\( L \) has seven farms. On these he employs two types of labour — all-purpose subordinates, or \( yara \), on whom he can rely to perform a multitude of tasks, including farm labour, and the selling of such farm products as guineacorn stalks or bundles of grass; and occasional daily farm workers or \( Yan \ kwadago \). His total farm expenditure in 1978, almost entirely on labour, was N1000. This investment was made out of his retail earnings in the market. The market value of his total output was little more than this — between N1000 and N1200. He produced enough guineacorn and millet, 15 sacks, to feed his family, provide grain and money gifts at the naming and wedding ceremonies of friends and kin, and reserve a few sacks for storage against a price rise. He produced enough groundnuts — the equivalent of five sacks of processed nuts — to enable his wives to make sufficient groundnut oil for family needs and to sell, again leaving a small amount for storage against a price rise. Thus, his output of food, which absorbed most of his acreage and expenditure, went primarily to meet family needs, and secondarily to provide a small store of savings in kind. His output of cassava (worth perhaps N170 in 1979) was all sold, but it absorbed less than 20 per cent of his farm spending and little of his acreage. \( L \) uses the word 'riba' (profit?) to refer to the differences between his revenues and his costs.

His retail profit margin flows into household consumption — either directly, through current spending, or indirectly, through investment in farm labour and
thus the provision of family food needs. Otherwise, \( L \) uses 'riba' to contract additional marriages. The purpose and use of 'riba' is the maintenance and expansion of his household. It is true that \( L \) can, and sometimes does, conceive of 'profit' in the Marxist sense, as a money sum derived from the employment of wage labourers for a sum which is less than the value that they produce, which sum is then allocated to the further employment of labour-power and other means of production. However, he does so within at least two limits. First, farm labour is now relatively expensive. This restricts the profitability of capitalist investment in agriculture. Secondly, \( L \) lives in a moral order which insists on the crucial importance of polygamous marriage. Typically, before a Hausa man has achieved a degree of permanence in his own marital arrangements, he finds himself morally obliged to meet the marriage expenses of his rising sons and daughters. Of course, there are economic grounds, among others, for the emphasis placed on polygamous marriage in Hausa society. According to \( L \), he will be able to use family labour on his farm as his male children grow older, and will not need to employ so much wage labour. But to say that there are economic reasons 'for' an institution, is quite different from saying that those reasons are sufficient for it to exist.

Two different senses of accumulation may be distinguished. Under capitalist accumulation, farmers or farmer-traders with available money use their money primarily to employ day-labourers at a wage rate which will enable them to expand the sum of value produced for exchange on the market, through re-investment of profit in buying labour-power and means of production. Under household accumulation, they make a profit, as a balance of revenue over costs, and use it to buy farms and employ wage-labour. But their main use of profit from commerce or production is the maintenance, stabilisation, and enlargement of polygamous households through marriage, procreation, the contraction of marriages for their dependent children, and fostering close relations with their affines. They do this for reasons which are both economic and non-economic. Household accumulation is consistent with elements of capital accumulation: profit in the book-keeping sense, farm purchase, wage labour. However, the social purposes of these activities are not capitalist.

Like all Hausa farmer-traders, \( L \) is preoccupied with 'riba' and the investment of it in trade and in farm purchase and farm labour. But under the circumstances, \( L \)'s preoccupations are associated with an accumulation of household values rather than capitalist 'exchange value'. Getting to know \( L \) — and he was forthcoming and reflective in conversation — alerted me to the combination of careful money calculation with an emphasis on household values. I came to think that this conjunction is the pervasive feature of Hausa economic life. It is as if money served household values, rather than social arrangements being designed to facilitate the accumulation of money values. The cycle of household accumulation is fraught with difficulty. For \( L \) profit making, and the investment of profits in farm-purchase and farm-labour, are ways of increasing his capacity to meet financial responsibilities and to provision a growing household. The elements of capitalist production can be present, without capitalist mode of production. The capitalist grin and paws and tail; but no capitalist cat.

**Conclusion**

Our case studies of the inter-rural grain trade in Hausaland show how grain trading takes place through a complex network of social relations. They variously involve ties of kinship, friendship, clientage and religious observance, considerations of
future security and calculations of economic advantage. They bring together aristocrats and urban merchants, inter-rural wholesalers, retailers in rural and urban markets, and the farmers who grow the food. They articulate the linked markets in the purchase and sale (for immediate and future delivery) of grain and other crops, in credit advances, for trading, investment, marriage or consumption purposes, in buying and selling of livestock and in investments in agricultural production, transport and rural manufacturing. They enable traders to store crops over time and move crops over long distances, and across international boundaries, in response to changes, within and between seasons and in the supply of and demand for food in different places. These are not the ‘impersonal’ markets conceived by liberal economic, political and sociological theories. Competition in both commodity and credit markets depends on the personalised social relations among traders for the spread of information and to provide access to credit and to customers and suppliers.

Trading across space, whether within or between economic regions, within a short period of time, especially the purchase and sale of grain for weekly markets, is very competitive. Profit rates tend to be low and the producers’ share of the final retail price tends to be high. Trading across time, i.e. storage against a price rise, is an important and generally profitable marketing activity. The differences between buying and selling prices are generally wider than in trading over short periods across space. Over the year, traders increase their investment funds by combining the gradual increases in funds from trading in weekly markets with purchasing grain for storage against a price rise. They procure future grain deliveries for storage by providing falle loans to farmers in the pre-harvest period. Traders augment their funds by investing profits from grain marketing in livestock and in agricultural production and vice versa. Rural traders use loans from urban patrons, and the money advanced by patrons for purchases of grain on their own behalf, to expand the scope of their trading transactions. The combination of falle loans, weekly trading in crops, investments in farming and in livestock, and storage against a price rise together make possible a considerable accumulation of money capital. At the same time they offer a hedge against the uncertainties of credit repayment, of crop production and of price fluctuations.

Local Government Authorities, state and federal governments, and aristocrats of the Emirates who operate with money built up over years of taxation, extortion and corruption, occupy the apex of both public and private marketing channels. Government manages the marketing of cotton through the former Northern States/Region Marketing Board, now the Cotton Marketing Board, and its Licensed Buying Agents, often district heads and other members of the aristocracy (see Williams in this issue of ROAPE). The recently established Grains Marketing Board has not purchased much grain, especially sorghum, the staple item of the inter-rural grain trade from southern Katsina. Private grain marketing relies on the aristocracy and the government as a source of trading funds and as one of the final markets for grain, purchased by contractors for schools, and the army and other public institutions. Decisions about the purchase, movement and sale of grain in rural markets are largely in the hands of rural-based traders, on whom urban merchants and aristocrats rely for their own participation in the inter-rural grain trade.

The grain trade operates through vertical clientage networks, kin groups and lateral friendship associations. These ties are varied and flexible. Patrons seek to expand their network of clients. Traders can always seek the support of alternative patrons. Relations between suppliers and customers are never exclusive. Patrons
benefit from the claims they are able to secure on the labour-time (and produce) of their clients and kin, but these advantages are partly offset by the reciprocal obligations thus incurred. The marketing of grain is not, and cannot be, 'perfectly competitive'. The need to dispose of large sums of money and to develop a network of creditors, clients and agents, as well as to acquire knowledge and experience of complex markets, makes possible a degree of concentration in the control of trade from many rural markets and between distant markets. However, the same clientage and associational networks constrain the process of accumulation through the claims for assistance made on their participants. The scope for ignoring such claims, and for profiteering, both from credit advances and commodity transactions, is limited by the availability of alternative purchasers, creditors and patrons.

Traders accumulate within a nexus of household and kin relations. Marriage alliances and increases in the number of wives and children are important to the expansion of a man's trading and family activities. They also define the goals of accumulation. 'Riba', profit, is the central focus of trading activities, but it is used to provision and expand the household. Household accumulation incorporates profit-making and the buying and selling of commodities, including wage-labour. However, the social purposes realised through these activities are distinct from those of capitalist accumulation.

Note

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This paper discusses the effects of commodity production on rural households in Southern Malawi during the colonial period. It argues that the effects on relations — particularly those of gender — within the household can only be understood within a wider context of inter-household relations and the interventions of the colonial state. Drawing on two case studies of commoditisation, occurring in the same historical period and within the same region, it shows the very different effects of this on the position of women within their households and communities.

The 'household' has become a basic concept in the analysis of African rural economies. It has been regarded as a unit of production, controlling access to resources such as land and labour and making joint decisions about the allocation of such resources. Such a model would be useful for the purposes of comparative analysis. Yet it does not 'fit' the evidence concerning inter-household relations in Africa. At a recent inter-disciplinary workshop on the Household in Africa, a number of different models were put forward while some participants rejected the usefulness of the concept of the household altogether, preferring to deal with a matrifocal 'hearth-hold' or advocating a return to a focus on the individual as the decision-maker.

While there has been no consensus on 'the household', discussions surrounding it have thrown up a number of valuable insights. At least we know better now which lines of enquiry obscure rather than illuminate and which models mislead. We know, for example, that evolutionary schema do not go far to explain the observed changes in African households over time. We know that it is dangerous to assume that resources are held in common or decisions taken jointly. In the case of many African rural economies, we need only to turn our attention to the matter of food consumption to realise that we are not always dealing with a simple unit. Food allocation within African households can be markedly uneven, for instance, and often consumption of meals is organised along lines of age and gender which cross-cut household boundaries. This renders irrelevant the common definition of the household as a unit whose members 'eat from one pot'. The income streams of marriage partners within households are often maintained in separation from each other, and inheritance patterns reinforce this. Some have gone so far as to see this conjugal economic separation as characteristically 'African', though, as Ann Whitehead and others have pointed out, this approach runs the risk of elevating (or reducing) the absence of the 'conjugal estate' to an unbroachable, unanalysable cultural 'given'.

Household Units and Historical Process in Southern Malawi

Megan Vaughan
Models which depend on the existence of irreducible cultural forms are unsatisfactory but so too are purely functionalist ones. Changes in the mode of production undoubtedly have important effects on the structure of households and the relations within them. Olivia Harris points out, however, that it would be mistaken to assume that each economic system produces its own specific household form. To understand the changes which take place in household size and composition we have to re-integrate the study of the ‘unit’ with a study of historical ‘process’; the unit has to be seen both as a lens on, and a product of, a wider network of social and economic relations. For Marxist scholars the debate revolves around the question of the effects of a shift from household-based subsistence production to household-based petty commodity production and, in particular, the extent of the impact of commoditisation on the cycle of reproduction. Theoretically, the permeation of commercial relations into the agrarian structure will give rise to commodity-producing households whose reproduction will depend, at least in part, on the purchase of commodities. This process tends towards the isolation of the domestic unit as relations between households come to be mediated through commodity relations. As Harris points out, however, it is important not to confuse isolation with autonomy. Chayanov’s much-cited peasant households, for instance, had the appearance of autonomy precisely because they were so embedded in relations of commodity exchange. The data from Africa shows this process of isolation to be far from straightforward or linear. At all stages in the commercialisation of the economy capital articulates with specific and changing forms of African relations of production which include, but go beyond, those of the household. A number of writers have drawn attention to the fact that as commercialisation of African economies deepens, so the communal bonds of rural societies, far from dissolving, appear to be strengthened in certain ways. For this reason, attention is being focused once again on the nature of inter-household relations, for without a knowledge of these it appears unlikely that we will understand the structure of households and of intra-household relations. This is not to say that we should be reduced to explanations which invoke ‘traditional’ values, nor that we should resort to over-simplistic models of the ‘lineage mode of production’. Rather, by re-integrating the study of the household into the wider context of the historical development of capitalism in Africa, we can begin to evolve a dynamic model which will help make visible the problematically ‘invisible’ nature of intra-household relations. Ann Whitehead suggests such a way forward which focuses on the differential access to resources of male and female members of households. This involves looking in detail at inter-household links to both kin and non-kin and observing how these are put to use. In turn, this reflects crucially on the process of reproduction of the household and of class formation. But it also highlights the crucial importance of the interventionist nature of the state in Africa and how it has moulded the particular form of capitalist relations which have developed there.

Gavin Kitching’s study of the process of class formation in rural Kenya is one example of the use of this approach. Kitching focuses on men’s and women’s access to resources and on their differential insertion into the capitalist economy, and uses this information to reflect on the ‘political economy of the family’. The patterns of household formation which emerge from his analysis are complex and defy reduction to a simple functionalist model. In discussing household structure amongst the Kikuyu in the 1950s, for instance, Kitching lists a number of variables which affected the balance of gender power within these households. These variables included the presence or absence of male household heads from the
farms, the size of the land-holding and the extent of the hiring of labour. But understanding the variables at work does not enable us to predict the outcome with any certainty. Kitching concludes that, generally speaking, a male household head with abundant land resources, who was present on the farm for at least part of the year, and who could afford to hire labour, would be likely to control a much larger proportion of the household surplus product than a man on a smallholding who was permanently absent and dependent entirely on his wife's labour for production on the plot. However, it was possible, as Kitching points out, that men in such a weak 'strategic' position would be more likely to assert their customary rights energetically, and so ultimately exercise more control over the household surplus product. In the end, he suggests, the outcome may have had more to do with the 'personalities' of husband and wife and their forcefulness in asserting their rights than with any of the variables mentioned. Another way of interpreting this, however, is to lay greater emphasis on the effects of inter-household relations on intra-household politics. In an increasingly, but incompletely, commoditised economy, such inter-household relations would include formal and fictive kinship ties and informal arrangements of co-operation, clientship and friendship. The importance of such ties can only be understood within the context of the historical development of capitalism in Africa. The process of colonial domination in Africa, as Sara Berry explains, everywhere superimposed new rules of access to resources on top of existing one. Although African economies become increasingly commercialised, this has not been accompanied by full privatisation of ownership or control over the means of production. For this reason, membership of various groups, ranging from 'the family to the state' has been crucially important in securing an individual's access to resources. Such bonds of kinship, clientage and other group affiliation moulded the pattern of class formation in Africa in particular ways:

The fact that ties of kinship and community no longer offer people havens from vagaries of the market (and) the oppressive exactions of the state ... does not mean that those ties are unimportant — their importance lies in the way they shape conditions of access, strategies of resource management, and uses of agricultural surplus (page 95.)

These ties were also vitally important in shaping the pattern of intra-household relations and hence the form of the household itself. If, then, we think in terms of the individual's access to resources being mediated through this web of relations, then the fact that the evolution of the African household under capitalism has not always conformed to 'theory', should not surprise us. In particular, the effects of the commercialisation of economic relations on the position of women has not always been predictable or unilinear. When describing the effects on households of involvement in maize cash-cropping in early 20th century Kenya, Kitching observes that the manner in which a household entered commodity production was a crucial variable. Where women entered into commodity production before or at the same time as men, for instance, they might be expected to have had a greater bargaining power when land became scarcer. In the rest of this paper I explore a similar question with reference to two societies in Southern Malawi during the colonial period and try to draw some conclusions about the interplay of commodity production, inter-household relations and 'the politics of the family'.

The first case study is drawn from the work of Elias Mandala and describes the effects of cotton cash-cropping on households and gender relations amongst the Mang'anja of the Lower Shire valley. The second case study is from the work of Landeg White who discusses the operation of tenant tobacco production on the
private estates of the Shire Highlands in the 1930s and 1940s. The communities under consideration were broadly similar in their formal kinship structure. Both the Mang'anja of the Lower Shire and the Nyanja, Yao and Lomwe residents of the Shire Highlands estates followed matrilineal inheritance rules and practised uxorilocal marriage in the early 20th century. Their cultural and religious practices were closely related. Both lay within the bounds of the same colonial provincial administration. But the two areas experienced the commercialisation of their economies in different ways and with different consequences for inter- and intra-household relations.

Mandala describes the economy of the Mang'anja in the mid-19th century as having been essentially 'gender neutral', by which he seems to mean that women's and men's economic activities received roughly equal social valuation. Mang'anja households, which usually consisted of a man and one wife (polygyny was uncommon), their unmarried children and possibly, slaves, maintained two gardens, a wet season garden called *mphala* and a dry season garden or *dimba*. Utilising both these gardens, agricultural work was more or less continuous throughout the year, with all members of the household contributing their labour. Although there were some gender-specific tasks (for instance, men prepared the flooded *dimba* fields at the same time as women were storing the harvest from the *mphala* garden), in general 'age and gender played no significant role in regulating production in the household based agricultural sector' (page 24). Non-agricultural production, on the other hand, was much more markedly gender-specific, and was less household based than kin and community based. Whilst men hunted and manufactured and traded cloth and iron, women engaged in the production and exchange of salt and pottery. Women were thus actively involved in external trade in their own right.

Mang'anja villages were conglomerations of related matrilineal sorority groups (*mbumba*) consisting of sisters, their daughters and unmarried sons 'overseen' by an elder brother or uncle. Marriage was uxorilocal: husbands came to reside with their wives in their wives' natal villages. The only men who did not do so were the guardians of *mbumba* groups and village headmen, whose status earned them the right of virilocal marriage. Rights to land were vested in women and men could only gain access to land through marriage. Marriage did not involve any formal transaction of goods, but was sealed through the institution of *chikamwini*, by which a prospective husband was placed 'on probation' for one to several years, living in the village of his prospective parents-in-law and performing agricultural labour for them. Only after this period would he be allowed to set up a separate household with his wife and gain access to separate gardens. Through this institution, then, Mang'anja elders 'circulated their women against labour' (page 37).

The marked increase in slave raiding from the 1860s onwards had profound effects on the economic and social organisation of Mang'anja life. Women became the main victims of the trade; famine accompanied theft and violence as the agricultural economy faltered. The histories of the northern and southern halves of the valley diverged somewhat as they came under different political influences at the end of the century. In the north, the original pattern of gender relations within the household was more or less maintained, but in the south a more distinctly gender-differentiated economy developed. In both areas communities began producing and trading sesame seed, but while in the north both men and women sold their seed to local traders, in the south the men alone took their produce to the Zambezian markets by canoe. In the south the increasingly male domination of
the economy at this time was also furthered by the development of labour migration and by the continuation of male non-agricultural specialities such as cloth and iron manufacture and large game hunting. In both areas, however, the non-agricultural economy eventually declined in the face of increasing competition from imports and the economies became more exclusively centred on agricultural, household-based production. This tendency was enhanced by colonial intervention and, in particular, by the introduction and adoption of cotton as a cash crop in the first decade of the 20th century.

According to Mandala, the developing pattern of cotton production in the valley was essentially ‘gender-blind’ (page 162). This seems to have had much to do with the resilience of some aspects of the matrilineal inheritance system in which access to land was a right vested in women. Two patterns of cotton cultivation emerged. In some areas cotton was grown on the wet season mphala gardens whilst food crops were cultivated on the dimba land. It required the co-operation of all members of the household to produce a subsistence and a surplus crop in the absence of slave labour. Husband and wife worked together on one garden before moving on to the next. In the south of the valley cotton was interplanted with food crops on both the dimba and mphala gardens, and man and wife together attended both sets of crops. While women stored the food crops from the dimba garden, men weeded the cotton for the last time, and were later joined by the women again to harvest and pick the crop.

Men and women thus jointly invested their labour in the production of the cotton crop which was grown on land formally allocated to women. Women clearly believed that both their labour on the crop and their position in the land-holding system entitled them to a fair share of the proceeds of the cotton sales. Although there is some evidence that, at the heart of the industry, men attempted to monopolise these proceeds by going to market the cotton alone, women soon staged a successful comeback. The centralisation of cotton marketing from 1910 onwards involved the publication of the dates and venues of cotton markets. Henceforth women made sure that they attended at the crucial stage of the sale of the crop. Women took their own loads of cotton to market and retained the cash earned in their own hands. The most common use to which they put this cash was the purchase of a new cloth for themselves. The cash earned from the men’s loads, on the other hand, was most commonly used to pay hut tax which, under colonial legislation, was the responsibility of husbands. Unmarried, widowed and divorced women who headed their own households were also liable to tax and like the men, used the proceeds of their cotton sales to pay this (page 165). The cotton economy was crucial to their independent existence and enabled them to avoid selling their own labour to wealthier households.

In the 1930s however, an important change took place in the economy of the valley as a consequence of the collapse of the cotton industry. Attempts to substitute groundnuts for cotton failed and cash-crop production was gradually replaced by labour migration and cattle-raising. The implications of this shift were enormous as both of these newly dominant activities were confined to able-bodied men, leaving women and some of the elders marginalised in the economy. Some women continued growing cotton in their own right but with low prices this was not an attractive proposition. Women who headed their own households and who had previously maintained their economic independence through cotton production now slipped further and further into dependency (page 199). More and more of these women defaulted on their tax payments until, in the 1940s, the colonial administration finally exempted all women from taxation and 'formally
endorsed the displacement of female labour from the larger colonial economy'. According to Mandala, the effects of labour migration were particularly acute for Mang'anja women because the functions of the mbumba group and the inter-household co-operation implied in it had irreversibly declined:

Labour migration in the valley started after the mbumba community had lost its cohesion as a force in production and reproduction as a result of the initial success of peasant agriculture, the collapse of the non-agricultural sector and colonial economic and administrative influences... Labour migration became a regular feature of the economy of the valley after the household had become the real context for female-male struggles in the colonial situation... Rural poverty became synonymous with femininity and colonial domination almost the same as male domination for the majority of rural women. Women bore the brunt of both capitalist and non-capitalist forms of exploitation (page 259).

Not only did women's labour become confined to the precarious 'subsistence' sector, but in the process they also lost some of the traditional mechanisms by which, as a group, they had resisted male domination. As controllers of household incomes, men now had much greater ability to manoeuvre within 'custom'. For some Mang'anja, cash payments from labour migration came to replace the performance of chikamwini and evolved into a form of bridewealth which sometimes also entailed patrilocal marriage and patrilineal inheritance.

On the estates of the Shire Highlands, some 50 miles away from the valley studied by Mandala, the position of women was also worsening in the 1930s and 1940s but for rather different reasons. Landeg White's study is of villages on the privately-owned Bruce Estates of Chiradzulu district, land which had been alienated at the end of the 19th century and which was peopled by communities of tenants. Despite living on alienated land, the customs and traditions of these tenant villagers were, in the early 20th century, very similar to those of the Mang'anja of the Lower Shire. The villagers were drawn from a number of groups, mainly Lomwe immigrants from Mozambique and Yao and Nyanja with whom they had intermarried. All these groups professed to follow matrilineal rules of inheritance and to practice uxorilocal marriage, and for all of them the sorority group or mbumba was the central unit of social organisation. Tenant villages therefore consisted of a collection of mbumba groups, though unlike the situation on customary land, a village on the estates might consist of groups which were unrelated to one another. Despite (or because) of the abnormality of their situation, tenant villages appear to have expended much effort in 're-creating' their traditional village organisation on the estate, inventing fictive kinship links where real links were absent, adhering to a residence pattern common to matrilineal groups and to the customs of uxorilocal marriage. Land for food cultivation was allocated to these villages by the landowner in return for a labour rent called thangata. Men and unmarried adult women were liable to thangata which, on this estate, was particularly onerous, extending up to eight months. Whilst men were performing thangata, however, and thus ensuring the household's right to residence on the estate, the women remained in charge of food production and the day-to-day conduct of life in the villages (page 210). Whilst the individual household was the basic unit of production and consumption, with each woman owning her own grain-bin (nkhokwe), there was nevertheless much co-operation between women in the villages. This co-operation was based both on the kinship ties of the matrilineage and on less formal friendships with other women. A matrilineal theory of society, built around the central position of the female ancestor, of women as land-holders, food producers and guardians of fertility, prevailed in this period and women successfully resisted attempts by men to
impose their 'new' conception of things on the culture of the village (page 211). As White explains, however, there were serious contradictions and tensions in this situation which were later to surface. Despite their efforts to maintain 'custom', these villages were ultimately dependent on male thangata labour for their existence. It was not by marriage that, in the final analysis, a man secured his access to land, but by working for the estate under the rules of thangata. A married woman's access to her land was thus ultimately dependent on her marriage tie, a reversal of matrilineal practice and one which women did their best to disguise.

The conflicts came to the fore in the 1930s with a modification of the thangata system. Instead of paying rent in the form of labour, men paid in the form of dark-fired tobacco which they grew on their own plots and sold to the estate. Where previously men had been heavily involved in work away from the immediate vicinity of the village, they now had a more direct interest in village affairs and, in particular, a direct interest in land allocation. Tobacco was grown by the men with no direct labour contribution from their wives: to grow it they needed land (page 240). Slowly the women had to concede that certain rights in tobacco land would be vested in men and eventually it became assumed that inheritance of these rights and assets would pass through the male line. When a man died, his tobacco land, his curing barn and his tools were inherited by his own sons rather than his wife's relations. Resist as they might, it was difficult for the women to arrest this development, for if the men were unable to produce the tobacco then the whole household could be evicted. Administrative measures further weakened the hold of women on household resources. Following the introduction of Indirect Rule the choice of village headman, formerly entirely in the hands of elder women, had to be ratified by the colonial authorities. The appointed chiefs and headmen were accorded rights over the allocation of land and of wood cutting with wood fast becoming a scarce resource since men needed increasing amounts of it with which to cure their tobacco.

From 1925 onwards, women on the estates were forbidden to marry men who resided off the estates. By the 1930s this regulation had given rise to a severe shortage of husbands. An unmarried woman had to perform thangata, a task compatible with the production of foodstuffs, so it was especially important for an adult women to find a husband. Men became a valuable asset and husbands had to be carefully preserved. Women's pounding songs, normally very critical of men, took a new form on the estates. White's fascinating account describes how these songs came to be directed by women against other women, expressing rivalry as opposed to solidarity. Husbands were mollified rather than chided. The strong alliance of women in defence of their rights within 'custom' seemed to have dissolved leaving each women, within her household, to negotiate for control.

Women had not completely relinquished their economic control, however, as is attested by the events in the late 1940s when the Bruce Estates were sold to the government and some of the land was distributed to former tenants. With some hold still on matrilineal custom, and with the ending of thangata, unmarried women on the former estate land suddenly became highly eligible for the resources which they controlled and men from the more crowded customary land areas flocked there to form marriage alliances. Today the situation has changed once again. Over the last 40 years land on the former Bruce Estates has become more and more scarce and women have had to marry away from the area, cultivating their husbands' land and conceding to virilocal residence and patrilineal inheritance. Women have again lost much of their bargaining power within households as the resources over which they have maintained a tenuous control.
become less and less valuable or significant.

Set side-by-side, these two case studies raise some interesting issues concerning the effects of commodity production on the economic status of women. In the case of the communities studied by Mandala, it appears that the development of a cash-cropping industry actually strengthened the economic and political position of women, both within the immediate household and in their wider economic and social relations. In the second example, however, the reverse seems to have been the case. The development of the tobacco industry marked a definite downturn in the position of women. In both cases, women actively used their inter-household links (to both kin and non-kin) to resist a decline in their bargaining power within the household, and as far as possible they moulded and manipulated 'custom' to suit the circumstances of an increasingly commercialised economy. In both cases, the ultimate decline in the position of women came about in part through the particular interventions of the state in moulding the nature of economic relations. By placing fiscal responsibility on men, for instance, the state made central the economic activities of male household members and placed greater emphasis on the household (and hence on marriage) as the basic economic unit of society. The price women paid for their exemption from taxation (and, in the case of the estates, their exemption from \textit{thangata}) was the ultimate marginalisation of their economic activities. Whilst women maintained control over certain resources, in general these resources became less central to overall household strategies. It was men who, by necessity, forged the stronger links with the new capitalist economy which gave them a powerful bargaining position within the household. This will perhaps become clearer if we look at both cases from the point of view of access to and control over productive resources exercised by household members.

There were two strands to the Lower Shire economy in the 19th century; agricultural production and non-agricultural production. The first was household-based, whilst the second involved the close co-operation of a wider group. Rights to land for agricultural production were firmly vested in women and men only gained access to these rights through marriage. Labour was supplied by both men and women within the household, sometimes supplemented by the labour of domestic slaves. Mandala makes the point that within Mang'anja society, women as well as men had control over this servile labour. Older women also controlled the labour of younger men through the institution of \textit{chikamwini}, by which a man earned his right to marriage (and hence his access to land) through performing agricultural labour on his prospective mother-in-law's land. The founding of a separate household, with its own grain-bin, could not take place until this labour service had been performed. Inter-household links, mediated through marriage custom, thus determined the timing of the formation of a new household and influenced the pattern of relationships within it. Men had a stronger hold on resources within the non-agricultural economy, which was clearly differentiated on gender lines. Men alone had control over iron-ore resources and hunting grounds and were in charge of the exchange of these commodities. Women were also involved in community-based non-agricultural production and exchange through the salt and pottery industries. By the end of the 19th century, as a result of the increasing influence of external trade links, there was some shift taking place within the valley economy towards the increasing centrality of male-dominated non-agricultural production. This shift must ultimately have affected the nature of intra-household relations. However, with the development of a peasant cash-cropping industry in the early colonial period, this trend came to a halt. Production once again became crucially centred on the household, and women's control over
land resources allowed them to insist on the right of control over at least part of the product. Women and men within households both contributed their labour to the cash-crop and to food production. Women maintained sole control over the food to be consumed by the household, whilst the cash crop was divided between them and their husbands. In this way the women gained a foothold in the new commercial economy which allowed them to maintain economic independence even in the absence of their husbands. Since peasant cotton production was so firmly based on the individual household, however, this caused the gradual weakening of inter-household linkages, especially of those associated with the matrilineal sorority group. This tendency was further reinforced by colonial interventions, and particularly taxation policies, which took the household as the basic unit of society and placed responsibility for a woman firmly on the shoulders of her husband, whereas traditionally such responsibility would have lain at least in part with her own male relatives. The increasing isolation of the household took its toll upon women when the cotton economy collapsed and the resources over which they had control became relatively less valuable. During the era of cotton production, husbands had been directly dependent on their wives for access to the means of production. Labour migration freed them from that independence. Women did not have the links to the wage economy which became central to the reproduction of the household and of whole communities and were left peculiarly dependent on a marriage link. Intra-household politics, therefore, were closely related to developments in a wider economy and to the differential insertion of men and women into the state-directed capitalist economy. As women became economically marginalised, they lost much of the political and ideological control they had previously exercised through the matrilineal system.

Mandala presents the decline in women's status since the 1930s as an irreversible one though the possibility remains that, with the near cessation of labour migration since the 1970s, women have gained a stronger voice within and without the household. On the Bruce Estates the decline of female economic and social status was by no means an unaltering one. In this case, intra-household politics were very clearly integrated with the peculiar way in which commoditisation of the economy occurred. On the one hand, the ownership of the means of production was outside African communities altogether. On the other hand, these communities retained some control over the allocation of land resources and over at least part of their labour. As White points out, the tenant villages were both villages and labour reserves. Relatively untouched by the landowners' demands for labour, women in the thangata era were responsible for the reproduction of their communities, and they energetically maintained their political and ideological control through the manipulation and recreation of matrilineal 'custom'. Within the bounds set by estate residence, women also retained some control over access to land for food production. Co-operation between women, within the mbumba group and through fictive kinship links, resisted commoditisation. Women in the early colonial period were isolated from the capitalist economy — they were not personally liable to taxation if they were married, nor were they liable to rent. However, the contradictions in this situation emerged clearly once labour rent gave way to the production of tobacco. Women were ultimately dependent on their husbands' payment of tax and rent for their residence on the estate and their access to land for food production. Men competed for and invested in land for the first time and increasingly challenged the right of women (who contributed no labour to the tobacco crop) to maintain control over this resource. The peculiar form which the capitalist economy took on
the Bruce Estates had a profound influence on both intra-household relations and inter-household relations. The hardship which men underwent in performing thangata and working for tax ultimately paid off in terms of their own community's politics. Women's relative isolation from the capitalist economy increased their dependence. Specific interventions, such as the rule prohibiting women from marrying a man off the estate, mediated the impact of capitalism in peculiar ways. In this case, the impact was felt in the increasing competition for husbands and the degeneration of co-operation between women. It would appear, however, from the subsequent history of the estate, that women maintained some hold over the land resources through the ideology of matrilineal kinship. Though they had apparently lost sway at the level of intra-household politics, they were still able to claim some rights when the land was sold and redistributed. Even today, only some of the men in the area have established patrilineal inheritance and virilocal marriage. These are usually wealthier individuals, for when there is more inheritable property at stake, competition for inheritance rights is bound to increase. But there are also a number of men for whom political and social status, rights to and control over resources resides in their membership of the larger matrilineal kin group.

Both of these case studies affirm the need to view the African household within the context of a wider network of relations and affiliations through which the impact of capitalism was mediated. Viewed in this light it is easier to understand why commoditisation has neither produced a standard African household form, nor has led to a uniform, unilinear decline in women's position in the gender relations of household production.

Bibliographic Note


There is now a large body of work on gender and economic change in Africa: see the discussion of this in P. Roberts, 'Feminism in Africa: Feminism and Africa', ROAPE, 27/28, 1983.

The two case studies cited from Southern Malawi are Elias Mandala, Capitalism, Ecology and Society: The Lower Tchiri (Shire) Valley of Malawi, 1860-1960 (Ph.D., University of
Minneapolis, 1983) and Landeg White, Magomero: Portrait of an African Village (CUP, Cambridge, forthcoming). I am very grateful to Elias Mandala and to Landeg White for allowing me to cite their work at length.

For households in southern Malawi in the present day and the functions of matrilineal sorority groups, see David Hirschmann and Megan Vaughan, ‘Food Production and Income Generation in a Matrilineal Society: Rural Women in Zomba, Malawi’, Journal of Southern African Studies, 10 (1), October 1983.
Debates

THE SEGMENTED AGRICULTURAL LABOUR MARKET IN SUDAN

In ROAPE 26 Jay O'Brien suggested a four-phase periodisation of the 'Formation of the Agricultural Labour Force in Sudan'. Phase I extended from 1898 (the British occupation of the country) to 1925 (when the Gezira Scheme was established). Agricultural development was limited to small-scale experimentation with cotton cultivation. Phase II which started with Gezira, continued to 1950. The supply of agricultural labour to Gezira and a few pump-irrigated private cotton estates dominated all labour policy in that period. West African Muslim immigrants were encouraged by the British Administration to settle in and around Gezira as a ready wage labour supply for the Scheme. Phase III (1950-75) and IV (1975 to the present) constitute O'Brien's main concern. This is only to be expected. The 1950s saw the development of commoditisation in general. This started to affect even the most remote areas and its active agents were merchant capital and the state. With this came the expansion of capitalist agricultural production (the so-called rainfed mechanised farming) resulting in the separation of an increasing number of producers from their means of production. This has forced them to increase cash cropping and/or seasonally migrate to wage labour in large agricultural production areas (so-called irrigated and rainfed mechanised schemes).

O'Brien considers Phase III to have been characterised by the Sudanisation of the Gezira Scheme; the rapid expansion of Sudanese private investment in 'pump schemes' along the Nile (especially the White Nile) and in 'rainfed mechanised farming' schemes (mainly in Gedaref region and also in Habila, in the Western Sudan, Damazine, Central-Southern Sudan, etc) on the other. Wage rates in the latter seem to be higher than in the former by about 50 per cent. Wage differentials for O'Brien stem from the 'differential cost of the social reproduction of the specific labour forces involved'. He elaborates this as follows:

... cotton picking wages have been relatively low because so many of the cotton pickers worked as family groups in which several members earned incomes to meet the consumption needs of the family. Conversely, wage rates in the rainfed schemes have been relatively high because the work forces there has been composed principally of individuals who leave their families at home and go out in search of an income to help meet the family's consumption needs.

Where the traditional division of labour excludes women from some or all types of agricultural work, the availability of women for wage labour is necessarily restricted. O'Brien seems to suggest that labour recruited in rainfed mechanised farming has been drawn from such places. Moreover, new schemes (which O'Brien
takes to include the rainfed schemes) 'had to pay somewhat higher wages initially than the going rate in order to attract labour'. These higher wages, however, continued because the type of labour attracted was of 'a different type with different reproduction requirements'.

In Phase IV (1975 to present) wage rates began to rise sharply and by a greater proportion in cotton picking than in sorghum and sesame harvests. There has been a tendency for wage rates in the different segments of the labour market to converge. In this phase 'the boundaries between the various segments of the labour market are breaking down and that labour is beginning to flow across them, particularly the boundary between cotton picking and sorghum and sesame labour markets'. Participation of women in agricultural wage labour by the late 1970s started to increase, 'male household heads continued to harvest sorghum and sesame while their families began to go to the cotton schemes without them'. The effectiveness of centralised systems of recruitment (which O'Brien describes as a non-market mechanism) has begun to decline. 'By 1978 the management of several large irrigated schemes including the Gezira had suspended cotton picking labour recruitment activities' and migrants were increasingly finding their own ways to the market. These changes 'reflect a fundamental restructuring of the previously highly segmented market for agricultural labour towards the formation of a truly national labour market'.

The larger work of O'Brien (1980) is one of the best dealing with the Sudanese socio-economic formation. However, his article in *ROAPE*, 26 is less good. Many of O'Brien's arguments regarding the formation of a 'truly' national labour market in the Sudan, and the causes of wage differentials, are ill-founded and lack documentation.

While attempting to remove O'Brien's misconceptions, the arguments below also endeavour to shed light on some aspects of the internal mechanisms of the two largest agricultural labour markets in the Sudan; the Gezira Scheme (the largest cotton producing region) and Gedaref (the largest rainfed mechanised farming region) based mainly on the fieldwork carried out by the author in 1982-83 in the two regions. Evidence available suggests that the segmentation of the labour market still persists and there have not yet developed those signs to which O'Brien refers as evidence of the formation of a national labour market in the Sudan.

### Table I: Average Daily Wage for Men and Women in Gezira by Crop in Some Selected Operations in 1981/2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crop</th>
<th>Operation</th>
<th>Men Daily Wage in £</th>
<th>Women Daily Wage in £</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dura (Sorghum)</td>
<td>Weeding</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Harvesting</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>n.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean All Operations</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>1.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cotton</td>
<td>Harvesting</td>
<td>1.86</td>
<td>1.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean All Operations</td>
<td>2.18</td>
<td>1.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groundnuts</td>
<td>Mean All Operations</td>
<td>1.95</td>
<td>1.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: ILO-UNHCR, 1984, Tables 3.12, 3.13, 3.14, p.120-1.*
Table II: Average Daily Cash Wages by Crop and Operation in Gedaref in 1981/82

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crop</th>
<th>Operation</th>
<th>Average Daily Wage in S£</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dura</td>
<td>Weeding</td>
<td>6.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Harvesting</td>
<td>5.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sesame</td>
<td>Weeding</td>
<td>6.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Harvesting</td>
<td>5.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cotton</td>
<td>Harvesting</td>
<td>4.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gum Arabic</td>
<td>Harvesting</td>
<td>3.76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ILO-UNHCR, 1984, Table 2.17, p.54.

Firstly, it is worth remembering that methodologically the two tables above are comparable. Data was collected in the same agricultural season, using the same questionnaire and the same enumerators. Money wages in the two different regions are comparable in terms of real wages as the price of consumer goods in the two regions are, on average, more or less the same. There is nothing to suggest any difference in intensity of the working day or labour productivity in the two regions, at least not in identical operations.

A look at the two tables suggests that the average daily wage for harvesting gum arabic in Gedaref, which is the lowest daily wage amongst the different operations, is much higher than the highest daily wage paid in Gezira, which is the dura harvest. A comparison of wage rates in identical operations such as dura weeding and harvesting and cotton harvesting reveals that in Gedaref wages were higher in 1981/2 by 187 per cent, 120 per cent and 162 per cent respectively.

Wage differentials exist not only between Gedaref and Gezira but within the latter as well. A comparison of wage rates received by different groups of wage labourers in Gezira during cotton picking in 1982/83 by the author shows that the seasonal wage labourers were paid on average about 62 per cent of the wage rates paid to the settled wage labourers (the latter group is almost ignored by O'Brien). Between two different groups of seasonal labourers — the 'westerners' (or 'peasant' group) and the 'arabs' of the Two Niles (or 'pastoralist-peasant' group) — there were also differences in wage rates. The latter were paid about 41 per cent more than the former. In other words, while the 'arabs' (pastoralist-peasants) were paid 72 per cent, the 'westerners' (peasants) were paid only 51 per cent of the wage rates paid to the settled labourers of Gezira for the same type of work and under the same working conditions. Amongst different individuals within each of the two groups of seasonal labourers differences of up to 40 per cent have also been recorded, while amongst settled labourers in different localities in Gezira, with the exception of a few rare cases, the rates paid had been almost the same. All this suggests, contrary to O'Brien's belief, that there have been no signs of convergence of wage rates in the different labour markets in the Sudan.

The second argument that O'Brien puts in support of the formation of a national labour market is that boundaries between the different segments are breaking down as labour is moving from one segment to another. In contrast, the ILO/UNHCR (1984:59) study concludes that the survey of seasonal workers in
Gedaref 'did not substantiate the commonly held view that migrants tend to move between different jobs and areas in irrigated and mechanised farming schemes, as well as in urban areas. Ninety-seven per cent of the jobs held by the respondents in 1981, and 98 per cent of those held at the time of the interview in 1982 were in Kassala province, with most of the remaining jobs in Gezira'. Only 3 per cent in 1981 and 2 per cent in 1982 of the Gedaref workers would go outside Kassala searching for jobs. In Gezira none of the 82 wage labourers interviewed in 1983 by the author of this article reported going to mechanised rainfed farming schemes selling his/her labour power.

O'Brien also asserts that the non-market mechanisms organising the movement of seasonal wage labour have begun to break down; from the mid-1970s migrants have 'increasingly elected to finance their own travel to the scheme areas in order to negotiate the highest rates they could find', and more importantly, the centralised system of recruitment has begun to be less effective so that, 'by 1978 the management of several large irrigated schemes, including Gezira, had suspended cotton picking labour recruitment activities'. It is true that in Gedaref the role of the labour contractors had begun to decline, finally coming to an end as a result of the flow of Eritrean and Ethiopian refugees from the 1970s. However, in Gezira, as the 1983 survey shows, 'non-market mechanisms' of labour recruitment were strongly evident (Abdelkarim, 1984a).

The evidence suggests that O'Brien's periodisation of the development of the Sudanese agricultural labour markets does not work. There are few signs yet of the formation of a national agricultural labour market and segmentation is still the case. However, there are still further problems with O'Brien's methodology and arguments. He describes his third phase (1950-1975) as one in which segmentation of the agricultural labour market has been the rule. Wage differentials, which for O'Brien are the clearest manifestation of that segmentation, are to be sought, as we have seen, 'in the differential cost of the social reproduction of the specific labour forces involved'. In cotton picking (i.e. in our case Gezira), the whole family participated and therefore contributed to the reproduction of the household, whereas in sorghum and sesame harvests (rainfed schemes) the type of labour recruited, according to O'Brien, has mainly been one which originally excluded women and therefore has to be paid higher wages to 'ensure the reproduction of the village economy as a source of seasonal labour'.

This raises numerous problems. Although O'Brien asserts that wage rate differentials are not 'a simple reflection of any essential differences in the quality of the types of work involved', he later seems to contradict this view by mentioning groups 'who regarded heavy agricultural activity as undignified' preferring to work 'on the relatively light work of cotton picking rather than the arduous work in the rainfed schemes'. The division of labour among such groups permitted participation by women in the labour process, allowing them to come in family groups. O'Brien clearly suggests that there exist differences of work between the cotton schemes and the rainfed mechanised schemes, but he does not show that the wage differentials discussed stem from such work differences. In sum, there are major problems with his three related arguments concerning (a) the division of labour among peasants and pastoralists embarked on wage labour in the different segments of the labour market, (b) whether or not women are excluded from the agricultural labour process, and (c) the link made between the needs of reproduction and the level of wages in the different segments.

Classification of the casual agricultural workers even at a broad estimatory level according to their areas of origin (when they are non-settled wage workers), types
of household economy and degree of involvement of women in agricultural tasks in the different agricultural labour markets in the Sudan is not available at present, and could not have been available to O'Brien. His arguments regarding the different types of workers that go to rainfed mechanised schemes and to cotton schemes do not seem to be founded on any substantial evidence. It is true that the seasonal workers that come to Gezira come more in family groups than as individuals, whereas in Gedaref (for reasons associated with the specific nature of production and labour organisation in that region) they come almost exclusively as individuals (see the ILO/UNHCR Report, 1984). However, this does not say that in other rainfed schemes and other cotton producing schemes the same thing happens, nor does it say that the remaining household members are not engaged in economic activities and therefore contributing to the household economic viability. (O'Brien's argument, as we have seen, suggests that workers in rainfed mechanised schemes receive higher wages because meeting the needs of reproduction of the household lies on the shoulders of the men). The evidence available does not support O'Brien's assertion.

In fact, seasonal labour does not go to the rainfed mechanised schemes only for sesame and sorghum harvests. It is not clear why O'Brien refers to that only (neither, in fact, is it clear why his article is concerned only with seasonal wage labour and ignores the formation of settled wage labourers). In 1982 it was found that in Gedaref 79 per cent of the workers that were engaged in weeding (which extends to about two months and which required on average no fewer work days per reeddan than that required for harvesting; see ILO/UNHCR, 1984:47) and who came from outside the region, did not consider Gedaref region as their current home at that time (Ibid, 59).

A survey of Habila mechanised farms by Affan (1978), with which O'Brien is acquainted, also shows clearly that the seasonal workers there undertake the weeding operation as well. The importance of the fact that seasonal workers go weeding as well is that their labour power must then be absent from their home areas during a crucial period and would need to be provided by other household members. In fact it is also possible, though not documented, that a large segment of those workers will also stay for the sesame and dura harvests, as going back home and returning again, taking into account the distances involved, would not be practical. (Forty-nine per cent of the workers in Gedaref were reported to come from homes in the Western part, 10 per cent from the Southern part and 9 per cent from the Central part of the country, as well as 11 per cent from Eritrea and Ethiopia).

Nor, in any case, is female wage labour restricted to cotton picking. In a survey conducted in Habila mechanised farms in 1976 it was found that the participation of women in wage labour was as high as 30 per cent (Affan, 1978:25). In the same region a 1981/82 survey showed that about 40 per cent of the wage labourers were female (El Hassan, Ph.D thesis, East Anglia). What this shows is that the participation of female household members in wage labour is not restricted to cotton picking.

Even if it were true that the type of labour that goes to rainfed schemes excludes women from wage labour (and other income generating activities) would that be sufficient reason, from the point of view of employers, to pay higher wages? In other words, are wages determined directly by the level of needs of the workers? Such a proposition would seem strange to Marx who distinguished between two elements of the value of labour power: a physical element representing the absolute physical minimum necessary to maintain and reproduce the class; and an
historical or social element representing an achieved standard of life and capable of expansion and contraction or even extinction. In other words, this latter element was itself the product of processes of class struggle.

Here it is suggested that wage differentials among different groups of wage labourers in Gezira and between them and the wage labourers of Gedaref are to be sought mainly in differences in class consciousness and collective organisation of different groups of workers. This would necessarily involve also their different experiences in the production process and different cultural and political backgrounds they might bring with them. Thus, for instance, it seems to be important how dependent on wage labour for their social reproduction wage labourers happen to be. In Gezira, seasonal workers received only 62 per cent of the wages received by settled workers in 1981/82. Settled workers were much more dependent on wage labour for their social and economic reproduction — the wage labouring aspect of their lives seemed to be higher than in the case of seasonal workers, 92.5 per cent of whom had access to land in their original areas. In the case of Gezira camp labourers, 74 per cent had sharecropping arrangements as sub-tenants. The proportion of landlessness is therefore higher among seasonal workers.

Even when sharecropping, most settled wage labourers would need to seek wage labour to supplement their incomes at particular times of the year. The wage labour aspect of the lives of settled labourers (including the landless and the category of labourer-sub-tenant) is continuous throughout the year. For most seasonal workers, however, it is only temporary during a few months of the year. Moreover, sharecropping is of recent origin in Gezira (A. Abdelkarim 1984b) and before that the present sub-tenants had lacked access to land.

Seasonal labourers come from different scattered locations. Either tenants or their representatives go to recruit them from their original areas (67 per cent); alternatively, some of them go to Gezira on their own, usually to work for tenants for whom they have worked in the past. In both cases the seasonal labourers enter the labour market with little or no prior knowledge of current wage rates, especially those prevailing among the settled workers. When arriving in Gezira most of the seasonal workers live in scattered places; in small camps built on site, consisting of a few households mostly working for the same tenant. The form of their payment which is normally in both cash and kind, while that of the settled workers being only in the form of cash, may conceal the differences in wage rates. Even if they know about the differences in wage rates between themselves and the settled workers, or among different groups within them, it seems that because of moral considerations which fit their own ideology (giving their 'word'), receiving in their home areas from their recruiters money advances called *mal-al-diayia* (literally, recruitment money) and other advances they choose to stick with the terms of their original agreement.

The situation of the settled workers is different. The majority of them live in Gezira labour camps and the rest in the tenants' villages. They do not only learn about wage rates received by each other, but they also learn about the cash advances received by the tenants from the Scheme's Administration to meet the costs of picking labour. These advances are estimated annually and paid to the tenants according to their estimated production. Settled workers, knowing the rate of advances paid to the tenants, may not accept working for less.

Despite the sums of money advanced, it should be understood that the Administration does not actually control the picking wage rates. The rate of money advanced for cotton picking seems to be calculated by the Scheme's
Administration more or less according to the prevailing wage rates in the whole agricultural season, and also by taking into consideration other possible factors (e.g. average yields in the particular season, expected supply-demand relations). The fact that the advance rates set by the Administration are not final and are subject to bargaining may be confirmed by the reaction of a considerable number of settled workers who have boycotted picking labour in the past and have given rise to complaints and campaigns against them (Tamim, 1980: 17-22).

Settled labourers are also advantaged in that the majority of them live in labour camps among fellow labourers, which adds to their experience and solidarity. The fact that most of these labour camps are inhabited by people of the same tribe or ethnic origin, however, means that their solidarity is formed on an ethnic rather than a class basis, but this still affects their bargaining power.

The arguments above suggest that settled labourers have the experience and solidarity to promote their interests in ways not open to the seasonal labourers. This argument may also be underlined by the results of the survey of 1983 which has shown that while 74 per cent of the settled labourers accepted wages only after bargaining, only 25 per cent of the seasonal labourers could confirm this (35 per cent said wages were fixed on their behalf by their village sheiks or other representatives and 40 per cent accepted what was offered by the employer).

The 1983 survey has also revealed wage differentials among a group of seasonal labourers which I label as 'pastoralist-peasant', comprised mainly of the 'arabs' of the two Niles and another group of seasonal labourers whom I call 'peasant', or 'westerners' (mainly coming from western Sudan). The former, on average, received 41 per cent higher wages than the latter. The 'pastoralist-peasants' come to the Scheme accompanied by at least a percentage of their animals. Many of these workers in fact come more for water and grazing for their animals than for wage labouring (Abdel Hamid, 1965; Shaw, 1961). Their animals partly contribute to their subsistence while temporarily residing in the Scheme. This would no doubt put them in a stronger bargaining position than other seasonal labourers who come initially without alternative resources. Moreover, some have long working, and possibly also other social and ethnic, relationships with some of the tenants for whom they will probably work every time. For the sake of securing them as future pickers (and for the sake of other non-market relationships), tenants may not try too hard to suppress wage rates offered to this group. In addition, the 'arab' wage workers will have gained relatively more experience of labour contracts and as wage workers as a large number of them will take their animals to Gezira every year. In contrast, a large number of the 'westerners' go to Gezira less regularly, depending on their seasonal economic fortunes at home.

A number of factors seem to have led to the differences in the bargaining power between Gezira and Gedaref wage workers; and to the relative strengthening of the bargaining power of the latter. Firstly, the process of 'free' labour formation, at least in terms of being free from accessibility to land, seems to be higher among the Gedaref wage labourers. In Gedaref, 49 per cent have no access to land (ILO/UNHCR, 1984:61), while in Gezira, among the seasonal labourers, only 7½ per cent, and among Gezira camp labourers only 26 per cent, have reported the same. This being the case, it may indicate that Gedaref wage workers depend more on wage labour to meet subsistence needs and might therefore be in a position to gain more experience due to their place in the production process.

Secondly, there are differences in the recruitment process in the two regions. While only one-third of Gezira seasonal workers are self-recruited, and 60 per cent of the settled labourers wait for the tenants or their representatives to recruit
them, in Gedaref all workers are self-recruited; even those who are brought from their home villages at some time by the employers would normally go to recruitment centres or other farms at different times looking for jobs. In Gedaref the workers have many employers to choose from. In Gedaref town, which is the main recruitment centre, thousands of wage workers meet hundreds of employers. There is no such centre in Gezira.

Thirdly, the physical size of the average production unit in Gedaref is much larger (a standard scheme in Gedaref is 1,000 or 1,500 feddans, while a standard tenancy in Gezira is only 40 feddans). Accordingly, the number of workers that may come together at one time is much higher in Gedaref. In fact, at certain peaks between 100 and 400 workers may come together in one scheme, while only a few workers may meet during the labour process in Gezira.

Fourth, in Gedaref jobs are normally offered to groups and not individuals. Those arriving as individuals or in smaller groups would be asked to form a larger group. Working groups may also be formed of wage workers of ethnically different origins. The working group bargains together with the employer for the wage, and if agreed they undertake the specific job and execute it collectively and then divide the wage equally among themselves. In Gezira, due to their small size, the job pieces are either undertaken by individuals or small working groups based on the household.

The arguments above suggest that the nature of the labour market and the labour process in Gedaref is more favourable to the formation of class consciousness and the strengthening of the bargaining power of the wage workers than in Gezira. There are other factors related to the cultural-political background of Gedaref wage workers which may also positively affect their bargaining power. The Gedaref labour market is probably the most diversified agricultural labour market in Sudan in terms of the origins of the wage workers. Wage workers come to Gedaref from the central, southern and western parts of the country as well as, and in increasingly greater numbers since the mid-1970s, from Eritrea and Ethiopia (see ILO/UNHCR, 1984:59). Taking the possibilities that the Gedaref labour market offers in terms of the frequency of meetings between large numbers of workers (in Gedaref town and on farms) it can then be suggested that Gedaref workers may be able to exchange wider varieties of experience. It should also be emphasised that many of the Ethiopian and Eritrean refugees are already politicised at home and may have experienced or are closer to some forms of collective organisation than other workers, and consequently bring these experiences with them to Gedaref. In fact, many farmers in Gedaref have related the emergence of the gowal system in dura (sorghum) harvest, which is generally more favourable to the workers, to the arrival of the refugees.

Forms of wage workers' collective organisation in Gedaref, though still at a lower stage of development, are relatively more developed than in Gezira. Among the casual workers of Gezira at present the only form of collective organisation is the Labour Camp. The Labour Camp is a loose, primitive and basically ethnic form of collective organisation. The Labour Camp is used at time to act as a pressure group against individual tenants who do not fulfil their terms of reference with some members of that Labour Camp. This may sometimes prove to be effective, as the tenants of a particular village have very few labour camps from which to recruit labour. In Gedaref the working group itself is a form of temporary collective organisation, unless a particular group work together for a long period. Cases of trans-group co-operation and common actions are not rare as farmers themselves have reported. Wage fights may involve many or all of the groups working on a
farm. In some cases during the sesame harvest combined action may even be
planned between working groups in different farms. However, a more developed,
permanent form of collective organisation (trades unions) still seem to be far
away, even in Gedaref.

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THE POLITICS OF CRISIS IN GHANA: CLASS STRUGGLE AND
ORGANISATION, 1981-84

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democrats believe that what is going on in Ghana is a revolution.

Another position is that December 31st was a Revolution which has since been
betrayed and what is currently unfolding is reaction masked by radical populist
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of the PNDC government who for various reasons have left the country. Another
section of the progressive forces argue that the new situation had effected an
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Another position is that December 31st was a Revolution which has since been betrayed and what is currently unfolding is reaction masked by radical populist rhetoric and demagogy. This is generally the position of one-time leading members of the PNDC government who for various reasons have left the country. Another section of the progressive forces argue that the new situation had effected an important shift in the correlation of forces, creating the conditions for the struggles
of our people against imperialism and for democracy. The possibilities opened up could, however, only be fully realised if certain important preliminary tasks were accomplished.

The PNDC regime has no doubt radically changed Ghana's international political posture. In place of the Limann regime's slavish attachment to US imperialism, Ghana today has adopted a radical non-aligned posture, involving the strengthening of ties with the socialist countries and active support for the anti-imperialist and national liberation struggles. But diplomatic postures may not necessarily be a definitive yardstick for evaluating processes internal to a country.

"I ask for nothing less than a revolution. Something that will transform the social and economic order of this country", Flight Lt Rawlings declared in his first post take-over broadcast. In its early major policy documents the PNDC government declared its aim to struggle for and win the National Democratic Revolution. The regime further declared its commitments to the establishment of popular power and democracy. These were correct declarations of intent. Declaration of intent is one thing, the capacity both objective and subjective to realise the intention, another.

What occurred on 31 December 1981 was a progressive coup d' etat, with possibilities to initiate progressive processes. To dismiss the coup as having no such possibilities is dogmatic. To say that the Revolution was on is equally incorrect. The overthrow of the Third Republic did not result in the installation of a revolutionary government. It was mainly the working-class, peasantry, patriotic middle and lower petty bourgeoisie — the same class coalition that had supported the AFRC — who saw the overthrow of the Third Republic and the aims of the PNDC as representing their interests. The composition of the PNDC, its Cabinet, etc., reflected this coalition. It was this progressive bloc which ousted the direct representatives of imperialism and remained powerful within the state structures.

On this basis, two broad areas of class struggle have been discernible in the three years of PNDC rule: against internal reaction and imperialism on the one hand, and among the classes in the coalition for leadership and dominance.

In spite of the appointment of leaders influenced by Marxism-Leninism to high office in the PNDC, the political and ideological weight of the working-class and the peasantry was weak. This may be explained by the dominance of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois ideology. In this connection, most workers and peasants accepted the view that the 'revolution' was simply about establishing a government of clean, honest, incorruptible and hardworking people who must be obediently supported by a hardworking, law-abiding and God fearing population. The presence of the petty-bourgeoisie in the state machinery and their consciousness about their class interests greatly strengthened the petty-bourgeois position within the ruling coalition.

For the working-class and peasantry, the victory of their struggles for revolutionary transformation (which initially was closely linked with the preservation and strengthening of the progressive tendency in the PNDC regime to prevent the capitulation of the new regime to the combined pressures of internal reaction and imperialism) depended critically on the speed with which the immense political, ideological and organisational tasks called forth were fulfilled.

1982-84: Zigzag in the Class Struggle
What is the current state of the class struggles in Ghana? What is the present correlation of forces? The answers to these questions cannot be correctly arrived at without analysing the developments (over the past three years) that resulted in
the present conjuncture. What have been the main issues in the class struggles, what factors account for the different sub-phases, the changes in the correlation of forces since 31 December 1981? The initial outline of the aims of the coup-makers did not amount to a programme for dealing with the deep economic and political crisis. Despite the spontaneous popular acclamation, there was no organised mass base for the new regime. Such a mass base would have been essential for the realisation of its patriotic and democratic proclamations. The disunited and inexperienced progressive organisations found themselves thrust on to the centre stage. Their composition ranged from mild reformists, radical Nkrumatist patriots, those influenced by Marxism-Leninism, to 'anarchists'. Having no specialist cadres and no programmes, the ideological and class contradictions within these forces sharpened.

From January to late October 1982, there were those who saw December 31 as a 'revolution' and those 'true revolutionaries' who rejected coups d'etat and advocated an independent direction to work for a truly revolutionary regime. Thirdly, there were those who called for an immediate expropriation of the Valco aluminium smelter which represents 70 per cent of US investment in Ghana. Finally there were those who regarded petty-traders as outside the camp of popular forces. Yet despite these ideological divergencies, a broad unity of the progressive tendencies was facilitated first, by an absence of a concrete economic and political programme and secondly, by a common anti-imperialist and democratic position.

The class struggle unleashed by the proclamation of the PNDC's aims proceeded blindly. Only vague parameters defined by patriotism, democracy and popular power provided a guiding line. The major interventions by the leadership were — and still are — those of the PNDC Chairman. People's struggles were localised, spontaneous, and centred around immediate goals. In the economic sphere, official practice was essentially a holding action whilst a scientific assessment was carried out. During this period, the main gains — other than the localised gains — of the oppressed strata were ideological and organisational. These were in the context of the emergence of militants, the laying of the foundations of mass organisational forms, for example the defence committees, sharpened class consciousness, mass confidence, and militancy. Despite this, there has not emerged a national mass movement. The survival of the PNDC regime still depended on the balance of forces within the essentially neo-colonial military.

**Crisis and Reactionary Offensive**

From late October 1982 until about mid-1983, the December 31 process faced a series of crises which significantly affected the correlation of forces in the regime and the wider society. The notorious judges' murders, involving a PNDC member and loyalist soldiers, cast a pall over the regime. Until reactionary forces overreached themselves in their crude use of the Special Investigations Board, set up by the PNDC to investigate the sordid business, the incident had provided a powerful instrument in their ideological campaign against the PNDC and the December 31 process. This campaign had found some sympathy with the population, especially the middle strata. The influx of over one million Ghanaians expelled from Nigeria in February 1983, at the time of the worst drought in 50 years and near empty national coffers, pressured the regime to mend some fences with those who controlled substantial resources — imperialist countries and institutions and the local propertied classes. The succession of imperialist backed coup attempts — four in the seven months from November 1982 until June 1983 —
enhanced the general influence of the military and within it those loyalists who advocated discipline, command and control without any real changes. A stable military was essential, the internal struggles for change suffered. On the economic, ideological and security fronts, imperialism and internal reaction used a big stick and carrots to pile up pressure.

The manner in which all these pressures were dealt with and the objective impact of these responses on the balance of forces, the class struggles and ultimately the realisation of the progressive possibilities of the December 31 process were closely influenced by the major crisis within the regime in October/November 1982. This crisis reverberated through the ranks of the progressive forces and the PNDC's military support base. Although many contradictions had been simmering within the regime and among progressive forces, the question of a concrete political economic programme proved to be the match which ignited the mixture. All the differences about the character of the process, the correlation of forces, the agenda of tasks, the ideological/class perspectives which underlaid the differences and the varying depth and grasp of scientific political economy were precipitated.

The extent of the economic crisis did not become known to most members of the regime until August 1982 when the National Economic Review Committee headed by the Secretary for Finance and Economic Planning presented a draft programme to a joint meeting of the PNDC, Cabinet and the National Defence Committee (NDC). The most contentious issue was the question of devaluation. The evidence presented indicated that beyond those elements of the economic crisis traceable to the structure and social relation of neo-colonialism, the crisis had been deepened by the fiscal and monetary policies of past regimes. For example money supply had risen by 2,200 per cent between 1972 and 1982, accompanied by a 20 per cent decline of the Gross National Product. This massive internal depreciation of the cedi unaccompanied by a correlative change in the external exchange rate had deleterious consequences on the economy. Many superficial, incorrect and populist positions have been expressed by some sections of the progressive forces on the character and consequences of the monetary and fiscal crisis that the PNDC inherited. Those who see devaluation as simply a sinister tool of the IMF do not deserve examination.

In a recent article, Zaya Yeebo shows a slightly more sophisticated superficiality. He notes that 'a domestic monetary disequilibrium may simply be a symptom of something more fundamental rather than the main cause of such a disequilibrium (sic). In the particular case of Ghana, there is considerable evidence to support the view that in terms of prime causes of payment problems, oil prices and recession in the West are beyond Ghana's control.' Whatever the first sentence in the quotation means, the impact of the oil price increases and the crisis of the world capitalist system on Ghana has been acknowledged. Beyond these, internal factors including the fiscal and monetary distortions produced a diminution of export receipts and therefore influenced the balance of payments. In addition this distortion had implications for the development of an integrated, self-reliant national economy and the survival of key sectors of the national economy.

For example, in 1982 the price of a ton of cocoa on the world market converted at the official exchange rate (C2.75 = $1) yielded a deficit of C7,400 over the local producer price. A similar situation existed with timber and gold. These three commodities account for over 90 per cent of Ghana's export earnings. Smuggling or a shift in productive activity made economic sense. Local production of key food items and raw materials was being swamped by cheap imports. Pricing policy
that made imports more expensive than local produce is an objective though not sufficient requirement for creating a protected home market and the development of local production. For Rightist pro-imperialist elements the need to devalue the cedi will be explained in terms of neo-classical principles of comparative advantage, and backed by IMF-type measures. For revolutionaries the issue was not whether there was an objective need to devalue the cedi but what complex of anti-imperialist and democratic political-economic measures should such a devaluation be located within, to ensure that a process of dismantling the structures and social relations of neo-colonialism was initiated. For even those who do not agree with the present directions of the PNDC’s policies it is important to understand this point.

The campaign that a section of the progressive forces launched in September/October 1982, presenting devaluation as an invention of the IMF, was an act of dishonesty and populist opportunism. In fact, their leaders in the regime were involved in preparing a political-economic report which accepted devaluation within a set of anti-imperialist and democratic measures and were involved in meetings that agreed on dealings with the IMF and allied institutions on terms compatible with the proclaimed anti-imperialist and democratic goals of the December 31 process. Implicit in these positions is a particular assessment of the correlation of forces and factors, both internal and international, a periodisation of tasks and the realisation of goals.

The campaign launched by a section of the Left showed a failure to appreciate the needs of the moment. There was a reckless element of anarchist adventurism amongst some progressives at this critical period. One leading member of the United Front (UF) of the June 4 Movement (JFM) and the Peoples Revolutionary League of Ghana (PRLG) and a cadre of the NDC, for example, made a broadcast to a Worker’s Defence Committee meeting in Accra on 29 October 1982. This falsely claimed that Sgt. Alolga Akata Pore and Chris Atim, two members of the PNDC noted for their progressive positions, had displaced the PNDC Chairman. The broadcast contributed considerably to deepening the distrusts and contradictions within the Council and creating confusion within the process’s support base. Furthermore, it provoked suspicion within important sections of the national leadership, and among loyalist soldiers, about the intentions of the most militantly anti-imperialist and democratic sections of the progressive forces, especially given their control over the co-ordinating structures of the burgeoning defence committee movement (the Peoples’ and Workers’ Defence Committees: PDCs/WDCs).

The result was the arrest of leading members of the UF for alleged connection with the 23 November 1982 coup attempt. Sgt. Akata Pore was arrested for allegedly inciting soldiers to mutiny, Chris Atim resigned from the PNDC and the NDC was dissolved after accusations that it was a centre of destabilisation. The dissolution of the NDC was a particularly heavy blow for the progressive forces in the regime. Those in the regime whose visions of ‘revolution’ did not extend beyond law and order, discipline and honesty, etc., appeared vindicated and were strengthened. ‘Foreign ideologies’ that were causing divisions in the nation (i.e. class-based political analysis and organisation) came under attack. The P/WDCs, contrary to what the purveyors of foreign ideologies maintained, were not organs of the struggle of the oppressed but were for all Ghanaians. Anarchy, disrespect for authority and laziness had been caused by the political work of progressive cadres, the social forces who sought to defuse the class struggles declared. Our ‘traditional friends’ i.e. the imperialist powers had been alienated by the shouting of hostile
slogans. Material support from the imperialist powers during the 1983 food crisis was projected as proof of the ever-cordial bonds between imperialism and Ghana. The provision of land, material aid, money etc., by the internal exploiting class evidenced the broad support the revolution had and the oneness of the Ghanaian people.

Despite the signals of appeasement, imperialism and internal reaction stepped up pressure, hoping to win more concrete concessions. Emboldened by the conciliatory posture of the regime, the enemies of the people stepped up their attacks on the militant mass movement. Bereft of the leadership, protective umbrella and representative role of the NDC, the defence committees were rendered confused and demoralised. On the eve of the presentation of the national budget in April 1983, the popular forces were in a confused retreat buffeted by an increasingly bold reactionary offensive and contraction of official support.

Despite the increased strength of the social forces which sought to defuse and contain the class struggles, the direction of the PNDC regime's policy was by no means unilinear. In December 1982 the Three-year Economic Recovery Programme was announced. In April 1983 the NDC was reconstituted with a strong representation of progressive elements and under guidelines which did not significantly deviate from those which had provided the framework for the struggles of the exploited classes prior to the October/November 1982 crisis. It also enhanced the national co-ordination of the P/WDCs and the presentation of grass-roots positions in intra-government debates.

Although not revolutionary, the Three-year Economic Recovery Programme (with its integral Mobilisation Programme) is one of the most progressive political economic programmes by any Ghanaian regime. Although many of its elements are compatible with a radical petty bourgeois nationalism, if implemented in its totality it undoubtedly would advance the democratic and anti-imperialist interests of our people. The programme, if totally implemented, would provoke class struggles that would aid rather than obstruct a deep going revolutionary process. It combined a mixture of 'traditional' measures which in themselves would not bring about structural changes or re-order social relations — devaluation and some new taxes on the propertied classes — with those that sought the transformation of the institutions, structures and social relations of neo-colonialism. Amongst many measures the programme envisaged: state monopoly of foreign trade, state control over banking and insurance, restructuring of the industrial sector; improvement of health, transport and other social services; reorganisation of internal trade, particularly the establishment of popularly controlled distribution structures linked to the state-owned trading concerns; improvement of the peasantry's access to credit and marketing structures, etc.

Although the Programme was aimed at preparing the way for a medium-term development plan to lay the foundations of a self-reliant, integrated and independent national economy, its successful implementation would involve an unprecedented level of class struggle, requiring a high level of popular mass mobilisation, education, organisation and sacrifice for both political struggles and production. Equally important, the implementation would require resolute and consistent leadership. The programme threatened the interests of imperialism and sections of the internal exploiting classes, especially the comprador bourgeoisie, middlemen — kulaks and the big commercial petty bourgeoisie. Furthermore, the successful implementation of the Programme would require a qualitatively different state machinery than the crisis-ridden neo-colonial one that the PNDC inherited.
In pushing forth a broad range of anti-imperialist and democratic tasks, the Programme provided an important legitimising framework for the struggles and demands of the popular forces. In the nature of the Programme a broad range of classes, excluding the comprador and middlemen-kulaks, had an interest in the implementation of one or the other aspect, whilst being hostile to some other aspects. Objectively only the working-class and the peasantry have an interest in the implementation of the whole package.

The open class struggles provoked by the 1983 Budget have been the fiercest and most violent over the past three years. Reactionary forces and their organisational expression — the professional bodies, the establishment Churches backed by imperialism — sought to replay the anti-SMC I struggle of the late 1970s. Backed by a section of the students' movement, some organised labour leaders and the leadership of Ghana National Association of Teachers they issued an ultimatum to the PNDC to resign. The majority of the politically active sections of the working people rallied to the defence of the regime and the reactionary offensive was defeated.

The struggles around the Budget exhibited certain features worthy of note. The aggressive antagonism of the reactionary forces showed either the failure of the regime's policy of appeasement or that it had not gone far enough. Popular class consciousness had come a long way since the 1976-79 democratic struggles. The hypocritical concern of reactionaries about the hardships the Budget would bring to working people and the blame falsely placed upon the PNDC for the economic crisis failed to convince the majority of working people. Various aspects of the regime's practices and the Budget were criticised and independent class demands advanced: an end to the politics of appeasement, political and economic offensive against the exploiters and a clear commitment by the PNDC to the cause of the oppressed. In some cases, mass expression went beyond demands to direct action against the exploiters and their institutions. This was dramatised by events in the wake of the most serious coup attempt to date on 19 June 1983. In the course of a march in solidarity with the PNDC, thousands of P/WDC militants invaded and occupied the Supreme Court buildings, briefly holding a High Court judge hostage, and, after declaring the old judiciary dissolved, called on the PNDC to set up a revolutionary judiciary. In the course of the same demonstration a long simmering labour dispute at the local subsidiary of Cadbury-Schweppes was dramatically transformed when a section of the demonstrators marched in and put the management to flight, marking the beginning of a six-week occupation which only ended when 150 laid off workers were reinstated by the Labour Ministry.

In several ways, the struggles around the 1983 Budget marked an important point in the post-December 31 class struggles. Although one cannot speak with certainty, those struggles appear to have marked a high point of the concerted efforts of imperialism and internal reaction to abort the progressive possibilities of December 31 by a direct physical overthrow of the PNDC regime. A policy of infiltration, co-optation and destruction of specific progressive elements of the process has been heightened since. The critical and conditional support that important sections of the popular forces gave to the PNDC implied that the phase of spontaneous faith in the leadership and its words as opposed to deeds was waning fast. Although various speeches by leading members of government accepted the correctness of popular demands and promised to fulfil them, concrete fulfilment or otherwise would be an important factor in future attitudes to the PNDC. The independent class stances that emerged also indicated that the divergence of interests within the PNDC's class coalition support base was
sharpening, accompanied by the evolution of the defence committees, especially WDCs, into class organs, with perspectives which may be at variance with the class positions dominant in the regime. (In this context it must be noted that in spite of the overall impressive appearance of the mass movement in the period, its manifold ideological and organisational weaknesses were also shown up).

Political Stability and Economic Stabilisation

The major class struggles around the 1983 Budget were the culmination of the frays and skirmishes among the classes in the preceding one-and-a-half years. While the reactionary offensive failed to dislodge the PNDC, the bitterness of the battles left the nation sharply divided. Apart from those who had an objective basis for hostility to progressive change, key sections of the skilled petty bourgeoisie were shaken and had retreated into postures ranging from hostility to sullen alienation from the regime. Their co-operation, at the very least, was needed for the implementation of the government’s programmes. The PNDC’s militant mass support meanwhile had expectations of the fight against the exploiting classes moving from the defensive into an offensive. In addition, the systematic implementation of the Recovery Programme required a certain canalisation and leadership control, without regimentation, of popular struggles. The Budget struggles, apart from exposing the organisational and ideological weaknesses of the popular forces, had also highlighted the limited leadership control the regime had over it, especially the urban working class. On the economic front the contested and conditional support the mass movement gave to the monetary and fiscal measures in the Budget opened up the credit lines to the IMF and other western financial institutions. (The devaluation of the cedi in particular represented a point of coincidence between the objective needs of the Ghanaian economy and the interests of imperialism; interests defined by notions of international comparative advantage, the utility of Ghanaian raw materials for OECD firms and profitable investments in Ghana). The dangers this financial link-up represented for the anti-imperialist and democratic content of the December 31 process have already been noted. The hub of the class struggles since mid-1983 has been how to respond to the contradictory demands represented by these factors.

Before the Budget struggles, particularly in the early days of the PNDC, the masses and organs of popular power had scored victories over the propertied classes. In the wake of the Budget struggles, the PNDC reached out to the internal opposition in various ways. A conditional amnesty was declared for exiles, various confiscated properties were given back. An active ideological campaign stressed the legitimacy and enduring importance of chieftaincy and the experience of the old. All Ghanaians, the line ran, had something to contribute to the 'Revolution'. An institutional footing was given to the opposition through the creation of organs such as the Regional Consultative Councils, packed with their political, ideological representatives. More importantly, well known figures from within their ranks were appointed to substantive offices in the regime.

These measures of national reconciliation were aimed as much at imperialism as at the internal opposition. As part of the ‘tactical’ ploy to maintain the flow of Western credit, the strong anti-imperialist tone of the official mass media was curbed. The views and expressions of representatives of the imperialist powers and institutions were given prominence. Although there has been no formal official renunciation, the most anti-imperialist elements of the Recovery Programme are yet to be implemented.

The measures taken by the PNDC to reduce the pressure from the internal
opposition and to soothe imperialism were responses to objective problems. The particular measures adopted are major concessions to the enemies of the Ghanaian people, whatever may have been the subjective 'tactical' calculation; combined with the manner in which the other cited issues were handled, they progressively weakened the popular forces and their institutions.

The P/WDCs from their inception were officially sanctioned and popularly accepted as 'organs of popular power'. Speaking in November 1982 the Chairman summarised the official and popular conception of the defence committees thus:

The people's defence committees are the democratic bedrock of the new people's power that the Revolution is building ... The PDCs must see themselves as mass organs of the oppressed sections of society. Organs through which the oppressed must organise and educate themselves and mobilise the people to destroy oppressive power relations and institutions and undertake productive activity which transform their material lives. This is the meaning of people's power.

This is the essence of the political and ideological framework within which the P/WDCs engaged in practice against the social relations and institutions of neo-colonialism with the fiat of the PNDC. At the head of the defence committees' movement stood the NDC organisation, from zonal through district and regional to the national level, under the Chairmanship of the PNDC Chairman. PNDC Law 42 gave the NDC broad powers to investigate and ensure conformity of all organisations, institutions and individuals with the sweeping provisions of the directive principles of state policy (which in bourgeois jurisprudence would be considered non-justifiable). The guidelines for the P/WDCs gave the defence committees extensive powers and functions and the NDC organisation was to co-ordinate and guide the exercise of these powers and performance of these duties. The NDC was thus both a 'neutral' arbiter and partisan class organ.

In practice the result of this character of the NDC and of the P/WDCs was to create a dual power situation given the continued existence of the old neo-colonial state institutions. These institutions, presided over by PNDC appointees, were constantly rocked by the activities and challenges of the P/WDCs, with the guidance and support of the NDC organisation. In the absence of a vanguard organisation with cadres in the defence committees and given the fact that the NDC organisation was in the process of creation alongside the rapidly developing P/WDC movement, the task of co-ordinating and guiding thousands of defence committees was enormous, making for many errors by a very young mass movement. These notwithstanding, the central problem was objective: the existence of dual power, represented by the emergent defence-committee-based popular power and the old state power with the PNDC as the link-up point of the two.

In an important national broadcast in August 1983, which heralded PNDC policy for dealing with the complex of issues under discussion, the Chairman of the PNDC touched on the issue of dual power and some of its effects and indicated the official perspective on it.

I want to make it absolutely clear that without strong central authority only confusion and frustration will result from our efforts at national recovery. Already the concept of decentralisation and the establishment of the NDC structures for political mobilisation at all levels have given some people the mistaken notion that we have parallel structures of government. We have travelled this road before and had hoped that the lessons would have been learned by all of us. Those who still have not better do so quickly, for we will no longer countenance even for a brief moment, a situation where petty power brokers exercise
authority without responsibility while others at the helm of affairs brace the storm and risk their very lives, correcting mistakes made by these opportunists.

Among the reasons given for the dissolution of the NDC in December 1982 was its attempt (or that of some individuals in it) to be a parallel government.

From the very beginning of the December 31 process, there have been divergent perspectives and practices among officials of the regime on these issues. This merely reflected the class coalition character of the government. Were mass political struggles and initiatives to be encouraged but guided by the regime or were they to be essentially passive executors of the official line? Is the state a neutral entity servicing society or an organ of class interests and domination? 1982 witnessed conflicts within the regime and with its support base around the issues, especially between some Regional Secretaries and NDC/PDC activists, with the latter generally taking a class view of the state and supporting mass political struggles and initiatives. The quoted November 1982 speech of the PNDC Chairman reflected the then dominance of this line in the regime. The vacuum created in the regime by the destruction of a section of the anti-imperialist and democratic forces was largely filled by persons who see the state as a neutral entity. For these forces politics and economics are two discrete spheres of existence: mass political initiatives and struggles are disruptive of production and 'established authority'. The defenders of these positions in the regime were increasingly strengthened by 'national reconciliation' appointments of, for example, PNDC Secretaries and District Secretaries.

Whilst productionist selfkeep initiatives of the defence committee movement have won official applause, those which smack of 'politics' have been subjected to ideological attack. Workers' struggles have increasingly been condemned as 'disruptive agitation'. A false ideological/political line, divisive of the popular forces, has gained increasing prominence in official ideology. Workers, the line goes, are part of a privileged and parasitic undifferentiated urban population, feeding off the real producers — the rural people. The fundamental contradictions, therefore, are not among classes but between town and country. Anything denied the privileged urban worker is for the benefit of the exploited rural people. Workers' militancy was a case of a vocal minority calling for more to the disadvantage of the long deprived, voiceless rural people.

All over the country, spurred on by the shrinking official support for the struggles of the masses, reactionary forces went on the offensive. The P/WDC organisation — the core of the militant mass movement — came under attack from all directions. Reactionary intrigues coupled with the subjectified understanding of the 'excess' of NDC/PDC militants by important sections of the regime resulted in the arrests and brutalisation of activists without adequate prior investigation of allegations, many of which turned out to be malicious and false. Thus, from mid-1983, the popular mass movement passed into a state of confusion, demobilisation and demoralisation. By the end of 1984 reactionary forces moved from the defensive onto the offensive, strengthening their overall political and ideological influence and presence in the regime. The political processes and factors which account for this shift in the balance of forces and its consequences are not dissimilar to that described by Woddis, drawing on several experiences:

The aims of the radical officers are complex, while they have aspirations, often Utopian, of building a new progressive society, they do not usually see that it is the working people who must be allowed and encouraged to be the creators of that society . . . They are striving in their own terms to build a new modern and radical society. But they do it on the basis of a
vision blinkered by their class origins, position and experience. They have to come to terms with various ‘realities’, to contend with different class pressures, to overcome immense economic shortcomings and face the most backward and complex social conditions and institutions. The people are largely illiterate, often heavily influenced by pre-capitalist superstitions and obscurantist prejudices. In trying to cut their way through this morass of problems, the radical officers with all the limitations of their own ideology, frequently find their anti-imperialist positions undercut by the contradictory processes in which they are caught up...

They rely on the support of the working people to overcome the resistance of domestic and external reaction — but the support has to be on the radical officers’ terms, not one of acceptance of the working people’s hegemony and leadership. Objectively, by their reserved and basically dominating attitude towards their own working class, they play into the hands of imperialism.

The policies of the PNDC over the past 18 months have yielded some ‘fruit’. Politically the measures have produced ‘stability’ by fostering a diffuse acceptability of the regime to a broad spectrum of Ghanaians. In this sense a professed aim of the PNDC’s ‘national reconciliation policy’ — the broadening of the regime’s support base — has been achieved at the cost of weakening the support base. The acceptability of the PNDC to ‘all Ghanaians’ has been at the price of dismantling the definite, organised and militant core support provided by the oppressed classes. Though the PNDC is not disliked by working people — the Chairman in particular is still quite popular in the rural areas — there is widespread disillusionment, especially among the working class, and the PNDC’s organised support has shrunk considerably. Imperialism, although still uncomfortable about some elements of the national situation — the presence of anti-imperialist and democratic currents within the mass movement and the elements of the PNDC’s foreign policy — is a lot less hostile than in 1982/early 1983.

On the economic front the re-opening of Western credit lines and inflows under various bilateral and multilateral schemes has made several hundreds of millions of dollars available for the rehabilitation and recapitalisation of badly run down infrastructure, plant and equipment, especially in the export sector. Given the depth of the economic crisis the PNDC inherited, the dramatic fall in official corruption and modest improvements in efficiency, these foreign loans will be better utilised than under preceding regimes. The higher prices being paid to export crop farmers is reportedly showing in improved cocoa purchases. Clement weather, improved distribution of inputs to farmers and memories of the food crisis of the early 1980s combined to produce a good harvest in 1984. All these are bound to register in the overall performance of the economy but such improvements will merely manifest improvements in the functioning of a neo-colonial economy without eliminating the bases of its tendency to crisis and domination by imperialism.

The three-year Recovery Programme was predicated on the mobilisation of internal resources with the P/WDCs playing a pivotal role in mass mobilisation for production and institutional transformation. Foreign credits were to be a mere supplement to this internal effort.

The progressive trimming and demobilisation of the militant mass movement has rendered key mass-based components of the Recovery and Mobilisation Programmes almost impossible to implement e.g. the improvement of health care through community based health brigades, the transformation of the production and exchange relations of the peasantry through the establishment of service
centres with co-operatives linked to urban people’s shops, the maximising of state budget capital expenditure by the organisation of a systematic supplementary local input, especially labour, into projects.

The Defence Committees
The creation of the people’s defence committees represent the single most important political and organisational gain of the exploited strata in Ghana over the past three years. They have been the most important mobilising organ of the masses in the period since 31 December 1981.

Within the communities, after initial practices strongly reminiscent of the June 4 vigilantes, the defence committees developed positively. In many areas they became organs of popular power exercising judicial, executive and local legislative functions and also mobilised the local people for many productive activities such as construction and farming. Along the borders they have been active in combating smugglers; in the communities they have enforced price control and rent laws and initiated the development of a popularly controlled distribution system.

In the countryside they have made up, although in a localised fashion, for the absence of a national and representative organisation of the peasantry.

In workplaces the defence committees have provided workers with an organisational form which cuts across the internal divisions within the working-class arising from trades union boundaries. Workers’ defence committees have been active in the struggle for the democratisation of power on the shop floor. A striking feature of WDC struggles has been the relative relegation of economic demands and the elevation of political demands to the fore of workers’ struggles. Over the past three years the sharpest political upheavals have been on the industrial front and rarely around economic issues.

In scores of workplaces across the country, workers have burst forth exposing managerial corruption and tyranny, demanding a new industrial democracy, decent and human working conditions. Workers’ action has rooted out many corrupt and dictatorial bosses and challenged the old industrial power and social relations.

Over the past three years through the defence committees the working-class has been proving its leading role within the camp of the popular forces. In the Armed Forces, the Police and Prisons Service, the defence committees have struggled against the tyranny of the old command structure and sought to improve relations with the civilian population.

More than any institution created by the PNDC, the defence committees have posed the greatest challenge to the old neo-colonial social order. This, unsurprisingly, has made them a central issue in the class struggles. Many defence committee militants from all sectors have been victimised, sacked from jobs, physically assaulted and some killed along the border and hounded by the old state institutions, especially the police, soldiers and the judiciary. Beyond the obvious assaults on the defence committees there have been political/ideological struggles among the classes — both inside and outside the regime — about the character and role of the defence committees. Are the defence committees to develop into organs of popular power serving as a basis for any future national political structure? Are they to have a generally free rein to take initiatives in the class struggles or to act only strictly within parameter’s defined by the national leadership and co-ordinating structures set up by the PNDC? How far are they independent mass organisations? To what extent are they official mass organisations? Who can be a member of a defence committee? Are the defence
committees first and foremost organs of political class struggle which also are involved in mobilising the masses for production or are they mainly to ensure hard work, productivity and efficiency without too much attention to the social relations of production and distribution?

In spite of official vacillation on all these issues with a growing tendency over the past one-and-a-half years to weigh in favour of a tame, depoliticised movement, the defence committees developed into organs of the class struggles of the exploited strata. This process was facilitated by the political challenges that the PNDC has faced over the past three years. On each occasion the defence committees proved decisive in the mass struggles. On the other hand, forces hostile to a militant class-conscious defence committee movement have been waging a consistent political/ideological offensive exploiting the weaknesses of the defence committees such as instances of undemocratic practice, petty corruption, spontaneity, the use of incorrect methods, usually due to lumpen elements within the committees.

On 1 December 1984 the forces hostile to a revolutionary defence committee movement (i.e. a class-conscious mass movement of the popular forces) secured a major victory when the PNDC abruptly announced the dissolution of the National Defence Committee. At the same time the Interim Management Committees (IMCs) of the Public Board and Corporations were dissolved to be replaced by Joint Consultative Councils (JCC). The IMCs, the highest organs of the firms, had a strong workers' representation. The JCCs, unlike the IMCs, are to be purely advisory with the managing director of the firm having the old autocratic powers which the IMCs had abolished. Furthermore the Co-ordinating structures of the defence committees were made subordinate to the district and regional administrations i.e. the old neo-colonial state structure.

This set of measures represent a drastic diminution of the most important political gains made by the masses through the defence committees. It marked the sealing of the official trend of the past one-and-a-half years to denude the defence committees of their role as organs of class struggle with an important role in the future political order of the country. The measures were the culmination of a long war of attrition inside the state and society. In the course of the battles the oppressed classes were subjected to a barrage of attacks through the official mass media, under the guise of protecting the 'noble title of worker' from corruption. Leading defence committee cadres were arrested, brutalised and detained on inadequately established allegations. The strongest and most militantly class-conscious defence committee front, that of Tema workers, was dissolved (on the amazing grounds that it had been penetrated by demagogues and imperialist agents!). All these left many militants confused and demoralised before the coup de grace of 1 December 1984.

Organised Labour Movement

The immediate pre-December 31 history of the organised labour movement left a legacy of bureaucratised and undemocratic organisations, steeped in reactionary and economistic ideology, under the leadership of corrupt and opportunist elements. The situation was particularly acute in the TUC where the broad sections of the mass membership began to question the value of trade unionism. Three broad types of attitudes towards the TUC leadership and the trade unions emerged among workers in the wake of the December 31 coup and the openings it created for democratic struggles.

The majority of the mass membership remained indifferent to the situation. A
large minority of members, utilising the great space for independent class action that was initially possible though the WDCs, took an anti-trade union stand, consciously and unconsciously taking the position that WDCs could replace unions and that trade unionism related to their specific experiences did not serve the interest of the working class. This attitude engendered a lot of union/WDC conflicts, especially in 1982, creating disunity within the workers’ movement. Around major national issues the mass of workers under the leadership of the WDCs have occasionally taken positions that contradicted that of the TUC leadership, resulting in violent clashes on at least one occasion.

There was a third group made up mainly of local union executives who correctly perceived the problems and sought to transform the Trade Union movement into a democratic, representative and progressive organisation. This group organised and led a mass insurrection on 29 April 1982 which kicked out the leadership of the TUC and the 17 national unions and installed an interim leadership to oversee the implementation of the programme around which revolt had been organised.

Various factors including the indifference of progressive rank and file (more concerned with defence committee matters) and the apathy of most workers, coupled with some errors by the interim leadership, created the conditions for some of the old leadership to return to office at Congress elections held in 1983. The old monolithic, bureaucratic, reactionary leadership of the trade unions movement, however, no longer exists. The April 29 action created openings for progressive forces to gain control of some national unions and thereby a foothold in the TUC leadership. Today the trade union movement is regaining a certain vigour, with the leadership making interventions on national issues, though in a manner that reflects its own internal contradictions. The trade union movement is still a battleground between the forces of progress and reaction. Over the past two years ideological work has been done by progressive forces within the working class to change the trade union movement. Many problems, however, remain. The TUC membership has a large lower petty bourgeois stratum who are generally indifferent to what they see as ‘political matters’. The distance between leadership and rank and file has been narrowed somewhat but a lot still remains to be done.

The Students’ Movement

In the situation of a demobilised working class, which was by and large the case before 31 December 1981, the student movement (within the framework of the National Union of Ghanaian Students (NUGS) led by a small group of progressive minded persons) assumed a progressive and active leading role within the ranks of the popular forces. Students’ activism was more visibly political in the anti-Unigov and June 4 days than that of the working-class. In the early days of PNDC rule the student movement was an important factor in mass mobilisation and organisation. Students engaged in the Task Force exercise throughout the country helped set up and form the outwork of the first P/WDCs in many parts of the country. Many progressive student militants gave up school to work within the institutions created by the PNDC, especially the co-ordinating structures of the defence committees.

In 1982 the struggles within the student movement around the extent and character of students’ involvement in national affairs tilted the balance in favour of reactionary elements who subsequently gained control of the NUGS. From mid-1983 the student movement has firmly been in the camp of reaction. In the great open class struggles that erupted around the PNDC in April 1983, the student movement ranged itself alongside internal reactionary forces and imperialism in an
offensive against the PNDC. In the open street clashes between workers defending the PNDC on the one hand and the students on the other, the workers drove students off two of the three University campuses and occupied the University of Ghana in Accra. The confrontation between workers and students, although divisive of the popular forces, was unavoidable in the circumstances.

The events of mid-1983 signalled a decline in the relative influence of the student movement in national affairs — the key factor being the regeneration of the workers' movement accompanied by improved class consciousness. The experience of mid-1983 also provoked internal debates within the student movement, immediately weakening the influence of the reactionary bloc, but without a consequent rise in the influence of progressive forces. The dominant attitude within the student movement today is one which seeks a non-involvement of students in 'non-student' national affairs. This attitude, however, is likely to be overrun when a new upsurge occurs in the open class struggles.

Yao Graham

Bibliographic Note

DISINVESTMENT & BLACK WORKERS ATTITUDES IN SOUTH AFRICA: A CRITICAL COMMENT

Michael Sutcliffe and Paul Wellings criticise Lawrence Schlemmer's widely-cited survey which purports to show that a majority of black male production workers in South Africa are against 'disinvestment' and, by implication, would prefer US business to pursue a strategy of 'constructive engagement'. Their critique was cited by the United Democratic Front on 12 June 1985 and debates at a widely-publicised seminar in Durban on 25 June. Their paper goes beyond a critique of Schlemmer's methodology to question conventional assumptions about the significance of disinvestment in South Africa for employment. Their critique raises central methodological questions about the inferences which can be drawn from opinion surveys and the political use to which their results can be put.

Less than a year ago disinvestment appeared very much a non-issue in South Africa. Claims that disinvestment could be implemented on a scale sufficient to damage the South African economy seriously, and hence force the South African government to dismantle its apartheid policies were considered extravagant by most observers. More recently there has been a dramatic reversal in perceptions of the disinvestment threat within South Africa. The intensification of the disinvestment campaign in the United States has been one obvious cause of this. So far some thirty-two city councils and nine Federal states have adopted divestment bills in one form or another, at least twenty-four other states are giving attention to comparable legislation. Several universities have also undertaken to off-load their holdings in US companies with South Africa connections. Most significantly, following Congressional approval of the Kennedy-
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Gray 'Anti-Apartheid' Bill, President Reagan has been forced to retreat from his previously uncompromising position and promulgate his own package of limited sanctions.

Meanwhile, anti-apartheid groups such as the American Committee on Africa and TransAfrica have had remarkable success in sustaining the protest movement, particularly on the university campuses and at Pretoria's Washington embassy. They have also been instrumental in mobilising support from powerful figures in both local and federal government especially where Democrats have sizeable majorities and where black constituencies, labour-organisations and university communities are prominent in the political arena. Their efforts have also encouraged lobbyists outside the United States to pursue similar campaigns in their own countries. As a result, limited sanctions have now been imposed by both the EEC and the Commonwealth. Hence, notwithstanding assurances that South Africa's two major Western allies — Britain and the United States — are still committed to policies of 'constructive engagement', Pretoria has become increasingly concerned lest even these countries should succumb to mounting pressure for the introduction of yet tougher economic sanctions.

But equally important, the disinvestment campaign attracted the attention of the media just as the South African economy was plunging yet further into recession and a new wave of township and worker unrest. It was quickly realised that the declining profitability of South African investments, together with the mounting strength of the independent trade union movement and the fiscal incompetence of the South African government, might convince US and other interests that disinvestment is not only politically expedient but economically sound.

As a result, the South African diplomatic corps as well as high-profile representatives of local capital, opposition politicians and black 'spokesmen' such as Gatsha Buthelezi, have mounted a propaganda drive aimed at countering arguments in favour of disinvestment. While careful not to encourage the disinvestment lobby with signals of unease, they have argued persuasively that disinvestment will affect black workers most of all, and thus succeed only in worsening the situation of those people it is supposed to assist. Prominent here has been the use of a report on the attitudes of black workers based on a questionnaire survey conducted by Professor Lawrence Schlemmer of the University of Natal in Durban. The most significant finding of this survey was that only 25 per cent of black workers were in favour of disinvestment as a form of pressure against the South African government, while the majority supported a policy of conditional investment on the lines of the Sullivan Code. This simple conclusion is of immense propaganda value since it undermines the legitimacy of the disinvestment campaign by questioning the assumption that it enjoys a popular mandate from black workers.

Not surprisingly, the report has been propelled centre-stage in the propaganda war by interest groups opposed to disinvestment. US Secretary of State, George Schultz, for example, has stressed that 'opinion polls in South Africa by reputable organisations reveal that the overwhelming majority of black factory workers are opposed to disinvestment by American firms'. Similarly, British Foreign Office Minister (with responsibility for Africa) Malcolm Rifkind notes that 'we have seen from recent polls in South Africa itself that black opinion is deeply divided with a majority apparently against sanctions'. Even though both FOSATU and CUSA, the two largest federations of independent unions in South Africa, have adopted resolutions expressing support for divestment (not the withdrawal of companies presently in South Africa), and the UDF and the ANC have backed calls for
disinvestment, Schlemmer's report continues to be regarded as the definitive work on black worker attitudes.

But although this report has very serious implications for the disinvestment lobby its advocates have not responded with anything that approaches a serious critique of the survey itself. Rather, they appear content to confine their attack to dark mutterings about the fact that the survey was financed by the US State Department. However, a very effective critique of the survey can be mounted on methodological grounds. We identify the many sampling problems and statistical errors in the report as well as the inadequacies and ambiguities of its questions. We emphasise the weaknesses of a methodology which reduces the analysis of complex and highly sensitive political opinions to a patronising multiple-choice examination, and conclude that the report is of little value as an indicator of political attitudes. In the second section we argue that the questionnaire was designed in a manner which invites respondents to consider disinvestment in terms which suit the South African government, that disinvestment will lead to large scale retrenchments of black workers. This is not necessarily correct, and similar flaws may be detected in other arguments against disinvestment.

Methodological Criticisms of the Schlemmer Survey
The Schlemmer study undertook to investigate the attitudes of black industrial workers in South Africa towards a range of political issues. Three basic themes determined the direction of the survey:

One is the extent to which political factors have penetrated the consciousness as regards industrial relations among black workers. Another is to what extent political issues have caused black workers to question the capitalist system. A third major issue, related to the others, is whether black workers support disinvestment and boycotts as external methods of opposing apartheid (p.2).

A questionnaire was devised and administered to a sample of black male production workers in several industrial centres. Schlemmer drew from the responses a variety of conclusions in respect of workers' political consciousness and made observations concerning the different positions assumed by sub-groups such as the 'young' and 'better-educated'. The viability of these results is never questioned nor is there a discussion of their statistical significance.

Analysis
The report presents overall responses to questions and then attempts to identify sub-groups whose responses differ significantly from the group as a whole. These are distinguished by age, socio-economic status, location, education, whether employed with a multinational or not, whether a member of a union or not, and 'worker militancy'. In Table 1 we document each instance where a sub-group is identified in the report as having a markedly different response to that of the sample as a whole, and then arrange the sub-groups according to the way in which they are supposed to have differed.

From this it would appear that young workers, unionists, the better educated and those living in Pretoria, Soweto and the Vaal area are more disillusioned with capitalism and more militant. Conversely, those working for multinationals, the less educated and older workers would appear to be less militant. This led Schlemmer to identify a minority black worker constituency which (he claims) displays '... a consistent militancy which covers both labour, community and political issues' (p.43). On the other hand, Schlemmer is at pains to stress '... the
Table 1: Alleged differences between the sub-groups in the Schlemmer report

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Anti-capitalist,</th>
<th>Pro-capitalist</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pro-Disinvestment</td>
<td>Anti-Disinvestment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Militant</td>
<td>Less Militant</td>
</tr>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>25 years</td>
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<td>Pretoria</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Soweto</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vaal</td>
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<tr>
<td>E. Rand</td>
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<td>P.E.</td>
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<td>SES High</td>
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</tr>
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<td>EMPLOYMENT MNC's</td>
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<td>S.A. Comp</td>
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</tr>
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<td>UNSKILLED</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNION MEMBERS</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUCATION Stds. 1 to 4</td>
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<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle and High</td>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WORKER RADICALS</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**Note:** The figures refer to the number of times that the report indicates 'significant' differences between the sub-groups.

**Source:** Compiled from Schlemmer (1984).

outstanding reputation that US companies appear to enjoy among black production workers' (p.38) on the basis of comparisons between the opinions of those employed by US firms and the rest.

However, one searches in vain for any statistical analysis in support of these observations. Schlemmer's approach is to eyeball the data and then use adjectives such as 'striking' and 'marked' to categorise the trends and differences that he thinks are important. As a result, we decided to run our own analysis of this data to test the statistical significance of the differences between sub-samples. Because Schlemmer's sample was 'quota controlled', and therefore non-random, one cannot calculate from probability theory the extent to which the characteristics of the sample and individual categories within that sample are representative of the populations from which they are drawn. But it is possible, within this constraint, to determine whether there is any statistical support for claims that there are significant differences between categories and the total sample. What we have done in Table 2, then, is to document the number of times the report correctly or incorrectly suggests that sub-groups (in respect of age, location, socio-economic status, and employment) differ significantly from the sample as a whole, and that attitudes of employees of US companies differ significantly from those held by employees of South African companies. Unfortunately, there was insufficient information about the sample size of the unskilled union, 'militancy' and educated...
Table 2: Analysis of the statistical basis for conclusions that: (1) the attitudes of sub-groups differed significantly from the sample as a whole, and (2) that the attitudes of employees of US companies differed significantly from those held by employees of South African companies

<table>
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<tr>
<th>SUB-GROUP VERSUS TOTAL SAMPLE¹</th>
<th>CORRECT</th>
<th>INCORRECT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AGE</td>
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<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOCATION</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMPLOYMENT (MULTINATIONAL OR NOT)</td>
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<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US COMPANIES VERSUS SOUTH AFRICAN COMPANIES²</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: 1: Eighteen tables referring to differences between sub-groups were used in this analysis (pp.12, 13, 17, 18(a), 18(b), 25(text), 27(text), 30, 35, 37).
2: Seven tables referring to differences between the attitudes of employees of US companies and South African companies were used in this analysis (p.21; p.29; p.33; p.34; p.36; p.37; p.39).

Note: One table (p.15) could not be included in the analysis because actual response rates were not cited. A further eight tables (pp.11, 14, 16, 23, 25, 26, 27, 31) did not refer to differences between sub-groups or US and South African companies, and were therefore irrelevant to our analysis.

Procedure: Standard Errors were calculated using the formula for binomial distributions (S.E. = \sqrt{P\% \cdot Q\% / N}. For example, the report states that while 66% of the full sample (n=451) were 'unhappy and angry' about life in South Africa, the sub-group aged 35-49 (n=121) emerged as 'markedly more unhappy and angry' (74%). From these figures, the standard errors may be calculated as 2.23 for the entire sample and 3.99 for the sub-group. The 95% confidence limits (given by \pm 1.96 \times S.E.) are therefore 66\pm 4.37 (i.e. 61.63 to 72.37) and 74\pm 7.82 (i.e. 66.18 to 81.82). Because these ranges overlap, the conclusion must be that the differences between the two samples are not significant.

related sub-groups to check the conclusions drawn about their characteristics. Calculations were therefore carried out for the 39 sub-group cases where sample size was available and for 42 cases involving comparisons between employees of US and South African Companies. The results are quite extraordinary: 75 out of 81 instances where 'significant' differences are implied are not statistically significant at the 95 per cent level of confidence.

These results evidence a sloppiness which is inexcusable in a major report. They also conform to the needs of a particular political agenda. For example, the report is keen to emphasise that employees of US companies appear more happy with their lot, less militant, more pro-capitalist and so on — observations which appear to endorse a policy of 'constructive engagement' — when there is no statistical basis for conclusions of this kind. Furthermore, the survey incorrectly reinforces the old National Party line that it is the young, the unionists, and so on who are unreasonable and revolutionary.
Sampling Problems
The survey was based on a sample of 551 black male production workers in seven industrial centres in South Africa: Durban-Pinetown, Port Elizabeth, and another five centres (Pretoria, Vaal, East Rand, West Rand and Soweto) located in the Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vereeniging (PWV) area. Our chi-square analysis demonstrates that the regional distribution of the sample is significantly different from the distribution of the population of black production workers, primarily because no workers were polled in the Western Cape (which accounts for 12 per cent of black manufacturing employment) and in other areas outside the major industrial centres (20 per cent). Hence, as Schlemmer acknowledges (p.10), the survey is not representative of all black factory workers. This is worth stressing since it appears to have been ignored in media broadcasting of the results. Schlemmer goes on to say, though, that the sample is representative of 'black employees in the major industrial centres in which multinational investment is concentrated' (p.10). However, according to Chris Rogerson, 50 per cent of manufacturing employment in multinational companies was located in PWV and Port Elizabeth in 1978, whereas the Schlemmer survey allocates 82 per cent of the sample to these two areas. Our point is not so much that the regional distribution of Schlemmer's sample is necessarily incorrect, but that a statistical framework for the allocation of sampling quotas between categories is not provided, and in the absence of this the representativeness of the sample remains questionable.

More important, because 'quota sampling' was used in this survey one cannot use probability theory to determine the representativeness of the sample. With this method, quotas are set up by instructing enumerators to undertake a specific number of interviews in given categories that reflect variations in the population: age, sex, income and so on. The restrictions and controls imposed on the ways in which respondents are selected may avoid some of the more serious biases that are likely to arrive in interviewing those most conveniently available within quotas. However, they may also be completely ineffective. Worse still, there is no way to identify and measure such biases that may be present except by a random sample properly drawn up and executed. Schlemmer's claim that the sample is representative can only be based on experience or guesswork, not statistics.

Finally, it is worth stressing that this is a survey of black male production workers, not 'black male workers', not 'black workers', and not blacks in general. Anti-disinvestment lobbyists have tended to gloss over this point as indeed does Schlemmer in his conclusion (pp.42-46) where he tends to generalise for all black workers. The Sunday Times, for example, which first publicised the survey in the media (23 September 1984), headlined the story 'Most SA blacks want investment from overseas'. Similarly, both George Schultz and Malcolm Rifkind have commented on what they take to be 'black opinion'. Only 20 per cent of black workers are employed in the manufacturing sector (and 19 per cent of these are women who comprise 31 per cent of all black workers), so the survey actually focuses on the attitudes of a group which accounts for 16 per cent of black workers — 12 per cent if unemployed workers are included.

The stated rationale for confining the survey to male production workers is that they '... are the people most intimately involved in the capitalist system and (they) participate in the sector in which most multinational companies operate — the manufacturing sector' (p.9). This selection may reflect the assumption that disinvestment will affect black production workers most of all, an assumption which is evident in the design of the questions relevant to this issue. But if one challenges this assumption (the subject of our final section) then the assertion that
the opinions of production workers are to be given priority becomes groundless.

**Administration and Questionnaire Design**

The report implies that the validity of the responses is ensured by the length of the interview (approximately 110 minutes) and the careful training that the interviewers undertook (p.9). But there are two major problems with survey research of this kind, neither of which are acknowledged or discussed in the report.

The first concerns the difficulty of exacting truthful responses to the questions. Many of the issues examined in the survey are highly sensitive. For example, it is a treasonable offence in terms of the Terrorism Act (1967) to openly advocate disinvestment, and this has been stressed in media sympathetic to the government. It is understandable, therefore, that blacks are suspicious of surveys of this type even when they are conducted by independent institutions with some credibility like the University of Natal. Hence, it is clearly naive to assume that assurances of anonymity will guarantee that responses are genuine. The decision to interview workers in their homes (having first made contact at the workplace) will have compounded this problem, and one gets no idea as to the degree to which workers may have refused to co-operate. Similar questions are asked by Sam Nolutshungu in his review of an earlier survey of black attitudes conducted by Theo Hanf and his colleagues where this research problem is well summarised as follows:

Some of the in-depth interviewees are reported as representing the ANC or the PAC, their left and moderate wings, and so on. The grounds for skepticism are, surely, self-evident. Very few people who are actively involved with subversive political organisations will proclaim that to market researchers. Similarly, given the nature of the South African regime, one cannot trust African respondents to say truly what they feel especially if that is known to be beyond the bounds of official tolerance. That there were as many candidly militant statements made as are reported is in itself outstanding, but it does not rule out, as the authors too sanguinely hope it does, the environment of state terror as a factor in the formulation of responses.

The second, more fundamental, problem lies in designing questions which generate meaningful responses. A common problem is ambiguity. A good example of this is the statement ‘Whites are strict but honest and fair — blacks would not be happier under their own people’ to which respondents were asked to agree or disagree (p.32) This statement makes no sense whatsoever. In the first place, it consists of four separate statements (‘White are strict’; ‘Whites are honest’; ‘Whites are fair’; ‘Blacks would not be happier under their own people’) to which responses may differ. Theoretically there are 16 possible responses to this question whereas only one composite result is permitted. Secondly, there is no obvious relationship between the two halves of the statement: it cannot be assumed that a person who agrees with the statement ‘Whites are strict but honest and fair’ will necessarily support the contention that ‘Blacks will not be happier under their own people’, or vice versa. Thirdly, the question does not allow considerations of whether ‘Blacks would be happier under their own people’ to be made independently of the first half of the statement which is loaded in favour of whites. Hence, the result may be biased towards an ‘agree’ response.

A further difficulty stems from inviting respondents to answer against hypothetical conditions and alternatives which, as Nolutshungu puts it, may ‘at present only be vaguely, and subjectively, imagined’. For example, the respondents were confronted with one statement which supports disinvestment on the ground
that it will 'frighten the South African government into getting rid of apartheid' (p.34). Schlemmer argues that this provides a 'built-in incentive to support the disinvestment' position (p.35), but one may equally argue that this is just as likely to diminish support in a context where international pressure has never appeared to 'frighten the South African government', in which case the proposition may seem unrealistic and therefore meaningless, and where the government responds to pressure with suppression, in which case the proposition may sound dangerously subversive.

This process of rationalisation explains why, for example, surveys of 'felt needs' in impoverished rural communities in South Africa invariably generate a list of priorities on the lines of 'water supply', 'health clinic', and so on rather than 'black majority rule'. A more legitimate exercise would therefore be to design some means of monitoring attitudes towards disinvestment once the issue has been given a comprehensive political hearing in collective forums recognised by workers such as the independent unions. The solution is not, as Stanley Uys suggests, to commission a 'new report which establishes, once and for all, how blacks in South Africa feel on this crucial issue'. The problems which emerge in deploring orthodox survey methodology to investigate opinion about a highly sensitive political issue like disinvestment are just too intractable and pervasive.

Related to this is the problem of collapsing complex political opinions into multiple-choice or Yes/No categories. There are two dangers here. The first results from a biased or inadequate conceptualisation of the issues at hand which 'forces' responses to assume a certain shape. This is evident in Schlemmer's treatment of the disinvestment issue and we discuss this in the following section. The second is a problem of incorporating a range of opinions into one or two statements or questions. Pre-coded structured questionnaires with prepared 'probes' are quite unsatisfactory means of analysing opinions, which such opinions are rich in their complexity and diversity. The usual result is to tie responses to pre-selected categories which are not exhaustive of the alternatives and then make the assumption that responses within categories are homogenous. In consequence, surveys of political attitudes are rarely good predictive devices. Thus, for example, only a few weeks after publication of the study in which Schlemmer concludes that the '... major pattern is for black workers to separate political issues from the industrial sphere' (p.42), workers in the the Transvaal came out in massive support of calls for a work stay-away.

In summary, we feel that this survey is basically bad social science. There are too many administrative, sampling and design problems to find the results convincing. Yet there will be many inclined to accept the general conclusion of the report on disinvestment. If one forgets about all the other problems, then the proportion of workers apparently opposed to disinvestment (75 per cent) may appear significant, particularly since Schlemmer is quick to answer critics who may doubt the political maturity of his respondents (p.44). However, we also suggest that the design of the questions relating to disinvestment reflect a biased and inadequate conceptualisation of the issue, one which favours a more 'conservative' response. It is to this that we now turn.

Conceptualising the Disinvestment Issue
A total of four questions were asked relating to disinvestment (see pp.33-41). In the first of these, respondents were asked; 'Which one of the following is true. When American companies build factories in South Africa, who do they help most?' The possible responses were limited to 'Help the African people to progress', 'Help the
Whites', and 'Help the South African Government' (p.33). The results (38 per cent, 16 per cent and 46 per cent respectively) are considered 'inconclusive' (p.34). However, the question is badly designed because the negative view of US investment is split between two categories as against one for the positive opinion. The responses to the second and third options could therefore be combined to give 62 per cent of the sample holding a negative view of investment, a result which is statistically significant at the 95 per cent level of confidence.

Nevertheless, the next three questions generate consistent results which suggest that majority opinion is against disinvestment. Only 25 per cent of the overall sample supported a pro-disinvestment position in Table 14 (p.34), 26 per cent in Table 15 (p.36), and 9 per cent in Table 16 (p.37). But let us look more closely at how those three questions were phrased.

Table 14: 'One man, Samuel says: "Overseas people and banks and companies must stop buying South African goods and stop sending money to build factories in South Africa so as to frighten the South African government into getting rid of Apartheid." Another man Joseph says: "People and banks and companies overseas should continue to buy South African goods and send money to build factories because it makes jobs for all people in South Africa."

Which man would you agree with, Samuel or Joseph?
Support for Samuel 25%; for Joseph 75%

Table 15: 'There are groups of people in America and England who try to encourage banks and organisations not to invest money in South Africa — not to put their money in factories which are in South Africa. Do you think this is a good thing or a bad thing?
Good thing (Disinvestment) — 26%
Bad thing (Engagement) — 74%

Table 16: 'Which of the following would you prefer to see happen — What is best?'
American companies should build as many factories in South Africa as they can, making as many jobs for blacks as they can: 59%
American companies should only run factories in South Africa if they can pay blacks high wages, give good pensions and help with housing, even if they make fewer jobs: 32%
American companies should not run factories in South Africa because they make the government of South Africa stronger: 9%

In each statement investment is equated with the building of factories while disinvestment implies the closing down of factories or an inability to build new ones. It is hardly surprising that production workers did not come out in solid support of a strategy which they are told will lead to retrenchments. For workers this obviously has more serious implications than frightening the South African government. What is remarkable is that as many as 25 per cent of workers advocated disinvestment in a context where an open declaration of support for this strategy is illegal and where the manufacturing sector is presently retrenching workers in the face of a severe recession.

The important point, though, is that the disinvestment issue was presented to workers in terms which are both misleading and unbalanced, and which bear close resemblance to the government's own propaganda. The impression given in the survey was that the contribution to jobs locally by direct US investment is quite considerable and that the involvement of US capital in South Africa is almost exclusively in the private manufacturing sector. Hence, it appears to be accepted that disinvestment will result in a drastic increase in black unemployment. This view is not only highly simplistic but also a gross exaggeration. The related
assumption that disinvestment will prejudice economic recovery in South Africa is equally invalid. In the following section, therefore, our objective is to challenge these assumptions to provide the basis for balanced discussion of the disinvestment issue.

De-mystifying the Role of Foreign Investment

Disinvestment will result in a drastic increase in black unemployment. This assumption may be challenged on a number of grounds. In the first place, the legislation so far introduced by universities, city councils and Federal states in the US amount, strictly speaking, to 'divestment' not 'disinvestment'. The measures being enacted are diverse, but the most common involves the off-loading of investments in US companies with South African connections. For example, New York City elected in 1984 to off-load $2.5 billion worth of shares in companies which were non-signatories of the Sullivan Code. Similarly, Ohio State University announced in June 1985 that it would sell $10.8 million worth of holdings in US companies with investments in South Africa. The South African media have tended to stress the apparent significance of these decisions, but even the Financial Mail (1 February 1985) admits that the capital involved (about $5.0 billion) is insignificant at present, and that the 'actual economic impact is pretty small'. The fact is that these holdings will be bought as soon as they are put up for sale. This may devalue the holdings temporarily, but in the long run it may not be much of an inconvenience to the companies. What divestment may do is to persuade American companies or banks not to make new investments in South Africa to avoid possible embarassment later, but immediately it is little more than a symbolic gesture.

None of the bills that have been put before the US Congress and Senate (including the Kennedy-Gray Bill) will actually force American companies to completely withdraw from South Africa, close down factories and repatriate personnel and machinery. What they might do is prevent or discourage new investment in South Africa, but this will be enforceable only if the relevant provision is retained in the final legislated version of the Bill. Another point is that stock and physical assets divested by departing American companies will be bought up by other capitalists (both South African and foreign), particularly in situations where divesting companies are forced to off-load stock at prices below their true market value. This amounts to a financial transaction with no necessary implications for unemployment, although takeovers and mergers could lead to rationalisation and hence retrenchment programmes later on.

Most importantly, it is necessary to correct the view that American investment is a major source of jobs for black South Africans. First, it is essential to distinguish between direct and indirect investment. Direct investment refers to the investment by foreigners in undertakings in South Africa in which they have a controlling interest. This is usually regarded as necessarily job-creating, but we will argue against the simplicity of this view later. Indirect investment refers to investment in financial assets (the purchase by foreigners of shares in South African companies) and foreign bank loans to private companies, the South African government and its parastatals. Very few forms of indirect investment are job-creating. For example, if shares are being issued for the first time, foreign investment participates in the initial development of a company and helps it to create jobs. Alternatively, the foreign purchase of shares long since issued may enable those companies divesting those shares to invest in job-creating developments inside South Africa. In general, though, it is 'direct' investment which has the greatest effect on job creation.

Most US (and indeed most foreign) investment is in fact 'indirect', the largest
share of it comprising loans to the South African government and its parastatals. The vigour with which the present disinvestment campaign is being pursued is in large measure due to the 1982 decision by the IMF to loan $620 million to the South African government. This, together with smaller loans to parastatals and the decision to allow US corporations to service South Africa's nuclear power plant, clearly had a major impact upon the mobilisation of a variety of groups against Pretoria.

Moreover, whereas direct investment has in the past been consistently higher than direct investment, the latter increased rapidly in the 1970s and started to exceed direct investment in 1975, at the same time being directed increasingly towards the public rather than private sector. By 1983 direct investment comprised only 42 per cent of total foreign liabilities. Foreign liabilities emanating from the US in 1983 accounted for only 22 per cent of the total, with about 86 per cent of this being indirect investment. Thus only a very small proportion of American investment in South Africa leads directly to the building of factories and the creation of jobs. Direct US investment is not particularly important to South Africa in comparison with Britain and the EEC. One estimate (Izwilethu, April 1985, p.4) is that US direct investment amounts to $2.3 billion, compared to $16 billion from Britain and $5 billion from the rest of Europe, and accounts for only 25 per cent of jobs arising from foreign investment. Nor does American indirect investment seem to be particularly important either. In 1984 all US bank loans to South African borrowers amounted to only $4.6 billion.

How many jobs would be lost in the unlikely event that the disinvestment campaign forces US companies (of which there are about 300 presently in South Africa) to close down or sell off their operations, and assuming in the latter case that the purchase of US companies by South African or other foreign interests will absorb capital which would otherwise have been deployed in other job-creating investments? Estimates of this vary widely. On the one hand, Pretoria's Economic Advisory Council estimates that roughly 150,000 persons (all race groups) are employed by US corporations, which, using a (generous) multiplier of 4.0 — 5.0 '... suggests that between 650,000 and 750,000 people depend directly for their livelihood on the activities of US companies in South Africa', the vast majority being blacks. Hence, it is argued that 'the adverse consequences of a disinvestment on employment could be substantial.' On the other hand, figures between 70,000 and 150,000 (for American companies), about 2 per cent of the black labour force, are cited by both Stephen Gelb and David Walsh. What is certain, though, is that disinvestment would have far less impact upon employment than a successful boycott of South African exports.

One should also note that the number of black retrenchments caused by disinvestment could be reduced by the inflow of foreign capital to purchase disinvesting American companies, and by the use of South African capital to purchase disinvesting US companies which would otherwise have been directed abroad, or invested in financial holdings which have no impact upon job creation. Further foreign investment is often associated with the infusion of new technology which can have a number of negative effects upon job creation and the economy such as introducing and deepening a bias towards capital-intensive techniques in production, stimulating imports and aggravating balance of payments difficulties particularly during a phase of deteriorating exchange rates, limiting research into, and development of, local technologies, and providing jobs for expatriates to operate the technology. Stephen Gelb argues, therefore, that since foreign technology 'gives a greater boost to the growth of output and profits than to
employment, so its withdrawal may well slow growth and cut into general profitability more than it reduces employment.

Finally, disinvestment may encourage South African capital to invest locally rather than in overseas markets (in which larger South African corporations have become increasingly interested in recent years), particularly if restrictions are placed on foreign investments by South African companies, thereby improving opportunities for the expansion of assets and market shares. To sum up: the impact of American disinvestment on black workers in South Africa is likely to be far less dramatic than the apocalyptic scenario predicted by opponents of the campaign, and also much more complex.

Economic growth in South Africa requires US investment; hence, disinvestment will seriously prejudice economic recovery. The assumption underpinning this argument is that South Africa's domestic savings have historically been insufficient to satisfy its capital needs, and that foreign investment therefore comprises a central element in ensuring and maintaining a satisfactory growth rate and the creation of sufficient job opportunities in the long term. Unemployment amongst blacks is already in the region of 20 per cent (perhaps 1,500,000 in total), and the economy now needs to generate at least 250,000 jobs each year just to absorb blacks entering the labour market. It is implied that 'foreign investment is the answer', as a study by Stellenbosch's Bureau for Economic Research put it recently. For this reason, the *Sunday Times* (5 May 1985) speaks in terms of disinvestment being a 'threat to millions of jobs'.

These arguments also rest on questionable assumptions. Since direct foreign investment has never been a major creator of jobs in South Africa, and is presently directly responsible for perhaps seven per cent of jobs, there would appear little reason to expect it to become the saviour in the future. There is even less reason to expect foreign investment to revive the South African economy if one considers that its importance has been declining steadily since the late 1970s. The proportion of new capital formation financed by foreign investment has fallen from 35 per cent over the period 1946-1955 to 17 per cent over 1966-1977 and to about 10 per cent in the last five years. The share of long-term foreign investment in total investment has been declining steadily in both the central government and banking sector (from 67 per cent in 1960 to 47 per cent in 1983), and the private sector (from 81 per cent in 1980 to 66 per cent in 1983), and the share of equity capital in the total foreign liabilities of the private sector has declined substantially from the late 1970s (from 16 per cent in 1870 to 7 per cent in 1983).

There may be some short term reasons for this such as a rise in short term interest rates since 1982, and a marked outflow of long-term capital arising from net sales of shares on the Stock Exchange to local residents, especially after the South African Reserve Bank abolished exchange controls on non-residents and concomitantly the financial rand market in February 1983. The most important consequence of this decision was the repatriation of foreign-held funds away from South Africa. In the first six months of 1983, the outflow of capital was approximately $650 million. The declining commitment of foreign investors to long-term investment may be a response to the falling level of economic activity in the present recession and the deteriorating exchange rate which increases the cost of importing machinery and technology to South Africa. For various reasons the attractiveness of South Africa as a site for direct investment has deteriorated considerably. Total net foreign investment has fallen appreciably since 1976, net capital inflow from the rest of the world has been negative for several years, and 30 US companies have moved out of South Africa since 1980 while only 11 have...
moved in. At present the major proportion of new investment (especially US investment) in South Africa comprises reinvestments of locally generated profits. Consequently, to argue that foreign investment will provide the means to stage an economic recovery in South Africa ignores not only the fact that foreign investment has not done this role for over fifty years, but also that foreign (and indeed South African) investors are looking elsewhere for profitable opportunities. In particular, they are looking for locations where cheaper labour is available and more repressive forms of labour control are in force, or where markets, infrastructure, technology, and so on provide better business conditions. The influential Business Environment Risk Information study, for example, argued in 1982 that South Africa was good only for trade and short term relationships, and it specifically warned against long-term investment because risk levels were increasing and profit potential diminishing. More recently (1985) a leading firm of investment analysts Frost & Sullivan of New York — reduced South Africa's short-term investment rating from B+ to C+, and its long-term rating from B to D+. As Stephen Gelb puts it: 'The very high profit rates available during the 1950s and 1960s, which attracted foreign capital to South Africa, are clearly a thing of the past'. There are even indications that US banks are no longer interested in underwriting long term loans to South African borrowers. This trend predates the disinvestment campaign.

Hence, whereas the South African government and others have been at pains to argue that the momentum given to disinvestment results purely from 'political' forces and thereby label it, for example, as ANC or as UDF inspired, there is considerable evidence to show that disinvestment is linked to 'economic' effects such as the relaxation of exchange control restrictions and the costs of apartheid. The present concern about disinvestment is therefore akin to shutting the stable door after the horse has bolted. As even the Economic Advisory Council is forced to admit:

It is very difficult to establish a one-to-one relation between the disinvestment campaign and trends in foreign investment in South Africa ... Whatever the exact reasons, these trends do point in a direction probably not far removed from what the disinvestment campaigners are apparently trying to achieve.

The debate about disinvestment has also tended to deflect attention from the more important issue regarding the ways in which apartheid and capitalism in South Africa (rather than disinvestment) have contributed to the present crisis of unemployment. Stephen Gelb argues that '... the question of job loss is far more closely connected with general economic conditions than with the withdrawal of foreign capital. The prominence of the 'disinvestment debate' may well have obstructed full discussion of current state economic policies'.

While state and capital have argued in terms of black workers being the 'first to suffer' in the wake of a disinvestment campaign, their policies in fact worsen the situation in many ways, such as: Unproductive state spending on defence and police forces to control local black protest, destabilise the neighbouring states, and continue the occupation of Namibia; the inefficient allocation of state spending to the procurement of strategic resources to counteract sanctions introduced in response to its apartheid policies; state spending on the bantustans and other aspects of apartheid administration — the influx control system and the tri-cameral parliament, for example; industrial decentralisation — one estimate is that for every job created in decentralised areas (at well over twice the equivalent cost in urban centres), nine have been lost in metropolitan areas through restrictions
imposed on the expansion of firms there by the Environment Planning Act of 1967; the introduction by capital of job-replacing or job-saving technologies; the increasing monopolisation (and rationalisation) of South African Capital; the state's monetarist policies which have been a central factor in the depth and duration of the present recession, and accompanying widespread retrenchments; and, the increasing tendency for major South African corporations to seek investments overseas rather than locally. Hence, as Gelb concludes:

The apparent concern on the part of local state and business actors for disinvestment related unemployment seems hard to understand, when these same elements are implementing and supporting policies which are daily destroying jobs. Furthermore, unemployment which may result from foreign capital's withdrawal is due as much to the poor state of the economy as to overseas political campaigns.

Conclusion
The purpose of the above discussion is not to argue that the disinvestment campaign is ineffectual, but rather that its economic impact is likely to be considerably more complex and appreciably less cataclysmic than is typically implied by its opponents. Hence, it is misleading to present the disinvestment campaign, as Schlemmer did, as a simple either/or dilemma: either one frightens the South African government or there are more jobs for black workers. This approach not only misrepresents the issues therefore, but it also fails to acknowledge the strategic and symbolic significance of the campaign and the fact that it incorporates a wide variety of options. A short and by no means exhaustive list of such options might include: sanctions on all firms investing in South Africa; sanctions on firms if they do not comply with certain codes of conduct; a reduction of US exports to South Africa (involving restrictions on the sale of certain types of goods or services to particular customers); a reduction of South African exports to the United States; restrictions on South African investment in the United States; restrictions on loans to the South African government and its parastatals; and restrictions on South African firms applying for loans on overseas capital markets.

Hence, the survey could have presented the disinvestment issue in quite different terms to those used in Tables 13-16. One wonders, for example, what the response might have been if workers had been asked their opinion on the sale of computer technology to the South African police or restrictions on loans to the South African government. The degree to which responses may be sensitive to the way in which the questions are phrased is indicated by a more recent poll (August 1985) commissioned by the London Sunday Times. Using a different question ('Do you think other countries are right or wrong to impose economic sanctions unless South Africa agrees to get rid of the apartheid system?'), the poll found that no less than 77 per cent of urban black South Africans are in favour of sanctions when the question is put this way.

What we are arguing, therefore, is that the disinvestment campaign is a good deal more diverse, more complex and sophisticated than Schlemmer implies, and that his investigations into attitudes towards this issue are misleading and his conclusions worthless. The progressive implications and possibilities that disinvestment might hold for the emergence of a non-racial democracy in South Africa are still wide open to debate, and the view of black workers have yet to be heard.

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Bibliographic Note

Lawrence Schlemmer's (1984) report 'Black Worker Attitudes: Political Options, Capitalism and Investment in South Africa' is available from the Centre of Applied Social Sciences, University of Natal, Durban, South Africa.

Works cited in this paper are as follows: Stephen Gelb 'Unemployment and the Disinvestment Debate', South African Labour Bulletin, Vol.10, No.6, 1985, which contributes a useful discussion on the relationship between foreign investment and employment; our observations on the regional distribution of multinational investment in South Africa are based on figures published by Chris Rogerson in his 'Patterns of Indigenous and Foreign Control of South African Manufacturing', The South African Geographer, Vol.10, No.2, 1982. This provides the most recent and comprehensive survey of the location of M.N.C.'s in South Africa; Sam Nolutshungu's remarks are contained in his review of several books in the Journal of Southern African Studies, Vol.9, No.2, 1983; a useful source of details on foreign investment in South Africa is the Central Economic Advisory Service's 'Disinvestment: its Effects on South and Southern Africa and Possible Counteraction' (Pretoria, April 1985); David Welsh, 'Fighting Disinvestment', Leadership SA, First Quarter 1985; George Schultz's remarks were drawn from his 'Southern Africa: Toward an American Consensus' address delivered to the National Press Club (Washington DC: April 16th, 1985); Stanley Uys, 'Disinvestment: a need for black opinion?' Natal Mercury (Durban: May 3rd, 1985).


AGRARIAN POLICY AND MIGRATION IN ZIMBABWE AND SOUTHERN AFRICA: REFORM OR TRANSPORTATION?

David Simon

The stimulating paper by Ray Bush and Lionel Cliffe in ROAPE 29 raises some crucial issues about the efficacy of land reform policies in Zimbabwe and, indeed, all southern Africa's migrant labour societies. These countries are characterised by a colonial inheritance of two agricultures — a large scale white-dominated capitalist sector, and an underdeveloped black peasant sector producing cheap labour power for the rest of the economy rather than agricultural commodities. Nevertheless corporate capital has long sought to stabilise a sector of the black workforce by ending migrant labour and enabling permanent urban residence. On
Bibliographic Note

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AGRARIAN POLICY AND MIGRATION IN ZIMBABWE AND SOUTHERN AFRICA: REFORM OR TRANSPORTATION?

David Simon

The stimulating paper by Ray Bush and Lionel Cliffe in ROAPE 29 raises some crucial issues about the efficacy of land reform policies in Zimbabwe and, indeed, all southern Africa's migrant labour societies. These countries are characterised by a colonial inheritance of two agricultures — a large scale white-dominated capitalist sector, and an underdeveloped black peasant sector producing cheap labour power for the rest of the economy rather than agricultural commodities. Nevertheless corporate capital has long sought to stabilise a sector of the black workforce by ending migrant labour and enabling permanent urban residence. On
the other hand, since migrant labour is such a powerful symbol of capitalist exploitation to the black oppressed, its abolition has frequently been assumed essential for post-liberation social transformation.

Tracing the history of early 'liberal' and latterly more 'radical' proposals for ending migrant labour (as embodied in the 1981 Riddell Commission report and the Zimbabwean state's current resettlement programme), Bush and Cliffe reveal and criticise the remarkable degree of continuity in their essential character. Although there is an important quantitative difference between them

. . . the same basic prescription, of separating out the worker-peasant migrants into settled proletarians or settled peasants, lies at the root of both proposed paths. Moreover, we shall see that though the 'radical' strategies would put more resources in the hands of the peasants and give more income to workers, their proposals also fail to cater for all the worker-peasant families and consign some, even if a much smaller number, to final impoverishment.

The essential problem is seen as a preoccupation with maintaining commercial agricultural production levels, hence leaving the white or former white capitalist sector more or less intact, and creating a class of relatively small scale black commercial farmers. The envisaged solution for the mass of rural peasants in the overcrowded communal areas (CAs — the former tribal trust lands) is inextricable from plans to end migrant labour. Land holdings are unviably small in the CAs, while the large population (estimated by the Riddell Commission at 780,000 families in 1980) is growing by approximately 3 per cent per annum. Since the CAs can retain only 325,000 families on a viable basis, at least 455,000 families will need to be moved. In order to safeguard commercial production, resettlement is taking place only on vacant or voluntarily sold white farms. For this and a variety of logistical, financial and political reasons, the pace is slower even than projected. The most recent data show only 30,815 families to have been resettled by the end of June 1984, compared to a target of 162,000 by the end of 1984.

Clearly, then, another large scale solution is required. The Riddell Commission estimated that there were 235,000 families split by migrant labour. These are to be encouraged to reunite permanently in towns and cities — as an urban proletariat — attracted by higher wages and improved conditions. The balance of at least 185,000 families will, the Commission hopes, gradually be absorbed by expanding industrialisation. In view of these policy elements, coupled with the comparatively small scale of rural resettlement, the eligibility criteria for resettlement expressly exclude families with an urban income (from one or more migrants) and those headed by women other than widows with dependants.

The Agrarian Reform Debate: Some Specific Propositions
(a) Bush and Cliffe cast doubt on the Riddell Commission's use of 'carrying capacity' data for the CAs, asserting this to be a 'highly ideological concept' but without further elaboration. What, then, is the nature of this ideological content? The term derives from ecology where it refers to the maximum number (or biomass) of one or more animal species sustainable on a particular unit of land without environmental degradation. As such it is fairly uncontroversial. The Commission presumably imputes a similarly technical meaning to the concept when establishing a viable population for the CAs. However, there are concealed ideological problems in using the term in this manner for human beings. Although there might theoretically be some definable minimum area of land required to sustain a person in a given environment, this cannot be unique in practice. There
are three variables affecting the equation: (i) the mix of arable and grazing land, (ii) the species of livestock and crops kept and hence their yield and (iii), most crucial for the present context, the land tenure system.

'Carrying capacity' under communal settlement and cultivation (such as Zimbabwe's Model B resettlement villages) will differ from that under nucleated settlements with individual landholdings (e.g. Zimbabwe's Model A resettlement villages) even in the same area. The Riddell Commission advocated a system focusing on the most productive farmers, but how did it define carrying capacity? Would any of these systems be socially acceptable to the intended target group of jobless and landless peasants? How would the size of holdings — and hence the land's carrying capacity — be affected if worker-peasant households with a wage income to 'subsidize' their rural reproduction were to become eligible for resettlement or could retain their holdings in the CAs? Are the calculations in any case based on an assumed goal of mere self-sufficiency in the peasant sector, or is agricultural surplus to be extracted to feed the urban populace? Such crucial policy assumptions need to be made explicit and appraised more adequately.

(b) With 30,815 families resettled by mid-1984 (cf. 55,180 envisaged by mid-1983) the rate of progress has been too slow to make large inroads into the ranks of the landless, let alone worker-peasants. Recruitment to the schemes reflects the eligibility criteria. Thus 62 per cent of settlers on Model A schemes (which comprise 86 per cent of all schemes) come from the CAs, 8 per cent from former 'protected villages', 15 per cent from white farms while only 6 per cent are former urban workers. Four fifths of resettlement schemes are located in Natural Regions III, IV and V, officially described as 'undeveloped and hostile agro-ecological regions' dependent on rainfed agriculture. The scope and scale of possible resettlement are thus restricted by definition, since human densities ('carrying capacities') will necessarily be lower than in more fertile areas. This point is even more pertinent for labour reserve economies in arid parts of southern Africa, where the existing labour force on stock ranches may already represent the viable population density.

(c) Criticism by Bush and Cliffe of the Riddell Commission proposals and current Zimbabwean resettlement policy centres on the exclusion of worker-peasants — the major segment of the rural population — and secondly, on the individual basis of tenure provided for. It is pertinent to ask, though, whether and how the position of worker-peasants would differ under a collective land ownership system from that predicted with the existing policy. Bush and Cliffe argue thus:

... the near landless have their immediate needs met by being allocated individual resettlement plots, but resettlement if it were, at a later stage, to provide some security and additional livelihood for dependents of migrants let alone be part of a transition to socialism, would have to have some co-operative dimension — at least so as to provide a collective entity to which a man returning when out of work or for a family or members of it leaving to live in town. (sic).

In other words, collective ownership is required for the attainment of socialism, and to provide security for worker-peasant families who, they argue, should retain (or obtain) land rights. Justification for the latter assertion presumably lies in the profound difficulties experienced by farmer-housewives in maintaining even subsistence level production and guaranteeing reproduction in the absence of their menfolk under existing conditions. Individual tenure might be possible for full time peasants despite the wider social consequences warned against, but not for the dependants of migrants.
Formidable problems would certainly arise in implementing collectivisation. Would the worker-peasant/farmer-housewife class be amenable? Would sufficient voluntary response be forthcoming for viability? If not, would forced resettlement occur? And if so, how will it be policed? Coerced ujamaa villagisation in Tanzania is now widely accepted as having been counterproductive. Furthermore, Frelimo’s Fourth Congress in 1984 called for more emphasis on peasant production because of the failure by both communal villages and state farms to meet production targets. Perhaps, in view of such experiences, we need to examine anew the question of whether individual tenure really is incompatible with socialism?

Agrarian Reform and Urbanisation: The Numbers Game Revisited

As outlined by Bush and Cliffe, both the Riddell report and a recent paper by Kay advocate accelerated urbanisation as a means to reunite split families, hence ending migrancy while simultaneously reducing land pressure in the communal areas to enable agrarian reform. From these perspectives, splitting the worker-peasant class into permanent peasant and urban proletarian fractions would presumably thus be justifiable on grounds both of necessity and productive efficiency. Kay’s proposal rests on some form of coercion, dependants being required to join their menfolk in town or wherever else in the modern economy they are employed. Apart from assumptions regarding the nature and definition of family structure, this implies the need for costly bureaucratic control and policing. Surely forced urbanisation is no more likely to find ready acceptance among the coerced than its hated recent predecessor, constrained urbanisation?

The Riddell Commission’s version follows an earlier government policy statement in relying, instead of on coercion, on the hope that the 235,000 split families will move citywards of their own accord, induced by the higher minimum wages, improved housing and social security provisions it recommends. Some of these proposals, at least on wages, have since been implemented. This perspective at least leaves the family definition question to the people themselves, but it nevertheless suffers from another fundamental flaw. Rural-urban disparities in incomes or income earning opportunities, health and educational facilities etc. have long been recognised as being major causes of migration. How will it be possible, by consciously increasing such disparities, to encourage existing migrants’ dependants to move permanently while simultaneously presumably discouraging (or preventing?) other potential migrants superfluous to the needs of the envisaged gradual industrialisation from doing so? The consequences of such a policy would, in all probability, therefore be counterproductive, if not disastrous, for the cities. Only by reducing urban-rural disparities will the incentive or need to migrate recede. The apartheid experience shows dramatically that, no matter how brutal and sophisticated the enforcement, urban ‘influx control’ alone cannot succeed.

However, concern with eliminating migrant labour by reuniting split families deserves more credit in the Riddell Commission’s case than conceded by Bush and Cliffe. Whatever the practical problems implied by such moves, the social and politico-economic impact of migrant labour have long been central foci of criticism of the colonial status quo, both by liberal white opinion and liberation movements throughout southern Africa. While the most appropriate method of achieving change should rightly be a subject for debate, it would indeed be a remarkable volte face to rule out all such solutions on principle.

What, then, is the current urban situation in Zimbabwe? Is it even realistic to suggest the addition of over one million people to the ranks of the urban
proletariat? This figure would represent the total number of people in split families if it is conservatively assumed, for argument's sake, that these are only nuclear families averaging six members. Deducting the migrants themselves, relocating the 235,000 families cited in the Riddell report would add 1,175,000 new urban dwellers. According to official data (with all their shortcomings and almost certain undercounting) Zimbabwe's indigenous population grew from 3,730,000 in 1961 to 5,880,000 in 1969 and 6,640,000 in 1978 at an average rate of 3.4 per cent per annum. The current estimate is considerably over 8 million. In the years to 1979 the urban growth rate was substantially higher at around 4.6 per cent p.a. despite influx control, but was expected to reach a massive 11.5 per cent p.a. over the ensuing five year period, boosted by an exodus of rural people displaced by the war of independence. No Third World country has been able to cope with this order of urban growth.

The impact of war and the other urban-rural disparities already referred to on Harare's growth should not be underestimated. Official data put its black population at 280,000 in 1969, 480,000 in December 1978 and 633,000 in January 1980. Local experts suggested one million as more realistic. A certain proportion of these displaced people, whether relatives of existing migrants and established city dwellers or not, will have returned to their peasant holdings after independence and the war's end, but the present population is nevertheless certain to be far higher still. The security situation in Matabeleland over the last two years has caused further displacement to Bulawayo and other centres in that region.

With the threat such rapid urbanisation presented to vested white capitalist and political interests, and the sheer task of providing even basic shelter, a range of strategies was adopted in the few years prior to independence. At the strategic level, Chitungwiza was planned and created outside Harare as a black satellite city in nearby Seki Tribal Trust Land to preserve white domination in the capital. In Harare itself existing townships reached unprecedented levels of overcrowding and squalor. Financial resources for accelerated public construction of 'subsidized' matchbox houses as in the past were claimed to be inadequate. Temporary refugee shelters inevitably became semipermanent abodes; squatting was passively tolerated, and a variety of fairly progressive aided self-help housing schemes initiated. Unemployment was rampant and petty trade booming. An indication of the rate and scale at which urban growth can occur is provided by Derbyshire squatment near Chitungwiza, which had existed since 1958 with roughly 200 inhabitants. Between August and the beginning of October 1976 its population rose to 2,000 and by the end of that month had reached 12,000 before the occupants were relocated to Chirambahuyo within Chitungwiza.

With independence a pronounced government attitudinal shift occurred, apparently commensurate with the socialist political economic outlook. In April 1981 Eddison Zvobgo, then Minister of Local Government and Housing, wrote the foreword to a study of Chirambahuyo. Referring to the alternative solutions of doing nothing, bulldozer clearance, and upgrading reviewed in the study, he said:

They (the authors) conclude that upgrading a squatter settlement would be the best strategy to adopt. With this conclusion we have no quarrel. However, it must be made clear that society as a whole owes the poor a duty or obligation to live in environments that are not merely dignified but are conducive to better health and a better life. I argue that while it may not be advisable, for economic reasons, to demolish the Chirambahuyos of this world, we should never permit any more Chirambahuyos to rear their heads (my italics).

According to state policy no more squatments were to be allowed and priority was to be given to rehousing existing squatters, whose shelters would then be
demolished. Even supervised upgrading to specified standards was now to be rejected, while social considerations apparently did not enter the equation. Within a year, however, squatments were being bulldozed in South African style, without the prior provision of alternative housing, despite the earlier argument of economic imperatives in preserving them as an interim measure. Ultra low-cost housing experiments have also been halted as demeaning and unworthy of Zimbabwean socialism.

Thus at the same time as the Riddell Commission was recommending reunification of split families, the state was harassing them and demolishing the material symbols of their tenacious attempts to live as families. Petty traders are being persecuted; unaccompanied women have on occasion risked being arrested as prostitutes, while they and the unemployed are being urged, sometimes less than voluntarily, to join in agrarian production on rural resettlement schemes. The government is thus resorting to direct urban containment policies again. Importantly, industrial output and employment have stagnated since 1982. Seen in this light, proposals for encouraging rapid urbanisation on the scale envisaged, without a radical transformation of urban structure, state policy and employment prospects, are unrealistic if not detrimental to the life chances of the people concerned.

**Dividing Peasant From Proletarian: Some Speculative Implications**

The final issue to be considered here, while crucial to both theory and practice, is also necessarily the most abstract and speculative. The central plank in Bush and Cliffe's critique is that successive agrarian reform proposals would divide the worker-peasant class into full-time peasants on the one hand and an urban proletariat on the other. A residual section of the peasantry, excluded because of the individual basis of tenure and eligibility criteria, will be condemned to total impoverishment. They argue with reason that from the people's perspective, retention of a stake in both town and country would diversify and enhance their life chances, since neither alternative alone is likely to offer a secure future. At a theoretical level their (unstated) reasoning is probably as follows. The worker-peasantry form an underclass par excellence. Any initiative which divides the exploited masses, either by design or effect, is necessarily reactionary. For the transition to socialism, unity among the working classes is a prerequisite; fission can only hinder the struggle.

These propositions would benefit from more rigorous debate in the southern African context. Institutionalised labour reserves and migrancy have long been rightly condemned as a social evil and the underpinning of capitalist superexploitation. As stated above, it is in this context that the Riddell Commission's concern with ending migrancy should be seen. In any case, its abolition must surely rank as a first order priority if liberation, independence and socialist transformation are to have substance. On the other hand, I have shown that inadequate resources exist to provide for an enlarged, stabilized urban proletariat in the short term; rural prospects may not be much better. Abolition of migrancy in terms of existing proposals would thus seemingly require state policing to ensure that people engage exclusively in either urban or rural activity.

What would the actual class implications of the Riddell proposals be? Clearly a distinction between peasants and proletarians will arise, but will this necessarily become a class division? Is the worker-peasant class not already rather heterogeneous in terms of access to the means of production and reproduction, and would this diversity not increase over time even if both rural and urban bases
are retained? Might class division not then occur anyway? For instance, Ruth First's study shows that limited rural differentiation was occurring during the 1970s in Mozambique's Inhambane province through the coincidence of expanded peasant production and higher migrant mine wages.

The differentiation into a middle and poor peasantry arises from these groups' differential reliance on wage labour, and on the different wage and skill levels within the mining industry. The stratum of middle peasants is able, after a period of wage work on the mines, to sustain a certain level of agricultural production. By contrast, the poor peasants cannot withdraw from the contract cycle; their agricultural base is too poor to sustain their families without contract renewals, and they regard themselves as unemployed when not on contract.

Conditions for the urban proletariat in Zimbabwe and elsewhere are grim. Prospects for the rural peasantry may not be significantly better even after land reform if the rural aristocracy and bourgeoisie, on the (white) commercial farms and African purchase areas respectively, are able to maintain their stranglehold over commodity pricing and extension resources. As Bush and Cliffe outline, the same effect will result from agrarian reform proposals concentrating on 'true farmers' rather than 'mere cultivators'. In short, it is conceivable — though perhaps unlikely — that only relatively small socio-economic differentiation may arise between urban and rural poor despite their occupational distinction.

There is very little literature on the class implications of abolition of migrant labour, perhaps because the southern African regional political economy has changed relatively little to date, despite the attainment of formal independence by all its countries except Namibia. Existing material concentrates on ending international migration, especially on Mozambique. The BLS countries remain primarily labour reservoirs for the South African industrial complex, although the South African state and Chamber of Mines have consciously reduced their dependence on foreign migrants in recent years. The total number declined from 485,100 in 1973 to 285,000 in 1980. Malawi, Mozambique, Botswana, Lesotho and Zimbabwe have thus been faced with the immediate task of providing alternative employment for tens of thousands of displaced migrants.

Despite the multilateral initiatives proposed by SADCC, the foreseeable growth potential of industry and mining in its member states — and hence their capacity to generate additional employment — is very limited. Ending both internal and international migrant labour, and creating alternative employment opportunities will thus depend, as Ruth First has argued,

... on the transformation of the conditions of production in the rural areas from which the migrant labour has been drawn ... However the critical issue is not one of rural development as such, but rather the type of transformation which rural development policies tend to favour.

Although, like Bush and Cliffe, she sees co-operative peasant production as holding the key to success, she makes no detailed recommendations. It appears unlikely, though, that rural transformation can be successful and productive enough to curtail migrancy in the short term. Nevertheless, recent experiences in Mozambique and Nicaragua are cited by Bush and Cliffe as evidence that expansion of co-operative production and continued seasonal migration or farm labour are not incompatible. In Nicaragua there has actually been explicit debate on the class implications of proposed new policies. In southern Africa some permanent migration to urban areas will inevitably continue and is probably desirable. However, if both this and oscillating migration are to occur at rates
which the towns can absorb, rural conditions that force peasants to seek urban employment will have to be transformed.

By late 1984 the conditions and prospects for social transformation in Zimbabwe, and indeed the region as a whole, appeared to have receded. Large scale land redistribution no longer seems to be on the cards for the moment. Perhaps, then, we should refocus our attention on the class implications of the current reforms under continuing conditions of primarily capitalist production. Rural problems and policies cannot be studied in isolation from the urban elements of a national or regional political economy. Policies must be compatible with the resources available for their implementation. They should enhance the position of the poor without greatly increased centralisation, state control or the need for repressive policing. Little is known about the class implications of the various scenarios discussed, and this important aspect deserves far greater attention than hitherto. As Bush and Cliffe suggest, the utility of the 'worker-peasant' class conceptualisation should be included in this debate. While it captures the essential urban-rural links in migrant (re-)production, it is often implicitly seen as a transitional hybrid formation. Yet the persistence of this class is a distinguishing feature of African urbanisation. Worker-peasants, at least in southern Africa, may encompass the majority of the urban population, and also a fair degree of differentiation. Some, but not all, of their interests will probably coincide with those of a stable urban proletariat on the one hand and a rural peasantry on the other. Such ambiguity, while beneficial to the people's life chances, does not necessarily facilitate derivation of unambiguous class analytical terminology.

Bibliographic Note

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investment in agriculture at the local level. Contract farming is of both major and increasing importance to the economy of Kenya with estimates of about 12 per cent of smallholders producing cash crops of contract and accounting for some 15 per cent of the total marketed output (Buch-Hansen 1980: 11). Hensen and Marcussen's particular interest is in those agro-industrial complexes which have been established by collaboration between multinational firms and international capital, on the one side, and the Kenyan Government, on the other. Their test cases are tea, sponsored by the Kenya Tea Development Authority (KTDA) and studied at Buret, and sugar, sponsored by the Mumias Sugar Company and studied in Muhoroni and Mumias. Their data from these studies, it is claimed, fails to support the dependency position. We find the analysis unconvincing, however, and here address its main arguments and their implications.

To begin with a general point: Hansen and Marcussen initially focus on dependency theory. According to this view, phrased in the most general terms, autonomous capitalist development is impossible on the periphery, as class forces cannot emerge to stimulate the economy and the local bourgeoisie and state are tools in the hands of international capital. In contrast, Hansen and Marcussen propose 'internationalisation of capital' theories, based on capital's tendency to over-extend its sphere of operation. In this view the emmiseration of the peasantry is not inevitable. They pursue their argument by turning to the logic of capital and the new forms of investment in peasant agriculture of which their selected schemes form a part. It is, of course, not difficult to trace the advantages to transnational corporations of forms of contract farming. As the United Nations Centre on Transnational Corporations reported in 1980, 'the contract forms of vertical integration are of undoubted and increasing importance among other things because contract farming is less risky for the foreign investor compared to the direct ownership of plantations' (quoted 1982; 16). The state, anxious to raise agricultural productivity, likewise welcomes such schemes. Are they also, however, of such obvious benefit to the peasant smallholder?

A key issue here is the meaning of 'benefit'? In much liberal and Marxist theory alike, the peasants are regarded as a 'problem', for development, a block to progress: they must either, in liberal theory, be subordinated to the demands of capitalism or, in Marxist theory, be eliminated as a class. The key term of liberal development theory is 'modernisation' with the peasants seen as backward and tradition-orientated. They must be persuaded to use better techniques and be incorporated into the market economy. In Marxist terms, peasant production is seen as a form of commodity production whose logical development is capitalism. The peasantry thus represent a transitional class to be exploited by capital since cash-crops are in effect subsidised by unpaid subsistence labour. The very independence of the household mode of production thus allows such producers to be systematically underpaid, and the real cost of cash-crop production is to be seen in an increased workload and decreased standards of living.

The question thus resolves itself into a choice of theory. This being the case, we would argue that it simply cannot be assessed with reference to the empirical evidence in the way Hansen and Marcussen seem to assume. It is not simply that interpretation is ultimately ideological, but that the two paradigms address a different order of data. The liberal version lends itself more easily to the level of human motivation and economic process. Liberal economic theory 'applies to peasant production the categories for describing the phenomena of capitalism, profit, wages, capital. Peasants do save and invest. They do buy and sell in the market in order to realise an income' (Williams 1981: 31). But in Marxist theory
categories do not act as labels for universal economic processes but specify forms of social relations. The commercial transactions undertaken by peasants cannot therefore be assimilated to the motivational schemas of capitalist society, either in aim or effect. They attest rather to the discontinuity of social formations predicated upon different forms of control over the means of production. The meaning of an activity — empirically observed — is not therefore self-evident: thus evidence that peasants rationally calculate to maximise their own self-interest is not proof that such activity is ultimately beneficial, nor is it an index that they are becoming 'capitalistic'. *Pari passu*, data is grist to both mills in a non-contradictory way. It is necessary to restate these elementary points here, because Hansen and Marcussen's attempt to prove the limitations of a dependency perspective would seem to founder on them.

Hansen and Marcussen's thesis revolves around two main claims. Firstly, there has been no emmiseration of the peasantry. On the contrary, the vast majority of contract farmers have raised their standards of living, and, further, there is a suggestion of an emerging rural bourgeoisie. Secondly, this evidence effectively refutes the dependency argument. On both counts, however, there is room for doubt. We therefore now consider a number of methodological issues, relating (a) to their collection and analysis of data and (b) to the logical relationship between their empirical findings and the theory.

Their main conclusions are presented in the form of statistical comparisons of tea and sugar contract farmers with more general samples of farmers in the same broad geographic area. These comparisons show higher incomes accruing to the former. Certain specific problems are acknowledged by the authors. The general data on farmers was not collected by them and, additionally, it refers to a different time span. Data from the Integrated Rural Survey of 1974/75 was compared with data on contracted farmers collected by the authors for 1972-79. The question of comparability is therefore crucial.

Hansen and Marcussen's use of statistics on comparative income levels is open to misgivings on other grounds as well.

First, they base some of their interpretation on the level of average incomes. But averages hide a plethora of difference, as the authors clearly recognise. This procedure disguises the fact that many contract farmers are actually no better off. For example, the average payment in the tea scheme is Ksh4,200, while the median is Ksh3,000. This would seem to indicate a broad range of differentiation with undue influence being exerted from the top end of the scale. Indeed, according to Hansen and Marcussen, the earnings of the top 10 per cent of contract farmers constitute some 35 per cent of the total from tea. For the majority of tea farmers, then, the Ksh4,200 average income is unrealistically high. The income differentials between the contracted farmers and their non-contracted counterparts (average cash income from all sources put at 1,300 in 1974/75) may not be so great as Hansen and Marcussen believe. And the 'half of the farmers at the lower end' of the scale who make only 12 per cent of the total receipts from tea probably receive little more than those outside the schemes; indeed, some may be amongst the poorest.

Secondly, poverty is, of course, relative. The comparison of incomes tells us nothing about the absolute levels of reproduction, for which we would need more conclusive data on subsistence production, labour time etc. The claim that the tea schemes are not adding to rural proletarianisation and that there is no exploitation of the peasantry would thus seem rather empty.

A third related point is that concepts such as exploitation do not lend themselves
easily to empirical demonstrations in economies with a large subsistence sector. We take exploitation to express the difference between the exchange value of a commodity and the socially necessary labour time embodied in its production. Where does subsistence production fit? One rough and ready measure of the degree of exploitation — not used by Hansen and Marcussen — might be arrived at by comparing the incomes of contracted farmers with the average wage of workers in similar production where the subsistence component is either non-existent or much less. Take, for example, the tea estate workers recently described for Kericho by Fish. If we take Hansen and Marcussen’s figures for average income from tea after deducting the costs of inputs and hired labour, then average net returns ‘vary between Ksh1,500 and Ksh3,000 depending on the maturity of the bush’. This can be broken down into a monthly income of between Ksh125 and Ksh250. Tea pluckers on estates in Kericho, on the other hand, can expect to earn between Ksh400 in a bad month and Ksh700 in a good month.

More speculatively, we could give a monetary value to the subsistence production of the contract farmers to arrive at a notional total income comparable to that of the plantation workers. Given that the Integrated Rural Survey of 1974/75 puts the value of subsistence production as low as Ksh200, the effective average income for tea contract farmers could be as little as Ksh325 to Ksh450 per month. If this approximates reality, it puts the incomes of contracted farmers into a totally different perspective: far from doing well, they are doing extremely badly. And we can note that tea estate workers are generally considered to be super-exploited! We have quoted the above figures for the sake of argument and would not push a conclusion. Without far more detailed work it is difficult to know what to make of this data. We would simply stress the fallacy, especially concerning the subsistence sector, of equating an increased money income with an absence of exploitation.

To turn to the question of an emerging rural bourgeoisie, Hansen and Marcussen apply two operational criteria for assessing its presence: (a) the extent to which wage labour rather than family labour is used; and (b) the extent to which income is used for capital accumulation rather than consumption. They then tentatively suggest a division of their sample into three categories:

(1) a small group, 10-15 per cent, who hire labour to work their cash crop and invest in land as part of the process of accumulation;
(2) a middle stratum (the vast majority) who use a mixture of family and wage labour and spend their incomes in the sphere of consumption;
(3) an unspecified number at the lower end who rely entirely on family labour and have problems surviving from their agricultural production.

The farmers in the first category are taken to represent part of an emerging rural bourgeoisie.

There are two main difficulties with this interpretation. First, it is not demonstrated that such a development is directly attributable to the schemes in question. Apart from their incomes from tea and sugar respectively, the farmers were said to have ‘considerable incomes from other cash crops, from permanent wage labour (often as school teachers), from shops and taxis’. It is therefore possible that the pattern of social differentiation is relatively independent of the schemes. Richer households may simply have taken advantage of the new opportunities of contract farming, as they have of many other initiatives. Nowhere do Hansen and Marcussen address the question of who was originally incorporated into these schemes and whether they were biased towards the rich and middle peasantry). Thus tea and sugar contract farming might well be aiding the process of accumulation but we cannot say that it is generating it.
Second, Hansen and Marcussen assume that a class analysis is appropriate here (see Kitching, ROAPE 8). To describe first category farmers as 'small capitalist farmers' whose presence may be taken as indicative of some process of 'self-centred' development is a huge interpretative leap. Without more information, it could equally be argued that the overwhelming majority of farmers placed in the second category is evidence of the peasantry's lack of accumulation. And it seems logically tenuous to regard the first category as indicating a rising bourgeoisie while denying that category 3 indicates pauperisation and proletarianisation.

For Hansen and and Marcussen, the critical question for a dependency interpretation is whether the system of contract farming 'necessarily leads to a process of proletarianisation, increased exploitation or generally deteriorating conditions of reproduction for the small farmers' (1982: 28). We have argued that they have by no means proved that this is not occurring with respect to their studies of the tea and sugar contract farmers. We would add that the question itself emerges from a somewhat narrow reading of dependency theory, which is actually more concerned with the rate and distribution of surplus. Thus, we would argue that the major beneficiaries of any increased productivity are the state and international capital. Our major point, however, is that 'dependency' as such is very difficult either to prove or to disprove at the level Hansen and Marcussen have chosen to operationalise their research.

We would add two further criticisms of their overall methodological approach. First, their research is essentially static — it lacks an understanding of the social and cultural dynamics that impinge on the people they are studying. Their statistics stand in isolation from the objects of their study — the farmers, their families, their culture, their social organisation etc. — and hence from the subject of their study, the underlying processes and forces that generate such trends. It can never be sufficient to establish a purely quantitative assessment of wealth differentials as assessment of such patterns involves understanding the complex interrelationship here between the investment schemes, wider socio-economic forces and traditional farming systems. If research at the level of small-holders is to have real substance, then it must establish the factors which influence the day-to-day decisions made by farmers. These cannot be reduced, as Hansen and Marcussen imply, simply to a set of rational economic choices.

Second, discussions about poverty and inequality in peasant society cannot take place simply at the level of the household. We would question their assumption that the household is an undifferentiated unit and their insensitivity to the nature of the domestic economy. To state the obvious, households vary in size, making straight income comparisons difficult to interpret. Further it is within the household that the labour process is organised, that surpluses are distributed and where conflicts over these may occur. Of particular interest here is the position of women. The incorporation into the market economy and the introduction of cash-cropping has created shifts in the division of labour, many of which would appear to have increased the burden of work for women without commensurate returns or control over the profits of such labour. The same applies — though possibly in different ways — to other household dependents — for example, young men before they achieve their inheritance rights. These are areas that our own research aims to investigate.

We have criticised Hansen and Marcussen's research in some detail but this should not be read simply as a negative exercise. On the contrary, the problems they have faced in their research design are important and instructive, since they bear on the problems we have faced in developing our own research on tea and
tobacco schemes in the overall context of the stated objectives of the Kenyan Government to follow a Basic Needs Strategy. Our particular concern is with both inter- and intra-familial patterns of inequality among smallholders. We hope to consider — among other issues — the extent to which peasants do not simply adapt to wider economic forces but actively and creatively respond — or create — such conditions. The importance of these questions is clearly demonstrated by Hansen and Marcussen's paper.

Suzette Heald and Alex Hay

Note

We gratefully acknowledge the generosity of Mogen Buch-Hansen in sending us his working papers on tea and sugar contract farming. He also studied the tobacco scheme run by British American Tobacco but we have made no reference to this as it does not form part of his argument in 'Contract Farming and the Peasantry'.

Bibliographic Note

Briefings

NIGERIA, CRISIS MANAGEMENT UNDER THE BURHARI ADMINISTRATION

On 31 December 1983, the civilian government of Alhaji Shehu Shagari was overthrown in a coup led by senior officers of the Nigerian Armed Forces. Major-General Muhammadu Buhari emerged as the new head of State and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces on a platform that promised to restore the fortunes of an economy undergoing severe structural crisis exacerbated by the world oil market glut. Yet, barely 20 months after, Muhammadu Buhari was overthrown in a palace coup staged by the Chief of Army Staff, Major-General Ibrahim Babangida. This briefing is principally concerned with assessing the political and economic policies designed by the Buhari administration to manage the Nigerian economic crisis and the events leading up to its overthrow. This official understanding of the causes of the crisis remained at the level of reacting to the symptoms of the problem and it sought to solve them within the framework of the capitalist order.

In December 1983, when the Buhari coup took place, the Nigerian economy was in a dire state. About 50 per cent of the industrial capacity of the country had been lost owing to the closure of factories unable to obtain foreign exchange to import raw materials and spare parts. As a result about one million workers had been retrenched from the manufacturing sector between 1980 and 1983. The country’s GDP fell by 4.4 per cent in 1983 after a decline of 2 per cent in 1982 and the budget deficit for 1983 was ₦6.231 billion, representing more than 50 per cent of total government expenditure. The foreign exchange current account recorded a deficit of ₦4.9 billion in 1982 and ₦2.9 billion in 1983. For an economy which spent ₦9.095 billion on imports in 1980, rising to ₦3.59 billion in 1981, the foreign exchange earnings principally from crude petroleum exports, fell from ₦10.1 billion in 1979 to ₦5.161 billion in 1982.

Clearly then, the bizarre pattern of imports that had prevailed since the ‘oil boom’ started could no longer be sustained. Coupled with the industrial stagnation in the country, inflation accelerated rapidly. The real incomes of workers and peasants were undermined as the prices of basic commodities like milk, sugar, rice, beans and yams escalated beyond their reach, and that was if and when they were available. On top of this, the level of foreign indebtedness reached a peak of ₦15 billion in 1983 while the country’s backlog of trade payments stood at ₦5 billion in 1983. billion in 1983 while the country’s backlog of trade payments stood at ₦5 billion in 1983. The parlous state of affairs was worsened by the collapse of basic social services like hospitals, rural health clinics and schools. The Shagari government adopted half-hearted measures, through the Economic Stabilisation Act of April 1982, to tackle the crisis but these met with dismal failure. Amidst all
this, high-level corruption and fraud thrived as politicians scrambled to make fortunes for themselves.

It was against this background that the military stepped in, in December 1983. As far as the Buhari administration was concerned, the principal cause of the crisis was unbridled corruption which 'got out of hand' within the general context of a society lacking in 'discipline' and 'moral rigour'. It perceived that the state was engaged in wasteful expenditure and playing an unduly big role in the economic life of the country. The bureaucracy was thought to be unwieldy and overcrowded and therefore had to be pruned down. State subsidisation of education and health was thought to be unjustifiable in the situation of the crisis. The new government also blamed the chaotic system of importation and administration of import licences for the worsening of the crisis. On the basis of this understanding, the government adopted the following measures to contain the decline in the economy.

1. A drastic reduction in government expenditure through the massive retrenchment of public service employees to cut down the wage bill; removal of state subsidies on health and education at all levels and the re-introduction of primary school and hospital fees; catering services in universities were handed over to private contractors with the result that the cost of feeding students increased three-fold; abandonment of some government projects not considered to deserve priority attention; unilateral wage freeze imposed by the state and the suspension of various workers' allowances — some state governments in addition unilaterally slashed workers' wages. In Imo State, the controversial 'Imo Formula' was introduced whereby workers were paid according to the proportion of expected state revenue that was available. Thus if the state got 50 per cent of its expected revenue for a particular month, workers were compelled to accept 50 per cent of their wages.

2. A generalised campaign to boost government internal revenue through more meticulous collection of taxes and the introduction of compulsory educational and development levies ranging from ₦20.00 to ₦50.00 per person; re-introduction of taxes such as the much-hated 'Jangali' and 'Haraji'; imposition of a compulsory ₦100 tax on all travellers whose journeys originate from Nigeria and whose destinations are outside Africa.

3. Change in the colours of Naira notes in a bid to check illegal currency dealings within and outside the country as well as to establish Central Bank control over the amount of money in circulation; it was also a bid to restore confidence in the Naira. The imposition of stiff currency laws regarding foreign exchange conditions for travellers into, and out, of Nigeria; passengers failing to declare currencies on them or refusing to change them at official rates at a bank were liable to be jailed; closure of the country's land borders indefinitely since December, 1983, also as part of the anti-smuggling strategy since smuggling was thought to be central to the shortage of basic commodities in the country.

4. Placing all commodities hitherto under open import licence under specific licences to enable the government to control directly the goods and the amounts imported into the country. This was hoped to enable the state to monitor efficiently its level of import commitments vis-à-vis available foreign exchange holdings. Also, a nominally stricter import licensing system was introduced to make it difficult for fake importers to operate while priority was given to those whom the government called 'genuine manufacturers' to enable them to import raw materials and spare parts; foreign exchange was to be rationed out in such a way as to give priority to manufacturers.
5. Emphasis on the repayment of international short-term loans, especially trade backlogs, and the servicing of long-term debts by apportioning a substantial part of the annual budget to debt repayment. In 1985, about 44 per cent of expected foreign exchange receipts were reserved for debt repayment and services. Economic growth rates were projected at only 1 per cent. The aim of this policy was to restore confidence in the Nigerian economy in international financial circles.

6. Government proclamation of a ‘war against indiscipline’ (WAI) prosecuted with a missionary zeal and reportedly to be made up of 50 phases, five of which had been launched in the last 20 months. A litany of decrees was enacted promising draconian sanctions for offences such as drug peddling, armed robbery, examination malpractices, arson, etc., etc., as part of the strategy to impose discipline on the society; an attempt to whip up nationalist sentiment and patriotic fervour in Nigerians even to the point of compelling would-be couples to recite the national anthem and national pledge before they could be officially registered as married!

7. Admonition to industrialists to secure their raw materials locally and the promise of a package of special incentives for manufacturers pioneering the use of local raw materials; a decision to reduce the rate of establishment of factories dependent on foreign raw materials or that would require a large foreign exchange commitment. The state also made clear its determination to restore the agricultural sector which had virtually collapsed in the oil boom era — as a first step the government announced that foreign companies investing in agricultural ventures were to be exempted from compliance with the indigenisation decree and allowed to own as much as 80 per cent of the equity in their ventures.

8. All the above policies were pursued within the broad framework of continuing negotiations with the IMF. The only remaining sticking point between the federal government and the IMF was the refusal of the former to devalue the Naira to a level acceptable to the IMF; there was also a policy of selective privatisation of some government-owned companies and parastatals; with seven agricultural companies listed as up for sale.

The military government pursued the above policies with some zeal but the bearers of their worst consequences were the beleaguered workers and peasants. After the initial enthusiasm which greeted the coup had died down, the implications of the government’s policies became obvious to people; increased repression and the use of brute force was the government’s solution to Nigeria’s chronic problems. Guru professors who in the past had advocated the need for a ‘benevolent dictatorship’ in Nigeria at last got what they wanted and more. Nigerians watched helplessly as the same military government which presided over the sacking of over a million workers, proceeded to promote its members to the ranks of major-generals, brigadiers and colonels, some with six months arrears in May; and the defence budget remained unjustifiably high. The rash of decrees enacted to deal with the crisis were soon systematically directed not at the barons of the drugs trade and the smuggling business but at their hapless agents, and sub-agents. The collapse of social discipline was seen not as a direct result of the polarisation of society and the increased social alienation associated with capitalism, but as problems to be repressed by the wanton use of the death penalty. The war against indiscipline became a war against the organised labour force and other segments of society such as students, petty-traders, urban destitutes and squatters.

The military left no one in doubt as to their hatred of organised labour and made
clear their determination to crush the Nigerian Labour Congress whose leadership appeared to be confused and helpless in the face of the depleting of its ranks through mass retrenchments. The leadership was not prepared for a confrontation with the state which appeared eager to proscribe them at the slightest pretext and the May Day in 1984 and 1985 were marked by speeches from labour leaders exhorting workers to be prepared for ever more sacrifices! With the working class living in a state of fear and insecurity, the state proceeded to ban the central students’ organisation — NANS — and its leaders were hounded and harassed by the Nigerian Security Organisation. Several universities took their cue from this to ban campus students’ unions and all public demonstrations and processions. Then the weight of the notorious Decree Number 4, enacted to protect dubious government officials from public criticism, was brought to bear on journalists in a fresh bid to muzzle public opinion. The Decree exposed the hollowness of the government's claim to accountability and discipline, more so as the military officials refused to declare their assets publicly as they had earlier promised to do.

The repression of the press was soon followed by the ban on associations such as the Nigerian Medical Association (NMA) and National Association of Resident Doctors (NARD) which led to a doctors’ strike to ask for better conditions in hospitals, the deplorable state of which the government had mentioned as a justification for the 1983 coup. The state dismissed all doctors who went on strike, banned their associations and detained their leaders for being a 'threat' to 'state security'. It declared the hospitals at the centre of the strike as military zones headed by military medical personnel and ejected striking doctors from their official living quarters. The fate that befell the NMA and NARD was a warning to any other unions in the country as to what could befall them if they attempted to stand in the way of the WAI Brigade. The government then proceeded to orchestrate an anti-intellectual campaign, accusing university lecturers of leading subversive organisations and addressing symposia which were liable to 'endanger' the public peace. A ban on all politically related symposia and seminars was announced and the academic staff union appeared helpless to do anything.

Increasingly, the populace became disillusioned with a government acting with such high-handed self-righteousness. Senior military personnel publicly extolled the Brazilian model as the way out for Nigeria. The government procrastinated about putting some of the discredited politicians arrested to trial. Among them were deposed President Shagari and his deputy, Alex Ekwueme. It began to become obvious that the government had an interest in not trying and jailing some of the detained politicians, if only to avoid exposing the skeletons in the cupboards of some of its senior functionaries. Against this background, it became patently unjustifiable for the government to keep individuals like Balarabe Musa, radical ex-governor of Kaduna State, anti-corruption campaigner Tai Solarin and journalists haroun Adamu and Rufa'i Ibrahim in perpetual detention (see ROAPE 33). The vested interests linking discredited politicians, especially those of the NPN, to the military government became apparent and public suspicion grew.

In particular, attention was directed at the trial and conviction of, mainly, state-based politicians of non-NPN governments, such as Muhammadu Abubakar Rimi, radical ex-governor (PRP) of Kano State; Bola Ige, ex-UPN Governor of Oyo State;
Jim Newbodo, ex-NPP GOVERNOR OF Anambra State; Ambrose Alli, former UPN governor of Bendel State, without any trial or conviction of Ministers and Officials of the NPN-Federal Government. This made sections of the Press and radical intelligentsia to dub the regime as 'NPN in Uniform'. popular playwright, Wole Soyinka was alluding to the general disenchantment with the trials when he reportedly said that the 1983 coup was the only one he knew which was staged 'against the opposition'. Soon the trials were fed into the geo-political and ethnic geometry of the ruling class, with public allegations of biases against the south. Sponsored write-ups and press campaigns were later to take the cloak of 'defendin our politicians against theirs', in the south, whereas in the north the trials were seen as directed mainly at the radical opposition in the north during the second republic. Although former NPN politicians, such as former NPN governor of Kwara State, Alhaji Adamu Attta; ex-NPN governor of Niger, Awwal Ibrahim and Dr Garba Nadama governor of Sokoto (NPN) were tried and convicted, critics still questioned the government's release of influential NPN politicians, such as Mallam Adamu Giroma, former Minister for Agriculture and also Lawal Kaita, ex-NPN governor of Kaduna State and others.

In spite of the harsh but largely misdirected economic and social measures imposed by the government, the crisis in the Nigerian economy did not show any signs or slowing down significantly and matters were not helped by the continuing slide in the world oil market. Occasionally, wages still went unpaid, albeit not as chronically as in the civilian era; the shortage of basic commodities remained, and now officers' wives became dealers in imported rice. Factories that managed to remain open operated at very low capacities. The government responded by concluding several counter-trade deals with Brazil, Italy, France and the Soviet Union, in which oil estimated to have cost $4.5 million was bartered for raw materials and for machine goods to keep major government projects like the Ajaokuta Steel Plant, the liquefied natural gas and petrochemical projects going and to keep existing factories Open. In the fact of the collapse of its policies and the failure of its programmes, the state became even more repressive and intolerant of criticism, the Nigerian Security Organisation’s powers were significantly expanded. Then the state began to play the old card of blaming so-called illegal ECOWAS immigrants, especially from Ghana, for the continued shortage of commodities and jobs. But the diversion created by the second massexpulsion of aliens early in 1985 was only short-lived and was soon exhausted.

The regime also consciously built a religious basis to its politics as a further effort at obscurationism. Thus, cocaine and other drug addicts were not only criminal but were also 'irreligious and immoral people'. General Buhari concluded a recent public reiteration of the government's economic policies with these words: 'This is our mission and nobody can stop us since we are the government... and we pray to almighty Allah to guide us to accomplish it'. But the limits of this approach were soon exposed by the fresh Maitatsine riots at Jimeta, in Bauchi State. The old tendency to divide the populace along ethnic lines was resuscitated and found easy disciples in this period of crisis. Disputes raged in the press over the application of federal character (the sharing out of federal posts among indigenes of the 19 states) and over quota systems and the state publicly played the north-south card. Buhari himself did not help matters when, in an interview on the federal radio in Kaduna, he identified the sources of opposition to his government as coming from the south and promised to shut down private newspapers owned by southerners if they persisted in criticising his regime.
It was evident that the Buhari regime was under the influence of Kaduna-based interests who found that their voice in the government through the aggressive right-wing intellectualism of Dr Muhammed Tukur, Minister of Trade and Industry. With all sources of protest and opposition in civil society silenced, the main source of criticism of government policies came from retired military personnel. Contradictory policies and contradictory methods of handling the collective estate of the Nigerian bourgeoisie opened up accusations of favouritism, nepotism and sectionalist hegemony. The first call for a confederal system in the post-war period in Nigeria came after the 1983 elections when the UPN governor of Ogun State publicly expressed the dissatisfaction of the core of the Yoruba bourgeoisie with the balance of power in the country. In 1985, it was resuscitated by disillusioned retired Yoruba officers as it became clear that the alliance between Hausa-Fulani and Yoruba military officers struck in the civil war years and largely maintained in the decade after the war began to collapse. These criticisms, led publicly by retired Brigadier Adekunle (the 'Black scorpion' of civil war fame), and retired Lieutenant-General Akinrinade soon took on the reactionary character of calling for a confederal system in Nigeria that could only mean the dismemberment of the Nigerian state. A largely backward debate soon ensured between 'federalists' and 'confederalists' and for the first time in Nigeria the Yoruba military elite found itself sharing the same political platform as their civilian counterparts who congregated around Chief Awolowo and the banned Unit Party (UPN).

The government responded by placing a ban on all political debate as to the future of the country and warned that it would detain anyone who breached the ban. As if to demonstrate its determination to impose the 'politics of no politics' Sule Katagum, ex-chairman of the Public Service Commission and Bukar Zarma, editor of the pro-government New Nigerian, were detained when the former granted a pro-Shagari interview. But it was once more clear for all to see that the Nigerian ruling class remained incapable of solving its leadership crisis and establishing a stable bourgeois legitimacy over society. On 27 August 1985 when Major-General Ibrahim Babangida, Chief of Army Staff, became the new head of State in a palace coup, significantly he took the title of President, not previously used by military heads of state, and Commander-in-Chief and deliberately expanded his powers as President while abolishing the post of Chief of Staff of Supreme Headquarters. The last occupant, Major-General Tunde Idiagbon, had used it in an authoritarian manner.

Although Babangida will be hard put to convince Nigerians that he was not part of the draconian policies of the Buhari-Idiagbon government, he has taken first steps to heal the wounds created by the deposed government. The notorious decree number 4 has been repealed while journalists held under its provision have been released unconditionally. The new National Council of Ministers is a coalition of anti-Buhari/Idiagbon forces, including retired General Akinrininade, Professor Ransome-Kuti, elder brother of the musician Fela Anjkolapo. Kuti who was jailed for currency offences in what looked like a vendetta by Idiagbon and his cohorts. The cabinet appointments represent an attempt by Babangida to placate sections of the society bruised by the Buhari clique, including the confederalists. The new Attorney-General and Minister of Justice is also the President of the Nigerian Bar Association which was kept under siege by the Buhari government. But it is significant that no gesture has been made to the labouring classes and the new government appears to be more concerned with winning back the support of professionals (doctors, lawyers, journalists) and those sectors of the bourgeoisie that felt alienated while making a renewed commitment to big business, domestic
and foreign. The domestic bourgeoisie can look forward to the windfall of privatisation which Babangida promises to carry well beyond what Buhari was able to offer. Submission to the IMF's demand for devaluation appears well on its way especially as the government's new finance minister is openly pro-IMF and Babangida himself has insisted on the necessity to adjust the Naira to its 'realistic' level. For labour it appears as though the old tune played under Buhari will continue under Babangida, with greater consequences for workers' welfare with the impending devaluation of the Naira.

It is equally significant that the balance of power in the new Armed Forces Ruling Council (AFRC) which replaced the abolished Supreme Military Council (SMC), is held by minority elements in the north and south as opposed to dominance of northern officers in the SMC. This new balance in the AFRC appears to further enhance the power and position of Major-General Babangida, while at the same time downplaying the presence of the dominant ethnic groups — Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo. It is this new balance that Babangida hopes will preserve the nation's stability but with his adoption of the title of President, it appears as if the militarisation of politics in Nigeria will continue for some time to come. Also the concentration of so much power in the office of the President could well mean the continuation of the autocracy of the Buhari-Idiagbon clique. It may be too soon to say it categorically, but the signals coming from Bodan Barracks and the new balance in the AFRC certainly represent a setback for the 'Kaduna mafia', if not an outright defeat. Yet, the question that arises as workers and peasants brace themselves for the IMF is: will the new balance of power in the country last?

Meanwhile, the Babangida regime has declared a state of economic emergency for 15 months with effect from October 1985 and also promised a definite political timetable sometime next year. Furthermore, they are attempting to govern the state through a combination of authoritarian populism, guarded liberalism and setting up of public panels. Also advisory councils are being set up in Army barracks and other branches of the armed forces to liaise with the government, at state and federal levels. In addition, military personnel have been appointed as heads of all parastatals, public corporations, companies, in a renewed drive at militarising the society and creating jobs for the boys!

Adebayo Olukoshi and Tajudeen Abdulraheem

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TAKING ON THE CHAMBER: THE SOUTH AFRICAN NUM IN ACTION

The South African National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) is currently assessing the effects of its industrial action in August and September 1985. Its conclusions will be mixed. On the positive side, the NUM forced higher-than-offered increases in certain mines, split the Chamber of Mines for the first time, engaged in effective and sustained collective bargaining, and confirmed the quality of its leadership and rank-and-file organisation. On the negative side, the strike fizzled out without major gains in the mines where action took place, management and state willingness to use heavy repression against miners was established, the uneven strength of the NUM in different mining houses was highlighted, and problems emerged in the NUM's use of mass participatory democracy to decide strategic planning in industrial disputes.
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The history of the 1985 dispute is clear. After extended negotiations with the Chamber of Mines, the NUM proposed strike action for 24 August. The Chamber's offer of between 14.1 and 19.6 per cent did not meet the NUM's demands which included a 22 per cent wage increase across the board. Anglo-American's willingness to offer more than the Chamber's final offer was followed by more modest improvements offered by Anglo-Vaal and Gold Fields of South Africa, but neither these improvements nor the arbitrary payment of the final Chamber offer from July seemed to satisfy the NUM's claims.

Continuing negotiations had caused the delay of strike action and it was not finally taken until 1 September. However, by then the NUM had decided to accept the revised Anglo-American offer, and action was called only in Gencor, Anglo-Vaal and Gold Fields of South Africa (GFSA) mining operations. The call was for some 60,000 miners to take action rather than the full NUM membership of some 150,000. After much confusion, in which some mines nominated for action failed to strike, often due to harsh company action, and in which mines not expected to take action came out, the strike was called off on 3 September. This followed the threat, and partial enactment, of mass redundancies and 'repatriation' to homelands. Thus the strike and the negotiation petered out into as yet unresolved legal wrangles which may in time provide important precedents for the treatment of striking migrant labour in the mines and elsewhere.

The increased offers made by Anglo-American, Rand, Anglo-Vaal and GFSA reflected these companies' fear of disruptive industrial action. Anglo-American in particular faced major problems, for some 80 per cent of the NUM's membership of 150,000 work in Anglo-American concerns. Anglo-American, with more of its investment in more profitable mines, already had a policy of paying better wages at top and bottom to black miners than the other mining houses. It was willing to increase its offer to between 18 and 22 per cent for surface workers and 17 and 20 per cent for underground employees. Rand, GFSA and Anglo-Vaal made less dramatic amendments to the Chamber's offer, but Gencor refused to budge. In other words, the higher the density of union membership, and the more profitable the enterprise, the more willing were the companies to make substantial improvements on the Chamber's final offer.

The split in the Chamber's united bargaining front induced by this logic is a dramatic consequence of the NUM's rise to prominence since 1982. The long-term effects of this split are hard to foretell. However, there is a general impression gaining ground amongst mine managers that the strategy of the NUM has been to divide the mining houses and 'pick off' each, using company based rather than industry based bargaining. There is some evidence that this has been the NUM's approach and that it brings with it both advantages and disadvantages. It is an effective strategy where union membership is high across the sector. Where it is uneven, the consequences of company bargaining can be expected to be uneven in turn. Hence, gains may be made at the expense of Anglo-American but parallel gains may be hard to win elsewhere, particularly in the low density Gencor Mines. In the NUM's view, the split reflects both its own increased presence and the inability of different companies to agree to a common strategy for negotiation. The combination of these factors offers managements and union little choice but to negotiate on a company by company basis.

A central theme of the dispute has been the bargaining style adopted by the NUM. The NUM's negotiating team, led by Cyril Ramaphosa, has been impressive in its handling of the union case. Management universally recognises that Ramaphosa is a formidable organiser and negotiator. The common view amongst
white miners is that he maintains a Svengali-type hold over gullible migrant labourers and that the NUM is essentially a Ramphosa fiefdom. In reality, the NUM negotiating team has collectively handled itself very effectively, making good use of offer and counter offer in the negotiation and using the media to great effect. The particular emphasis placed on a recent NUM-sponsored report on health and safety in the mines caught the Chamber between two lines of fire and promoted the image of a professional NUM bargaining strategy.

The commitment to democracy stressed by the NUM since its formation has been continued. The decision to take strike action in the first place was made at a mass meeting attended by many thousands of miners. However this commitment brings with it many problems. For instance, it may be difficult to reconcile the strategic requirements of the bargaining process with the militant demands laid down by a mass meeting. It is said without any trace of hyperbole that the leadership of the NUM would have risked physical injury, even death, if they had gone against the militant demand for strike action made at the Welkom meeting. This reflects also the feeling on the part of many rank and file miners that the NUM has come of age, and should make the point by 'having a go' at the mining houses. Such a charged atmosphere does much to reinforce commitment to the union but at the same time places a negotiating team in a difficult position when possibilities of a negotiated settlement appear. It says much of the NUM leadership that it has been able to carry out effective negotiations without losing touch with the rank-and-file.

The fizzling-out of the dispute into the courts must worry the NUM. Despite the gains made at the expense of some mining houses, the NUM's foray into industrial action was only a mixed success. The confusion which appears to have reigned reflects the problem of uneven union densities and the parallel problem of working with a rank-and-file prepared to take unilateral action either in support of other miners or in relation to local action either in support of other miners or in relation to local grievances. The obvious conclusion is that the NUM, despite remarkable gains since its formation in 1982, must look to greater membership in the companies where it is currently weak, and must acquire the bargaining recognition which has given the union its leverage over Anglo-American. This may be complicated by the differences in company profitability of which the Chamber makes so much. In particular, Gencor, in which the NUM has the least representation and which refused to budge from the Chamber's final offer, believes that its operations cannot compete with those of other firms in the gold sector if NUM demands are satisfied.

Perhaps the most obvious lesson of the dispute was the willingness of management to use two sets of negotiating tactics. Formal and sophisticated collective bargaining constituted the overt set of tactics, but the use of intimidation and threats to employment constituted the other. When passing through the mines during the build-up to the strike, razor wire, armoured cars and a strong security presence could be noted everywhere. Leading NUM stewards were subject to machete attacks, workers in poorly-organised mines were isolated wherever possible from NUM representatives and the NUM was hampered in its legitimate activities where it had gained recognition. During the actual strike, tear gas, rubber bullets and food blockades were used by management as a means of disrupting the organisation of the NUM and deterring miners from militant activity. Over all this anti-union preparation hung the ultimate threat, already invoked by Anglo-American in the case of 14,000 miners in April, of dismissal followed by a forced bussing back to the 'homelands'. The April events showed that the mining houses
were prepared to go to these lengths if the circumstances so demanded, and the re-hiring would take into account previous union involvement. As the strike developed, the mining houses (especially GFSA at Deelkraal and Gencor at Beatrix) began sacking miners and it was this which pushed the NUM into suspending the strike and into the Industrial Court. The implications of the April and September sackings are well understood by the NUM. An effective collective bargaining strategy may be organised at one level, but the conduct of disputes will be governed by the willingness of management to use arbitrary, state-condoned power over the employment contract in its interests. It remains to be seen whether the NUM's approach to the Industrial Court will qualify this managerial power to any extent.

The implications of the recent dispute in the South African mining industry are mixed for both labour and capital. It is unclear which way the balance will tip in future confrontations.

Nigel Haworth

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Mobilisation Politics in Cape Town, August 1984-October 1985: a Personal Account

Cape Town takes some time to initiate mass resistance against apartheid, but once ignited it gathers and sustains an intense momentum, drawing in a broad spectrum of grassroots community organisations, trade unions and, particularly, black schools, colleges and the University of the Western Cape (UWC), established by the government as a separate university for Coloured students. The Western Cape is distinguished by the predominance of so-called 'Coloureds' among its residents and diverse political traditions represented by the Unity Movement (UM) and the United Democratic Front (UDF). Today the UDF commands a great deal of support in the Western Cape and has become the chief target for state repression. Nevertheless the core of resistance in the Western Cape remains the politics of street survival, with thousands of youth and goods taking to the streets to fight the police.

The cycle of resistance that has recently swept the Western Cape began with the massive anti-election campaigns of 1984. This was the campaign to boycott the puppet elections held on 22 and 28 August 1984 by P.W. Botha to include 'Coloured' and 'Indian' sellouts in separate 'parliaments'. The University of the Western Cape, as well as peninsula schools and colleges, experienced a prolonged boycott of classes over eight weeks, with the students and individual staff members devoting all their energies to this campaign. Over 300 staff (mainly black) of this university organised a protest march and sustained placard demonstrations against the elections. The success of this campaign was reflected in the total rejection of Botha's tricameral parliament, with percentage polls in some constituencies as low as 4 per cent and seldom higher than 20 per cent.

The educational institutions constitute the 'vanguard' of liberation struggle in the Western Cape, with students spearheading political protest in the form of school boycotts, mass protest rallies and protest marches. The presence or intervention of
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International Labour Reports

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boycotts, mass protest rallies and protest marches. The presence or intervention of
police at such events inevitably produce street riots, stone throwing and pitched battles with the police. The massacre of 19 people on 21 March 1985 in Uitenhague in the Eastern Cape during the 25th commemoration of the Sharpeville massacre of 1960 produced an immediate outcry in the Western Cape. And on 26 June 1985 people celebrated the 30th anniversary of the Freedom Charter of the African National Congress (ANC) and the Congress Alliance all over the Cape Peninsula. Once the educational institutions responded with class boycotts, they awakened the entire Western Cape to a sustained period of politicisation. All secondary schools, colleges and UWC were represented on the Western Cape Students Action Committee (WECASAC). Meetings and awareness programmes were held at schools and campuses and mandates were taken to WESAC meetings to continue the boycotts, organise mass rallies and door to door pamphlet blitzes in the community. University students were organised in area committees to mobilise in their communities. Scores of mass meetings were held across the entire Western Cape, with UDF officials travelling the entire area to address meetings against apartheid, detentions and the state of emergency. In the past, University students have mobilised in support of grassroots community issues, as well as worker and trade union struggles. This support was vital to the success of the red meat boycott, the Fattis and Monis (spaghetti) boycott and the Rowntrees (sweets) boycott, where workers were locked out in pay disputes and strikes during 1980 and 1981.

A peninsula wide teachers' network was established on 15 August 1985 to 'unite teachers against apartheid', consisting of 80-100 schools, colleges and the university. Over 1,000 teachers crammed the hall in Athlone to register their condemnation of apartheid and the state of emergency. This structure was initiated by a group of progressive lecturers at UWC and was later formalised into a teacher's union, the Western Cape Teacher's Union, WECTU (28 Sept. 1985). Teachers demanded an end to the state of emergency, the release of all political prisoners and detainees, the right of all political exiles to return home, true representation of the people by their chosen leaders and an end to apartheid. Their programmes included mobilising teachers against apartheid, supporting student boycotts with alternative education and awareness (politicisation) programmes, locating the role of educators and education in the liberation struggle, revising syllabi to direct them towards achieving an alternative democratic society and, ultimately, transforming all educational institutions into democratic places of learning. All over the Cape Peninsula, teachers and lecturers refused to teach under circumstances where police presence on school premises and campuses had become a regular feature.

The University of the Western Cape became the centre for mass rallies, with police invading the campus regularly leading to an exchange of stones with rubber bullets, teargas and birdshot between students and police. At these rallies the ANC flag was hoisted pointing to the considerable support that the Congress has on the campus and in the Western Cape. Freedom songs were sung and speakers included student leaders, trade unionists, lecturers, parents, UDF officials and patrons. Scores of students were gaoled and charged with 'attending an illegal gathering'. The UDF and the Western Province Council of Churches called for a consumer boycott of white businesses in response to the struggles in the Eastern Cape. Weeks of community mass meetings followed. White shopping areas were deserted as blacks supported black petty traders instead. The boycott of white shops was later transformed into a selective boycott of black collaborators and the major white chain stores, to uphold the non-racial character of the liberation struggle.
In August 1985 the UDF and its chief patron, Dr Allen Boesak, president of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, had called for a mass protest march on 28 August 1985 to Pollsmoor Prison in Cape Town to demand the release of Nelson Mandela. On the eve of the proposed march Dr Boesak was detained at a roadblock by security police on his way to the University of the Western Cape where battles between police and students had erupted. On 23 August police clamped down on executive officials and detained half of the UDF office bearers with the other half retreating into hiding. This temporarily stunned the UDF but with the momentum of mass mobilisation and new leaders emerging, the march took place nonetheless. The venue was set in the centre of Athlone, a black township. Thousands of people gathered near the meeting place which had been occupied by police, who sealed off a number of black townships to prevent people from reaching the march venue. This led to a number of localised marches erupting all over the Cape Peninsula. People marched into police stations demanding the release of all political detainees. After a number of sjambok (whip) charges by police, people regrouped at Hewat Teacher’s College. Over 5,000 people decided to march from there to Pollsmoor Prison. The march was stopped by the police and 57 church and community leaders were arrested. Police moved in on the marchers, firing teargas, charging into homes and beating and arresting numerous people. The full brunt of police brutality was unleashed on the black community of Athlone that day. A resident recalled, ‘Die situation is nes soos die oorlog, toe die army in onse townships was. Kyk hoeveel polisie is daar vir ons kinders’ (The situation is just like the war — 1940s — when the army came into our townships. Look how many police there are for our children).

Residents soon developed survival tactics in solidarity against the police by, for example, blocking off roads or causing traffic jams and harbouring youths fleeing from the police. In one afternoon police action ignited people’s anger. The realities of the emergency situation elsewhere in the country were brought home with brute force to the people of Cape Town, uniting them in a common hatred against the coercive forces of the state. The event has become known as the ‘Battle of Belgravia’, Athlone’s main street. When a police informer was discovered in a teachers’ protest meeting in Athlone, he was bundled on to the stage, disarmed and beaten up by schoolteachers and principals. Teachers jumped over chairs to get a shot at the cop. Two large contingents of riot police surrounded the hall, taking position on the walls and roof, rifles cocked, ready to fire. After negotiation the police informers’ revolver was handed over to the police who then withdrew.

The night of the Pollsmoor march rioting broke out in Athlone, spread to the rest of the Peninsula and continues unabated. To date the death toll in the Western Cape has exceeded a hundred. In the whole country it is calculated by the South African Institute of Race Relations to be 834 people between September 1984 and October 1985, of whom more than half have been killed since the declaration of a state of emergency on much of the country on 21 July. More than half the victims have died as a result of security force action. Funerals of riot victims have become mass rallies, with thousands of mourners expressing their outrage and their commitment to fight apartheid to the end.

On 6 September violence spilled over from Salt River to the white area of Observatory where shops were stoned and looted. On 11 September a policeman was killed at a funeral of a man who had been shot in the head by police. The anger of the Muslim mourners ran so high that they beat and stabbed him to death. On the night of 12 September youths stoned and petrol bombed houses in the white suburb of Kraaifontein. Whites opened fire, injuring a number of black youths.
Since then arms sales to whites have rocketed. White hysteria ran high, so that the government had to call on whites to 'think, don’t shoot'.

Meanwhile marches on local police stations continued throughout September, particularly in the black areas of Mitchells Plain, Hanover Park in Athlone, in Guguletu and in country towns like Paarl and Worcester. Community and civic organisations led marches on rent and housing offices, protesting against high rents, unemployment and poor facilities. The marches in Mitchell’s Plain by schoolteachers and students were particularly successful in securing the release of detained teachers and schoolchildren. On 19 September the students persuaded the Vice-Chancellor of the University to lead them in a peaceful march on Bellville police station to protest against the detention of students and lecturers, and of the university chaplain, Dr Boesak. The march was declared illegal and police blocked off the 3,000 marchers outside the university entrance. Participants in Botha’s tricameral parliament became the targets for petrol-bombing and grenade attacks.

Following the Pollsmoor march, Botha’s coloured education Minister, Carter Ebrahim, closed down all 500 schools and colleges in the Cape on 6 September. The newly formed teachers co-ordinating committee went into action and mobilised parents to reject this decision. Participating in the mass meetings was an experience in itself. Community halls were crammed. Ordinary workers provided crucial insights into the social basis of the political unrest and came up with innovative ideas. At one mass meeting in Bellville on 12 September a rather intellectual speaker was addressing parents on the virtues of fighting for equal rights, ‘one man, one vote’, the value of education and the folly of prolonged boycotts and stone-throwing. Pandemonium broke out among the audience, especially the youth. One skollie (unemployed) shouted ‘Moenie kak praat nie, dis frustrations’ (don’t talk crap, its frustrating’). A woman jumped up, stomping her feet vehemently and shouted ‘Julle praat net kak, ek gaan liewerste huis toe on TV te watch’ (you’re just talking shit, I’d rather go home to watch TV). Students jeered ‘Sit, sit the struggle continues.’ Numerous workers, mothers and housewives took to the platform, demanding the opening of schools. One woman said ‘We’ll take our schools back by force — they closed down 500 schools, but they don’t have 500 Caspirs (police armoured vehicles) to cover all the schools’ (Caspirs, as one bumper sticker put it, ‘are not friendly ghosts’). Another woman related her experience with the police in the townships. ‘Hulle wil die laaities ‘n lift gee in die Caspir — ek se vir hulle: Wat soek hulle op die strate? Hulle moes in die skool gewees het! Ek vertel hulle; Moenie vir my kinders lekkers gee nie. Vandag gee jy hulle lekkers, more skiet jy hulle dood! So die kinders soek nie daar nie. Ek slaat hulle daar weg.’ (The police want to give the children a ride in the Caspir. I tell them: What are they doing on the streets? They should have been in school. I tell them: Don’t give my children sweets. Today you give them sweets, tomorrow you shoot them dead. So the children have no business there. I slap them away from there’). Wild cheers erupted from the audience.

On 17 September 1985 thousands of parents stayed away from work to take their children to school in defiance of the closure. This mobilisation of the community was unprecedented in the Western Cape. At Alexander Linton High School in Athlone, police occupied the school premises and arrested 150 schoolchildren, parents and teachers, including the vice principal. Residents blocked all the streets around the school by parking their cars in the middle of the street and walking off. It took over five hours to tow away cars.

On 15 October a South African Transport Services Truck was stoned by youths in Athlone. As bricks smashed through the windscreen, soldiers and police
emerged from the 'Trojan Horse', firing into the fleeing crowds. The shotgun blasts shattered the windows of nearby houses. When the firing ceased three young people lay dead. Twenty people were arrested as police kicked down the doors of nearby houses, forcibly removing the body of a 16 year old and several wounded people, one aged four, one aged eight. Two days later, more people were injured and another person was killed when police fired on people leaving a mosque in Athlone where they had gathered to demand the release of the bodies of the people killed on the 15th.

On 24 October the Emergency was extended to Cape Town. Students, teachers, community and UDF leaders were rounded up across the Peninsula — some 200 people were arrested in two waves within eight days. The next week 50 women arrived in Adderly Street in central Cape Town wearing 'Troops out of the Townships' T-shirts. Police occupied intersections wearing riot helmets and armed with teargas cannisters, shotguns and rubber bullets. Lunch hour crowds continued to gather until they were dispersed with water cannon using purple dye. Sjambok-wielding police chased people through the city centre, whipping pedestrians as they went. As a Cape Town car sticker asked 'Is the border in Angola — or in Athlone?'

The black townships in the Western Cape have become 'no go zones' for police, as youths act to 'render the townships ungovernable' and to create, in their terms, 'liberated zones.'

A Correspondent
Reviews


South Africa is not only the most industrialised nation in Africa, it also has the greatest electricity-generating capacity, producing over 60 per cent of Africa's electricity (All data are taken from Christie.) This electric power is largely (84.4 per cent in 1975) produced by the state Electricity Supply Commission (ESCOM). It is both plentiful and produced at a relatively low price compared to other industrialised nations (e.g. at less than half the unit cost of electricity in West Germany).

The historic relationship between electricity supply, industrialisation and capital accumulation in South Africa is the topic of Refrew Christie's *Electricity, Industry and Class in South Africa*. This long-needed study analyses the effects of the development of electricity supply on the accumulation of capital both in South Africa and abroad. Externally, South Africa's place in the world economy has long been understood as one of supplier of cheap minerals. This has usually been explained in terms of geological good fortune and repressive racist labour policies that have kept mine labour, and hence minerals, cheap. Christie shows that South Africa's comparative advantage in minerals lies not only in cheap black labour but also in cheap electric power (Geologic good fortune means little if ores cannot be extracted profitably). Domestically, the growth of a cheap power industry is shown to have laid the basis for expansion of mining and the foundation of secondary manufacturing. It did so both directly by providing cheap power and indirectly by supporting mechanisation and 'capital restructuring' with their attendant gains in productivity. Thus, this industry with its cheap, abundant power enhanced both the domestic and international extraction of surplus value and accumulation of capital.

But what produced the 'cheapness' of this power? Christie discusses three main factors. First, South African electricity is mainly coal-generated (over 75 per cent) and coal is abundant and easily extracted. Second, African miners and power station workers are paid low wages; their labour is 'cheap'. This directly reduces the cost of electricity and the coal used to generate it (As Christie points out, South Africa may well have the cheapest coal in the world). Finally, electricity is kept cheap by state policies and the operations of ESCOM. The state has created a technically efficient monopoly supply in ESCOM, used it to provide power to mining, transport, manufacturing and kept that power cheap by pricing policies that mandate electricity generation 'at neither a profit or a loss.'

In the historical analysis, Christie shows how the early development of the electricity industry was related to contradictions within gold mining and amongst
gold- and coal-mine operators and miners, the state and the railways. These contradictions led to the creation of ESCOM and its later support of the state-operated Iron and Steel Corporation (ISCOR) and other key aspects of South African industrialisation. He then shows how ESCOM, ISCOR and other parastatal corporations supported the post-World War II development of the new gold fields and the automotive, electrical equipment and nuclear power industries. Here cheap power is shown to be one of the factors underlying the 'cheap labour' aspect of capitalist manufacturing in South Africa, for the mechanisation and 'restructuring' of capital (both dependent on cheap power) resulted in 'de-skilling' of African labour power and a consequent lowering of African wages.

Overall, *Electricity, Industry and Class in South Africa* is a well-done, empirically detailed and thorough study that sheds light on an important aspect of South African industrialisation. It clearly presents the technical details of mining and processing ore, transportation and uranium enrichment and their impact on profits and capital accumulation, both directly and indirectly. It lays out the complex relations and contradiction among gold- and coal-mining, the state, parastatal and private enterprises, industrialisation and the electric industry. These contradictions are clearly discussed with respect to their effects on wages, productivity, electric rates and profits. Christie is particularly effective in showing how the uneven development of the electric industry was a result of the interplay of domestic and international contradictions.

The major limitations of this study are three. First, it is thin on some crucial data. To support his conclusion that the cheapness of electricity fostered a more rapid accumulation of capital and industrialisation, Christie could have presented data on actual electricity rates, the degree to which they were subsidised, and estimates of how much they increased profits. While he presents some data, he does not present historical data series that could be used to demonstrate his conclusion; his empirical evidence is partial and therefore not fully convincing. Second, the study is relatively weak on questions of class; it raises questions of class and class struggle only intermittently. It is much better at considering intra-capitalist class struggle than capital-labour struggles. Further, it does not address the question of the class structure of state enterprises such as ESCOM, and this leads to its third limitation. It does not raise the many theoretical issues implicit in its analysis of cheap state power. If ESCOM 'cheapens' electricity, what does this mean in Marxian value theoretic terms? Is this the state electricity commodity a capitalist commodity? If so, is it priced below its exchange-value? What are the contradictions created by such a subsidy? Indeed, how are the production and pricing of all such state commodities understood in class theoretic terms?

These criticisms notwithstanding, this is an excellent piece of historical research. It should provide invaluable help in understanding capitalist industrialisation in South Africa. It should also prompt new empirical and theoretical research concerning the relationship among state enterprises, the production and pricing of state commodities and the extraction and distribution of surplus value in capitalist social formations in general and in South Africa in particular.

Fred Curtis
Drew University

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Zimbabwe: A Revolution That Lost Its Way? is a compact and competent history of the war of national liberation in Zimbabwe. More importantly, it is a pertinent polemic against the ' petty bourgeois' leadership of what was then the struggle against Rhodesian settler rule, and is now the Zimbabwean state. Unfortunately, Astrow's book fails on the latter, crucial, count. The petty bourgeoisie is blamed for the betrayal of Zimbabwe's masses, but never analysed with any clarity.

The fundamental flaw in Astrow's book is shared by other 'workerist' perspectives on national liberation (see Davies & O'Meara in ROAPE 29 for a critique), the post-colonial state and petty bourgeois politicians. Such stances are strangely contradictory. While they condemn the petty bourgeoisie as an ineffectual and contemptible class force, they simultaneously endow it with the power to manipulate and betray whole revolutions. While they spend inordinate amounts of time probing the factional struggles within the petty bourgeois leaderships of liberation wars, they fail to uncover the deeper processes leading to the more noteworthy contradictions and class alliances encompassing the nascent state actors. And while proselytizing on the revolutionary purity of the working class and peasantry, they neglect to study how these classes interact with each other and the politicians-in-the-making. At one time Astrow informs the reader that the working class was forced into relative acquiescence by petty bourgeois union leaders quite early in the game, but in many more places one is told that only the pressure of the African 'masses' (who quite quickly become an undifferentiated 'people') forced the leaders of ZAPU and ZANU - more particularly the latter - into some temporary semblance of radicalism. In neither instance is an intricate probing of such potentially historic shifts undertaken. The inner workers of such alliances are replaced by either vague assertions of mechanical pushes and pulls, or of cynical petty bourgeois co-option. And with independence, the effects of these positional shifts are explained away with the claim that Zimbabwe is now unambiguously in 'the Western camp': and 'concessions' made to the oppressed classes were and are purely rhetorical, easily dispensed with at the moment of state power. The courted ones are now the local and international capitalists; the contradictions of state, state-managing class and the organisation of hegemony have mysteriously disappeared.

This lack of analysis forces Astrow, ironically enough, to put the petty bourgeoisie into something like a vacuum — with all power unto itself. The class he condemns ends up being the class he relies on. Thus he becomes almost idealistic, suggesting in a few places that a better 'political programme' would have saved the Zimbabwean revolution. But where do political programmes come from? According to Astrow's theoretical trajectory, the petty bourgeoisie alone bears the responsibility for such guides.

Astrow's ambiguous treatment of the petty bourgeoisie results on the one hand from poor analysis in the 'class subject's' own terms. It is called at various times a stratum, an entity or some sort containing both old and new middle strata, the intellectuals, a social group, an elite, and a class; no attempts are made to ascertain its historical formation, the structures of its relations with other working classes and modes of production, or its role in the processes of production and reproduction. On the other hand, it results from scant attention to international forces affecting the course of Zimbabwe's recent past. All the Frontline States are written off as equally petty bourgeois, and Imperialism is presented as a faceless,
yet monolithic (although sometimes 'British') abstraction. An appendix culled from various Revolutionary Communist League writings on imperialism is too vague and obscure to have an apparent relevance to Zimbabwe. Yet Astrow's first aim in writing the book was to tell British workers (never, incidentally, referred to as substantially petty bourgeois themselves) that the only way to fight for national liberation in the Third World is to strike imperialism at its source.

Added to the above shortcomings is a neglect of nationalism in its own terms. Astrow seems so eager to demonstrate the inherent shortcomings of the stagist interpretation of the 'national democratic revolution' that he ignores the peculiarities of nationalism in peripheral social formations and the contradictions of race, class and ethnicity tied up with it. No one can deny the sterility of Soviet-style theories of national democratic revolution and the inflated role of the 'intelligentsia' within it, but to place Zimbabwe squarely within this pre-imposed scheme is as presumptuous and undialectical as the dogma itself. Zimbabwe is too contradictory for that: indeed, a passage Astrow quotes from Zimbabwe News (the ZANU paper) as proof of adherence to the two-stage theory actually poses four or more stages on another page. Such eclecticism certainly does not demonstrate cohesion to any petty bourgeoisie and Stalinist 'line' as Astrow would have it. Rather, it indicates an intelligentsia in search of ideology and allies and a revolution that is having great difficulty finding its way, let alone losing it. The fact that the same document somewhat self-consciously slides students and soldiers right into the proletariat suggests, pace Astrow, not malicious hoodwinking, but an almost desperate search for class grounding. Such are the dilemmas of a nationalist revolution being led by the petty bourgeoisie. They seem to be structured into the very process. Nor do they disappear with the gaining of state power.

Yet Astrow's focus is not on imperialism and nationalism, but on the Zimbabwean petty bourgeois politicians, and how they managed to lose the way of that country's revolution. Thus, a critique of Zimbabwe: A Revolution That Lost Its Way? must be directed at his main concern. To do so, one must clarify where Astrow seems to have lost his direction. To my way of thinking, he seems to have failed on three essential counts.

Firstly, he has not adequately accounted for the differences between the 'new' and 'old' petty bourgeoisie on a global scale. The new petty bourgeoisie could, it seems, be classified as 'organiser of hegemony'. It ameliorates conflict between capital and labour, core and periphery, modes of production and, perhaps increasingly, between genders. Such tasks are necessary, but are to all purposes impossible — because the conflicts are fundamentally irreconcilable. Yet the contradictions do not end there: the fact that the new petty bourgeoisie does not own or control the means of production and reproduction, but has a position as 'manager' of many of them is one; the possibility that its labour is not a commodity and often a drain on surplus value is another; so is the reality that the 'concessions' the new petty bourgeoisie helps capital negotiate with its antagonists are just as often material as ideological. Nor should it be forgotten that it is often members of the new petty bourgeoisie who become something similar to a 'vanguard' of the struggle against capital and its state. Whether their class position forces them to be objectively antagonistic to the labouring classes in spite of 'suicide' is another issue, but it is not relegated solely to the Third World.

Second, an attempt could have been made to draw out the contrasts between the new petty bourgeoisies in core and periphery. This would then entail, third, a move into the discussion of the specificity of the post-colonial state. The creation of a new petty bourgeoisie in Africa was a quite conscious colonial act — but it met
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with the unforeseen consequences of the state-seeking self-activity of the new actors. In Zimbabwe, for example, Rhodes carefully groomed one of Lobengula’s sons to be a veterinarian — surely the epitome of a ‘servant’ to agricultural capitalism. Typically, however, the young man decided to train as a lawyer — a somewhat less obsequious creature — and led a movement for land rights. To be sure, such opposition was not against capitalism per se, but it did foreshadow resistance to settler rule — a resistance that would amount to little without at least temporary alliances with the more oppressed classes.

Debates can be, and have been, carried out over whether the peripheral new petty bourgeoisie and the state it eventually inherits are ‘overdeveloped’. The difficulties in organising hegemony often lead to conflict within this peripheral class fraction, and it often takes front stage, as opposed to the quieter behind the scenes manoeuvrings of the Western kin.

All of this is to say that Astrow may well be correct — certainly the majority of the Zimbabwean petty bourgeoisie who are now in positions of power are on some sort of road to bourgeois status, be it of the bureaucratic or more classical type — but that he may be correct for more complicated reasons than he suggests. Also, the answer to the problem he poses may also be more complex than his book indicates. Zimbabwe is not yet an ‘an open and shut case’. The struggle is still continuing in, around, and through the organ and the organisers of hegemony — the state and the segmented ‘petty bourgeois’ state managers. The fact that the latter entities are disproportionately developed, and that hegemony in post-colonial social formations can be unstable at best, no doubt leads to the unique forms of class conflict that Astrow has failed to elucidate. The task still waits us.

Dave Moore

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The need for a more critical and alternative approach to general African history, as essayed by Bernstein and Depelchin, (“The Object of African History: a materialist perspective”), History in Africa, 5 (1978), 6 (1979) has become compelling. Freund’s introductory book is a welcome response to this need. African historiographical discussions have long emphasised sources and techniques of assembling data. For reasons connected to the well-known problems of reconstructing Africa’s preliterate past, this concern can be appreciated. But it high time historical discussions also paid serious attention to the principles for interpreting the agglomerated data, This is where the materialist method comes in.

Materialist analysis of the African past is, however, not a new endeavour as evidenced, for instance, in the work of the Hungarian scholar, Endre Sik, in his The History of Black Africa (1966), though by no means an excellent work. French Marxists such as Rey, Meillassoux and Terray have also developed a Marxist perspective on aspects of African history. One major difference between Freund’s contribution and these earlier works is, however, their scope. While most Marxist writings on the African past have so far concentrated on the political economy of colonialism in specific geopolitical areas, Freund’s book takes a continental sweep (although for obvious reasons, Egypt and the Maghrib are excluded).
How does Freund deal with the class 'problematic' in order to pacify critics of class analysis of the African past? He makes a plea for a less rigid conception of classes. According to him classes are not unique to capitalism. He correctly notes: 'In the African continent there is a great range of historically specific social and economic relationships that, with some imagination and flexibility, can be discussed in class terms' (p.xii).

Yet it is evident that Freund has difficulty handling the class question in the pre-colonial period. Whereas in a bourgeois society the exploiters and surplus appropriators are a defined social class — the capitalist bourgeois — in Africa, the exploiting strata are unwieldy and socially amorphous, intersecting groups: men appropriating women's surpluses, the ruling class and the merchants appropriating those of the peasantry (p.l 14), the elders exploiting the youths who, in fact, have to resort to migrant labour as a means of escaping exploitation (p.134). The emerging picture is that of a system of continuous surplus recycling — a vast redistributive network — in which even the exploited is able to partake, through marriage, kinship ties, and old age, thereby recouping some of his or her losses. Of course partly because of the marked development of class relations since colonial subordination, especially in Southern Africa, Freund deals with the colonial and post-colonial periods relatively smoothly (surprisingly there is no mention of Colin Bundy's important work on South African peasantry).

The book presents no new evidence. Like most textbooks it is a work of synthesis. The interpretations are not novel either. One might have the impression that Freund has attempted to reconcile the opposing claims of Euro-centric liberal Africanists on the one hand, and those of the Afro-centrists as represented by the liberal nationalist scholars and the radical neo-Marxist underdevelopmentalists, on the other. His materialist method is flexible enough to allow criticisms of some Marxist views — a flexibility which occasionally pushes him closer to the liberal perspective than to the Marxist position.

One of the strengths of *The Making of Contemporary Africa* is its ability to bring into one compact volume the major debates that have raged in both liberal African history and radical political economy. The origins and social character of Africa's pre-colonial states (Freund rarely uses 'social formation' — a term which seems more apt in a materialist context), the social basis of European conquest of Africa, the essence of the colonial state (whether it was primarily an instrument of the metropolitan bourgeoisie or not), the urgent question of underdevelopment, the revolutionary situation in Southern Africa, etc. — are all touched upon.

Freund's need for brevity is understandable. But, even then, there exists scope for clarifying some of these questions. For example, the question of the development of African pre-colonial states remains as problematic as ever. Freund explains nothing by merely stating that the states emerged out of contradictions resulting from the social network as represented by lineage groups, age-sets, title and secret societies (pp.24-25). We are not made aware of the dynamics of the assumed contradictions.

Furthermore, it would have been more helpful if Freund would chronologically qualify his acceptance of the now popular explanation which links commodity production not to peasant rationality but to a variety of coercive measures adopted by the colonial state. For we do know that widespread commodity production and peasantisation (for example, palm produce in Nigeria) antedates formal colonial pax.

Again, we need a broader perception of the problem of articulation. Freund adopts the position of the articulationists which attributes the persistence of
Africa's pre-capitalist social relations to their resistance to the capitalist mode of production. But readers should also be made aware that the colonial state, in its antagonism to social change, reinforced the existing pre-capitalist structures, particularly in the non-settler colonies, and effectively creamed surpluses off them.

All considered, the book is a significant addition to the existing stock of textbooks on African history. Its alternative approach, coupled with its lack of jargon makes it recommendable for undergraduate reading, especially in general survey courses.

Ben Naanen
Dalhousie University

For research material and ideas for this paper I am particularly indebted to Paul Clough, Bob Shenton and Piotr Dutkiewicz.
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THE 1986 CONFERENCE OF THE REVIEW OF AFRICAN POLITICAL ECONOMY
26-28 September 1986 at the University of Liverpool

POPULAR STRUGGLES IN AFRICA

The 1986 Conference of ROAPE will be held at the University of Liverpool from Friday 26 September to Sunday 28 September 1986. The theme of the conference will be POPULAR STRUGGLES IN AFRICA.

A number of abstracts and offers of papers have already been received. On the basis of these, workshops will be organised on the following themes:

• democracy & socialism
• peasant movements
• women's struggles
• working class action
• liberation movements
• post-colonial revolutionary strategy
• popular consciousness & ideology
• coping with poverty/repression/war/famine
• the emerging 'left' in Africa
• the environment

There are also a number of suggestions regarding country-based workshops.

Organisation of Conferences

In the light of your comments on the previous conferences, we propose:

1. to send all members a full set of abstracts in advance of the conference. On the basis of these, you can choose the workshop sessions you wish to attend and notify us in advance;
2. to select workshop convenors who will coordinate workshops and be in touch with contributors in advance;
3. to allocate more time at the beginning of the conference for meeting each other and reading the full papers. These will not be sent to you in advance (in order to keep costs down), except to workshop convenors, but available for sale in workshop sets on arrival;
4. to allocate time for 'spontaneous' workshops on issues and controversies which arise.

On the basis of these proposals, the provisional programme for the conference is:

Friday 26 September 1300 onwards
Registration, meeting people, reading papers
1645-1800 Preliminary Workshop meeting with convenors
1700-1830 Dinner with informal meetings to follow.

Saturday 27 September 0800-0900 Breakfast
1200-1300 Lunch
1700-1830 Dinner
There will be 4-5 workshop sessions running in parallel throughout the day, followed by a disco in the evening.

Sunday 28 September 0800-0900 Breakfast
0930-1100 'Spontaneous' workshops
1130-1300 Final Plenary/Lunch
Booking Form (one form per person but please see 7. below)

I wish to attend the ROAPE Conference as Resident ______ (tick which required)
Non-Resident ______

1. Accommodation and Meal Charges: Non-residents may book for lunch/dinner as required. You are advised that there are no pubs or restaurants within easy reach of the conference hall.

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2. Conference Fee (payable by all participants)
The Conference Fee includes one set of abstracts, coffee/tea and entertainment. It does not include the full papers (price to be determined when all papers are in but obviously we will try to keep costs as low as possible).

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3. Total to Pay (items 1 & 2 above) __

Cheques should be made out to THE UNIVERSITY OF LIVERPOOL (ROAPE Conference) (A/c no. 142001).

Please note that in order to ensure that you receive your abstracts in advance, you should book not later than 1 May 1986. The FINAL date for participants who wish to book accommodation and/or meals will be 1 August 1986.

A late fee of £5.00/$10.00 will be charged after 1 August.
4. Diet
Please specify if you have any dietary requirements

5. Disabled
Please specify any requirements you may need

6. Creche
Please specify the number and age of children requiring creche facilities and if a cot is required in your room

7. Rooms
All are single rooms with hand basins. Do you wish to have a room next to another participant and if so, whom? If possible please send both booking forms together

8. Contributors
Abstracts, not more than two sides of A4 paper, should be sent to the Conference Organiser not later than 1 April 1986.
* I have already sent the abstract of my paper
* I enclose the abstract of my paper
* I propose a paper and will send my abstract by 1 April. The provisional title is

Papers, not more than 8000 words, should be sent to the Conference Organiser not later than 1 July 1986. Please indicate if you will be able
* to send at least 50 copies
* to bring up to 50 copies

9. YOUR NAME
ADDRESS please write clearly

10. Conference convenors on behalf of ROAPE are Penelope Roberts and Barry Munslow. ALL BOOKING FORMS, CORRESPONDENCE ETC. REGARDING THE CONFERENCE SHOULD BE SENT TO: Penelope Roberts (ROAPE conference), Department of Sociology, University of Liverpool, LIVERPOOL L69 3BX, UK. Telephone: (051) 709-6022 extension 2632 or 2743 (for Barry Munslow).