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Editorial

Soviet Intervention in Africa
Our first article is a companion-piece to that of Fred Halliday, in No.10 of the Review, who documented US involvement in the Horn of Africa. Lyons’ article is concerned with Soviet involvement in the area, and especially in the bizarre events of the last two years. It seeks to explain the role of the USSR by arguing, principally, that pursuit of state interest ‘narrowly’ conceived, has been the basis of Soviet foreign policy since 1917. It thus rejects the simplistic alternative notions of the USSR as the disinterested supporter of national liberation and socialist movements on the one hand, or as a ‘social imperialist’ superpower motivated by discernible imperatives of its economic system, on the other.

We hope that now we have belatedly aired the issue of the Soviet role in Africa, this will encourage further contributions. Certainly there is scope for pursuing the explanation of the Soviet role in Africa beyond the partial one presented here, partial because it deliberately begs the question of the nature of the Soviet state and the political, economic and social relations it serves to preserve. There is also room for more concrete analyses of such issues as Soviet trade and aid, of her arms supplies to various parts of the continent and of her involvement in critical arenas: the Tanzania-Uganda conflict was after all the second occasion in the last two years when Soviet weapons faced each other on an African battlefield.

Most crucially, socialists need to pursue a critical analysis of Soviet assistance to the liberation movements in southern Africa: while welcoming the supply of necessary armaments and even urging more (ground-to-air missiles for both wings of the Patriotic Front as the only effective counter to Smith’s air superiority for instance), we must be vigilant against any tendency to arm one faction for aggression against another, or against any tendency – that Lyons suggests as likely – to impose a bureaucratic, centralised elitist and militaristic form of organisation on the liberation movements. For one doesn’t have to support the equally opportunist line of Peking’s present rulers to realise that full liberation is only likely through some variant of a people’s war in which the workers and peasants are effectively mobilised, and not manipulated.

Mining Companies and Mining Economies
This article on the Horn apart, practically everything else in this Number bears on two related themes: mining and workers. We will try to draw attention to some of the common threads that can be drawn out of these different discussions.
For a hundred years or more, imperialist interests have extracted mineral wealth from Africa. Originally, most of this mining was in the South — South Africa itself, Namibia, Angola, and Rhodesia — and was mainly for precious metals and gems. During the colonial period, other countries came to be exploited primarily for their minerals, notably Zaire and Zambia — but in these cases metals for basic industries, copper and nickel, were the target.

Since the era of Independence in Africa, mining activities have spread to many other countries. In addition to oil, basic metals, especially iron ore, have been developed from the 1950s — largely tied in to the needs of the EEC — in Liberia, Mauritana, Angola, Algeria and elsewhere; and new 'specialist' raw materials, of which uranium is the best known but including also some of the elements needed in key alloys — vanadium, chrome, bauxite and magnesium have been mined in places like Gabon and Guinea as well as South Africa and Rhodesia. It is such 'strategic' metals that, as Mezger stresses, makes certain African countries and their mining operations 'indispensable' to western capitalism.

As a result by far the majority of the multinationals' direct investments in Africa has been in mineral extraction. Moreover a good part of the indirect (portfolio) investment, borrowing by governments and official 'aid', has been directed to developing the infrastructure for mining ventures and/or has been secured against future mineral earnings. Thus, as Bennoune shows, the railways in Mauritania were built to get out the iron ore. Similarly, at the other end of Africa, Botswana went into hock to provide infrastructure to make mining possible.

The significance of mining is not simply measured by the amount of investment in that sector. The impact has been even more dramatic in that several countries have become very much specialist mining economies in the process. Various contributions in this issue focus on three African countries that are among the most dependent on mining, and moreover on the export of a single product. Zambia and Mauritania both derive over 90% of their export earnings from one metal — copper and iron ore respectively — while for Liberia 65% come from iron ore. But they are not alone, perhaps a third of all African countries derive the greater part of their foreign exchange earnings from mineral products — and among them are most of the larger countries and more powerful economies: Algeria, Gabon, Morocco, Nigeria, Angola, Zaire and of course South Africa.

This specialist role within an institutionalised, though changing, international division of labour has several characteristic effects on these mining economies. First they are often extreme cases of monoculture, the dependence on a single commodity — perhaps even more than in the agricultural economies — with the inevitable concomitant that they lay themselves open, as Hodges' and Bennoune's studies of Zambia and Mauritania show, to immeasurably deeper crises than afflict the advanced capitalist countries themselves. A second, consequent feature is that their mining role encourages two virulent forms of dependence: they depend on access to the international market which is often monopolised; and they are technologically dependent for the supply of mining equipment and know-how on the outside capitalist world and usually on the specific multinationals that operate the mine. A third characteristic of the underdevelopment that they tend to experience in an extreme form is that the mines are notable examples of economic and social enclaves. In Tanzania, for instance, the Mwadui diamond mine sits behind a 'frontier', two wire fences that cut off the mine
workings, three man-made lakes, a golf course, a herd of dairy cattle and a brewery from the dry semi-pastoral area around it. The overall 'enclave' effect, and especially the generally extreme underdevelopment of much of the rest of society, is of course a product of the labour requirements of the mines. Where mining has been longer established and on a significant scale, and not only in the 'White South', the imperatives of labour recruitment typically meant the deliberate curtailment of commercial opportunities for peasant agriculture, and with the usual patterns of migrant labour and the absence of males, this meant the impoverishment even of subsistence agriculture and of course further determined the monocultural nature of the economy.

Minerals in a changing International Economic Order

It is not enough for socialists to document or even to condemn these effects. We must also see what the trends are, what new patterns are emerging, and moreover look at the contradictions that changing forms are throwing up.

One starting point, here, is to recognise, as our contributions on South Africa and Zambia bring out, the changing role in which the mining industries of Africa are cast. One dimension of change is that occasioned by the current crisis of capitalism, which is depressing the price and demand for most raw materials, although oil and gold (and phosphates) are important exceptions. But as well as such cyclical consequences, it is important to note that some long run and irreversible tendencies are at work. These include the identification and exploitation of a diversified set of sources which international monopolies always seek and have in some instances succeeded in finding. The quite enormous potentials for deep sea mining of copper, documented in this Number by Payne, are one of the most dramatic examples of this possibility. Such possibilities have the contradictory implications of leading to an enforced end to earlier patterns of monocultural dependence, but in the short run and in the absence of opportunities for long term planned diversification there are also the prospects of shattering effects on revenues, services, investment, employment and the incomes of workers and peasants. The alternative of planned diversification could only arise under one of two circumstances: an internal economy that was genuinely under the control of workers and peasants, or under a Third-World-directed 'New International Economic Order'. Given the unlikelihood of this latter, what are the chances for a basic change of power within the country? This question in turn must bring us back to a consideration of another area of change in the political economy of mining — the relationship between capital and labour. In particular, is the fact that some of the mining economies are going to be left out in the cold, permanently or for a lengthy cycle, likely to generate a militancy on the part of workers and peasants that can dictate a different future for the latter?

The same issue of course must be raised in relation to those countries, which (in Mezger's phrase) are not likely to be abandoned by international capital — either because their minerals are still likely to be required in the technological restructuring that is going on or because they offer not just a single handy raw material. But there the specific question — that Mezger does not go on to ask about South Africa — is whether the contradictions that emerge, alongside any attempts at reform, are likely to provide the breeding ground for resistance to a further incorporation with imperialism on new terms.
Mineworkers, Unions and the State

The labour process in mining has also been subject to change. What characterised the early mining developments, both in southern and central Africa, was the reliance on underground operations that were essentially manual (though this did not necessarily mean that the capital invested in infrastructure was negligible), and thus on a large number of unskilled underground workers, recruited through migrant contracts for the most part. However, in Zambia especially, this pattern was changed — in response to the kind of worker militancy, described in the contributions of Silver and others, that emerged at the height of the nationalist struggle. This was defused by the introduction in the 1960s of precisely the package of mechanisation and a switch to a permanent, skilled black labour force that Mezger claims is being prepared in South Africa. Those mining ventures that were initiated in the decolonisation period, tended to have that form of production from the outset. Thus Bennoune’s study shows how the massive but capital-intensive investment in iron ore mining in Mauritania generated only 4,500 jobs. In Liberia, similarly, including mechanisation has resulted, according to Khafre’s Briefing, in employment falling alongside production increases.

The tendency to create a limited, permanent, skilled proletariat has had as its observe the generation of massive unemployment — 35%, Hodges tells us, in Zambia! But also insofar as mining has usually meant rural stagnation, it has led to peasant pauperisation with almost no employment outlet. However, the material on Liberia (including an article on workers’ struggles that we have had to hold over), on Ghana, on Mauritania, and even on Zambia does not sustain the argument that such a small, skilled group of workers are destined to act politically as a ‘labour aristocracy’.

What the evidence does suggest are two common features: considerable militancy at least at certain moments and for certain limited objectives but also a tendency for the union leadership to dampen down such militancy and, in recent years, for unions to be manipulated and incorporated by the state. It should also be added that the state itself is a prime target for the strategies of the big mining houses: Anglo American and Lonrho are precisely the capitalist interests that Hodges argues are having more say in Zambia: MIFERMA and the Mauritanian state are old pals, as are the Liberian state and the European steel cartel.

In South Africa, too, this alliance between state and international mining houses is being underlined. There are signs, too, of trade union/state collaboration, even with some of the black unions, which is why the kind of black unions that develop there is so crucial. (As we go to press, government proposals to extend trade union rights to blacks seem designed to eliminate independent workers’ organisations).

What is suggested, therefore, is that neither the mineworkers nor the massive underclasses that mining tends to create, are likely to accept their conditions passively, but both need to be mobilised for the longer haul. For as Silver points out for the Ghanaian case, if the class struggles of such as the mineworkers are to be extended into the wider struggle for socialism, then the task of mobilisation will have to be undertaken by explicitly socialist political organisations.
The USSR, China and The Horn of Africa

Roy Lyons

What are we to make of events in the Horn? Two ‘Marxist-Leninist’ regimes, Somalia and Ethiopia, fighting each other, and each in turn having been armed by the Soviet Union; then Ethiopia using Soviet and Cuban help to put down the Eritrean liberation movement, one wing of which also styles itself ‘Marxist-Leninist’. Are any of these acting on the basis of Marxist principles? Or in accord with ‘proletarian internationalism’? Or with Lenin’s theses on the national question? In particular what are we to make of Soviet policy? This article argues that defence of state interest has been the primary consideration in Soviet foreign policy-making since 1917.

In the Horn of Africa, the USSR has stepped into a vacuum, created by the failure of the US to maintain a hegemonic influence, to exert leverage on the West and to preclude the development of Chinese influence in the area. There is, therefore, no satisfactory economic explanation for this foreign policy development and thus the concept of ‘social imperialism’ has to be rejected. Indeed, the USSR cannot establish any kind of ‘imperialist’ economic presence in this or any other area of the ‘Third World’ since its attractiveness to regimes such as Ethiopia and Somalia does not lie in its capacity to offer effective economic aid, but rather in its ability to supply military weaponry. One development has political significance for Africa; namely, the fact that the Soviet Union does offer a model for state and party structures which the ruling groups (especially military) of many ‘Third world’ countries find a useful, hierarchical vehicle through which to firm their power-base. Though the USSR does not require the establishment of such a structure, there are reasons why it favours such developments and finds it easier to deal with countries with political structures which parallel its own.

Soviet analysis in fact seems to proceed from a definition of a regime as ‘progressive’ (that is, one which has a close friendship with the USSR) to a designation of that regime as one that is ‘developing socialism’ when it begins to establish the political (i.e. party and state) structures which parallel those of the USSR itself.

More briefly, the roles of China and Cuba in the Horn are also examined. ‘Reasons of state’ seem to be as important for the former as for the USSR in determining foreign policy. Despite the democratic and anti-social imperialist gloss China puts on its policy decisions, they all derive from the overall ident-
ification of the USSR as the principal enemy. As for Cuba, while noting its dependence on Soviet aid, its role in the Horn is not to be simply interpreted as a *quid pro quo* for Soviet aid, but does bear some relation to the specific character of the Cuban revolution.

In taking the view that Soviet foreign policy since 1917, has been based on the need to preserve the Soviet State, no attempt will be made to deal with the problem of how that state is to be characterised, and thus to root the analysis of Soviet policy towards the Horn in the USSR's domestic socio-economic formation. In the first place, the precise relationship between the political forces at work in the USSR and its foreign policy is impossible to establish because those forces cannot be identified except by reading between the lines of official pronouncements. Deducing different political alignments from foreign policy changes — Kremlinology — is scorned by Marxists for often very good reasons: but that is all there is. Unlike the 'bourgeois' democracies, there are no possibilities of political organisation (other than within that which holds state power). Thus there are no parallels to the US anti-war movement of the 1960's or the open struggle between political parties with different policies and bases of electoral support which would indicate the political and economic roots of foreign policy making. Even in the capitalist democracies, where such roots can be established, particular policy decisions may not be automatically reducible to the interests of a class or a fraction of a class.

In the case of the USSR, national interest can be identified in economic terms but this cannot be automatically reduced to the dominance of one particular section of a technocratic 'class' or to the interests of some 'incipient' capitalist class. The need to protect the 'national' economy, that is, to preserve the *status quo* in domestic political and social relations and particularly to preserve territorial integrity, lies at the heart of foreign policy considerations for all nation-states. However, this is not to argue that different internal political relations of, say, the US and the USSR do not make for different kinds of foreign policy practice. The mobilisation of political forces against the US involvement in Indochina played a key role in changing US foreign policy. There is no way in which political forces in the USSR opposed to the Warsaw pact invasion of Czechoslovakia could express such opposition and thus attempt to change policy. Indeed there is no way of knowing whether such forces existed (which of course enables the Soviet Government to deny their existence). That crucial difference in political relations between the US and the USSR clearly does affect the foreign policy pursued.

Granted every State's need to defend its interests, there are still different ways of so doing. For instance, under Stalin, the policies of the member parties of the Comintern were subordinated to the 'interest of state' of the USSR. Instead the USSR could have assisted the communist parties of Europe to develop the possibilities for socialist transformation rather than hindered them from doing so. That would have entailed a different foreign policy practice, subordinating it to the imperatives of socialist advance elsewhere, and in turn helping the task of building democratic socialism in the USSR itself. Why the USSR has pursued a foreign policy of a 'geopolitical' type without reference to the internal political consequences in, and character of, the states concerned, is a function of the Soviet political structure which does therefore deserve analysis. However for our present purposes it is not practically possible to discover how that relationship is
‘articulated’. Our assumption will therefore be that the Soviet state seeks to preserve the political relations on which its political and military leadership is based. The preservation of this structure is achieved in the sphere of foreign policy by reference to national geopolitical and economic interests and not to any class interest, whatever the latter concept is supposed to mean in the Soviet context.

**Soviet Foreign Policy: an historical overview**

Defence of the Soviet Union, of the gains of the October Revolution, defence of the ‘socialist’ states of Eastern Europe and defence of the Chinese and South East Asian revolutions have until recently lain at the heart of the politics of communist parties throughout the world. For a long period, the international communist movement was united in putting defence of the Soviet Union as a priority task.

Whatever the twists and turns of Soviet foreign policy, however adversely they might affect the prospects of revolution in the country concerned, its Communist Party would always rationalise it away. After Khruschev’s ‘secret speech’ in 1956, such rationalisations were much less easy to take. Hungary 1956, the Sino-Soviet split, the supply of Polish coal to break a miners’ strike in Fascist Spain, the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, China’s co-operation with Pinochet’s Chile, the Soviet and Chinese courtship of Nixon while he bombed Vietnam, the Vietnam-Cambodian war, and now the Horn of Africa, with Soviet support of what can only most charitably be labelled a military dictatorship, have all confused, divided and truncated socialist movements in the capitalist countries. In the Third World these episodes resulted in suspicion, caution and outright hostility to those countries calling themselves socialist, if not to socialism itself.

In 1920, Lenin made the Bolsheviks’ position on economic relations with capitalist states very clear:

> I know of no reason why a socialist state such as ours cannot do business indefinitely with capitalist countries. We don’t mind taking the capitalist locomotives and farming machinery, so why should they mind taking our socialist wheat, flax and platinum.

A similar stance was reiterated by Lenin a year later at the 9th All Russia Congress of Soviets:

> ...having started on our work of peaceful construction, we shall exert all efforts to continue it without interruption. At the same time comrades, be vigilant, safeguard the defence potential of our country, look after our Red Army like the apple of your eye.

The interest of the maintenance of the Soviet State demanded peace and defence against external and internal enemies. It is difficult to see what alternative existed in the circumstances of the birth of the new Soviet State. But this is not the point; it is the manner in which state interest was interpreted by Stalin and his successors, and is still interpreted today, which deserves criticism.

Some examples may illustrate at what price Soviet state interest was pursued. In 1921, the Soviet Union signed a treaty of friendship with Turkey under Mustafa Kemal, six weeks after the Kemalists had executed 42 leading Turkish com-
munists. In the 1930's the USSR went through a somersault with respect to Nazi Germany. As Stalin stated, at the beginning of 1934,

Of course we are far from being enthusiastic about the Fascist regime in Germany. But it is not a question of Fascism here, if only for the reason that Fascism in Italy, for example, has not prevented the USSR from establishing the best relations with that country.

After Germany, almost as Stalin was speaking, made a pact with Poland, correctly viewed by Stalin as a hostile act, Soviet policy changed with the objective of organising alliances against Hitler's Germany. The domestic position of the European communists changed too. From denouncing their Social Democrats as Social Fascists, a policy that had taken them into an alliance with the Nazis against the Social Democrats and thus played no small part in Hitler's rise to power, Soviet foreign policy dictated the opposite course, and anti-fascist fronts were in. In 1939 policy came full circle with the Soviet-German Pact, which, although it was helped to fruition by the ditherings of the appeasers of France and Britain, was a definite policy choice by Stalin, the objective of which was not to give the Soviet Union breathing space to prepare for war but to obtain a lasting peace and division of the world into Soviet and German spheres of influence. Claudin, who quotes Molotov (then Soviet Foreign Minister):

The good neighbourly and friendly relations that have been established between the Soviet Union and Germany are not based on fortuitous considerations of a transient nature, but on the fundamental interests of both the USSR and Germany.

Once the Soviet Union was brought into the War and with it the Communist Parties of Europe, its contribution was decisive in the defeat of Hitler's Germany, and its sacrifice of 20 million dead immense and all the more tragic for its directly resulting from the mistaken opportunism of Stalin's foreign policy throughout the 1930's.

Soviet involvement in the Middle East first began with the recognition of Israel, one of the first countries to do so, in 1948. The supply to Israel of Czech arms followed. By 1955, when the Nasser regime in Egypt was looking for a major ally, the Soviet Union, whose relations with Israel had begun to deteriorate, again supplied Czech arms to its new friend. However Nasser made it clear that while 'strengthening our economic ties with Russia' he could still 'arrest communists at home and put them on trial' as Hitler and Mustafa Kemal had done before him. Today nothing changes. Soviet military were giving aid to a Sudanese regime which had conducted a bloody repression of communists after 1971. Further south, $48m worth of Soviet weaponry and $12m worth of economic aid went to Amin's Uganda between 1971 and 1975. This co-operation was apparently valuable in 'solving important international questions, in the interest of peace and security of all peoples... military aid served the goal of strengthening defensive capacity in the event of aggression' as the Soviet ambassador to Uganda put it in 1975. And this only two months before the USSR broke off relations, even if only for six days, over Uganda's adverse comment on Soviet aid to the MPLA. In between these events, Moscow Radio informed the world that 'Uganda's foreign policy bears a distinctly anti-imperialist character. The country has been taking a firm stand against imperialist neo-colonialism and racism in Africa at every international forum.' The continuity in the rhetoric needs no emphasis here.
The Soviet Union, China and the Horn to 1973

The Soviet connection with the Horn dates from 1956 with the granting of a $25m credit to the Royalist Yemeni Arab Republic. By the time of the 1962 coup which overthrew the rule of the Imams, the USSR was Yemen's major arms supplier. By then, China had entered into the aid competition with $21m worth of loans, but after the 1962 coup the Soviet arms contribution gave that country the edge and it followed up with a $72m aid package. China responded with loans of $28 million in 1964 and $22m in 1972 as its relations with the Yemen improved after a cool period in the late 1960's, allegedly resulting from Soviet pressure on the Yemeni government. With the establishment of the People's Democratic Republic of the Yemen (PDRY) in 1967, Soviet and Chinese attention shifted towards this more pronounced 'left-wing' regime. By 1973 China had given $72m in loans while the USSR lagged behind with a mere $13m added to $25m of military aid. The early attention paid to the Yemen reflected the strategic considerations which followed from Soviet support of Egypt since the middle of the 1950's. Situated at the opposite side of the Red Sea and at the gateway to the Indian Ocean, a Soviet inclined Yemen and later PDRY offered an implied threat to Western interests in the area as well as to the more reactionary and powerful Saudi Arabia, to which the two Yemens were large exporters of labour. Soviet pre-eminence in the North Yemen was countered by Chinese pre-eminence in the South, though both powers continued to retain a presence in each other's zone of influence.

Soviet and Chinese aid rivalries spread across the Red Sea to Ethiopia with the granting of a $102m Soviet loan to Haile Selassie's regime in 1959. These new ties with the USSR delayed Ethiopian recognition of China until 1971 when China garnished diplomatic relations with an $80m loan largely to improve the civil air system from which China then benefited.

Early Soviet and Chinese military involvement on the African side of the Red Sea had been in the Sudan. Between 1955 and 1972 Sudan received $65m of military aid from the USSR, with a major arms deal concluded in 1967 giving the army tanks and aerial defence weaponry and the Air Force the older MIG jets. The army also had Russian tanks from China. Much of this weaponry was used in the war in the South and Southerners alleged at the time that Soviet pilots flew combat helicopters. The alleged Soviet-Bulgarian connection with the unsuccessful coup against the Numeiry regime in 1971 which became the excuse for the killing and imprisonment of thousands of Sudanese communists, soured relations with the USSR. China, after its ritualistic condemnation of 'social-imperialism', thereby gained a foothold which it strengthened through a $75m loan. Soviet economic aid to the Sudan continued and totalled $54m by 1973. The USSR's major breakthrough in establishing an influential position in the region came in Somalia in 1963 when they outbid a Western (West Germany, USA and Italy) military aid offer of $18m by offering $30m. At the same time China was offering economic aid to Somalia worth $23m. With a further large loan of $110m in 1971, Chinese economic aid to Somalia in fact far exceeded the Soviet contribution by 1973 of $71m of which military aid amounted to $50m. China reportedly tried to conclude an arms deal with Somalia in 1973 but their proviso that Somalia should not buy arms from elsewhere was obviously unacceptable to the latter.
It was Soviet military involvement in Somalia which alarmed the cold war warriors of the West. The chief attention focused on the Berbera complex with deep-water berths and ‘naval staging facilities’, alleged to be a euphemism for a Soviet base. These facilities included a communications post to link Moscow with its Indian Ocean fleet and a tactical missile handling and storage ‘facility’. US Congressional delegations visiting Somalia in 1976 were divided about what the Berbera complex actually held; while it was true that missile crates were at Berbera, it was not certain that they were in Soviet hands. The presence in the country of some 3000 Soviet military advisers and 100 technicians, the 700 Somalis trained either in the USSR or Somalia by Soviet advisers, the potential 17,000 strong Somali army and 350 strong airforce that was being catered for, coupled with the strategic position of the country and the increasing concern about the military build-up by the big powers in the Indian Ocean, all fuelled Western concern that it was losing an area traditionally within its ‘sphere of influence’.

The Soviet and Chinese connection also involved Eritrea. China began to supply arms to the Eritrean Liberation Front in 1968 but cut this off completely as part of the agreement which established diplomatic relations with Ethiopia in 1971. China channelled arms through Syria and the PDRY, and the ELF was reported to be receiving training in China well into the late 1960s. The Eritreans got hold of Czech and Soviet arms from Libyan stocks and these were shipped (via Saudi Arabia!) to Eritrea. Soviet arms were also getting to the ELF and later the Eritrean Peoples Liberation Front (EPLF), through the PDRY, Syria and Iraq. Until 1967 Cuban military advisers had also been training Eritrean cadres based in Aden (PDRY). In general this Soviet, Chinese and Cuban military aid was relatively small and mainly indirect, probably more to keep options open than to signify a solid commitment.

The Break with Somalia

Even though the two countries had signed a Friendship Treaty for 20 years in 1974, the precise nature of the relationship between the USSR and Somalia was never very clear right up to the military break in November 1977. Up to October of last year Somalia had received $250m worth of Soviet military aid and there were around 1500 military ‘experts’ in the country. The USSR supplied Somalia with all its petroleum and was involved in major irrigation and dam building projects. Soviet aircraft, lorries and technicians had played a vital role in evacuating and resettling drought stricken nomads in 1975. All this was part of a Shs.375m aid project which also included the provision of fishing vessels and equipment for 20 fishing co-operatives, also part of the nomad resettlement plan. Trade between the two countries had more than doubled from the previously low levels. All of this moved President Siad Barre to state that ‘this historic Soviet assistance’ would never be forgotten and that Somalia’s ‘Soviet brothers’ would be ‘rewarded’ for their help. Nearly two years later at a time when Somali-Soviet relations were becoming very strained and there were widespread rumours of an impending break because of the increasing Soviet role in Ethiopia, Siad was still referring to the key role being played by the USSR and the impossibility of a break.

There is little doubt now that the main objective of Somali foreign policy was to ‘restore’ to its territory the Somali speaking and occupied areas of Ethiopia and Kenya and the port of Djibouti. By 1977 the Somali leadership was based on a
strong and cohesive military and political organisation and a growing economy. In contrast the Ethiopian empire, now presided over by the Dergue, was crumbling. The Eritreans were scoring major victories, and looking forward to declaring independence, the US had cut off arms supplies to the regime in Addis Ababa, and the Somali guerrillas of the Western Somali Liberation Front (reportedly Cuban trained) were operating successfully in the Ogaden region claimed by Somalia and had severed the Addis rail connection to the coast at Djibouti. The Soviet airlift of arms to Ethiopia and Somalia’s support for the Eritrean nationalists soured relations between Somalia and the Soviet Union. The slowdown of Soviet arms deliveries and their eventual stoppage in October 1977 and the restriction of fuel supplies for the military, added to the USSR’s clear commitment to the Ethiopian cause, demonstrated to Somalia that they would get no backing from that quarter for military aid to the WSLF in its occupation of the Ogaden. The Soviet position was very clear from the beginning of the Ogaden war: Somalia was guilty of aggression, of challenging the OAU Charter on the inviolability of existing national boundaries and the USSR would defend Ethiopia’s internationally accepted boundaries and territorial integrity. After the break with Somalia Tass somewhat angrily stated that Somalia had failed to notify the USSR of its ‘intentions to renounce the peaceful way of settling outstanding questions with a neighbouring state.’ Somalia’s territorial claims were ‘fanning the flames of fratricidal war’. Only ‘the imperialists’ would gain from such a dispute.

‘The imperialists’ however were very slow to respond, which was not Somalia’s calculation. Saudi and Iranian offers of aid earlier in 1977 and in 1976 and reactionary Arab support for an anti-Ethiopian position, as well as the expectation that US policy would exactly mirror that of the Soviet Union, presumably gave the Somalis the impression that they had little to lose by a quick strike against a weak Ethiopia. Added to this was the expectation that after helping West Germany to end the Mogadishu hijack in October the necessary aid would be forthcoming from the West European countries. In the event the replacement aid took on the bizarre character of Somalia’s Arab allies buying Soviet and Czech arms from Hungary in the ‘open market’ and of Iran promising to supply Somalia with Soviet arms which it had received from the USSR because it was not allowed to pass on US deliveries.

The USSR’s Switch to Ethiopia
The US decision in April 1977 to stop $100m worth of military supplies which the Dergue said they had part paid for, left them with no alternative but to turn to the Soviet Union. However, some sources claim that there was a secret arms deal between Ethiopia and the USSR the previous December and that Ethiopian soldiers were already training in T-34 tanks. Ethiopia had indeed been getting light arms from Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, but these are believed to have been bought on the open market. It is possible that it was knowledge of these developments added to the more explicit ‘Marxist-Leninist’ direction the Dergue was taking, rather than the human rights issue, which influenced the original US decision to reduce arms supplies to Ethiopia, while the Ethiopian expulsion of the US military in April provided the occasion for the US stopping all supplies. The triumph of Mengistu in the February palace coup also probably meant final defeat for any groups within the Dergue more inclined to seek US military backing. By the same token for Mengistu to secure his power base, he needed to
re-emphasise the ‘Marxist-Leninist’ character of his regime and do a deal with the
Soviet Union.

In the same period, Fidel Castro visited the Horn region and Mengistu went to
Moscow and signed one of those Friendship Treaties with the USSR. Ethiopia
then began to receive T-54 tanks in May and June. The German Democratic
Republic (GDR) supplied weapons for the ‘Peoples’ Militia’ — AK-47s, self
loading rifles, machine pistols, light machine guns, anti-tank rockets and bazookas.
Libyan oil was allegedly underwriting the cost of these weapons. By September
and the Ogaden war the Soviet Union was supplying the whole range of armoury:
Katyusha rocket launchers, armoured personnel carriers, the large and more
modern T-55 and T-62 tanks, long range artillery and MIG 21 and 23 jet fighters
with trained Ethiopian pilots. By October the Cubans had 50 military advisers
to be added to those from the USSR and the PDRY. When the Ethiopians
counter-attacked early in 1978, they had large numbers of Cuban troops and
about 1000 Soviet advisers, including senior officers who had previously been
in Somalia. After a long series of the usual denials from both the Ethiopians
and their allies, Cuba finally admitted their part, when Granma stated in June
that Cuban pilots, tank crews, artillerymen and armoured infantry brigades
had taken part in the fighting to recover the Ogaden, and that the USSR had
supplied Ethiopia with ‘indispensable military equipment, instructors and
advisers’. The increasing military links between the Soviet Union and Ethiopia
were paralleled by a sixfold increase in trade between the two countries from
1976 to 1977, mainly accounted for by Soviet exports.

The Break with Sudan
The changing line-up in the Horn in 1977 was completed in May with the
expulsion of Soviet military advisers from Sudan and a consequent worsening of
relations with the USSR — relations which had earlier been improving steadily
since 1971 especially in the military field. While the Soviet Union was arming
Somalia, Sudan was happy to get most of its military hardware from the same
source. However, as Soviet-Ethiopian ties developed, Sudan, which had been
supporting the Eritrean guerillas, revived its original anti-Soviet stance and request-
ed for US military aid. Numeiry later claimed that the Soviet advisers had
done nothing for two years, that 50% of the military equipment was unservice-
able and that Sudan’s MIGs had been grounded due to lack of oil. Whether this
statement was justified or not, it was certainly true that trade between the two
countries had slumped to 25% of the 1971 level and in the meantime China had
taken over as Sudan’s main market for cotton.

Eritrea
The Ethiopian advance on Eritrea to ‘obliterate’ the guerillas, as a Dergue
captain put it earlier this year, is now well under way. The USSR and Cuba are
clearly unhappy about the possible physical and military annihilation of their
former friends, but the Cubans have been taking part in the operations against
the EPLF and the ELF. Refugee reports have stated that Cuban pilots have been
flying MIG fighters and troops have been operating artillery. Cuban and Soviet
advisers are also training Ethiopian troops in Eritrea. Cuba may be a restraining
influence on the revengeful Dergue, and perhaps trying to get the Eritrean
liberation movements to negotiate a political solution to the problem. Not that
the Eritreans are against negotiation. The ELF leader, Ahmed Nasser, stated earlier in 1978 that the movements are in favour of peace talks, and has indeed been to Moscow to say so. But these talks do have one pre-condition: self-determination for Eritrea. The movements have clearly kept the line open to the USSR in order that the latter puts pressure on the Dergue to negotiate on these terms.

Cuba's position on Eritrea was stated by Castro himself in an interview printed in the *Ethiopian Herald* in December 1977. He argued that when the Eritrean nationalists were fighting Haile Selassie's regime they played a revolutionary role. However, when the Revolution developed in Ethiopia, Saudi Arabia and the other Arab countries began to aid Eritrea, and now Saudi Arabia and the Sudan control the Eritrean liberation movements, and progressive and revolutionary forces are now in a minority. He went on to say that attacking Ethiopia, no matter which banners or arguments are used, is a 'historic crime'. The disintegration of Ethiopia and the surrender of its sea outlets was unacceptable and so self-determination in a confederation was the answer. In June, 1978, he repeated these arguments, adding that he wanted a political solution 'with a unified Ethiopia based on Marxist-Leninist principles for Eritrea'. The Soviet position is that the former regime had tried to destroy the 'national heritage' of Eritrea, but that the changes in Ethiopia now 'created the preconditions for a just settlement of the dispute'. In arguing for the maintenance of the existing territorial boundaries of the former Empire, the USSR and Cuba can bank on the sympathy of most members of the OAU, whose policy it is to oppose the changing of old boundaries by force.

Mengistu however sees the old imperial boundaries of Ethiopia as strictly national boundaries. 'Eritrea' he stated in an interview in *Africa* (March 1978) had always been an 'integral' part of Ethiopia, its 'northern region'. He went on to state that,

Under the National Democratic Revolutionary Programme (of 1976) Nationalities were given the inalienable right to fully participate in the determination of their social, economic and political future within the framework of full regional autonomy. (our italics)

So that even if Mengistu recognised the national identity of of Eritrea, which he does not, it would only qualify for regional autonomy. The outcome of this dispute will perhaps indicate the extent to which the USSR can exert a positive influence on the Dergue, for what is so far clear in all its relationships with countries in the Horn region is that in the end it is the regimes themselves which decide and not the Soviet Union or Cuba.

In assessing the genuineness of the Soviet position on the nationalities question in the Horn, based, it claims, on Lenin's principles it is worth noting *Ethiopian Herald*’s (18 December 1977) comparison of the Somali invasion of Ethiopia to Hitler's invasion of Poland in 1939, arguing that just as the USSR was then in the middle of implementing its Five Year Plan, Ethiopia was in the throes of economic reconstruction when Somalia invaded. Somalia was a Fascist state, Barre another Hitler. Existing frontiers had to be recognised as integral and Somalis should observe this policy especially closely because otherwise Ethiopia could claim it as it once was a part of Ethiopia. This account chose a poor historical analogy, if such it was. The German annexation of Poland, was, as history has confirmed, the direct result of the German-Soviet Treaty of 1939;
indeed, it was the Soviet Union which by this treaty annexed the Eastern part of Poland which it still holds today. As for the claim that Somalia once belonged to Ethiopia, this was made by the Emperor Menelik II in 1891, though perhaps the author was unaware of the imperialist precedent for this claim. After the Russian Revolution, Lenin asserted the right of self-determination to the non-Russian nationalities and the colonies of the Russian Empire from the very beginning of the Revolution, a policy which resulted in for example Finland and Georgia exercising their right to independence and in others choosing to be associated with the Russian Federal Republic. However, the practice of self-determination did not last very long. In 1921, the Red Army invaded Georgia, an invasion like that of Czechoslovakia 47 years later, justified by a call for assistance from the local communists. The real reason — the need for oil — was revealed later. However the former justification was revived in order to sanction the occupation of the Baltic Republics of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia in 1940 and the invasion of Hungary in 1956. Current protestations about national integrity being respected in the Horn of Africa must therefore be regarded with some scepticism.

The USSR’s switch to support of Ethiopia and its resulting conflict with the Eritrean guerillas and with Somalia brought the national question to the forefront. What we have yet to explain is why that switch was made. We shall try to do so by placing the Horn region in the context of the USSR's global foreign policy. It will be argued that geopolitical motives are primary, and that there are short-run economic advantages which should not be ignored. Finally we shall argue that the USSR will assist in the formation of political structures parallel to its own in countries with which it forms close alliances, in order to make for easier dealings with these countries. It then uses the existence of such structures as evidence of the regime’s commitment to socialism. Further, it will be suggested that the theory of non-capitalist development provides the ideological justification for support for and alliances with such regimes, alliances that are dictated by a geopolitical purpose.

The Military Dimension: Soviet Global Strategy and the Horn
The Soviet Union has consistently maintained that it is involved in the Horn to preserve peace and the security of the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean. A joint Soviet/Ethiopian statement at the time of Colonel Mengistu’s visit to Moscow in May 1977 ‘opposed the attempts of some countries to establish control over the Red Sea in violation of the legitimate rights of other countries and peoples of the region and to the detriment of international shipping’. However, analysis of Soviet strategy has focused on the increasing naval activity in recent years both in the Mediterranean and in the Indian Ocean. This increased naval activity is seen as rooted in the Cuban missile crisis of 1962, when it is argued a strong Soviet Navy might have prevented the USA forcing Soviet withdrawal of the missiles. The USSR naval commander-in-chief, Admiral Gorshkov, has been credited with the role of architect of Soviet naval strategy. He argued recently in a book entitled the Sea Power of the State that the key to Soviet defence capacity was ‘to create a modern [nuclear, missile carrying] navy capable of dealing with the latest innovations in the enemy camp in any part of the globe’. The importance of getting naval facilities in friendly countries around the world lay in the ‘vivid’ demonstration of ‘the economic and military power of a country beyond its own borders’ and in the deterrent value against potential enemies ‘by the
perfection of the equipment being exhibited, to undermine them, to intimidate
them, but also to support friendly states.' For Gorshkov,

The sea is a no-man's land and therefore navies do not encounter in their activities many of
the limitations that prevent the use of other branches of the armed forces in peacetime for
political purposes.

'Influence on coastal countries' and the ability to influence by using the more
threat of force of a landing party were two of the political purposes mentioned.

It is not difficult to see where the Horn fits into this strategy. Naval facilities in
Somalia and the PDRY served the purpose of demonstrating Soviet naval power,
of offering assistance to friendly countries and of posing a threat to Western oil
supply lines. Additionally, they served as a warning to China.

While the USSR's friendship with Somalia remained solid, its strategy in the
Horn was clear. However the policy of aiding Ethiopia seemed to jeopardise
grand strategy in the Horn. Why the USSR made this policy development can
perhaps be explained in two ways. First, there was a plan for a socialist con-
federation in the Horn which would be backed militarily and politically by the
USSR: a *Pax Sovietica*, as it came to be dubbed. Indeed the March and April
1977 visits to the Horn states by Fidel Castro and the then Soviet President,
Podgorny, were part of such a strategy for solving the national question. The
federation would include Ethiopia, Somalia, Eritrea, Djibouti and the PDRY.
Siad Barre was however playing both his options. Just after a secret meeting
with Mengistu and Castro in the PDRY, he moved north and attended a meeting
in Sana'a (Yemen) with President Numeiry of Sudan and the Presidents of both
Yemen states. This allegedly Saudi-inspired meeting spurred the Castro federation
lobby on even further but it was rejected by Barre. It was alleged that Siad would
only accept this federation if he was to lead it, presumably this being the only
way Somalis's 'five-star Constitution' (for a Greater Somalia) could be satisfied,
and that the federation idea did not resolve Somali fears about the increasing
militarisation of Ethiopia, or its suspicion of the Dergue leaders.

To add to the confusion of motives, it seems that around this time the Dergue
leaders were putting a deal to the Soviet Union by which Ethiopia would grant
self-determination to the Somalis in the Ogaden, guarantee the integrity of
Djibouti, about to become independent from France, and by which in return
the USSR would send aid to the EPLF in Eritrea in order that it could win out
over its rivals who were regarded as 'non-Marxist', and presumably also in return
for Soviet weapons. Whether the underlying motive of this deal was to secure
arms, or whether it was a new version of the federation proposal is of purely
academic interest now. The fact that the failure of the federation strategy in
all its forms led to its alternative: arming the Dergue and forming a political
alliance which would leave its opponents confused and bring them round to
negotiate a federal solution.

The second explanation for the Soviet Union's new policy was that relations
with Somalia were not really as close as they appeared. Somalia had throughout
its close association with the USSR retained excellent relations with China,
whose aid projects were considered very successful. In January 1977, Siad had
sent a congratulatory message to Chairman Hua saying that 'the militant friendly
relations and bonds of co-operation and understanding between Somalia and
China would without doubt be further consolidated'. And six months later,
China was reported to be offering spares for some of Somalia's older Soviet weapons. Siad also sought good relations with the West, especially with the EEC countries and the World Bank, in order to overcome Soviet dependency. The USSR will certainly not have opposed these connections, though there was some evidence of their having put pressure on Somalia to restrict them. What fuelled Soviet suspicions of Somalia's leaders more than these economic connections with the West was the membership of the Arab League and the flirtations with Saudi Arabia and the Sudan, mentioned above. However, the USSR still thought they were in a strong position throughout 1977. In April Podgorny was talking of 'developing fruitfully the many-sided links between the two countries'; in June the USSR were no doubt gratified to see reports that Siad had stated to a journalist that, 'if you knew what the Soviet Union was doing in Somalia, you would not ask me about the possibility of breaking relations'. Even two weeks before military relations were broken, Siad was stating that relations with his Soviet 'brothers' were 'not totally in jeopardy'. However, once relations were broken the full weight of Soviet condemnation was brought to bear on Somalia and the Soviet ambassador was talking in Mogadishu in headmasterly terms of 'teaching the Somalis a lesson', as the latter found themselves fighting Soviet tanks in the Ogaden. Part of that 'lesson' was no doubt that the USSR held the military strings and were not to be crossed. One lesson however that the USSR had not learnt from its Egyptian experience was that such rationalities do not always figure prominently in the calculations of leaders whose nationalistic impulses may drive them elsewhere. As we have seen, the key element in Siad's strategy, Western arms, failed to materialise in sufficient strength, otherwise Siad might have been reading the lesson.

The Economics of Soviet Involvement
Can Soviet involvement in the Horn have a longer term economic rationale? The evidence for a resource-rich Horn is not very great and in any case has to be balanced against the Soviet Union's vast resource base, which makes the 'raw material imperialism' of the classic kind unnecessary even if it was ideologically possible. Nevertheless raw material and food resources are there to be exploited. Reportedly $3.4 billion (in 1975 values) worth of copper, zinc, lead, silver and gold lies at the bottom of the Red Sea. Ethiopia has deposits of gold and platinum, while the search for major sources of natural gas and oil continues. It is interesting that traces have been found in the disputed Ogaden zone. Eritrea has salt, potash, copper and possibly iron ore and zinc, with possible offshore oil near Massawa. Fish is a major food resource which the Soviet fishing fleet has been harvesting in increasingly great quantities around Africa. Given East European and Soviet meat shortages, fish has presumably become an important alternative protein source. But while fishing is a growth activity (the Soviet fishing catch rose from 5.1 million tons in 1965 to 9.2 million in 1974, with 90% of the latter figure coming from non-domestic fishing grounds) and the African fishing grounds are clearly of some importance to the USSR, it is unlikely to be the economic key to Soviet foreign policy in the Horn. Oil however might be more important. Apart from the strategic connection, that is that the possibility of Soviet and allied control of the oil sea routes and the threat this poses to the major oil producing states as well as the West, there is the question of the Soviet need for oil. Although the USSR is presently more than self-sufficient in oil, it has been pointed out that the necessary new development of oil resources in
Siberia is a high cost operation, especially for transport and communications. The USSR has sought agreements with the advanced capitalist powers, especially Japan, for them to provide the technology to exploit the oil resources. In the meantime the Soviet Union is able to earn hard currency by exporting its less complex oil technology, especially in refining, to friendly oil producing states in the Middle East in exchange for crude oil, which enables it to export oil surpluses to the West. Secondly, it has been a feature of Soviet military and economic aid to its friends and allies in the Third World that oil supplied as part of the aid comes from Middle East countries, presumably as part of the barter deals the USSR makes with the latter states. For example, Somalia's oil supplies for military purposes were part of Soviet aid but the oil came from Iraq. Thirdly, the price increases agreed between the Soviet Union and its East European customers for Soviet oil were designed to reduce the latter's dependence on this oil and allow the USSR to export more of it to hard currency markets. Strategically however it becomes important to safeguard Middle East oil supplies to Eastern Europe so that the socialist bloc as a whole has enough oil for its needs, and the USSR economy can maintain foreign exchange earnings in oil. All of this becomes increasingly important should Soviet oil production peak in the early 1980's before the results of Siberian investment come on stream. However, the real oil position of the USSR is in dispute. The CIA claims that deficits will occur in the 1980's but the reliability of such a source suggests that the opposite is the case and indeed a Swedish consultant's report put forward the view that Soviet oilfields were producing below capacity and that production of crude oil could double by 1990. Oil is unlikely to be the key factor underlying Soviet involvement in the Horn region. But once there, the USSR is in a position to exert some diplomatic leverage from the implied threat to Middle East oil supplies to western Europe and the United States.

To the defence of fishing and oil should be added the defence of the USSR's international shipping business. The question of the 'reactionary Arab' threat to 'international shipping' was explicitly referred to in a Soviet statement quoted earlier. What must have been at the back of their minds was their own expanding shipping business in the Third World. The East African trade is one example. The USSR does not belong to the East African Conference and has been undercutting this cartel and so gaining a larger share of the whole shipping market with the possibility that it will put the other lines, mainly from Western Europe though also from Poland and the GDR, out of business. With a virtual monopoly of commercial shipping through the Suez Canal the USSR would be able to assert some influence once more over Egypt, just as it has been investing more resources into developing the Canal. Of course, to be added to these considerations is the foreign exchange earning potential of this activity.

Despite these clear economic interests and gains, none of the foregoing adds up to a determining economic rationale for foreign policy decisions. The earnings from shipping do represent much needed foreign currency, the barter exchange deals do, where they involve raw materials such as oil or food such as fish, reduce the Soviet hard currency requirements for the repayment of loans from the West and of western technology, where the latter is not done by barter repayment of a proportion of the products derived from the new technology. Although it is clear that the USSR has seen advanced capitalist technology as a means of solving its chronic economic problems of low labour productivity and falling growth rates, such investment still only accounted for about
5% of the total for 1975. In addition, although foreign trade turnover is growing faster than national income, the growth areas are with the other Comecon countries and with the developing world, where barter deals are most common and hard currency payments are not involved. In any case as far as the developing countries are concerned the increase in turnover reflects a very healthy trade surplus, especially with the increases in exports to Angola, Nigeria and Ethiopia in 1977. As to the question of whether the USSR gains from any ‘unequal exchange’ in trade relations, this is not very easy to resolve, mainly because of the barter agreements, where the money values are difficult to assign. As for ‘straightforward’ trade, one study concluded that ‘there is no observable trend to suggest a deliberate Soviet policy of over or under-pricing. On the contrary prices seem to be very much a product of individual bargaining’ (Stevens 1975). Even were the USSR to fix prices in such a way that they did gain, this would simply be one way of ensuring repayment of loans.

Far overshadowing industrial and merchandise trade is the arms trade. Soviet economic aid to 11 African counties between 1971 and 1975 of $600m was far outweighed by military aid worth $2,000m. Although the USSR now matches the US as an equal among suppliers, it is not clear how, or even whether, the weaponry supplied was even paid for. An exception is ironically Ethiopia. Since Soviet military aid began it is believed that $1bn worth has been supplied to Ethiopia. This will have to be repaid in hard currency, and is at the moment equal to three years’ foreign exchange earnings. So that although the USSR is clearly driving harder bargains, the importance of this trade or aid is very small compared to arms production and the foreign trade turnover of the USSR. There is little doubt that the USSR is very willing to step in and supply weapons and training when requested, but this has a more military-strategic than economic rationale. Part of the military (and economic) rationale may be a reflection of what some observers see as the key role played by the Soviet military sector in the development of USSR technology, and its possibly increasing political importance. Certainly from the military practitioners’ point of view, the possibility of testing new weaponry in real battles is always attractive. From the recipient countries’ point of view, Soviet weaponry in particular may be technologically more suitable, being relatively less complicated to manipulate and service than its western counterpart. Also, the Soviet technology lag behind the US is smallest in the arms sector.

Thus, while the general fiction that the advanced ‘socialist’ societies are winning out over capitalism and imperialism is maintained, the reality is of an advancing capitalism and of relatively declining socialism in the material terms which the socialist countries set up as the criteria of comparison, backed by a long, if not increasing lag in technology which can only be reduced by importing from that ‘declining’ West. The developing world constantly shows its understanding of the realities by increasing its economic relations with the capitalist countries but conversely finding the USSR and its allies a more convenient source of arms. For the USSR this is of strategic importance insofar as it can alter the military balance in its favour. The underlying dilemma for the Soviet Union is that advanced capitalism is thus able to use its more sophisticated forms of economic domination which in the longer run fit the requirements of the ‘national intelligentsias’, as Soviet theorists call these ruling groups (see below) and which, as the case of Egypt has recently shown, may prove in the longer run the more important influence on the balance of forces in the international sphere. How-
ever, in the short run, the USSR has the weaponry to offer these states, and this is a growing market. As regards the determinants of foreign policy, the USSR does make economic calculations, but these are consequential upon military strategy and not vice versa.

The Politics of Soviet Involvement
The history of Soviet involvement in the Horn poses a third question: What are the political criteria which are brought to bear in determining Soviet foreign policy alignments? Specifically, is the character of the allied regime of any importance at all? All Soviet scholarly analysis on world development takes as a basic assumption that

Despite its attempts to adapt to the new conditions, capitalism is steadily losing ground in world economics and politics. (Tarabin, 1974)

In their view Imperialism is weakening in its struggle against socialism due to the 'upsurge of activity in the international workers' movement and the national liberation movement'. The 'world socialist system exerts an ever growing influence on inter-imperialist contradictions' in the area of foreign relations, where the socialist countries 'encourage disunity in the imperialist, military and political alliances'. The changed character of the world balance of forces is due to the 'economic growth and military power of the Soviet Union'. Soviet policies of 'international friendship and cooperation with revolutionary, liberation and anti-imperialist forces' are forcing the imperialist powers to contend with a new competitive element in the shape of the world socialist system.

The essence of the theory of non-capitalist development is that the existence of socialism as the 'main force of world development' means that it is possible for post-colonial societies to skip the capitalist stage because there is a 'higher social system' in existence. When Marx, who is quoted in support of this thesis, suggested the possibility of 'skipping a stage', he was thinking of the existence by that time of a socialist western Europe. However, since as the Soviet scholars put it, 'the socialist revolution won out earlier in Russia than in the West European countries' Lenin was able to assign to the eastern socialist world the role assigned by Marx to the western European proletariat. Although the productive forces, and even more so, the production relations, were not dominated by the conditions of advanced capitalism in Russia, Lenin's view was that this was not the determining factor. Solodovnikov and Bogoslovsky endorse Lenin's view in this way:

Thus Lenin established the fact that one or another level — be it even the highest level of development of productive forces and labour productivity — is not the determining prerequisite with which the replacement of one social system by another must necessarily begin, and that such replacement can begin with the revolutionary seizure of political power, with the creation by revolutionary means of the prerequisites for the attainment of this necessary level under the new political system. In other words, the national democratic revolution and its development into a socialist revolution is the way that permits countries that have shaken off the colonial yoke to carry out the transition to socialism, by-passing the capitalist stage . . . or interrupting the process of capitalist development.

On what does the decision to take the 'socialist-oriented', non-capitalist path depend? Andreyev writes,

The choice of capitalist or socialist orientation largely depends on the social groups that hold the key positions in the state apparatus on the political roles that they play and on which emergent classes they identify themselves with.
It is the progressive ‘military and civilian’ national intelligentsia which has the educational and cultural capacity to be the ‘hegemonic leader of the working masses and the social core of revolutionary democracy’. Of this intelligentsia Andreyev writes that it ‘might well voice the interests of either the bourgeois or the revolutionary forces. In the latter instance, revolutionary democrats often carry out the same socio-economic measures as the Communists would have carried out in their place’. Of course the ‘national intelligentsia’ are not without some ‘bourgeois influence’, but more of that below.

Soviet theorists of non-capitalist development often use the example of the Asian republics of the USSR to make their case. Here they see Russian proletarian support as the key to the defeat of ‘feudal and kulak elements’ in these former Russian colonies and the building of socialist institutions and State power. Thus on a world scale, the existence of the large socialist camp gives those states which have undergone a national democratic revolution the same opportunity to join forces with the socialist camp. In 1975 Solodovnikov and Boboslovsky identified six countries in Africa with a ‘socialist orientation’: Algeria, Egypt, Guinea, Congo-Brazzaville, Somalia and Tanzania. Perhaps anticipation the rupture with Egypt, they wrote that the process of non-capitalist development cannot take place without an aggravation of the class struggle, temporary zig-zags and retreats. The main reasons for the instability and inconsistency that we see in the implementation of anti-capitalist measures . . . are to be found in the petty bourgeois nature of these countries and their ruling parties, the low level of the working class’s political and ideological awareness, the inability of many revolutionary democrats to abandon their nationalistic sentiments and the stubborn resistance put up by imperialist and reactionary circles.

Perhaps they were thinking of Somalia too. Indeed the first response by the Soviet media to the Somali abrogation of the Friendship Treaty was to suggest that ‘in the Somali Government, chauvinistic and expansionist elements have taken the upper hand over common sense’. It is precisely because Soviet analysis locates the key to a country’s choice of ‘development path’ and international alignment in the ‘progressive’ or ‘reactionary’ character of the personnel occupying pivotal positions in its state apparatus, that the nature of the political structure associated with the development of ‘socialism’ is of considerable importance; for Soviet theorists, this structure must be one which can be subordinated to its progressive personnel. An important milestone in the journey along the non-capitalist road to socialism is the transformation of revolutionary democratic movements into ‘Marxist-Leninist’ parties. In Somalia it was the ‘revolutionary democratic military and civilian intelligentsia’ as Andreyev might call it which, having established military power, having developed a military relationship with the USSR, adopted ‘Marxist-Leninist’ ideology as that of the state, and finally created the Marxist-Leninist party — the Somali Socialist Revolutionary Party in June 1976. This was ‘an historic step in the direction so brilliantly illuminated by Lenin’ unanimously decided at a ‘representative gathering of approximately 3000 of the most advanced and conscious workers, peasants, soldiers, youth, women, intellectuals, small businessmen and nomads, held at the Academy of Armed Forces’, as the African Communist (First Quarter 1977) reported. Siad Barre was of course proclaimed General Secretary and he declared that the SSRP:

would be the vehicle which would translate the economic and political aspirations of the nation into realities. Lenin had said “Without a revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement”. The organisation needed is a revolutionary party which can direct the
new changes, and whose guidance is scientific socialism and the experiences socialists have gained in their long struggle.

Whether the Party was to be made a 'vehicle' for the military rather than the 'people' was a key question left to be answered in the future, but there was no question about its purpose: to 'direct'. A Somali commentator writing in the Information Ministry's New Era asserted that

The SSRP which is based on the principles of democratic centralism, iron discipline, criticism and self-criticism is sure to grow stronger with the passage of time, gaining in popularity . . .

To assist in maintaining 'iron discipline' there was always that guarantor of popularity, the State Security organisation. Here the Soviet Union provided its particular expertise in the shape of the KGB which has helped to train Somalia's intelligence services. Ironically, the pursuit of 'iron discipline' has occasionally resulted in the temporary imprisonment of the more zealously pro-Soviet ideologues in the military leadership, thus re-emphasising the importance of nationalist politics and of factionalism in these kind of regimes.

The conception of the Party thus developed is that of a group of 'conscious' cadres, well trained in 'Marxism-Leninism' and able to bring this ideology to the masses thus raising their level of political consciousness. The existence of class enemies, of international enemies and of counter-revolutionaries of all kinds requires a well organised, tightly knit group of people with a strong leadership exercising direction and guidance over the classes or class which it is supposed to represent. Hence the need for a strong security service to root out sources of 'anti-State activity'. Only with such a Party organisation can the productive forces be developed and socialism built. The creation of this party is an important signpost for 'socialist orientation'.

The Ethiopian military, having similarly acquired 'Marxist-Leninist' ideology via Soviet weapons, have been trying to create such a 'vanguard party' for some time. The Dergue is still trying to weld together the different political factions which are still 'legal' into a 'proletarian party'. It is instructive in assessing any political determination of foreign policy, to follow Soviet comment on the 'revolutionary process' in Ethiopia. Soviet radio and press comment on the Dergue in its early months labelled it as a 'genuinely progressive force'. Apparently there were offers from the Soviet Union of military supplies in 1974 but the Dergue turned these down supposedly because of the close relations between Somalia and the USSR. In 1975 Soviet courtship of the Dergue continued with Moscow Radio yet again describing it as 'progressive', especially because of the declarations by the Dergue on Economic Policy and on Land Reform of February and March 1975 which projected the nationalisations of key economic sectors and of land. The African Communist (Fourth Quarter 1975) no doubt reflected 'socialist camp' thinking on Ethiopia or alternatively helped to mould it when one of its contributors wrote:

The policy of 'Ethiopia Tikdem' meaning 'Ethiopian Socialism' (sic)* is largely in its incipient stage and it is still unclear whether it will lead to a real socialist orientation or provide the rhetoric for a new exploitative class based on a military-bureaucratic bourgeoisie. Ultimately the answer will depend on whether the other pillar of the Ethiopian Revolution — the working masses and the militant youth — wins its rightful place in the new body politic. But the Declaration on Economic Policy followed by the far reaching edict on agrarian reform indicates a revolutionary purpose of the most hopeful kind.

*Ethiopia Tikdem in fact means 'Ethiopia First'.
By early 1977 Soviet commentaries had clearly come to view the Dergue as more than a progressive force. The political struggle, wrote the Pravda Addis Ababa correspondent on 6 January had assumed ‘acute forms’ and the Dergue had had to face plots by ‘ultra-leftist, anarchist and petty bourgeois groups’. However, the regime was moving in a ‘socialist direction’ with the ‘strengthening of the organs of people’s authority’ including the preparation for the creation of ‘a political party relying on the proletariat and basing its work on the principles of scientific socialism’. Such preparations had been going on since the April 1976 ‘Programme for the National Democratic Revolution’ announced the Dergue’s intention to create a People’s Democratic Republic under the leadership of the proletariat, and the Provisional Office for Mass Organisational Affairs (POMOA) was created to give the political and ideological basis for the intended state of affairs. On 3 February 1977 Izvestiya’s Addis correspondent reported that a large demonstration of workers, students and peasants had taken place denouncing counter-revolution and that the Chairman of the Dergue General Teferi Bante ‘had called on all progressive forces to show vigilance and expressed his confidence in the Revolution’. However the General must have got his lines wrong somewhere in his speech because Izvestiya was being read in Moscow, Teferi Bante had been executed in a Palace coup by the Mengistu faction of the Dergue. Twelve days later Tass was able to report that the 3 February ‘changes in the structure of Government sharply restricted the circle of persons who can take important decisions in the periods between the sessions of the PMAC (Provisional Military Advisory Council)’ and 12 days after that report Pravda assured its readers that the Dergue was going over to the offensive against its political opponents and that Mengistu, its new Chairman, had ‘in fact been at the head of the revolutionary movement since 1974’. What this presumably all meant was that Mengistu had been the USSR’s man for some time, that his rivals had sought to maintain links with the US, and that in order to defeat them he had assured himself of Soviet support, both military and economic.

Fidel Castro was certainly unambiguous about Ethiopia and Mengistu. He stated in an interview published in Granma that ‘a profound revolution’ was taking place in Ethiopia based on a ‘powerful movement and a thoroughgoing agrarian reform in a feudal country in which the peasants were actually slaves’. He went on to say:

There has been an urban reform and the main industries of the country have been nationalised. I think there are certain similarities between the Ethiopian Revolution and the French and Bolshevik Revolutions, because the leaders have made an anti-feudal revolution while working at the same time for socialism. This reminds us of the intense class struggle waged between the workers and the peasants on the one side and the large landowners and bourgeoisie on the other and because this country is now being criminally attacked from abroad by the Arab reaction, acting in complicity with imperialism. The 3 February events have been decisive. That was when the Left and the true leaders of the Revolution took control and the process was directed along revolutionary lines. I’ve gotten to know Mengistu very well. He is a serene, daring, intelligent and courageous man, and I think he has exceptional qualities as a revolutionary leader.

Not that anyone could doubt that a ‘revolution’ was taking place. In terms of violence and purges alone, there was a remarkable similarity to the Revolutions of France and Russia. Even the terminology of the Russian civil war was imported: the Dergue unleashed a ‘red terror’ campaign against the ‘white terror’ of its political opponents. When a Dergue official was asked to provide a figure for those killed or arrested, he stated that ‘there is no cost accounting when you
are conducting a revolution.' Amnesty International have just provided the world with the figures. They estimate that the Dergue has been responsible for the deaths of 5000 people from 'summary executions' and political killings carried out during the 'red terror'. The scale of political arrests and detentions in total secrecy, running into 'some thousands', revives memories of the 1930s in the USSR. A revolution certainly, but in a socialist direction? Furthermore, was it in keeping with the methods of Marxist analysis that on the basis of a single visit to Ethiopia and a couple of meetings with Mengistu, Castro could come to such a judgement? Nationalisation and land reform did not guarantee a transition to socialism and to many observers the Mengistu group looked very likely to fit the 'military-bureaucratic' bill. However, by August the leader of the Soviet Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee delegation to Addis was talking of the 'deeply rooted fraternal relations between the peoples of the two socialist countries'. He was 'tremendously impressed' with the 'mammoth militia parade' (as well he might be with its array of Soviet and Czech small arms) and the delegation pronounced itself satisfied that 'the PMAC was doing everything possible to prepare the masses for power'. In December the *Ethiopian Herald* reported a donation of 40,000 Birr from the USSR Trades Unions to the 350,000 member All Ethiopia Trades Union (AETU). In handing over this sum the USSR Ambassador Ratanov said that 'the only way to make the revolution achieve its lofty aim is through the active participation in the on-going class struggle, greater politicisation, discipline and increased production'. The AETU had been established earlier in the year to replace the Confederation of Ethiopian Labour Unions banned in 1976 because it was organised by political groups opposed to the continuing rule of the military. At that time the USSR had been reported to be unhappy about the banning of a workers' movement but all was now presumably well. But the difficulties of creating a workers' movement from the top are many; not least the 'correctness' of the leadership. By the middle of 1978 the entire leadership of the AETU had been arrested for allegedly engaging in political activity inside Me'ei Sone, the formerly favoured political group which went underground. Clearly this group has to be wiped out before a reliable trades union movement, not to mention political party, can be formed.

Establishing a base among the peasants has been of greater importance to the Dergue. The first congress of the All Ethiopia Peasants Association was held in April 1978. The AEPA entails a tiered system of local, district, provincial and regional levels. This gives the Ethiopian government the opportunity to control the local associations, which have had considerable autonomy during the past two years. It is to be expected that the associations will have to identify ideologically with the PMAC and the projected new party. This would be consistent with an institutional view of 'socialism' characterised by the integration of Party-State and worker and peasant organisations, under the leadership of the party. This replication of the structures of Stalin's USSR is not a development which necessarily follows from Soviet involvement, but it is one which the USSR is well pleased to foster, making for, though not necessarily guaranteeing, a more effective geo-political relationship. Even in cases where this policy comes adrift, as in Somalia, a strong 'pro-Soviet' lobby still remains and diplomatic relations have yet to be broken.

Thus Ethiopia has seen the playing out of a model non-capitalist scenario. Mengistu's 'circle' was seen as the revolutionary custodian of Ethiopia's National
Democratic Revolution and 3 February as the date when this revolutionary
democratic group of the military intelligentsia irrevocably placed Ethiopia on
the road to socialism. It should be fairly clear by now that ‘socialist orientation’
has relatively little to do with the internal dynamic of social relations through-
out the economy and society of these countries. The orientation of a leading
group within the elite corps of the State machine towards the Soviet Union and
towards policies of State control of the economy is sufficient to qualify for the
label. The masses on whose behalf the Revolution is made are then organised
according to the ‘principles of scientific socialism’, learning their ideological
lines, performing their tasks in the ‘struggle for production’ and ready to de-
nounce what they had supported the day before when ‘bourgeois influences’
take over in the leadership. In essence, we see how military alliances made for
geo-political reasons are given their political justification and theoretical pedi-
gree in the appropriate editing of Marx and Lenin.

China and the Horn

As is well known, Chinese foreign policy follows the theory of the Three Worlds,
placing China in the Third World in solidarity with the ‘oppressed nations’,
‘forging unity and building the broadest united front against the two hegemonic
powers’ war policies’ to quote the Peking Review (2 December 1978). China
seeks to establish peaceful relations with all states on the basis of the ‘Five
Principles’ of peaceful co-existence: mutual respect for sovereignty, and ter-
ritorial integrity; mutual non-aggression; non-interference in each other’s internal
affairs; equality and mutual benefit; and peaceful co-existence. China sees the
USSR as the main danger to world peace. According to Chinese analysis, the
Soviet Union has been a social-imperialist or social-colonialist power since ‘not
long after Stalin’s death’ with the rise of the ‘Khrushchev-Brezhnev clique’ to
state and party power. The Soviet Union is ‘state-monopoly capitalist’ and
carries out its ‘tsarist’ objective of colonial expansion. The ‘new Tsars’ are after
the maximum profits, and so ‘while exploiting and oppressing the people at
home, they have joined the ranks of international imperialism, pushing an
imperialist policy to divide up the world’, according to the above-mentioned
article. The USSR’s drive is the ‘scramble for world domination’ resulting from
its ‘state-monopoly capitalist base’.

China constantly condemns the ‘power politics and hegemonism of the big
bullying the small and the strong bullying the weak’, and this is the view it has
taken of events in the Horn. Somalia’s decision to expel the Soviet military and
close down military facilities was greeted by China as a ‘daring action’, marking
the ‘new awakening of African states and people’ and as ‘another important vic-
tory ... in the struggle against hegemonism’. China was equally pleased with
Sudan’s expulsion of the Soviet military earlier in the year. We have already
noted China’s economic links with the three African powers in the Horn region.
Despite the increased Soviet involvement in 1977 China sought to expand its
ties with Ethiopia by an agreement to build a textile factory announced last
December while previously China and Somalia continued to have cordial relations
throughout the period when the Soviet connection was strongest. Sudan had
moved much closer to China since the 1971 coup attempt. So whatever an
individual nation may decide to do in terms of relations with rival powers, China
is quite happy to forge relations with such a state as long as the five principles
are adhered to.
An important reason why China follows this policy may be that it has no alternative, lacking both the economic power of the imperialist states and the military power of the Soviet Union. Influence on the foreign and domestic policies of Third World countries is therefore best exerted by expanding economic relations through aid and trade, and by being able to contrast this seemingly disinterested policy with the competitive military and economic policies of the two 'super-powers'. Further, China seeks to undermine the formation of potentially hostile alliances, particularly on its borders, as recent policy towards Cambodia and Vietnam has shown, especially alliances of a pro-Soviet character. The threat from the Soviet Union is seen as very real, with the build up of missile forces and military personnel on the Soviet and Mongolian sides of the border with China. Soviet troop withdrawals from the other side of its borders are thus made a condition for the improvement of Sino-Soviet state relations, as a recent speech by Chairman Hua repeated.

The Horn of Africa may be becoming increasingly important to China's global strategy as it is already to the US and USSR's. For here the Horn's critical location requires the prevention of hostile centres and alliances being formed against China in the future. As for specific economic interests, the same arguments apply as in the case of the USSR, that is, that they are hardly a determining rationale for foreign policy. Ironically many of the arguments which the Chinese theories use to justify their 'social-imperialist' labelling of the Soviet Union, also apply to China itself! Trade and aid deals between China and the Third World are very similar in the mechanics of their operation to those concluded with the Soviet Union. For instance, a feature of Chinese aid projects is that local costs are paid for from the profits made on the sale of Chinese goods, another case of trade following aid. However, these economic interests are secondary and relatively minor compared to the major strategic objective of containing the two 'hegemonic' powers. The protection of State interests, as for the USSR, remains the chief determinant of China's foreign policy.

Cuban Strategy in the Horn
While it is impossible to discount the tremendous military and economic connections that bind Cuba to the USSR, it is perhaps too simple to explain the Cuban involvement in the Horn, or indeed in Angola, as merely a consequence of these connections. There is little doubt that Cuba's commitment to the anti-imperialist struggle has informed its strategy in Africa as it informed its endorsement of Guevarist revolutionary strategy in Latin America in the 1960s, a strategy which, incidentally, helped to sour Cuban-Soviet relations for a while. The account by Garcia Marquez in New Left Review 101-2 of the way in which many Cubans volunteered to fight in Angola and the other seemingly spontaneous demonstrations of solidarity with anti-imperialist forces give some indication that there is a popular political commitment which would override any economic obligation. Nevertheless the economic connections should not be set aside so easily. Cuba is heavily dependent on the USSR, both economically and militarily. This very dependence seems to force the Cubans to carve out an independent foreign policy and international presence which may lead to its diplomatic recognition by the USA. The resulting resumption of economic ties with the US and US-led international financial organisations will thus lessen Cuba's dependence on the USSR. It is in the latter's interest that this happens,
Cuba’s recent economic difficulties have accelerated its need to resume normal economic relations with its big neighbour. The collapse of the world sugar price has hit Cuba hard. Although the USSR and the other Comecon countries import a large part of the Cuban crop (at, Peking should note, higher than world prices on the average) earnings from sugar on world hard currency markets is an important source of payment for imports from the developed capitalist countries, and Soviet shortages of sugar beet reported in 1977 meant that there was less available for sale by Cuba in hard currency markets because they had to increase their sales to the USSR. However the Cubans had ordered large quantities of foreign, mainly producer, goods on the basis of the record 1973-4 sugar prices and so they now have a large import bill to pay with lower receipts than expected. In addition, Cuba had accumulated foreign currency debts of up to $500m, 60% of which was due for payment in 1977. In addition to those debts, Cuba also has to start repaying its debts to the Soviet Union in the mid-1980s and however they are to be repaid, the net result is the need for increased foreign exchange earnings. So Cuba is now developing tourism and citrus as export earners, and turning to joint venture deals with international firms, especially in copper and zinc mining. Further, Cuba is trying to get aid from the international financial institutions with the help of the USSR. This appears to be dependent on US approval which can only come with the lifting of the blockade. This would allow Cuba to establish cooperation links with US companies directly instead of through their overseas subsidiaries. Although Castro has said that he will not trade off a partial withdrawal from Africa against financial aid, the African involvement of about a quarter of Cuba’s army is a useful bargaining counter. Meanwhile, Cuba remains dependent on the USSR for arms supplies — $350m worth since 1960, 70% between 1960 and 1963 — and for trade (50% of Cuba’s trade with the world), while Cuba’s militant support for Ethiopia’s ‘revolution’ is probably paid for entirely by the Soviet Union and the other allied socialist countries.

If it is not for machinery and oil from the Comecon countries and their demand for Cuban sugar, what is the political rationale for Cuban involvement? Fidel Castro has explained it in this way:

Africa is the weakest link in the imperialist chain today. The worst crimes committed against the peoples in the last centuries were committed there. There are excellent perspectives there for going directly from tribalism to socialism, without having to go through certain stages that other regions of the world had to experience. As revolutionaries, we have the duty to support the anti-imperialist, anti-racist, and anti-neocolonialist struggle.

Africa is very important today. Imperialist domination isn’t as strong there as it is in Latin America. Therefore there are real possibilities for the revolution in Africa.

The opportunity for Cuban communists to demonstrate their internationalism particularly after suppressing it for so long in Latin America, may reflect a deep feeling among Cubans that means more to them than the price of sugar.

Conclusions
The main objective of this article has been to show that Soviet foreign policy towards the Horn has been based, as elsewhere, on the defence of its State interests, primarily in the sense of securing its boundaries, but also of protecting
the interests of the national economy and of preserving the political relations on the basis of which the political leadership of the CPSU exercises state power. That the USSR has a geo-political interest of a defensive character in the Horn and the Indian ocean should not be confused with the cold war assertions of politicians and military in the West which see these developments as evidence of aggressive intent and thus seek to justify the manufacture and deployment of even more deadly weaponry, the tightening of internal security and the limiting of hard won democratic rights. Such reactions only serve to reinforce the geo-political-defensive nature of Soviet foreign policy and thus lead to the risk of escalating conflict around the world, not to mention retarding the possibilities of the development of political democracy within the USSR and its allies.

While emphasising the geo-political motivation of Soviet foreign policy we have also noted that the USSR derives some economic benefits from its trade and aid relations with developing countries, particularly in allowing it to earn hard currency. But these benefits are marginal to its total economic activity and cannot be reduced to its economic dynamic. Thus we have taken issue with Chinese interpretations and especially with the thesis of 'social-imperialism'. It has also been argued that the reproduction of the political structure of the USSR, a structure of party-state indistinguishability and incorporation into that union of worker and peasant organisations, is important for the USSR's political leadership. It does confer a socialist legitimacy of a recognisable kind to those leaderships, military or civilian, and it does offer a useful political disguise for the Soviet Union's geo-political motivations. The USSR does not require this development for the success of its foreign policy, but where it sees the opportunity of fostering it, it will do so.

However the 'Marxist-Leninist' political structure is that of Stalin’s USSR, the very concept of Marxism-Leninism being of Stalinist coinage. The party which sits at the head of this structure is the party of Lenin's conception. The key question for revolutionary socialists is whether it is possible to separate Lenin's model of the party from its Stalinist abuse. Is it not in the very nature of the Leninist 'vanguard party', whether formed from above or from below, that Stalinist distortions are most likely to occur? Will whether they do or do not occur depend simply upon the personal character of the leader or leaders? When such a party achieves a monopoly of state power this issue is very serious indeed if all that lies between authoritarian dictatorship and political democracy is the psychological make-up of the party leader. In Somalia and Ethiopia the model of the party sought after or achieved is proclaimed to be that of Lenin. Rather it is that model conceived in the pre-revolutionary period by Lenin and severely edited by Stalin and his group in the 1920s. As Claudin shows, Lenin's conception of the Party set out in What is to be Done? was organisationally related to the struggle against the 'political police' of Tsarist Russia. Thus 'professional revolutionaries' were required 'organised, according to "all the rules of the art" by people who are professionally engaged in political activity' and whom 'the spontaneously awakening masses will advance also from their own ranks' in 'increasing numbers'. The role of a revolutionary vanguard party was to bring consciousness to the working class movement because if allowed to develop 'spontaneously' this would only lead 'to its subordination to bourgeois ideology'. As Claudin points out, within the logic of this view the proletariat becomes the object which in the hands of the Party, the 'bearer of socialist consciousness' becomes the 'material weapon' for socialist victory. It is true that after the 1905
Revolution Lenin modified his view of the nature of the party to take in the new conditions of legality in which it could then operate, especially with regard to widening membership and contesting elections, and with making use of the abolition of censorship. But the essential character of the party remains: it determines the ‘correct’ line, it can brook no internal opposition and must conduct ‘periodic cleansing of its ranks’ (*Party Organisation and Party Literature*). While the political conditions in which the party operates may change, the internal rules which form the basis of its ‘disciplined’ functioning do not.

It is ironic to compare contemporary versions of this type of Party claiming the ‘Marxist-Leninist’ label with the role of the political party as outlined by Marx and Engels. ‘Communists therefore are ... the most advanced and resolute section of the working class parties of every country, that section which pushes forward all others’. As the *Communist Manifesto* also states, ‘The Communists do not form a separate party opposed to other working class parties’. Claudin makes the point that for Marx, the class developed political consciousness through various forms of struggle and that political parties were an ‘episodic’ phenomenon in this process. Here the party was inseparable from the class. The party itself was to be democratic, open to all shades of socialist opinion, without leadership cults and with election and permanent control of leaders by members. There is no question that a certain revolutionary elitism creeps into even Marx and Engels’ statements in the *Communist Manifesto*. The Communists, they wrote ‘have over the great mass of the proletariat the advantage of clearly understanding the line of march, the conditions, and the ultimate general results of the proletariat movement’. However they do not make the leap into the era of the monolithic single party placed above the proletariat which was the hallmark of Stalin’s contribution to the post-revolutionary process in the Soviet Union, a contribution derived from the essentials rather than the qualifications of Lenin’s theory and practice. For despite Lenin’s theoretical and, for some time after 1917, practical commitment to a plurality of parties, and to differences of view being admissible within the Bolshevik party itself, it is the 1902 model of a tightly-knit quasi-political organisation aimed against the Tsarist political police which has survived. As we know, it was the external and internal hostility to the Bolsheviks which was used to justify that party’s political monopoly and it was not long before its centralist organisation was able to overcome its democratic ideology and provide a vehicle for Stalin’s group and the security police to take over, stage their show trials, denounce, imprison and execute subsequently exonerated communists, and repeat the process in Eastern Europe in the 1950s. It is arguable how much weight is to be attached to Lenin’s conception of the party, how much to the circumstances of the time, and how much to the personality of Stalin, in these developments. Nearing his death, Lenin wanted the removal of Stalin as General Secretary and the renewal of the party through the infusion of a number of well trained ‘working class’ cadres. This view of political structures in personal terms is very similar to that of the contemporary theorists of the non-capitalist path.

The justification of the centralist turn taken in Stalinist USSR, for iron discipline and the sacrificing of even socialist plurality, has always rested on the economic effectivity of centralised planning. The appeal of this model to socialists in developing countries has equally rested on its supposed economic advantages. Even if this was the case, the abandonment of democratic politics for the sake of economic advantage does not necessarily, if at all, take a society any nearer to
socialism, unless socialism is to be measured by the tonnage of steel, or the number of orbiting space-people. It may well be that the 'Marxist-Leninist' regimes of Africa are a necessary development in order to lay the basis for productive development; it may be they are an inevitable development, as many have argued the Stalinist period was. But the existence of these regimes cannot of itself guarantee an irreversible march to socialism. Their very adoption of the sterile 'Marxist-Leninist' ideological package is more likely in our view to guarantee economic and social stagnation and political degeneration as the party line restricts or even forbids political activity and analysis outside the narrow confines of the apparatus and ideology.

If we are chiefly concerned with the political, rather than diplomatic, impact of the USSR's foreign policy, then the way in which its 'political model' has been adopted elsewhere is of primary importance to those at the receiving end, even if it is not for Soviet foreign policy makers. It is as important now as it ever was, for those of us wanting to express our solidarity with the struggle for socialism in Africa and elsewhere throughout the world, that we struggle for those political structures that will guarantee the democratic rights of the mass of the people as a prerequisite to building socialism. Theoretically, this means resurrecting Marxism as a method rather than as the religion it has become. Practically, this means recognising that the attitude taken towards the USSR, China or the US is no test of a country's or a movement's commitment to socialism or of the existence of political conditions for socialist development. Further, it means seriously questioning the undemocratic centralist model and the monolithic party of which it is part and questioning the legitimacy of destroying genuine grass roots worker and peasant institutions whose survival under politically pluralistic conditions can be the only sure guarantee against Stalinist deformations and can provide the basis for a recognisably genuine, democratic socialist development. Only then can we expect such countries to develop the kind of foreign policy which subordinates interests of state to interests of socialist forces in other nation states. Such a foreign policy is not guaranteed, but the political preconditions for fighting for such a policy would have been established domestically. It is the lack of such democratic practices in the Soviet Union which continues to guarantee that Soviet foreign policy will be based in the last analysis on geo-political state interest. Where such interest puts it on the same side as domestic socialist forces in the countries concerned this is not necessarily the reflection of a consistent 'socialist' foreign policy, the dimensions of which have yet to be properly explored.

Bibliographic Notes


The *Peking Review* carries regular statements of China's policy and theoretical position on foreign affairs, as does *China Broadsheet* (China Policy Study Group, London).


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The Political Economy of Mauritania: Imperialism and Class Struggle

Mahfoud Bennoune

This article explores the way that colonial exploitation conditioned the political, social and economic life of the Mauritanian rural and urban communities. It shows how a neo-colonial state was formed for the specific purpose not only of continuing colonial plunder under a new institutional arrangement but of intensifying the exploitation of Mauritanian workers for the benefit of multinational corporations, with far-reaching and even tragic socio-economic consequences for the majority of the Mauritanian people.*

In Mauritania the recognition of national sovereignty by France in 1960 did not result in the radical alteration of the colonial status quo ante. The post-independence state apparatus inherited from the pre-1960 period not only was kept intact in its basic structure, function and finality, but was perfected and strengthened in order to preserve the interests of multinational corporations with only a gradual change in the political, administrative and military personnel in favour of the indigenous emergent predominant classes. This former French colony in northwest Africa has for many years been the site of lucrative mining operations carried out by multinational corporations.

Now, caught up in a lethal conflict over Western Sahara, Mauritania has suddenly attracted the attention of the international diplomatic channels and news media. Therefore, it is an opportune moment to provide an analysis of the formation of this neo-colonial state and its evolution. Since disintegrative changes wrought by the colonial situation may be difficult to comprehend unless contrasted with the actual pre-colonial social formation, this article will consist of three parts. The first will analyze the characteristic features of the indigenous pre-colonial social formation which was composed of at least two distinct modes of production: pastoral nomadism and sedentary agriculture articulated by trade. The second part will delineate the socio-economic changes brought about by the penetration of capitalist social relations of production under a colonial form. And the third, which is the main focus, analyzes the emergence and development of a neo-colonial state.

**Land and People**

Present-day Mauritania constitutes a ‘geographic link’ between the Maghreb and

*Although this manuscript was submitted before the 1978 coup, that event has clearly done nothing to disturb the basic pattern described here — Editors.
sub-Saharan Africa. Historically it played an important role in the famous trans-Saharan trade which was carried out from antiquity until its interruption by colonialism in the twentieth century. On the whole the country is predominantly constituted by the desert. Indeed, the average annual rainfall runs progressively from less than six inches in the north to 27 inches in the south.

As a consequence, Mauritania exhibits three distinct geographic zones: a narrow belt located in the extreme south along the Senegal River valley where soil and climatic conditions are favourable enough to make possible the development of agriculture and sedentary village peasant communities. Further north from this valley is a broad Sudanic savannah region which stretches from east to west and is characterized by large sand plains and fixed dunes covered with sparse grass and scrub trees; on the far northern fringes is located an immense arid region. In this zone vegetation is restricted to dry beds of wadis beneath which water still flows, or to oases where palm groves and irrigated agriculture flourish.

Thus the immensity of the barren Saharan landscapes of the northern part stand in contrast to the steppe lands of the southern zones. The primary economic pursuits of the population of the steppe lands has been intensive stock-raising which formed the life blood of the pastoral nomads. However, in the extreme south, agriculture (mostly irrigated) has been widely practiced since neolithic times. These basic geographic and climatic characteristics have, in many respects, shaped and conditioned the successive socio-economic formations and the consecutive modes of production that have developed in Mauritania during its long and rich pre-colonial history.

The Sahara in general and Mauritania in particular have been inhabited since the paleolithic period. By the neolithic period, various pre-historic communities were already practicing the cultivation of plants and the raising of livestock. Faunal remains indicate that the Sahara was then receiving sufficient amounts of rainfall to permit the existence of a variety of animals and the development of agriculture. However, the post-neolithic process of dessication not only extended the desert but also expelled — except from oases — man, plants, and animals southward.

The original population which settled Mauritania was mentioned in some Arab-Berber mythologies and legends as the Beni-Bafur, who continued to live there until historic times. When the domestication of the camel made possible trans-Saharan travel, some Berber tribes, who were probably driven out by the Roman domination of North Africa and who were the ancestors of the population of the modern Sanhaja and Zenete desert confederacies, appeared in this region. After the seventh century, A.D., various other Arab-Berber nomadic populations immigrated there. The development of trans-Saharan trade was accompanied by wars of expansion and Islamization of the local population, quickly followed by Arabization. Contemporary Mauritanians are a mixture of Berbers, Arabs and sub-Saharan Africans consisting of the Tukulors, Fulani Soninke (or Sarakole) and Wolof tribes, whose populations are dispersed all over the southern parts of the country and have constituted, until recently, the bulk of the sedentary village communities.

Pre-Colonial Socio-economic Formation and Political Organization
The Mauritanian pre-colonial socio-economic formation exhibited specific
features characterized strikingly by a combination of specific tributary (and yet internally cooperative) social relations of production. This pre-capitalist socio-economic formation comprised two distinct modes of production. In the southern region a tributary mode of production, based on a sedentary mixed economy was characterized by a tribal corporate landholding system. As long as the peasant cultivators exploited their lands and paid their traditional taxes to the ruling chieftains representing the authority of the emirs, they maintained the security of tenure and were granted ‘protection’. However, further north in central and northern Mauritania, a pastoral nomadic mode of production characterized by specific social relations of production existed. It was geared primarily to extensive livestock raising which required special techniques of production and a certain peculiar ‘logistics’ involving constant mobility. Because of this, herds, rather than land, formed the essential social wealth of these pastoralists and even articulated their property relations as well.

Pastoral nomadism as practiced by the Mauritanians was not only a highly specialized and skilled exploitation of a desert environment but also represents an altogether distinct mode of production. It is characterized broadly by individual or familial ownership of animals and collective access to land. While herds belonged to individual extended families, usufruct rights to the grazing of pastures were held collectively by the tribes. Indeed, Marx observed that,

Among nomadic pastoral tribes ... by the earth, like all other conditions of nature, appears in its elementary boundlessness ... It is grazed and consumed by the herds, which provide the nomadic peoples with their subsistence. They regard it as their property, though never fixing that property. Among the nomadic pastoral tribes the community is in fact always united, a travelling party, caravan, horde, and the forms of higher and lower rank develop out of the conditions of this mode of life ... What is appropriated is here only the herd and not the soil, which is always used in temporary communalty wherever the tribe breaks its wanderings (Pre-Capitalist Social Formations).

In short, the pre-colonial economy was generally geared to the production of ‘use values’ rather than ‘exchange values’. Only in the cities there existed a petty commodity ‘sector’ controlled by artisans side by side with a mercantile ‘sector’ specializing in local and long-distance caravan trade.

The socio-economic organization was characterized by a certain degree of collective labour, communal granaries, and livestock lending system of mutual cooperation. Sheep shearing, which is an important annual activity, was carried out collectively by the herders who pooled their labour together on a ‘cooperative basis’. Due to the annual migratory cycles, the nomads owning land in the oases or other areas gave it for cultivation to share croppers. The landowners provided land and water and the share croppers furnished tools and labour in exchange for half of the products. Since the nomadic collectivities considered these agricultural crops as communal property they shared them among their members. As a result, all the silos of grain were owned collectively by the members of the clan or tribe. Usually a large quantity of grain stored there is saved for eventual crises that may be caused by drought.

Livestock lending was widely practiced as a socio-economic mechanism of integration and cooperation designed to facilitate the task of impoverished nomadic families in acquiring new flocks from fortunate kinsmen, friends or patrons in order not to drop out of the pastoral system. According to Briggs, this lending of flocks,
binds together different social segments of a nomadic mourish community... The borrower enjoys free use of the animal that is loaned and of such of its products as he consumes himself, but he must reimburse the owner for products that are sold and must also pay some sort of depreciation fee if he is able. Loans are made for periods of anywhere from three days to three generations.

This peculiar underlying infrastructure gave rise to a corresponding socio-political organization characterized by small segmentary 'city-States' or emirates which were ruled by warriors in close alliance with religious brotherhoods.

At the time of the French conquest the basic socio-political unit at the local level was, in Mauritania as elsewhere in the Saharan region of the Maghreb, the tribe. The term 'tribal society' remains an exceedingly ill-defined catchall. Indeed, the concept of tribe has been ossified by the colonial administrators and Euro-American anthropologists. The latter, in premising their theoretical assumptions on ethnocentric observations distorted by the ideological presuppositions of the former, have analyzed tribal systems as final political units, which are more or less islands unto themselves. However, historically almost all Saharan tribes including those of Mauritania, either formed independent large desert confederacies, known as emirates, or were loosely linked to regional states and multi-ethnic empires. They all shared to a large extent, a common culture, language and history. Mauritania has been ruled since the eighth century by various emirs whose capital shifted from one place to another.

Thus, after 1644, when the warlike Hassaniya tribes seized power after having defeated the armies of the Sanhaja and Zenete confederacies, a centralized emirate was founded. Thenceforth Mauritanian society came to be divided into various distinct classes whose striking membership rigidity led some authors to refer to them as castes. The ruling elements at the top were constituted by aristocratic warriors and marabouts or holy families, the former claiming to be Arabs while the latter were of Berber descent. The majority of the population was considered by this ruling 'caste' as 'vassals' who were granted military and supernatural protection in exchange for tribute. Two artisanal classes who specialized not only in handicraft production but also in furnishing musicians and genealogists (griots) provided services mainly for the ruling aristocratic and clerical class. The bottom of this social hierarchy was filled by a class which was reduced to a state of servitude in order to provide labourers and various other retainers attached to oligarchic families. This class was composed mainly of sub-Saharan Africans.

Nonetheless, the system of tribute payments reflects the complexity of the pre-capitalist social stratification of Mauritania. The 'vassals' paid tributes not only for 'armed protection' but also for 'economic assistance' during crises. However, many people became tribute-paying vassals as a result of indebtedness to the wealthy families. The latter in return sometimes paid 'warlike groups' who were used as their mercenaries or their allies; the merchants paid dues at times to powerful and strategically located nomadic communities for the right to 'pass back and forth' with their caravans. And to complicate the matter further, even the maraboutic groups were actually subdivided into two social categories: marabouts of the shade and marabouts of the sun. The former were usually tribute givers and the latter tribute receivers. Yet even a tributary maraboutic group retained a certain degree of preeminence in terms of political power.
The Intrusion of Colonialism

Prior to the colonization of the interior, the major emirates underwent a process of fragmentation. After 1434, Portuguese, Dutch, French and English traders appeared on the Atlantic coast and established entrepots. The Europeans and their trade promoted factional warfare inside the larger confederacies. Then smaller localized centers of power emerged headed by petty emirs.

The French military conquest at the end of the nineteenth century was launched from the south. In 1889 the French defeated a Senegalese revolt led by a Muslim religious brotherhood. The French commanders then turned to secure the north bank of the Senegal river which was supposedly threatened by the emirs of southern Mauritania, but when the forces of the Emir of Adrar increased their resistance, the French generals temporarily abandoned their efforts to conquer the northern regions in order to consolidate their control of the south.

At least some of the semi-feudal lords and tribal chieftains fought against the French intrusions, though they were later to become devoted collaborators of the colonial administration. The last Emirs of Adrar in particular were leaders of the struggle. Responding to both pressure and assistance from the Western Sharan tribal confederacy of Ma el-Ainin, they organized the four ksours of Atar, Chinguetti, Ouadane and Oujeft and the nomadic populations of the vicinity. Adrar became the capital of the anti-colonial resistance from the end of the nineteenth century to 1910. Between 1906 and 1910, the French army mounted a ‘military pacification’ programme which relied on a scorched-earth strategy. It included murder, rape, blackmail and bribery, finally culminating in the occupation of Adrar in 1910 and the subjugation of most of the tribes. But the resistance inspired and organized by the descendants of Ma el-Ainin continued until 1934. Without the use of indigenous mercenaries, officered by the French and organized into detachments of camel-mounted meharists, and of motorized companies, the French could not have overcome this stiff resistance. Finally, like the Maghreb and West Africa, Mauritania was subjected to the French colonial order.

As early as 1903, Mauritania was unilaterally declared a civil protectorate. By a decree promulgated on October 18, 1904, this territory was officially placed, by the French government, under the control of an administrative commissioner, acting on the orders of the Governor General of West Africa. However, as indicated above, only after a long period of concerted military effort did the title of protectorate stop being administrative fiction. Thus, even before its ‘pacification’ was undertaken, Mauritania was already formally integrated into the ‘French Federation of West Africa (AOF) which, after 1920, included Senegal, Guinea, Dahomey, Ivory Coast, Mali, Nigeria and Upper Volta. After 1910 it was administered by a commissaire du gouvernement and considered as a civil protectorate. However, on 4 December, 1920 it was transformed by decree into a mere colonie and placed under the control of a lieutenant governor who ruled it with an iron hand. It was divided administratively into nine geographic cercles. Every cercle was administered by a military commander assisted by a council of indigenous notables. These cercles were further subdivided into small local units headed by army officers in the regions inhabited by pastoral nomads. Under their direct command were detachments of camel-mounted meharist forces and civilian administrators in the sedentary areas.
Because of the immensity of this barren territory and the existence of a traditional
class system elaborate enough to maintain the social control of subservient
populations, the French colonial authority relied largely on the semi-feudalist
and tribal sheikhs to govern the remote hinterland. In the words of Alfred
Gerteiny,

In Mauritania, perhaps more than in any other colony, the French administrators sought the
assistance of their subjects, especially from tribal chiefs and emirs. This was considered
the only way to maintain peace among a very proud people. The traditional chieftains were
loosely organized in communes indigènes as advisors to the French administration. Though
their function was purely consultative and on a lower level, Mauritania's traditional tribal
chiefs were the indispensable auxiliaries of the administrators.

There is no doubt that Mauritania was considered, from the outset, as a purely
strategic colony that constituted geographically a pontic corridor connecting the
French northern and western African colonial domains. The colonial strategists
were fully aware of this since they referred to their own administrative apparatus
of coercion and control as the 'administrative of the vacuum'. Nevertheless, their
overall imperialist economic interests were never absent from the geopolitical
considerations and schemes, which were designed among other things to exclude
other rival capitalist powers from introduction into the French colonial empire
of Africa.

The Penetration of Capitalism
The intrusion of colonialism into the region was immediately followed by the
penetration of capitalism and the integration of this population under the
international 'invisible hand'. Indeed, as early as 1920 a document prepared
under the auspices of the British Foreign Office, stated that

The Moors are turning more and more to commercial pursuits. The warrior tribes... are
not obliged to add to their incomes by condescending to military service, the transport and
gum trades and the breeding of camels for sale. A steady exchange of products goes on
between the Senegal and adjacent places... In December, when the floods are over, the
Trarza, Brakna and Duaish tribes approach the river, bringing gum for sale... They remain
near the river for the dry season, employing their camels in the transport of groundnuts, but
by July, when the damp heat becomes dangerous to camels, they retire to the dunes. Certain
Marabout tribes move between the Adrar and the coast bartering millet, cattle and other
goods with the Imragen for dry fish which they sell in the interior. There is a growing trade
between the Adrar and the south. In 1913 more than 2,000 camels were used in this traffic
and 150 metric tons of dates and 100 metric tons of salt were carried.

This growing entanglement of the Mauritanian population into the international
market was exacerbated by the imposition of colonial taxes in cash. Indeed, the
colony was granted a financial autonomy which actually amounted to forcing
the colonized masses to partially finance their own oppression. The following
quote from a British Foreign Office document illustrates this:

The figures of the budget for 1913 give some idea of the relative position of civil and
military necessities. The salaries and equipment of the administrative officials in that year
amounted to £14,814, whereas similar charges for military police and native guards totalled
£24,478. Posts, telegraphs and wireless installations cost £6,080, public works, £2,127,
public instruction £425, and agriculture, £198.

And this document added significantly that 'it is something that trade has begun
to flow more freely and widely.'

In fact, from the outset the major sources of the colonial administration revenue
were derived from taxes extracted from the indigenous population. Thus, for
1913 alone, £36,840 was exacted from the colonized population. The sub-Saharan Africans living in southern Mauritania were coerced to pay a head tax amounting to four francs per head on every person over the age of ten. The 'Moors' resident in the colony had to pay Moslem taxes to the colonial administration comprising the zekkat, one-fortieth of their flocks of herds, and the ushur, one-tenth of their crops. For 1913 alone the receipts from the zekkat and ushur taxes amounted to £21,805, comprising 62 per cent of the total while the head tax provided a total of £6,371. Thus while the colonial administration was increasingly siphoning off a 'surplus value' under various forms from the direct producers, the indigenous population was steadily growing. According to official statistics for 1914 the population of Mauritania totalled about 250,000 divided into 214,000 'Moors', 36,000 'negroids' and 144 'Europeans'. By the 1950s it had reached 850,000; 650,000 were considered as pastoral nomads; 150,000 sedentary villagers; and 50,000 urbanites. (If the above figures are correct the population of Mauritania more than tripled in less than 50 years).

Furthermore, the introduction of French manufactured products resulted not only in the rapid decline of local artisanal industries but also in the compounded monetary dependence of the indigenous people on the market. When the pre-colonial trade routes connecting North Africa to the Sahel were interrupted and the commercial activities diverted elsewhere, the ancient cities that lived by caravan traffic, e.g., Tichit, Chinguetti, Ouadane, Atar and Oualata, 'grew idle beneath their palm trees'. However, new centres of trade developed in connection with the intensification of commercial exchange stimulated by colonization. A new social group composed of traders emerged and grew both in number and importance and asserted itself as a social class whose parasitic function was mediating between the direct 'traditional' producers and the capitalist enterprises. By 1956 over 12,000 traders were carrying out business outside Mauritania, namely in West Africa.

All these and other pressures exerted on this population compelled an increasing number of pastoral nomads and agriculturalists to produce for the market rather than for self-subsistence. Once enmeshed in the colonial framework and integrated into the capitalist market in a very one-sided and distorted fashion, the economic vulnerability of these 'traditional' producers was aggravated by successive cyclical crises and chronic fluctuations in the prices of commodities. The deterioration of the living conditions of the population was accentuated by the disintegration of the pre-colonial socio-economic structure which was caused by the impact of the penetration of capitalism. As a result, a process of pauperization led to large-scale migration both to urban centers and to the groundnut plantations of West Africa. Thus emerged the modern Mauritanian migrant labour force. In other words, colonialism did not only integrate the Mauritanian producers into the capitalist market, but also created the conditions for the 'liberation' of a labour force from an 'archaic' pre-capitalist sector. In 1958 between 60,000 and 80,000 labourers were working outside Mauritania; most of them were recurrent migrants. About 48 per cent of the active male population had migrated at least once every five years. This migration drained the local economy of part of its most dynamic labour force. Mauritania, like many other African regions, became, by the 1950s, not only a labour reserve but also a source of raw materials. But this colonial situation was bound to give rise to both class and political struggles for national liberation. Nonetheless, due to the lack of development of the productive forces no radical nationalist movement of any
significance emerged in Mauritania between 1946 and 1960. Only various political movements, most of them sponsored and manipulated by the colonial administrators, took shape.

**Political Structures and National Movements**

During the pre-colonial period the heads of the rural communities, both nomadic and sedentary, referred to as sheikhs, were actually selected by and accountable to the local council, known as jemaâ. These built-in structural mechanisms, public opinion pressures and customs were important limiting factors of the sheikhly authority and power. Gerteiny has shown how the French colonial administrators in their obsessive emphasis on affirming France's paramount authority nationalized the chieftainship system, reserved the rights of designation and control, and defined and regulated the authority, rights and obligations of the chiefs. Such efforts were aimed first at mobilizing the traditional order to serve the needs of modern administrative structure and then slowly preparing the way for their eventual substitution.

Therefore, in total disregard not only for the traditional norms, structures and their articulation, but also in contradiction with the finality of the system itself, the colonial administrators have maintained the pre-colonial hierarchy of authority but used it for their own ends — control. By imposing their own native henchmen on the top of the hierarchical pyramid and shifting accountability from the administered to the alien administrators, the colonial officials violated the basic rule of the pre-colonial system. Furthermore, in order to ascertain and justify their paramountcy, these officials deliberately sought to exacerbate the pre-existing contradictions of such a pre-capitalist class system.

At any rate, after 1946 Mauritania experienced various political activities undertaken by numerous groupings most of which cannot be considered as nationalist reformers. The reasons underlying the absence of radical nationalism were the lack of economic development, and the fact that these political activities remained closely tied to the overall framework of post-World War II French politics.

Indeed, the first major movement of contestation emerged under the shadow of the SFIO (French Socialist Party) colonial section in 1946. The constitution of the Fourth Republic granted a seat in the national assembly to Mauritania. Despite a deficient organization and superficial slogans calling simplistically for the abolition of the 'chieftainship system' the Mauritanian candidate backed by the SFIO was elected deputy to the French Parliament in collaboration with other Mauritians who founded L'Entente Mauritanienne. This national movement, though it acquired a certain autonomy, was supported by the artisans and intelligentsia from the declining traditional urban centers such as Adrar and came to represent primarily the interests of the traders whose business activities transcended tribal loyalties. As a consequence the Entente neglected to organize its popular base and to elaborate a coherent program expressing the aspirations of the masses.

These structural and ideological weaknesses rendered this movement vulnerable to the machinations of the colonial administrators, who devoted a great deal of effort and energy to undermining the movement's effectiveness and hold on the people. In fact, in 1948 the French incited Mauritanian notables affiliated with
the traditional ruling classes to establish L'union Progressiste Mauritanienne, in order to offset the influence of the Entente (it should be noted that one of the co-founders of this reactionary party of collaboration was no less than Moktar Ould Daddah, the current President). There was nothing progressive about the movement, which represented the class interests of the traditional pro-French Moorish chieftains and the traditional chieftains from the black Mauritanian minorities.

No wonder the candidates of the UPM for the French Parliamentary seat won against the incumbent Entente's candidate in the legislative election of 1951. The next year in the elections for the General Council, the UPM 'captured' 22 out of 24 seats. By 1955 a group of young militants, upon becoming aware of the widespread corruption and servile collaboration of the UPM notables, formed a splinter group which established a genuine national movement called L'Association de la Jeunesse Mauritanienne (AJM) that unsuccessfully challenged its hegemony in the legislative elections of 1956.

When the War of National Liberation in Algeria forced the French Parliament to pass the overseas reform act (loi cadre) designed as a counter-insurgency measure to prevent the emergence of other Algerias elsewhere, the power of the Mauritanian notables was suddenly enhanced. Indeed, in accordance with this law a territorial assembly was established. When elections were held in May 1957, 33 out of 34 seats won by the UPM. Commenting on this election, Gerteiny has stated that, 'It is safe to assume that voting irregularities contributed to the UPM landslide'. The first internal autonomous government which was presided over by Ould Daddah (a former translator in the colonial service and the only lawyer in Mauritania) was invested by this territorial assembly in 1957. Two Frenchmen were assigned key positions in his cabinet: Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Economic Planning. In May 1958 the UPM and opportunist members of the Entente fused and formed the Parti de Regroupement Mauritanien; though it changed its name in the subsequent years it remains the ruling party to this day in Mauritania. The collapse of the Fourth Republic and the advent of Gaullism culminated in the constitutional referendum of September 1958 devised to prepare the establishment of neo-colonial relations between France and its western African empire under the guise of the French community. The PRM decided to join it. Mauritania became then an autonomous but not fully sovereign state. On the eve of the 17 May 1959 elections for Mauritania's constituent assembly, the government curtailed all political activities except those of the PRM. Thus, in 1960, in the words of a spokesman of the AJM, independence was handed to those ‘who had spent the major part of their lives collaborating with the imperialists'. In order to understand this historical juncture, an outline of the salient features of Mauritanian economy and society is necessary.

Economy and Society at Independence

In 1959 the Mauritanian GDP totalled 14.4 billion CFA francs.* Most of this was comprised of herding and agriculture, the main components of primary production which amounted overall to 10.3 billion francs. Secondary pro-

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*Further references to francs refer to CFA francs. The CFA franc was set up as a joint currency of the states of the French African Monetary Union, the Communauté Financière Africaine. In December 1970, the exchange rate was $1 = 277.71 CFA francs.
duction, including handicrafts and mining, totalled only 0.6 billion, while the tertiary sector (services) came to 1.1 billion and administrative salaries to 2.5 billion francs. The extent of the livestock herds can be judged from 1957 data: 1.2 million head of cattle, 7.3 million sheep and goats, and 400,000 camels. In addition, about 220,000 palm trees produced an average annual crop of 4,500 metric tons of dates.

In 1959 exports, primarily of cattle, gum and dates, represented 22 per cent of the GNP. With imports estimated at 7 billion francs and exports valued at only about 3.2 billion, there was a large deficit. The colonial government made up the difference in the form of aid, organized within the framework of the AOF.

At the beginning of the 1960s, there were approximately one million potentially active persons between fifteen and sixty years of age. Only an estimated 600,000 were considered economically active: about 400,000 engaged in animal husbandry; 160,000 in agriculture and the remainder in other activities such as wage labour, trade and handicrafts. Agriculture and livestock represented approximately 84 per cent of the GNP and mining only 4 per cent.

Although Mauritania had been deeply influenced by the penetration of capitalism, its own productive forces had barely been developed. It had one of the worst economic infrastructures in the poverty-stricken West African Federation. French capital had relegated it to a secondary geopolitical status. Nevertheless, Mauritania long held out the promise of mineral wealth. As early as 1935, colonial engineers discovered a rich iron deposit at Kedia of Idjil in the northern desert region, but apparently the cost of extracting the ore remained too high.

After World War II, the colonial administration began to create some necessary infrastructure. Even then the volume of investment remained very low: from 1946 through 1959 only 3.8 billion francs were invested in Mauritania by the French colonial investment fund, 22 per cent in geological research and the remainder in infrastructural development. On the eve of independence imperialist interests were poised for a major mining boom.

The corporate vehicle for the burgeoning mining operation was the Société Anonyme des Mines de Fer de Mauritanie (MIFERMA), a multinational entity set up in 1952 by the big European steel companies under the auspices of the French state. France participated through the Bureau Minier de la France d'Outre Mer (BMFOM), which provided 27 per cent of the initial capital. The remaining shares were divided among the European capitalists: French steel interests (32 per cent) in association with British (19 per cent), Italian (15 per cent) and German (5 per cent). American interests were also present through the World Bank which advanced a loan covering $66m of the $190m investment. The Mauritanian state was later granted a slim five per cent participation.

At the time of independence, mining operations had not begun in earnest. Mauritanians remained dependent primarily on agriculture and herding and only very secondarily on wage labour. Many Mauritanians worked outside the country: 60,000 to 80,000 in plantations south of the border. This lack of development of the forces of production is reflected in the relative absence of a modern social infrastructure.

The social infrastructure at the time of independence was extremely backward.
As late as 1955 only two major towns had electricity to service some 2,000 European employees of the colonial service or of MIFERMA. There were no paved roads or railways; no dentists, pharmacists or hospitals. There were only seven European doctors, six employed by the public health service and one employed by MIFERMA. Neither magazines nor a daily newspaper were published and there was no public radio. In 1957, only 7 per cent of the school-age children attended classes: 6,493 in primary grades and a mere 291 in secondary school. Only a very few individuals were university graduates.

Such an absence of socio-economic infrastructure helps to explain the strength of the traditional notables and the lack of a genuine radical nationalist movement. The situation was ripe for the formation of a classic neo-colonial state.

French recognition of Mauritanian national sovereignty in 1960 did not alter the colonial status quo. The state apparatus inherited from the pre-1960 period was kept intact in its basic structure, function and finality, but was perfected and strengthened to preserve the interests of foreign multinational corporations, with only a gradual change in the political, administrative and military personnel in favour of the indigenous emergent predominant classes, at the expense of the colonial mandarinate.

However, the former colonial power continued to control Mauritania in innumerable ways. It provided financial 'aid' to the Mauritanian neo-colonial state budget; it furnished cultural, administrative and technical 'experts' for the government ministries; its mercantile and financial interests dominated the Mauritanian neo-colonial economy. To ensure the defence of the Mauritanian territory against Moroccan irredentists and to protect the new indigenous ruling classes favourable to imperialism, French army units remained stationed there.

Post-independence Mauritanian politics continued to be manipulated by French agents and to be torn by factional and even tribal rivalries. Indeed, on the morrow of formal independence, the Mauritanian political forces were divided as a result of the colonial heritage and Moroccan irredentism. The question was whether to form a neo-colonial state or to join a neo-colonial reactionary kingdom. The Moroccan Istiqlal party had not only claimed sovereignty over Mauritania in 1958 but over a vast territory extending from southwestern Algeria to the Senegal River. This claim even found supporters inside Mauritania itself who were financed by Rabat. A violent factional strife erupted, based primarily on tribal and ethnic affiliations. However, given the bankrupt nature of the Moroccan monarchy and its servile relations with world imperialism, and the opportunist and inconsequent policies of the so-called Moroccan opposition parties, the pro-French factions which rejected Moroccan irredentism under the leadership of Ould Daddah, backed by the French army stationed in the country, emerged victorious. In eliminating from power the proponents of Moroccan irredentism, they took the opportunity of purging all the radical nationalist elements represented primarily by the AJM. Henceforth their determined and servile collaboration with the multinational corporations against the Mauritanian masses in general and the emerging working class in particular was openly asserted.

The iron ore mining operations were a major French concern. Above all the new
state had to ensure the profitable extraction of this key resource. In 1959, even before formal independence, the French ministers in the Mauritanian government negotiated and signed an agreement advantageous to MIFERMA. This accord remained in effect for fifteen years.

By early 1960 the colonial authorities had established a legal and institutional framework favourable to their interests. Under these ideal conditions MIFERMA quickly proceeded to invest in capital intensive technology for the extraction of Mauritania’s rich iron ore reserves. Between 1960 and 1973 the company invested 18 billion francs; its goal was to extract the Kedia of Idjil deposit of no less than 152 million tons and ship it out of the country as rapidly as possible.

The ore was extracted from open pits, then carried on a 650 kilometer railway to the mineral port of Nouadhibou, and shipped to Europe where it was processed and transformed. Both the railway and the harbour were constructed solely for this purpose. The neo-colonial state financed most of the cost of this infrastructure through high-interest loans from European and American private and public financial institutions.

MIFERMA’s search for a maximum rate of profit led to the pillage of Mauritania’s sole source of mineral wealth and the flagrant exploitation of the indigenous workers. The quantity of iron ore exported reflects the frantic effort to produce: it increased from 1.678 million metric tons in 1963 to 7.447 million by 1967, to 9.103 million in 1970 and reached 10.445 million by 1973. Meanwhile, the workers were exploited ferociously: output per worker grew from 1,500 metric tons in 1964 to 21,000 tons by 1972. During this period the neo-colonial state agreed to keep wages frozen. The situation epitomised the general pattern described by Samir Amin, in his *Unequal Development*:

> the products exported by the periphery are of interest to central capitalism in so far as all things being equal: that is, with the same productivity, the reward of labour is lower there than at the centre. And it can be lower in so far as the peripheral society is subordinated by all available means, economic and extra-economic to this new function of supplying cheap labour for the exporting sector... Furthermore, the methods employed so as to ensure that the reward of labour is law are based on strengthening those local parasitic social groups which function as transmission belts: latifundia-owners, kulaks, comprador trading bourgeoisie, state bureaucracy, etc.

In fact, without such internal collaborationist social forces, imperialism would not have been able to impose easily dominant-dependent relations in the post-colonial period.

The economic strategy of MIFERMA, despite the recognition of Mauritania’s formal political independence, consisted of draining its natural resources using ‘native muscles’ and European capital, technology and skilled technicians, engineers and managers. In other words, a division of labour emerged which relied on an underpaid indigenous proletariat performing manual work and foreign, mostly French, overpaid intellectual personnel. As Bonte expressed it,

> All other aspects of MIFERMA’s policies are concerned with... [the] desire to recoup investments immediately and to reap maximum profits. MIFERMA employs about 4,500 people... The staff of European origin (800) [1000]... enjoying a high salary, occupy the executive posts. The Mauritanian staff are responsible for carrying out the European staff’s orders. They are symbolically categorized by MIFERMA as “subordinate personnel”.

The ‘executive’ employees were paid an annual average salary of 4,350,000
francs; the 'supervisory' personnel 1,700,000 francs and the 'subordinate' workers a mere 245,000.

These large gaps are widened by fringe benefits, such as housing, granted to the Europeans. Thus, while the Mauritanians live in filthy slums lacking running water, the Europeans live in comfortable dwellings which are themselves arranged in an extensive hierarchy. This clear separation (in Zouerate a wall symbolically separates the European quarters from the slums) is systematically encouraged by management.

The systematic discrimination practiced by MIFERMA in hiring and promoting indigenous personnel was determined by the fear that if Mauritanians were given high technical and managerial positions they might become aware of the possibility of taking over control of production. Westebbe has pointed out that this situation culminated in the fact that,

In the two highest classes of wage and salary earners, foreigners held 94 per cent of the positions and earned 50 per cent of all wage and salary payments. In general, Mauritanians held two-thirds of the jobs in the modern [neo-colonial] sector but received one-third of the total wage and salary payments.

However, according to Samir Amin the situation was even worse. In 1972 there were 'about 30,000 wage and salary earners', over 11,000 were employed by the government and 19,000 by the mines and other private business. The global incomes provided by the economy amounted to 'some 3,700 million FCFA of which more than 60 per cent was earned by the senior grades, almost entirely European and numbering about 1,000. It was estimated that over 50 per cent of the total earnings of foreigners were exported to the capitalist centres throughout the sixties. By 1967 Europeans, mostly French, still occupied about 91 per cent of the top managerial and administrative positions, in private as well as public sectors. Indeed, 10 per cent of the functionaries of the neo-colonial state were French. They occupied mainly planning, decision-making and managerial positions while the Mauritanians were still in clerical and other subaltern posts. Meanwhile, the majority of the Mauritanian masses remained either underemployed or unemployed altogether and if employed, they were underpaid. MIFERMA and its European personnel were pillaging the country.

Thus, in 1969 the backflow of funds from Mauritania to Europe totalled 10,925 million FCFA, representing 69 per cent of that year's receipts from sales; by 1969 it had reached 13,450 million FCFA, exactly 72 per cent. By 1974 the total quantity of iron ore exported to Europe increased to 11.4 million metric tons. As can be seen, only 31 per cent and 28 per cent of the total receipts for the two consecutive years remained inside Mauritania. The declared rate of profit was 18.6 per cent for 1968 and 24.1 per cent for 1969. By 1972 the dividends distributed officially to the shareholders totalled 7,084 FCFA. But the actual profits were higher than this. Indeed, Bonte observed that,

These declared profits are only part of the real profits. For this one must take into account real selling prices and the large additions to surplus value achieved by the participating companies in their home production, thanks to the reliable supplies of excellent raw materials from MIFERMA.

This is due to the interlocking relations between the producing and consuming steel companies composing MIFERMA.

In sum, the prodigious development of mining contrasted with the rest of the economy allowed MIFERMA to dominate the society and the underdeveloped state structure. As a result, a structure of dependence emerged and expanded.
(By 1976 raw materials represented by iron ore and copper provided 90 per cent of the value of exports, contrasted with only a 4 per cent contribution to the 1959 GNP). At the same time the neo-colonial state budget became increasingly dependent on royalty payments which made the government solvent.

Indeed, between 1965 and 1971 MIFERMA provided about 47 per cent of the budgetary receipts. As of 1972, the Mauritanian government had received an estimated 25,000 million FCFA. By the end of the sixties about one-third of the neo-colonial state’s budget was financed by the company’s royalties. Despite the large size of this sum, when contrasted with the declared profits it becomes insignificant. Besides this, Bonté has pointed out that:

Part of MIFERMA’s contributions are redirected towards projects from which it will benefit, enabling it in turn to increase its surplus value. Taxes are used to maintain both the administration and the repressive forces which facilitate the extraction of surplus value. The main impact of these taxes is the reproduction of the relationship between Mauritanian social forces and capitalism at the neo-colonial stage.

The successes achieved by MIFERMA led to the establishment in 1967 of a second multinational corporation, Société Minière de Mauritanie, in association with the Mauritanian neo-colonial state.

SOMIMA was formed to exploit the 500,000 tons of copper reserves and the 1.7 billion tons of magnetite, with a 40 per cent ore content, which had been discovered in Akjoujt. The initial capital was provided by the Mauritanian government (22 per cent); Charter Consolidated (an Anglo-American group company) 44.6 per cent; International Financial Corporation (IFC) 15 per cent; BRGM 6.13 per cent; and a French private group represented by Pennaroya, Banque de Paris et des Pays Bas and the Compagnie Financière d'Outre Mer 12.2 per cent. A total of 14,000 million FCFA was earmarked for anticipated investments. The minerals extracted were transported along a 173 mile Nouakchott highway to a 'modernized' port city where they were shipped to the capitalist centers. For copper alone the goal was to export an annual average of 50,000 tons between 1970 and 1980. Production began in 1969; by 1971 the company had exported about 34,000 tons of copper. This reached 41,700 tons in 1974 bringing the neo-colonial state about 10 per cent of its foreign exchange earnings. However, the copper and magnetite mirage which led to this apparent boom quickly turned into a nightmare for the shareholders of SOMIMA.

The current economic recession experienced by the capitalist world brought about a decline in the demand for copper. This was accompanied immediately by a drastic fall in copper prices. SOMIMA started losing approximately $1 million per month. Thus, by 1975, SOMIMA either had to cease production or face bankruptcy. Instead the neo-colonial state was incited to nationalize the copper mines of Akjoujt and hand them to the newly created national public company, SNIM. By this means the foreign companies managed to recover their invested capital and ensure the continuation of subsidized copper by an indebted neo-colonial government.

Mauritania’s principal resource after minerals is fish. Its coastal waters are extremely well stocked. Like the minerals the fish have been exploited by others. European fishing companies took a catch estimated at 300,000 tons a year in the mid-1960s, while Mauritanian fishermen took only 6,000 tons. However, the neo-colonial state recently established two small public companies that are supposed
to constitute the nucleus of a partially ‘Mauritaninized’ fishing industry. Despite heavy investments in this sector, the catch increased only slightly reaching 25,000 tons by 1973 and 60,000 by 1976; and yet, over 40 per cent of the catch was made by small private Mauritanian fishermen using very rudimentary methods.

As a consequence of this ruthless exploitation, which entailed some development of productive forces, far-reaching social contradictions within Mauritanian society at large were brought into existence.

Contradictions of Neo-colonialism

Colonialism resulted in the superimposition of the capitalist mode of production upon the Mauritanian pre-colonial formation. This culminated in both disintegrative and transformative socioeconomic changes. In the neo-colonial period, the penetration of capitalism increased dramatically. Even though the Mauritanian economy remained narrowly specialized, with investments and modern relations of production restricted mostly to mining, the social effects of this accelerated development were profound.

In the first decade of Mauritanian independence, the secondary sector experienced an unprecedented growth. Between 1959 and 1966 alone the Gross Domestic Product more than doubled. So uneven was this development that three quarters of the growth took place in mining and the remainder in mining-related services and administration. In the same period traditional economic activities — herding and agriculture — barely increased at all, as shown in Table I. According to Amin, Mauritania was transformed from an ‘undeveloped reserve’ into an ‘underdeveloped country’.

![Table I](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE I</th>
<th>NATIONAL ACCOUNTS (IN BILLION FCFA)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1959</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Production</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(mainly livestock, agriculture)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Production</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(mainly mining)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary Production</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(services)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Salaries</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total GDP</td>
<td>14.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source: Amin, 1973</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This rapid development created new social contradictions. The decline of pre-capitalist modes of production under the disruptive impact of international capitalism deprived increasing numbers of Mauritanians of their traditional livelihood. The ruin of these archaic social forms, compounded by heavy state taxes and the tragic circumstances of drought, forced thousands of Mauritanians to sell their labour power for starvation wages. The multinational corporations, MIFERMA and later SOMIMA, took advantage of this enormous labour reserve, employing the expanding Mauritanian proletariat to extract and transport mineral ores.
The destruction of the traditional economy was accelerated by the terrible drought which struck the whole Sahel in the period 1969-74. Mauritania was one of the most severely affected states in the region. According to the FAO, Mauritanian agriculture and livestock entered an unabated decline. The number of cattle decreased from 2.6 million in 1969 to 1.8 million in 1974. Sheep decreased from 3.4 million in 1972 to 2.8 million in 1974, and goats decreased from 2.6 million to 1.9 million in the same period. According to eyewitness accounts, many people died of starvation. By 1976 it was admitted that agricultural production had declined by over 40 per cent.

Tens of thousands of nomads streamed into the cities where they formed a new lumpenproletariat mass, living in vast shanty towns. The population of the seventeen major urban areas grew from 77,000 in 1962 to 300,000 by 1975. Nouakchott alone grew from 7,750 to 103,483. By 1976 only 27 per cent of the population were still nomads compared with 78 per cent in 1959; 31 per cent were urban dwellers compared with 6 per cent in 1959. Thus, while the countryside was ravaged with drought, the urban areas were plagued with misery and unemployment. Out of this unspeakable tragedy emerged the new Mauritanian proletariat: miners, truck and railroad workers, construction and port workers, and especially a large lumpenproletariat, both rural and urban.

The operations of the companies were bound to generate, to some degree, the development of indigenous productive forces which would, sooner or later, become their 'grave diggers' in Mauritania. When the emergent Mauritanian proletariat and its allies and supporters began to question the neo-colonial framework, they quickly realized that, in order to effectively contest the asymmetrical power relations imposed upon the Mauritanian people by French imperialism and its local agents, class struggle is the only method which transcends the anachronistic and archaic tribal and ethnic antagonism which had stifled the development of a radical movement of national liberation during the colonial period. Therefore the internationalization of exploitation during the neo-colonial phase ushered in a somewhat contradiction two-fold process contributing to the nationalization of political and class consciousness simultaneously.

From the outset the workers who were 'fortunate' enough to find employment and whose previous rural communal modes of life were 'torn assunder' by the emergence of peripheral capitalism, endeavoured not only to resist proletarianization but also to extricate Mauritania from the structure of dependency. The starvation wages (20,000 francs per month) condemned the deracinated proletarians and their dependents to a miserable life much worse than the one they had known in the 'traditional sector'. They were housed in overcrowded and unhygienic slums without running water and electricity on the outskirts of mining districts. Having been reduced to a common condition, the workers whose tribal and ethnic origins had initially hindered their unity along a national class line, eventually through struggle, became aware of their common class interests. This culminated in the first strike organized by the Mauritanian miners in Zouerate in 1968. The management of MIFERMA called in the army of the neo-colonial state to crush this strike by force of arms. Several workers were killed and many more wounded.

This tragic event led to the emergence of a more revolutionary group within the government-dominated Mauritanian Workers' Union (UTM). In the congress of the UTM, held in February 1969, when some union functionaries refused to
denounce the criminal acts perpetrated by the government against the workers, the radical rank and file formed a 'progressive UTM' which received the support of the teachers' union. The government undertook a series of repressive measures against the workers and the teachers; the progressive unionists responded by organizing, in the autumn of 1969, a series of strikes. Numerous strikers were either suspended or dismissed altogether. The government backed down on 12 November, with measures of 'clemency for pupils expelled' and 'for teachers suspended or dismissed after the strikes'.

Throughout 1970 the ruling single Parti Populaire Mauritanien tried in vain to use the state's oppressive apparatus to quell the increasing militancy of the popular forces represented by the workers and the clandestine Political Democratic movement established in 1968 by migrant workers and other progressive elements both in exile and inside the country. The members of the progressive UTM not only resisted the pressures exerted upon them but responded with more strikes. In September 1970 Ould Mohamed Salah, who was assigned the task of destroying the new militant unionism stated that 'No trade union or group of any kind in Mauritania has the right to express political ideas which contradict the options of the party'. In January 1971 the police arrested fifteen activists who were imprisoned without charges until 10 May when they organized hunger strikes in prison to protest their illegal prolonged detention. The rank and file staged peaceful demonstrations in Nouakchott to demand their release, but riot police were unleashed on the demonstrators. On 18 May the prisoners were tried by a special court which sentenced seven of them to two months imprisonment for managing in unauthorized association; four others were charged with possession and distribution of leaflets.

However, the determination of the workers to continue the anti-imperialist struggle was translated into a series of strikes in the autumn of 1971 including one at the MIFERMA iron ore mine which completely interrupted production for two months. Although this strike shook the company, in retrospect it appears that the workers' class demands were overshadowed by nationalistic ones, a fact that favoured the petty bourgeois aspirations for 'Mauritanianization' of MIFERMA's personnel and management rather than the socialization of production. Given the international situation which ruled out any possibility of direct French military intervention, as has occurred previously in Chad, the neo-colonial regime not only had to yield to some of the workers' demands but also began to adjust itself to this situation by employing some mystifying nationalistic and progressive slogans.

In June 1972 the political bureau of the PPM called for the revision of the 'co-operation agreement with France' which had up to that time constituted the legal framework for MIFERMA's plunder. In July the PPM ordered the unionists to reintegrate the official UTM. The party functionaries launched a campaign of denigration against the progressive unionists, stressing that 'trade unionism in Mauritania was a limited and privileged voicing of the Mauritanian society and that its claims could not be the same as the European workers who were struggling against a capitalist exploiter'.

Henceforth the deterioration of the living conditions and the emergence of new social forces turned the balance of power, even within the single ruling party, in favour of the petty bourgeois class which favoured both Mauritanianization and eventual nationalization of MIFERMA. In 1973, as a result of manoeuvres
involving cooptation, intimidation and even concessions to the progressive unionists, the PPM managed not only to impose a leadership of its liking on the trade unions but also to subject them to its total control. On the diplomatic front the regime had been attempting to convince French imperialism that only a gradual Mauritanianization perspective could, in the long run, save their respective interests in the country from the threat of either 'radical nationalism' or 'socialism'. This diplomatic effort culminated in new agreements with France covering cultural, technical and economic cooperation which were signed in February 1973.

However, the Mauritanian regime could not reach an agreement with France on military or monetary questions. The country quit the West African Monetary Union and the franc zone; French army personnel withdrew. This was a crucial moment in the reconsolidation of Mauritanian neo-colonialism through the institutionalization of state capitalism. The regime had to seek new outside support to perpetuate itself. Kuwait and Saudi Arabia agreed to assist the regime in establishing a new central bank. Algerian technical experts helped develop a new national currency, the ouguiya, coined and printed in Algeria and introduced in June 1973.* The regime adopted a certain verbal radicalism, including official support for the African liberation movements. Advisors from People's China appeared in Nouakchott. At the same time the regime sought support from the most reactionary pan-Arab forces. Since the Moroccan irre-dentists had finally given up their claims and recognized the sovereignty of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania in 1969, the regime of Nouakchott, in order to appease Pan-Arab reactionary forces, applied for membership in the Arab League which was granted in October 1973. As a direct consequence, the French army stationed in Mauritania departed.

The neo-colonial state needed all the external support it could muster, for it remained precarious socially and economically. A large positive balance of trade since 1965 had been consumed by a mounting external dent, estimated at 85 billion francs by 1970. This debt grew rapidly in the 1970s. Interest and amortization payments totalled 238 million francs in 1971; by 1976 they were no less than 581 million ouguiyas. Without infusions of fresh loans from European, US, Kuwaiti, Saudi and Moroccan sources, the Mauritanian state would have gone bankrupt. At the same time drought and urban misery created an explosive situation internally. Since the repressive neo-colonial forces could not henceforth withstand the popular pressures alone, the regime, in order both to appease the working class and to neutralize the petty bourgeois nationalists and the left, announced the long awaited nationalization of MIFERMA in November 1974. However, the following year the shareholders were handed $90 million as compensation. Nationalization, then, did not mean that the neo-colonial state had ceased to perform the role of the local link in the chain of imperialist exploitation in the region.

On the contrary, in 1974 its rulers were encouraged by Spain to lay claim officially to Western Sahara in order both to undermine and weaken the Polisario Front, which was waging a genuine anti-colonialist war of national liberation, and to provide opposition to Moroccan irredentist pretensions. Spanish colonial strategy laid the groundwork for the November 1975 tripartite agreement

*1 Ouguiya = 4 CFA francs, 1976.
between Spain, Morocco and Mauritania under the direct auspices of world imperialism, whereby the territory of Western Sahara was divided between these two Maghrebi neo-colonial states and the phosphates between Spain and the Allawite monarchy. Indeed, the former retained, besides 35 per cent of these resources, fishing rights along the coast and the maintenance of its sovereignty over Ceuta and Mellila in exchange for handing over the Western Sahara masses and the remaining 65 per cent of their underground wealth to the latter's ruling oligarchy. The essential point is that the Mauritanian neo-colonial state had deliberately coalesced with the Moroccan irredentists, who formed a holy alliance with imperialism, in order to achieve an 'unholy' objective: the spoliation of Western Saharan resources and the domination of its people.

The Intervention of the Neo-Colonial State in Western Sahara

The involvement of the neo-colonial regime on the side of imperialism and Moroccan irredentism allowed the Mauritanian ruling class to develop intimate relations with the Arab monarchies of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, which enhanced the country's ties to the capitalist centres. Internally the regime had temporarily managed to gain the support of the so-called petty bourgeois nationalist and progressive opposition elements through a well-orchestrated propaganda campaign of intoxication centred around two fundamentally contradictory issues: internal political democratization and economic development; and an external battle of 'unification with the homeland'.

Indeed, a party charter was approved in the summer of 1975 by the ruling PPM, advocating 'a truly national democracy and in accordance with the requirements of economic and cultural independence'. Because of opposition among the masses to the creeping corruption within the bureaucracy and the party apparatus, the charter, dictated from above, called for 'the supremacy of the party over the state organs and the adaptation of the party in the direction of democratization, efficiency and progress'. This democracy was said to be 'Islamic, national, centralist and socialist'. Five governing principles based on 'Islamic socialism' underlaid Mauritanian 'democracy': nationalization of key sectors of the economy; the elimination of exploitation of man by man; systematization of 'punishment and reward'; state control of basic public services; and a mixed economic sector in which the state is associated with international or national private enterprises for mineral prospecting and processing, provided that the private capital ceases 'outdated individualism' and settles for 'fair profits'.

However, the regime finally adopted only the most cosmetic of reforms. Apart from a few projects of SNIM, such as an oil refinery, a sugar refinery and a cement works, little of substance emerged. Underneath the rampant demagogy and radical verbalism lies the fact that even servile social relations of production based on unpaid labour still exist in the country. Externally an aggressive war against the Saharan people is draining the slim resources of the Mauritanian masses, (about half of whom are on the verge of starvation) in a lethal armed conflict in Western Sahara.

Indeed, the Mauritanian regime threw almost all of its 5,000-man army into the annexation of Western Sahara in late 1975. This offensive was costly, but the long war that followed has become even most costly. The Polisario partisans began a counter-offensive in the spring of 1976, over-running numerous Mauritanian positions and forcing the Mauritanians to call on the Moroccan army for help. In
the late spring the Polisario Front carried out a daring attack on Nouakchott, shelling the presidential palace and winning a major psychological victory in spite of heavy losses. More recently, the Polisario forces have attacked some of Mauritania’s key industrial installations. The iron ore railway has been cut several times and ore trains blown up.

With ore export revenues in jeopardy and mounting military expenditures, the Mauritanian state budget is currently in deep crisis. In 1976 military outlays amounted to 33 per cent or more. In the autumn of 1976 the government announced a forced loan, amounting to a large emergency tax on all citizens. On 2 January, 1977 the government announced an additional increase of nearly 26 per cent in its defense budget for 1977. Expenditures for the military make up about 60 per cent of the overall budget. (In 1976 they amounted to 32.9 per cent). Indeed, the equivalent of $30 million would be spent in the current fiscal year. According to the finance minister, this cost represented Mauritania’s efforts ‘to safeguard the reunited homeland’. As a result, the country’s finances are in a shambles. The conflict of Western Sahara may finally toll the knell of the Mauritanian neo-colonial state.

**Conclusion**

The present Mauritanian ruling class was imposed upon the masses in 1960. They continued to be assisted and advised by French ‘cooperants techniques’ in the post-colonial period in close relation with international finance capital, and have been promising their ‘subjects’ that the construction of their society depended on the successful operation of multinational corporations, represented in the country by MIFERMA and SOMIMA. By the 1970s it became crystal clear to the majority of the Mauritanian people that these foreign firms were carrying out the systematic ‘pillage’ of their resources rather than stimulating the development of their country; and that the rapid growth of the extractive ‘sector’ introduced a radical process of structural ‘peripherization’ which has completely enmeshed the Mauritanian economy and society into the capitalist centre. The external ‘economic aid’ pushed the neo-colonial state into the ‘debt trap’. Indeed, Bonte observed that ‘while production apparently increased and while private capital certainly flowed into the country, it flowed out in even larger quantities. These flows led to a persistent deficit in the balance of payments and to a growing debt’. This trend has been worsening in recent years. Thus, without loans from European, American, and conservative Arab regimes, the neo-colonial state would have collapsed financially. Indeed, from 1970 to 1975 foreign loans provided between 75 and 90 per cent of the funds for the governmental development programmes.

Meanwhile the social conditions of the people worsened dramatically in the 1970s. For instance, in 1976 a government official admitted that only 15 per cent of the total population received medical attention. The activities of the multinational corporations have destroyed the supportive communal structures of the rural masses which in the past had minimized the consequences of drought and other forms of economic crisis. Hence, in 1969-74 innumerable drought-stricken nomads and subsistence agriculturalists found themselves helpless and completely destitute. They had no alternative but to flee to the mushrooming slums surrounding the urban centres to lead ‘mutilated’ and ‘mutilating’ lives.

For these masses neither Mauritanianization nor nationalization have prevented
their growing immiseration. In other words, the extractive activities, either under
the aegis of multinational corporations or state-owned companies which remain
dependend on finance capital and its market, are not conducive to genuine,
democratic social development capable of resolving the fundamental problems
of the Mauritanian people. The operations of these foreign-dominated companies
have pre-empted the chances for the development of a diversified industrialization
providing for the primary needs of the people. Only an industry that results in
large ‘employment effects’ generated in proportion to the amount of capital
invested and whose management is assumed to a large degree by the producers
themselves, could bring about the development of a backward country like
Mauritania. Extractive ‘industry’ controlled by multinational corporations of
the sort described could not generate positive ‘linkage effects’ to the local
economic sectors powerful enough to effect their development within a well-
planned and integrated economy capable of satisfying the basic demands of
the population.

In short, ‘when the iron ore of Mauritania is worked out, that country will go
back to the desert’. However, this observation by Amin appears to be apocalyptic
and pessimistic. Another, more viable, alternative might be for the northwestern
African peoples to rid themselves of world imperialism and its local comprador
bourgeois allies, and to erect in place of the neo-colonial unviable statelets a
confederation of socialist republics devoted to the elimination of exploitation
and to the construction of a just and democratic society.

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in Modern Morocco: Two Case Studies’ in E. Gellner and C. Micaud, Eds., Arabs and Berbers,

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This issue contained articles by Samir Amin, John Saul, Claude Meillassoux
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Supplies ran out two years ago but the demand was so great that we have
reprinted at the price of £2 including postage.
(Please see inside front cover for address).
How the Mining Companies Undermine Liberation

Dorothea Mezger

The strategic importance of the whole region and the Cape sea routes, and of key minerals like gold and, increasingly, uranium make it unlikely that South Africa can be 'abandoned', especially given the new trends in the western economies. However, the mining industry is leaving nothing to chance and is taking measures to guard against this, and against a future transition to socialism. It is mechanising mining operations — thus making the industry more technologically dependent, and also able to make some concessions to a black labour force that will be skilled and non-migrant. It is also developing new forms of integration with foreign governments and companies.

The South African mining industry is of great strategic importance both in offering profitable investment opportunities for the international mining corporations, and in terms of raw material dependency of some major industrialised countries. Any analysis of the problems of the mining industry and raw material supplies and the strategies that are likely to be pursued has to be embedded in a more comprehensive assessment of the links between the crisis of the world economy and the conflict in Southern Africa.

The general assumption of the paper is that the region is of such cornerstone importance for the capitalist world economy that the main industrial powers of the west have to pursue political strategies that keep it in their sphere of influence. Given the experience of Vietnam, these policies will as long as possible, aim at an appeasement of the region, advocating peaceful transition to majority rule.

The mining industry, once the backbone of the system of apartheid and of migrant labour, increasingly operates in an economic and social environment where a strict colour bar becomes more and more a burden. This paper tries to demonstrate that, while the mining industry increasingly advocates the removal of job reservation and the migrant labour system and the introduction of majority rule as the best means of ensuring its own survival in the future, it has also set out to insulate itself against any repercussions of the liberation struggle. A socialist orientation of a future South Africa could threaten the profit position of the mining industry and could eventually mean its virtual exclusion from all mining operations in the region.
The New Accumulation Model: Importance of South Africa as a Supplier of Nuclear Fuels and other Minerals

The oil crisis was the immediate trigger for the end of the post-war economic growth. Mounting unemployment in the core countries, as well as in the Third World, and a drop in real wages signalled the end of an accumulation pattern that had served the western countries for nearly 30 years: one based on the ever-increasing purchasing power of the consumers in industrialised countries. A new accumulation model is in the making and, without being able to give it a definite outline, something other than the consumers of the industrialised countries will have to provide the drive for it. This is likely to come from the state both in industrialised and underdeveloped countries. States do not predominantly consume cars, TV sets, and the more sophisticated consumer goods the citizens of industrialised countries have grown accustomed to. State expenditure on military equipment is no new phenomenon, and its function is quite obvious. But recently there has been a vast increase in military spending by the underdeveloped countries. One of the axes of the new accumulation model seems to be investment in new forms of energy and especially of nuclear energy. Also, there is an increased interest in the question of raw materials in general. The problem of raw materials is not the availability of minerals or food-stuffs in physical terms, as the Club of Rome would like to make us believe, rather it is one of finding the most profitable and secure investment opportunities, since profitability and security of supplies are threatened by environmental constraints in the industrialised countries, and by claims of the national ruling elites for a share of profits in underdeveloped countries. The call for a new economic order is, in part, the attempt to administer this world-wide conflict of interests over natural resources.

The appearance on the scene of Japanese and West German companies specialising in mineral raw materials, the world economic crisis itself, that hinders the new investments in areas like ocean-mining, the rapidly growing amount of mining finances, all these have led to a situation of increased competition for the best and safest areas of investment among the mining corporations. Security of
supplies, of mineral raw materials, as well as of market outlets, are of basic importance for corporate capitalist planning.

In the new pattern of accumulation new sources of energy, and of nuclear energy particularly, are likely to play a major role. The strategy of the corporations and the states of industrialised and semi-industrialised countries aims at installing nuclear power plants — based on fissile technology. If the instalment of these power plants is pursued as planned there will be a vast increase in the demand for uranium. According to the data published by the IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency) and the nuclear energy agency of the OECD at the end of 1975, annual demand for uranium is likely to rise from 20,000 tons in 1975 to 80,000-100,000 tons in 1985.

In fact, it is unlikely that the uranium industry will be capable of meeting such supply targets. If nuclear power programmes grow fast, and there is hardly any doubt left that they will despite the best efforts of environmentalists, then cumulative demand may quickly exceed total reserves of uranium in the western world, especially those that may be produced at lower costs. At $80 per pound of uranium oxide, the economics of nuclear power are seriously affected. Power utilities need to have contracted supplies of fuel for at least a decade ahead. If these supplies are to be at reasonable prices new sources of uranium have to be discovered.

In this context it is necessary to have a look at the world reserves of uranium, at the main countries which are ready to export the fuels, and at their respective production capacities. A recent estimate by J.A. Patterson of the US Energy Research and Development Administration gave the following figures of uranium reserves at a cut-off level of $30 per pound:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Reserves (lbs)</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>640,000</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>430,000</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>360,000</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>225,000</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rest</td>
<td>745,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,400,000</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of course, figures given by the energy bodies are often political and there are no fixed criteria as to what constitutes 'reserves'. Nevertheless, it seems very likely that the demand for uranium will attain such proportions that it seems most unlikely that the industrialised countries could (or would) forego the considerable and relatively cheap resources of southern Africa.

In South Africa uranium is often mined as a by-product of gold. Hence, if the gold price is low, less gold is mined, and hence uranium production reduced. However, the recent increases in gold price have led to a higher proportion of uranium available from South African sources.

**Will South Africa be Abandoned?**

The fact that South Africa's main export products are mineral raw materials and that South Africa is heavily dependent on imports, led Bienefeld and Innes in an article in No.7 of the *Review* to classify South Africa as a peripheral economy:
"... one which does not constitute the base of operations of a significant concentration of internationally active capital. It is therefore an economy which can be abandoned relatively easily."

However, it is possible to argue that the occurrence of mineral raw materials and the availability of cheap labour are likely to be the basis for a rapid process of economic development, given the new accumulation model outlined above, rather than 'abandonment'. Moreover, in the South African case, raw material exports are not a synonym for technological dependency. Although in a variety of areas South Africa has to rely heavily on the import of sophisticated technology, the mining industry does have command over its own technology. In fact, South African mining houses extract minerals all over southern Africa and, moreover, are engaged in production in North America, South America, Australia and the Far East. The fact that not every bit and piece of the necessary mining equipment is produced in South Africa itself does not mean that the South African mining industry is not in command of its technology. The most important South African mining company, Anglo-American Corporation (AAC), is also very active in heavy engineering, often in association with other big mining corporations of international reputation. AAC, Consolidated Gold-Fields South Africa and other international mining companies associated with them, like Rio Tinto Zinc (RTZ), are directly involved with the production of international mining equipment. Recently the mechanisation of the gold mines, as one of the answers to the radical pressures the industry is confronted with, has pushed the big South African mining companies to move further into the production of technology.

The strategy of mechanisation has several functions. Providing more sophisticated technology for mining is one way of keeping the industry dependent on the technologies which the companies and the related suppliers of mining equipment throughout the world do provide. It is one way of making sure that a liberated South Africa will have to rely on the mining companies for further provision of technology in order to keep the existing production process going or in order to expand. It is also one means by which the international mining companies and AAC as one of them, safeguard their technological monopoly. In short a company like AAC has all the attributes of a truly international mining corporation: participating in the development of technology, command over its own finance capital, production in several countries, and a world-wide distribution network for the raw materials it produces. In other words, AAC and other South African companies figure among the most organised forms of late capitalism. As such they render the mining industry capable of determining its own future and thus go a considerable way to insure South Africa against abandonment.

The assessment of Bienefeld and Innes misses another important feature of South African economic policy: the conscious build-up of safeguards against being abandoned economically and politically in times of crises. This safeguard consists in offering to the outside world as many indispensable commodities as possible. Raw materials qualify for this much more than manufactured goods. For, while there are many places in the world where the preconditions for profitable manufacturing are to be found, especially places with an abundance of cheap labour and the political framework for utilizing it (investment legislation), as well as a reasonable infrastructure, this is only true to a limited extent
with regards to the production of mineral raw materials. New mining technology, especially large-scale low-grade mining technology, does allow the extraction of minerals where this would not have been possible a decade ago in the industrialised countries. Nevertheless, given the same political preconditions for investment, the richer deposits will be the more profitable ones. Moreover, many industrialised countries do not have any substantial reserves of raw materials, not even of low-grade ones, especially the EEC countries and Japan. These areas will remain dependent as regards their raw materials acquisition from areas like South Africa.

Strategies Beyond: Insulation against Going Socialist

The converse of South Africa's continued importance to western capitalism is the dependence it generates. The mining industry is at the heart of the importance and the dependence. Although mining contributes only 12.5% of total output in the GDP, thus ranking third behind manufacturing (23.7%) and commerce (13.4%), it contributes the bulk of foreign exchange earnings. In 1975, 67.2% of all export earnings were derived from mining. Gold alone earned 41% of all export income in 1975 and 38% in 1976. Thus the mining industry is of cornerstone importance for the functioning of an economy that is highly export-dependent: total exports represented 25% of the GDP in 1976. (This pronounced foreign orientation of the South African economy is in itself an expression of the underdeveloped internal market, and specifically the low wages paid to black labour.) The position of the mining industry as main earner of foreign exchange has important implications for the liberation of the country and far-reaching consequences for the political choices of the country once majority rule will have been achieved. The fact that the South African economy is dependent to a large extent on mineral exports and the special shape of her mining industry in which gold and, in the future, uranium play such a key role, make the country as a whole extremely vulnerable to economic pressure that could eventually be exerted by major western trading partners.

The starting point for any analysis of possible strategies for (and against) liberation is the assertion made at the outset, that the southern African region including the Cape shipping routes, and particularly South Africa, are of such military, strategic, economic and political importance to the West, that all means will be mobilised to keep it within the western sphere of influence. There are of course other means of control to achieve this goal, but this paper emphasises the role that the mining industry and the related economic and political institutions in the world will play in this conflict. In order to assess the importance of the mining industry in keeping South Africa within the capitalist world market, the structure and forms of its integration into that world economy, especially its links with the corporate international mining community, have to be examined. Basically, two major factors have to be analysed:

- the gold mining industry and its relations to western central banks;
- the remaining mining industry, including the uranium mining industry, and its relations to the international community of mining and trading corporations.

The Gold-Mining Industry

Once the backbone of the system of apartheid and heavily relying on migrant labour from neighbouring countries, the gold-mining industry is advocating and
beginning to undergo substantial changes that find expression mainly in the urge for mechanisation: witness, for instance, the reduction in the migrant labour force even though it continues and will take a long time to phase out. Indeed it is likely that gold mining's major promoters, AAC and Consolidated Goldfields, only aim at a gradual modification of the present system of migrant labour rather than a complete change. As Harry Oppenheimer, AAC's boss put it in a speech in 1976:

... as black workers become more skilled, more specialised and better paid, the migrant labour system becomes less and less appropriate from an economic point of view as well as, of course, from a social and moral point of view. This does not mean, unfortunately, that it is possible to foresee a time when migrant labour, particularly in the gold mining industry, can be completely phased out.

Unlike the rest of the South African mining industry, gold mining does not conform to the same extent to international standards of production technology. The recruitment of cheap, migrant labour with its weak, or non-existing, political organisation have encouraged the gold mines to hold back the introduction of the capital-intensive, highly productive type of technology found in other areas of mining. This is not to deny that in many respects South African gold mining technology is of advanced international standards. But there is room for the introduction of more capital intensive methods comparable to other mining in South Africa and in other parts of the western world. Nevertheless, the industry clearly still aims to take advantage of cheap labour in the future: 'Because of the unique working environment, gold mining in S.A. has always been, and will remain for the foreseeable future, an essentially labour-intensive industry', says the Mining Journal last year.

Given the low wages that the apartheid system guarantees, the introduction of new mining methods does not seem to be a measure forced on to the companies by economic necessity. Thus the introduction of the new technology seems to be dictated by considerations of ensuring long run survival even if short-term economic losses have to be taken into account. This change of emphasis is implied in this extract from Optima, AAC's house journal:

... When T.D.S. (Technical Development Services, mining research and developing organisation, installed for research in mining mechanisation) became involved in the mechanisation of gold mining operations, the main goals set for it were to improve productivity; to limit cost escalation in the short term and reduce working costs in the long term; to improve the safety of operations; and to provide job enrichment. The current labour shortage on the gold mines has emphasised the need to improve productivity. Paradoxically, in the early stages of mechanisation the costs may be higher than those incurred with labour-intensive methods but this will not necessarily mean that the new systems and equipment will be economically unattractive.

Mechanisation of the gold mines is a strategy devised by the leading mining corporation in order to achieve the following goals:
- reduce the migrant labourers needed, and make the labour force largely indigenous South African;
- create a skilled African labour force and in turn,
- attack the colour bar so as to substitute black labour for expensive skilled white labour, thus making the change economically viable, or better, profitable.

Politically, the envisaged technological change is meant to be a strategy for survival for the mining companies in a liberated South Africa. Moreover, the shift towards greater mechanisation also opens up new investment fields for the
HOW MINING COMPANIES UNDERMINE LIBERATION

mining corporations, in this case in technology — particularly important in view of the present crisis of the world economy. At the same time a shift towards the production of capital goods tends to insulate the corporations against possible risks of nationalisation. This is not to claim that mechanisation and spurred-up production of mining technology as such prevent nationalisation in any way or form, but rather that if nationalisation becomes unavoidable, profits could still be secured through the sale of hard and soft-ware and management by the present owners of the mines — a strategy that AAC, for instance, has benefited from in places like Zambia. More than any other industry mining is driven to make such calculations and to come to terms with the impending end of the system of apartheid, since mining production cannot be transferred to any other part of the world. At the same time mining relies more on contract labour than any other industry in South Africa. This system of migratory labour has permitted the corporations to shift the long-term reproduction cost of the African labour force, the costs for the upbringing of the labour force, as well as the social costs of health and old age care onto the areas where the contract labour force was drawn from. Thus, by paying low wages to the male employed in the mines, their womenfolk who were left behind had to maintain the families. Thus the sexual division of labour despite the resulting social hardship and disruption has allowed a higher degree of surplus extraction than would otherwise have been possible. Now however, the decolonisation process in the neighbouring countries, the imminent threat to white domination that has built up since the 1960s in the whole region, have brought about pressures for the mining industry to get rid of this most blatant form of racist exploitation.

Policies towards these ends have been spelled out by Oppenheimer for some time. These attempt to safeguard the profitable investment opportunities by ensuring their continued control of the mining industry, even under black majority rule. In fact, with the exception of Cuba and (with limited success) Chile, no underdeveloped country has expropriated large mining corporations without having to rely on the same corporations for technology, distribution networks and finance. So control can be maintained by such deals.

A reduction of 80,000 in the imported labour force since 1974, when Malawi prohibited the emigration of her miners, has been made in a selective way aimed at stabilising South Africa's position in the region. One goal is to eliminate that part of the labour force immigrating from those countries with progressive political systems like Mozambique, whose contribution has dropped from 82,000 workers in 1974 to 34,000 in 1978. This policy also helps to 'destabilise' these countries by reducing the foreign exchange remittances of the workers. By the same token, reducing foreign labourers and recruiting South African blacks instead tends to stabilise the South African economy and reduces the disruptive effects of high unemployment of South African blacks. Whereas in 1974, of 380,000 migrant mine workers 170,000 were from Botswana, Swaziland, Lesotho (the territories still closely tied to South Africa) and the Republic itself, by 1978 the number of South Africans alone had risen to 220,000 and from Botswana, Swaziland and Lesotho another 130,000 — an increase in their share of labour from 22% to 73%.

Nationalisation of the labour force eliminates possible disruptions that may arise if more active forms of political and military conflict should come about with neighbouring countries. But a partial phasing-out of the system of migrant
labour is also on the agenda. It is politically necessary, as well as economically feasible. For a long time, the huge wage differentials (20:1 in 1971) in the mining industry between black and white labour has led the mining houses to attempt to break down the colour bar. If the white mine workers’ union bargaining power which maintains this colour bar can be smashed and white labour replaced by cheaper black, mechanisation could pay for itself. Moreover, this project would create a small, qualified, black ‘labour aristocracy’.

Wages for Africans have increased over the last four years, but in 1975, the starting cash was still R57.20 even after a raise of 320% from the 1971 level. Due to the very low level of wages even high rates of wage increases have not reduced the gap between black and white wages. And the gap has increased.

Supervisory jobs have so far been held exclusively by white mine workers. The corporations want to change this structure. The 1975 policy of the Chamber of Mines was spelled out in these terms:

The general approach to labour policy in the future will comprise a pyramid structure. The peak of the pyramid will represent the positions held by key supervisory or production workers. These jobs entail costly training which will be beneficial both to the person trained and to the mines. Therefore the top of the pyramid must be stabilised and the workers should be South African blacks living with their families on or near the mines. The remaining portion of the pyramid, which will form the bulk of the labour force, will remain migratory for some time in the future.

There are two areas in which mechanisation is being stressed: stoping, which is the operation concerned with the extraction of the gold-bearing reef; and development, which is the opening up and preparation of new areas for mining:

The mechanisation of stoping operations will require equipment, such as rock-cutters and systems for stope-in-rocks, and materials handling. Development operations require machinery suitable for rock-drilling and boring at high rates. Especially electro-hydraulic equipment will be involved. When the combination of the highly productive electro-hydraulic high-speed jumbo is ultimately integrated with the roofbolting jumbo and the shuttle train into mining operations it is expected that the present complement of 25 men in a high-speed development crew will be reduced to 10 and the rate of haulage advance will be increased by 60%, which will more than justify the anticipated 20% increase in unit costs in the initial stages of using mechanised methods.

In non-technical terms much of the underground work of making in-roads into a reef and actually shifting it will no longer be done by hand. Skilled jobs that will be required in large numbers have so far been held by whites. But it is intended that the extra jobs will be increasingly filled by black mine workers. The main hindrance to promoting African workers into those jobs is of course the white mine workers’ union, according to Oppenheimer (1977):

What is abundantly clear is that this country has a resource that is rare amongst industrialised countries — a great reservoir of under-utilised people. But this is not a matter for congratulations as we have done so little about their education and training and provided them with such restricted job opportunities that they cannot be quickly mobilised to overcome the shortage of skills that affects every aspect of industrial activity... late as it is, it is not too late to make an imaginative start. The major stumbling block is the attitude of whites in South Africa; more particularly of some (but not all) of the white trade unions. Nor is the attitude of the government acceptable... the mining industry is faced with some particularly reactionary trade unions.

Thus the survival problems of the mining industry have forced it to abandon a system created by the industry itself. A new stratification of the African worker, aiming at creating a small, skilled African labour force, that is trade-unionised, is
envisaged by mining capital, a trade union which could well act as a counter-
balance: to check the demands of the (white) mine workers' union.

Yet the pressures of the mine workers' union are very powerful. Thus, even if
'enlightened' mining and other big capital try to go against the colour bar, it is
by no means sure whether they will obtain their goal, given the present political
scene. The gradual change sought by the corporations as a means to offset the
impending threats to their control, may well not work out. Yet the strategy of
mechanisation is only one of several that the gold mining industry pursues in
order to maintain its control over the industry in the future. A major insurance
against the loss of control are its foreign connections.

The Foreign Connections of the Gold-Mining Industry
The end of the dollar standard in 1971 removed one of the major constraints on
profitable gold mining: the low gold price. The demonetisation of gold actually
means that no currency of IMF members is pegged to gold, nor can there be a
claim to make international transactions in gold. Nevertheless, gold continues to
play an important role as a store of value in a world of planned inflation, not
only for private hoarders, but for most central banks.

Thus, the western world's gold-stock in bar form, excluding privately held stock,
is equivalent to nearly 50 years of current South African gold production. A
quarter of this stockpile is in the US, half of the balance in Europe. It is therefore
clear that the main influences that act upon the price of gold lie with the mone-
tary authorities of the western industrialised countries. This has important im-
lications. A high gold price may, and as a matter of fact has, contributed to the
stabilisation of the South African economy. On the other hand, gold is not an
indispensable commodity in the same way as other minerals. The price of gold
may well be used at a given moment as a thumbscrew to try and force upon
South Africa some policies required by her western allies. Of course, similar
pressures could also be exerted once majority rule has been reached, should the
political framework not be to the liking of the western powers. The argument
run as follows: as long as a liberated South Africa is still as heavily import-
dependent as it is at present, a drastic reduction of her export earnings is likely
to have a strong destabilising effect on the economy. This reduction of earnings
can be brought about in the following sectors:

- foreign exchange earnings from the export of gold, either as an export com-
  modity or as means of payment;
- foreign exchange earnings derived from other mineral raw material sales;
- foreign exchange derived from the export of agricultural raw materials and
  manufactured goods and services.

Especially easily influenced are the first two sectors as the central banks in the
case of gold and the international mining corporations with their customers,
control the price plus the distribution network.

The possible effects of a destabilising policy via the reduction of export earnings
would be the higher the more import-dependent the country proves to be. As
of today slightly less than one-third of GDP is spent on imported goods and
services (machinery and transport equipment constituting roughly 40% of total
imports).
As long as South Africa remains within the framework of the capitalist world market, there is little likelihood that imports can be cut to such an extent as to protect the economy from destabilising influences via the foreign-exchange inflow. Gold is the most sensitive area in this respect, but it is by no means the only one.

The International Mining Corporations

Although the bulk of AAC's profits is derived from South Africa, it is a truly international corporation with world-wide mining and finance operations. Apart from the capital links mentioned above, there are major direct and indirect interests held in other mining houses, notably GCI, General Mining, and Union Corporation. Cross-capital links exist with the most important mining company in the world uranium market, Rio Tinto Zinc Corporation, and with other important mining companies. Its intimate connections with Charter Consolidated make the companies, in a sense, British-based as well. AAC describes its activities as follows:

Anglo-American Corporation is the head of an international group of mining, industrial and investment companies. In mining, the Corporation, together with its close associates De Beers, Consolidated Mines and Charter Consolidated, have important interests in the production of gold and uranium, diamonds, copper and nickel, coal, platinum, tin, potash, asbestos, iron ore, lead, zinc and wolfram.

There are also many foreign investors involved in mining of other materials apart from gold, though mining, once the centre of investment for foreign capital, has been reduced as compared to investment in manufacturing. By 1974, foreign liabilities in mining were less than one-sixth of total foreign liabilities, whereas, in 1960 they comprised nearly one-third. Direct foreign investment had also gone down and now accounts for less than one-third of all foreign investment. Nevertheless, a substantial part of the AAC's shares are still held in the UK and other foreign countries, though the UK stake in mining is going down from 60% in the 1960s to 50% in 1974. Instead, US multinational corporations have rapidly expanded their investments. US firms that have been active in the exploration and exploitation of deposits, employing most advanced mining technology, include Englehard Minerals and Chemicals Corporation (linked to AAC), AMAX, Union Carbide (the latter being active in chromium and vanadium mining), Phelps Dodge and US Steel, plus Canadian corporations Newmont Mining and Falconbridge. Apart from these 'big shots' of the mining community, there are various others: Swiss, Italian, German, Dutch, French, Japanese-based companies.

Apart from the capital links, there are other key connections between the mining companies, their associate companies, and the states of the industrialised countries:

- the long-term supply contracts together with the financial flows that result from it; and
- the mutual dependency upon the corporations' world-wide distribution network.

The long-term supply contract is an expression of a new era of mining. Since the late 1960s, and partly as an answer to rising nationalism in underdeveloped countries, mining corporations have developed low-grade mining technology which allows profitable mining in areas that a decade ago would not have been
considered worth mining (with ore bodies whose ore content may be as low as 0.4%, as in the case of copper). Mining capital, thus, could open up new investment fields and reshift mining partly into the industrialised countries. The disadvantage of low-grade mining is the large scale on which it has to be carried out, in order to be viable.

The consequent ever-increasing scale of mining operations has brought about a new pattern of financing. Whereas before mining was started on a relatively modest scale and extensions were paid from subsequent cash flows, now much larger amounts of capital are needed today in order to start. The financing of such big mining ventures is done through the integration of purchasers, i.e. manufacturers and trading companies, with the actual mining. The purchaser provides loans, which will be paid off by contracted annual supplies of the minerals. The industry is thus witnessing a vertical integration of the big smelters, refineries, manufacturers and trading corporations, with those who own the mines, but on the bases of long-term supply contracts rather than through capital links. Nevertheless, as regards market structure the results are similar.

Governments of the purchasing countries participate in mine deposit development as well, by either making public funds available, or as credit guarantors. In the case of South Africa, some governments abstain from participating for political reasons, though uranium is an exception, as we will see. A further strong link comes from the practice of dividing up markets. Sales agencies in some areas are handed over to mining and/or trading companies on the basis of a commission. Thus, if in any country a big mining corporation is under threat of nationalisation, the corporation can mobilise an international network of other corporations and states and international financial institutions to defend its interests. A very illustrative example of the kind was the nationalisation without compensation of Anaconda's and Kennecott's mines in Chile. In the case of West Germany, the import of Chilean copper dropped to less than half during the time of the Allende Government, Chile having ranked as supplier No.1 under the Frey Government. Chilean copper-transporting ships were harassed in European ports. This resulted in a drastic short-fall of foreign exchange for Chile.

An example of vertical integration is South Africa's Palabora copper mine, one of the most profitable in the world. The controlling interest in this mine is held by Rio Tinto Zinc Corporation, another capital investor is the Canadian Newmont Corporation, purchasers on the basis of long-term supply contracts are Mitsui and Norddeutsche Affinerie, a subsidiary of West Germany's most important non-ferrous metal corporation, Metall-Gesellschaft. Another example is Botswana's Selebi-Pikwe mine, with foreign capital interests of AMAX and Charter Consolidated; Norddeutsche Affinerie is the main purchaser through a long-term supply contract. These long-term supply contracts have also enabled countries like West Germany and Japan to integrate into a highly oligopolised industry like the international mining industry.

Uranium Mining and Nuclear Industries in South Africa
In South Africa the importance of uranium as a means of insulating the country against economic and political sanctions has long been recognised. Long-term supply contracts have been secured for uranium with governments and corporations throughout the western world. It is expected that within the next 3-5
years the value of uranium mining could well overtake that of all other minerals, with the exception of gold and possibly diamonds. A major impact on the development of the uranium mines will be the availability of finance by future purchasers. Thus *Mining Journal* writes (3 February 1978):

> While the capital cost of developing the mine (Afrikaander Lease Mine, about 15 km west of Klerkdorp) will be relatively low because of its shallow depth, the availability of consumer finance from prospective customers is likely to have a major bearing on the final decision.

The same issue makes clear that contracts with purchasers are also used as a means of insulating South Africa against political sanctions.

The provision of consumer finance, important for base metals for a number of years, has now become important for the South African gold mining industry with the uranium development at new mining propositions. From the South African point of view, apart from the assistance that such finance provides in the funding of a new mine, the fact that these loans are repayable only in terms of uranium deliveries is an assurance against the possible effects of any future embargo on trade with South Africa. This is a consideration which has increased in importance since the imposition of the United Nations' arms embargo on South Africa.

But South Africa does not only plan to export uranium oxide. Rather, she will be in a position to produce enriched uranium for her own consumption as well as for export. In this respect, the disclosure of documents by the African National Congress of South Africa in 1976 highlighted the nuclear collaboration of West German corporations (Siemens, Krupp, who invested in an experimental nuclear reactor, as well as STEAG investing in the Pelabinda enrichment plant). South Africa, through collaboration with other industrial states, has been able to develop the basis of its own nuclear industries, and through its enrichment plants will be capable of producing fissile material necessary for the production of nuclear weapons. Thus, she has the technology as well as the basic raw materials to produce nuclear weapons. Her nuclear industries rank with those of the most advanced industrial nations. Her military strength, the manner in which she is integrated with corporate capitalism, major industrialised countries' dependence on her raw materials, together with her strategic position at the Cape, make South Africa an unrenounceable part of the western sphere of influence. But her nuclear and other military capabilities and her 'semi-industrialisation' give South Africa the potential of a sub-imperialist power, and the mining industries are one of the most important foundations of this structure.

**Liberation, the Day After, and the Nationalisation of the Mines**

Majority rule in South Africa may well bring a demand for the nationalisation of the mines. But corporate capitalism has learnt to live with economic nationalism in all its forms. It has even learnt to use the labour force of socialist countries for capital valorisation, e.g. via sub-contracting. It has also learnt to live with nationalisations, although not with all forms of it. In some instances, corporations have even asked for nationalisation, e.g. Charter Consolidated in Mauritania, so as to socialise impending losses. This does not mean that the corporations do not feel endangered by nationalisation. But they have gained experience in dealing with the problem and developed new strategies, like the low-grade, large-scale mining which enables the mining industry to widen the area in which profitable mining can be carried out. More countries could be opened up for mining and competition for foreign mining capital is stirred up among them. So far, hardly any underdeveloped country has proved capable of opening up new mine deposits
on its own. The main constraints are technology and finance. No big international loan will be granted in the field of mining to an underdeveloped country if there is not a well-established mining corporation to utilise the funds. Thus, the nationalisations carried out so far have usually meant reliance on the former owners to manage the mines.

The different forms of nationalisations, whether total or partial, with or without compensation, have different implications for the capital owner. That with no compensation, thus totally excluding the previous owner, is the only form that the corporations cannot come to terms with. All other forms may prove not only acceptable, but even profitable. They may free part of the capital engaged in the mining venture for investment elsewhere while allowing the continued control of local operations through management, technology, the distribution network and access to the financial markets. Typically, in the case of a partial nationalisation, the corporations choose to be the minority shareholders. In this way they avoid such things as guaranteeing credits contracted on the financial markets. The joint-venture with the local government facilitates the use of transfer pricing by the corporations. Instead of splitting profits and then having them taxed, it is much better for the corporations to take out the total profit by way of charging high prices for intra-company imports of goods, services, technology, for the use of licences and credits. Even in the case of total nationalisation all these mechanisms can be applied, as long as management remains in the hands of the former capital owner.

A radical nationalisation completely excluding the former owner from all operations in production, management, distribution and finance, requires certain preconditions. In particular the local government has to be able to run the mining operations with local technical and managerial capacities, a condition that was fulfilled to a large extent in the case of Chile, but not in the case of Zambia, Zaire, and others, not even in the case of the Iranian Sar-Chesmeh copper mine, wholly financed by Iranian capital but managed by US-Anaconda.

In the case of South Africa a radical nationalisation would mean the virtual exclusion of most whites from their present occupations as technicians, skilled workers, and managers, since they would likely run the operations in a way loyal to their former employers. Yet the system of apartheid has so far precluded the development of a technical and managerial intelligentsia amongst blacks. And, it will take a long time to produce them on a large enough scale. Moreover, should an attempt at radical nationalisation be made in the gold mining industry, the international financial institutions controlling the gold price, especially the central banks of the US and western Europe, could depress the gold price by sales of their stock over a long period of time, and thus destabilise the South African economy. Moreover, as in the case of Chile, a series of other destabilising policies could be devised, one of which is at present acting as a severe constraint on the white-dominated South African economy: the denial of credits by big international lending agencies. The depression of the gold price, moreover, does not hit any very important industries in the western world, except uranium mining in South Africa itself.

As regards the non-gold mining industry the South African mining corporations can mobilise the western mining community and their respective states, either for the protection of capital interests or for the protection of secure supplies of raw materials. A nationalised mining industry would have to rely on the com-
munity of mining corporations for the international distribution of the raw materials, as well as for access to finance markets, in case of expanding mining production.

Considering all the other constraints, especially the one of the technical and managerial intelligentsia, a radical attempt at nationalisation is not likely to work unless the whole economy extricates itself at once from the capitalist world market. This alternative will not be dealt with here except to note that it is difficult to see how the structure of the South African economy heavily producing minerals for export, could adjust to integrate with COMECON in East Europe and or other socialist countries.

Any other, non-radical approach to nationalisation is compatible with the present corporate structure of the mining industry and will mean in practice the continuity of domination by the present corporations, albeit under another form and with new political problems.

Conclusion
This paper has examined the importance of South Africa as supplier of mineral raw materials. It has in particular focused on the strategies of the mining corporations to protect themselves against any repercussions of the liberation struggle that could endanger their future profits. The conclusion is that the corporations through their control, their own technology and links with the international corporate mining community and the nation-states of industrialised countries, in fact may well be able to cope with many economic and political pressures on them, including most forms of nationalisation. Since the mining houses like other big corporations can live without the colour bar if necessary, and since in the teeth of the mounting struggle for liberation the once profitable system of apartheid becomes increasingly a political liability, they will increasingly advocate its destruction and advocate majority rule. Yet, once liberation is achieved, they will try to counter any move towards a socialist-oriented society, and the effective take-over of their industry, as long as the country remains within the capitalist world market. Thus, the prospects for socialist liberation are severely threatened by the mining industry. Yet this is not to be taken as a statement of defeat. It is only through the awareness of underlying political problems, difficult as they may be, that a solution in the interest of the suppressed majority is to be found.

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Class Struggles in Ghana's Mining Industry

Jim Silver

The first 20 years of Ghanaian independence has seen industrial relations in the mining industry transformed from the relative stability of the early Nkrumah years when the mineworkers' living standards constantly rose, to a fierce confrontation by the rank and file workers, not only with the military regime, but also with the trades union leadership. The alliance of mining capital, the State and the trades union bureaucracy which faces the mineworkers has resulted in their development of a militant class consciousness. As yet, it is a defensive consciousness, disruptive, but not linked to any socialist transition in Ghana.

This article* analyses the relations between capital and labour in the Ghanaian mining industry over the past 15-20 years. It offers some concrete conclusions about the resulting kind and level of class consciousness attained by mineworkers, and further attempts to determine how that class consciousness and the struggles from which it has derived relate to the political economy of Ghana and especially to the role played by the state in that social formation.

It will be argued that the mineworkers' struggles in Ghana are increasingly taking the form of a direct confrontation between themselves and the state, with both mining capital, in its private and public forms, and the union having lost virtually all control over the workers. The development of these struggles will be described, emphasizing: the increasing militancy of rank and file mineworkers, as expressed both by strikes and by workplace-level struggles; the widening gap between these workers and their union; the co-optation of the union by mining capital and the state, thus creating a capital-state-union alliance against the workers; and the increasing necessity for the state to intervene, often in its most repressive form, to put down the insistent revolts of the mineworkers. The intensification of these struggles during the years under review, and the particular forms which they have taken, have been the crucible in which the mineworkers' now fiercely militant class consciousness has been formed.

It will be further argued, however, that this consciousness, militant though it may be, is not yet such as to make of the mineworkers a potential vanguard for a transition to socialism in Ghana. Theirs is basically a defensive consciousness,

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*I am indebted to Theo Mars for his comments and suggestions on an earlier draft of this paper.
rooted in the workplace, and not yet guided by any all-embracing, socialist-oriented political philosophy. Nevertheless, the mineworkers have become a major threat to the process of capital accumulation in the mining industry, and furthermore, their militancy has changed a previously relatively 'trouble-free' industry into one which is increasingly threatening and disrupting the economic and even political calculations of ruling regimes. Though not yet ready to lead the struggle for socialism, the mineworkers will certainly block any of the many so-called 'development' programmes, such as the IMF strategy about to be implemented in Ghana, which would make them victims rather than beneficiaries.

The Early Years
During the early years of independence, labour relations in the Ghanaian mines were excellent. Strikes were remarkably infrequent, and the bulk of the workforce supported Nkrumah and his Convention Peoples Party (CPP). This was not surprising, since in early 1961 Nkrumah had taken over five of the seven operating gold mines in the country, in response to their threatened closure as a result of declining profits, thus saving thousands of mineworkers' jobs. He then named E.A. Mettle-Nunoo to the post of Chairman of the newly created, government-owned Ghana State Mining Corporation (GSMC). Mettle-Nunoo was a former trade unionist, having risen to the position of Deputy Secretary-General of the Trades Union Congress (TUC). His attitude towards labour relations was that 'no disgruntled worker can work efficiently', and it was his proud claim (no doubt at least slightly exaggerated) that he gave to the workers anything for which they asked, with the result that strikes were almost unknown during his tenure of office. Wages, in both nominal and real terms, rose steadily, and mineworkers had little desire to bite the hand which, for the moment, fed them.

But by 1965, the Ghanaian economy was rapidly plunging into its final pre-coup despair. Real wages were being sharply eroded by the country's accelerating inflation, while in the minds of workers, the glorious myth of Nkrumah as the national hero of freedom and independence was confronted by the grim reality of day to day life.

Table I

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These data are derived from Kodwo Ewusi *The Distribution of Monetary Incomes in Ghana*, University of Ghana, Legon: Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research, 1971, p.43. The minimum wage of mineworkers has traditionally been slightly above the minimum for the country as a whole, but its trend would be the same as the trend shown here, and might well show an even sharper decline after 1960, since the cost of living is particularly high in some of the mining areas, such as Tarkwa and Prestea (The index here is deflated by the Accra Retail Price Index).

Meanwhile, support for the Ghana Mineworkers' Union (GMWU) was also being eroded. From 1951 to 1963, D.K. Foevie, former engine-driver at Marlu Mines, had been General President of the GMWU, and under his skilful leadership, wages rose and fringe benefits were won, with the result that a labour force once characterized by 100% annual turnover became increasingly stabilized.
But Foevie's longevity as leader was not attributable solely to his skills as a trade unionist. He was also a political opportunist of considerable skill, whose capacity for shifting sides at the right moment probably did as much to keep him in office as his abilities around the bargaining table. For example, when the GMWU Executive resigned under rank and file pressure in 1951, for having repudiated an unofficial mandate from the membership to join the 1950 General Strike, Foevie proclaimed to the workers that he had supported strike action from the start, even though he almost assuredly had not. However, he was sufficiently convincing that he was not only spared the wrath of the workers, but was also made their new General President. Several years later he again proved his adaptability when, under threat of deportation (he is Togolese by nationality) for opposing the CPP's proposed Industrial Relations Act, he adroitly slid over into the CPP ranks and, forgetting his previous distaste for their politics, set out to prove the old adage that there are none so pious as the recently converted. By 1961, he was rewarded for his efforts by being named by Nkrumah to the Board of Directors of the newly-formed GSMC. Foevie's instinct for survival had not, to this point, impaired his abilities as a trade unionist, and the GMWU still appeared to derive enthusiastic support from the rank and file.

However, in 1963, Foevie was named Chairman and Managing Director of the GSMC, and immediately became 'the complete employer', pursuing management interests (which he equated with the interests of the CPP) without regard for the needs of labour, and using his intimate knowledge of the mineworkers to single out and sack the militants. Seemingly unsatisfied with his new powers, he attempted to simultaneously carry on as General President of the GMWU. The Union would not have it, and Foevie promptly launched an all-out attack on the Executive, designed to undermine their rank and file support.

He brought in CPP 'cadres', installed them as Chairmen of newly-formed 'Grievance and Disciplinary Committees' at each of the State Mines, and issued instructions that workers' grievances should be routed through these new committees. The Union protested this intrusion into its jurisdiction, but to no avail. Its autonomy had long since been sapped by the Industrial Relations Act, first passed in 1958, which made all National Unions captive creatures of the CPP. Their positions in the GMWU thus dependent upon CPP support, the GMWU executive dared not oppose the introduction of CPP cadres into the labour relations mechanisms of the mining industry, nor dared they demand higher wages to counter inflation during a period when the CPP insisted that a weakening economy required greater labour discipline in order to increase production. As a result, rank and file support for the compromised and much weakened GMWU was fast slipping away, and even turning to open antagonism. By April 1965, the Regional Labour Officer was writing about the Amalgamated Banket Areas Limited at Tarkwa that, 'the union's role is gradually fading out', and in early 1966 he wrote to the Minister of Labour that, 'Mr Buachie (the General Secretary of the GMWU) was at Prestea last week but at that time thought it inexpedient to meet the workers. The tension was then high, and the atmosphere was not conducive enough.' Foevie and the CPP together had successfully managed to undermine the GMWU, and the resultant antagonism between mineworkers and their union is still a central feature of labour relations in the industry.

The Struggles Intensify
The overthrow of Nkrumah in February 1966, and the release of Ghana's workers
from the vise-like grip of the CPP led to a rash of strikes across the country. The mineworkers did not react quite so immediately to Nkrumah's demise, and during 1966 and 1967, strikes at the mines continued to be relatively infrequent.

However, the first of a series of violent mineworker outbreaks finally occurred at Prestea Goldfields on 11 May 1968. The immediate cause was dissatisfaction with and confusion over back pay, sparked by a pit-head insult from a Ghanaian senior staff member directed at underground workers who were about to begin the morning shift. The long-frustrated workers reacted with sudden rage, refusing to go down, and violently attacking senior staff members, plus company, state and trade union property. Several senior staff members were severely beaten, as were two policemen who attempted to rescue them, while rampaging workers damaged the Mines General Office and Security Building, senior staff bungalows and the senior staff restaurant, plus the police station and the Union local office. Two days later after a general meeting of all members, a new outburst resulted in the death of one policeman and the wounding of 14 others. Management escaped a similar fate only by running for their lives and hiding, some trembling in the attics of their offices whilst workers ransacked their files immediately beneath them.

A committee of inquiry was commissioned to establish the causes of the riots and found that the underlying grievances were both many and long simmering. They found that mineworkers' grievances with respect to the high cost of living and low wages, plus inadequate accommodation, sanitation and recreational facilities were all justified, as were complaints relating to sick leave payments, and the diagnosis of illness by company doctors. For example, the report commented on this final point by saying that the '... assessment of degree of incapacity has been low because the assessment is usually done by a Medical Officer who is an employee of the Mine and, therefore, biased in favour of the Corporation, (and) that this has been proved so especially in cases of Silicotic-Tuberculosis, which is an occupational disease, (but is) being diagnosed as ordinary Tuberculosis, which is a non-occupational disease'.

Aggravating these long-standing grievances was the much worsened split between the branch union and its membership, which by this time had widened to unbridgeable proportions. Evidence from the hearings made it clear that the trade union/rank and file split was, more accurately, a split between the trade union, controlled by and drawing support from the surface working southerners mostly artisans and clerks — on the one hand, and the northerners, who worked underground, on the other. In previous times, it was the northerners who formed the unstable element of the mines labour force, coming down to work for six months or so a year, then returning home. This enabled the more stabilized core of surface-working southerners to gain control of the GMWU by default. But the increased stabilisation since Foevie's days now meant that the northerners, long stuck with the worst jobs, and now faced with a union which was primarily concerned with the grievances of southern surface workers — when it showed any concern for workers at all — wanted a new deal for themselves. They demanded a more militant approach from the local union, and when that was not forthcoming, they seized control of the shop steward movement which had been introduced on a trial basis by the Union Executive in October 1964. As described by the mineworkers in a memorandum to the Committee of Inquiry investigating the Prestea disturbances, 'the shop stewards acted as the "nose"
and "eyes" of the Union and communicated to the Executive the mood and feeling of each shop. They also carried to the Union suggestions of reform etc., thus acting as a sort of "pepping up" body to the Union. The Union, however, did not want 'pepping up'. The northerners had used the shop steward movement as a vehicle to organise themselves, holding meetings underground and then coming 'en masse' to branch union meetings to push their claims, and they became a sufficient threat to the Union that the shop steward system was dissolved in May 1967 by an increasingly nervous, but no less conservative, Union Executive. This, of course, did not have the desired result, and the underground workers finally despaired of the union officials and their constant recourse to rules, procedures and constitutions. The union had now been by-passed, and the underground workers' struggle had escalated to the level of direct and violent confrontation with capital and the state. The degree of violence was no doubt a function of the length of time their grievances had been suppressed.

Similar outbreaks occurred in the rest of the industry. At Tarkwa Goldfields, the 1800 underground workers had struck on 11 January 1968, breaking windows, damaging the car of a Board member, and seriously injuring the Company Labour Controller. The immediate issue was non-payment of bonus. On 4 March the same workers were out again, this time marching to the SGMC headquarters in Tarkwa town to demand the removal of the Labour Controller, who they believed was cheating them on their overtime pay. On 28 June, a month and a half after the Prestea riots, the Tarkwa workers went out yet again, this time seriously wounding the Underground Manager and Assistant Mine Secretary plus several other senior staff members, and ransacking the Managing Director's bungalow and the senior staff canteen. In early October they once more downed tools, successfully demanding the reinstatement of the eleven workers who had been sacked for the June incident.

In early January 1969 there was more trouble at Tarkwa. Some of the underground workers had, over the years, devised a system to avoid work. 'They always appeared for work every morning, clocked their tickets, went down to their various levels, but came up and went home before work really started and got their full marks for the day'. Management, belatedly learning of this lack of devotion to duty, responded by fencing the shaft and affixing security gates to it. The workers promptly smashed the fence down, and the situation was sufficiently tense that the Regional Labour Officer wrote to the Chief Labour Officer in Accra that 'with the recent disturbances in the background . . . one can be sure that in the direction of enforcing discipline any measures that smack of regimentation will be vehemently opposed.' The workers' very direct forms of protest were gaining momentum, proving increasingly successful, and creating a crisis with respect to capital's ability to control labour.

The situation erupted again in early June 1969. This time the immediate issue was alleged insufficient compensation being paid to workers discharged on medical grounds, plus a demand for the removal of a Welfare Officer and the Acting Chief Security Officer. Management conceded to the removal of the former, but not the latter, and the workers immediately reacted with violence. They marched toward Tarkwa town, beating and seriously injuring the Company Medical Officer and the Mine Secretary, chasing the Labour Controller out of his office, and smashing offices and windows. A platoon of police was sent to meet them, and during the rioting they opened fire, wounding at least four people,
and arresting 47. The next day, the still tense situation was described by a tele-
gram stating: ‘Whole of underground workers, over 1000, gathered at the mine
this morning and offered strong resistance to police in worse fashion than yester-
day, using bows and arrows. Police opened fire wounded three. Twenty-one
arrests were made.’ Rioting broke out yet again several days later when under-
ground workers reporting for work found the police at the site. The Shift Bosses
and Senior Miners attempted to persuade the men to resume work anyway, and
were showered with stones for their efforts, resulting in another battle with the
police in which 80 workers were arrested. At the end of the month further
violence was threatened when it was learned that many workers had ‘packed
sufficient bows and arrows to fight police and Mine Senior Officers’ if their
demand to be paid for the time they had been out on strike was not met. This
threat did not materialise, however, and the police were finally withdrawn from
the mining area on 12 July.

The background problems had been the same at Tarkwa as at Prestea, together
with a seething resentment against management privilege and the local unions’
incompetence. The Regional Labour Officer wrote that ‘the trade union has
collapsed. The men have no confidence in their leaders because they feel they
(the leaders) are not representing their interests’, and the Chief Labour Officer
in Accra added that ‘... the mineworkers in Prestea and Tarkwa have no con-
fidence whatsoever in them (i.e. the national and local officers) and would not
hesitate to beat them up. It is significant to record that up to the third instant
when I left Tarkwa, the General Secretary of the GMWU had never visited the
Tarkwa Goldfields for fear of being beaten up.’

Aggravating matters at Tarkwa was the incompetence and corruption of senior
mines management. The Regional Labour Officer reported a discussion with
the SGMC Chairman ‘... who expressed his utter dissatisfaction with the manage-
ment. He said he was aware (that) the working people had grievances whilst
Mercedes Benz cars were flying about, (and) the Managing Director (spent)
almost all weekends at the Ambassador Hotel resulting in huge bills debited to
the Corporation ...’ Such ostentation ‘... beclouds the vision of top manage-
ment from discussing grievances which, accumulated as time passes, came out
in the form of riots.’

Meanwhile, in March 1969, the worst riot to date had occurred at Ashanti Gold-
fields Corporation (AGC) the country’s largest and traditionally most militant
mine. AGC had been taken over by Lonrho and the workers were demanding
the same three months severance pay which had been awarded to workers at
Konongo when that mine had been taken over by the state in 1963. In the
background were the same grievances as at Tarkwa and Prestea, but especially
housing. The company provided accommodation for only about 1000 of its
6500 African workers, and under questioning at the inquiry which followed the
riot, the Mine Secretary ‘... admitted that the corporation had never surveyed
the housing problem ...’ and that the last set of rooms built for the workers
had been erected in 1937.

Thus when Lonrho refused to pay the severance award, the workers called a
strike, and when local union officials urged moderation, they were stoned by
their members. Picketing at the mine gates on 3 March soon swelled over into
looting of and damage to company property. The police were called, rioting
broke out, tear-gas soon gave way to guns, and before the day was over, four
mineworkers lay dead, 16 people, including nine mineworkers, were wounded, and twenty policemen had been injured by thrown objects.

A commission was appointed to enquire into the deaths, but when by June of 1970 it still had not made its findings public, the workers struck again. The police were joined by soldiers for the first time, as the workers marauded through the streets of Obuasi, assaulting both their more recalcitrant workmates, and the police. It was reported that '. . . the workers at times deliberately provoked the police in order to lure them into a strife (sic) and thereby wreak vengeance for what they the miners suffered during last year’s disturbances.' On the 16th and 17th, 118 arrests were made, which served to dampen the violence, but work did not resume until 3 July, the workers refusing to go back down the pits even after the arrested miners were released and returned from Kumasi in a desperate but futile conciliatory gesture designed to resume production.

Thus for two and a half stormy years, labour relations at the Ghanaian mines were characterised by direct violence employed by workers against both capital and the Union. Large-scale violence had never before been directed by mineworkers against capital much less against the Union. Furthermore, the struggle was no longer confined to demands for wages and fringe benefits. More significantly, workers were forcing new issues — traditionally jealously guarded by capital as being indisputably within their preserve — into the arena of struggle. For example, workers were insisting upon the dismissal of certain management staff whose behaviour went outside the bounds decided by them as acceptable. Capital attempted to resist these labour encroachments, but being repeatedly unable to carry out its labour control function, was increasingly forced to turn to the state for overt assistance, in the form first of police, and finally, of the military.

The Mineworkers and the Military Regime: A Fragile Alliance

But relations between capital and labour were not to take the overtly conflictual form of violent strikes again until 1977. Between 1970 and 1977, strikes were relatively few in the mining industry. The mineworkers did not even join the 1971 anti-Busia strikes, despite their intense hatred of Busia and his Progress Party, most likely for two reasons. First, the strikes were sparked off by, among other things, Busia’s dissolution of the TUC, and the mineworkers had long since lost confidence, and interest, in the TUC. Secondly, the AGC workers had temporarily split from the GMWU to form their own union, in the long-held belief that direct bargaining with the extremely rich AGC, rather than joint bargaining which included the other, more marginal mines, would lead to higher wages for AGC workers. This development diverted mineworkers’ attention at the time of the 1974 strikes.

When the military overthrew Busia in January 1972, they were greeted with jubilation and pledges of mineworkers’ support, and even their forcing the AGC workers back into the GMWU was forgiven when the new regime, the National Redemption Council (NRC) (later to become, after a high-level reshuffle in October 1975, the Supreme Military Council [SMC]), took a 55% interest in AGC later the same year. Over the next several years, wages rose steadily, going from 0.80 Cedis per day for surface workers and 0.85 Cedis underground by August of 1974 — an increase of approximately
300% in 2½ years (1 Cedi = $0.75). Prices remained relatively stable during those 2½ years, and the GMWU appeared to be redeeming itself under the cautious but conscientious leadership of its new Secretary-General, E.G. Williams. All was peace and harmony.

But the renewed consensus between capital and labour was more apparent than real, as a closer examination would have made evident, and which later events were to prove. In the same way that the apparent industrial peace in the last years of Nkrumah had hidden the seeds of the violent clashes of 1968-70, so too did the absence of strikes from 1970 to 1976 mask the emergent trends which were to converge and issue in the renewed violent confrontations of 1977.

For example, it very quickly became clear that the NRC was going to take a very hard line on strikers, when they responded to an easily resolved 25 minute sit-down strike at AGC in July 1972, with a letter from the NRC Commissioner for Labour saying: ‘... I am directed to inform you that the sit-down strike contravenes the subversion decree just published in the country. You are therefore requested to take the necessary action; to hand over to the police for prosecution the heads of departments or organisers of the strikes.’ Next year the Commissioner responsible for Labour was quoted as saying ‘... that any trade unionist who incites workers to go on strike will be declared an economic war prisoner and dealt with by Military Tribunal under the Subversion Decree.’ And in 1974, a two day stoppage at Tarkwa brought machine-gun toting troops onto the mining property and threats to sack all who failed to resume work.

Meanwhile, the apparent revival of the GMWU went no deeper than did the NRC claims of support for workers. E.G. Williams, the new General-Secretary, had been the Branch Secretary at Prestea during the 1968 riots there, and had in fact been the focus of the radical underground workers' wrath, largely because of his conservative pro-surface worker attitudes, and his plodding concern with constitutional procedure in the face of — and to the detriment of any solution to — genuine worker grievances. Nevertheless, the report of the Committee of Inquiry said about Williams that he ‘... showed a realistic grasp of the relationship which should exist between labour and management and what should be the proper attitude of labour to the organisation which gives it employment.’ This ‘proper attitude’ was characterised by his tirade against the radicals amongst the mineworkers, about whom he said, ‘... we have to race very fast and swiftly to chase them out of the mine ...’, a task which he felt could not be done ‘... unless union and management could sit and take firm and concrete measures against subversionist (sic) within the mine; unless the management would accept reports, complaints and grievances from the union as genuine and act without hesitation ...’ The Committee was delighted with Williams, whom, they said, had ‘... impressed the Committee as a very intelligent, efficient, conscientious and painstaking officer who could do credit to any post higher than the one he occupies at present.’ Apparently the Committee members could read the future, because after the hearings, Williams was sent to Britain to undertake a four month course in Industrial Relations, and upon his return he moved immediately into the job of Administrative Secretary to the General Secretary at GMWU headquarters; in 1970, he was elected General Secretary of the GMWU. Williams' past record as a conservative opponent of militant workers, and his somewhat suspicious route to the top in the GMWU, made the likelihood of a renewed split between trade union and rank and file at a time of crisis a distinct probability.
Thus, standing between the workers who had been radicalized in 1968-70, and a military regime determined to make a quick resort to force to prevent a recurrence of 1968-70, was a trade union which had already been repudiated by the mineworkers, and which was headed by a leader who had been similarly repudiated. That such a fragile alliance could persist was largely due to the relative stability of the Ghanaian economy to 1974. The National Consumer Price Index rose by 4.8% in 1970/71; 11.8% in 1971/72; and 8.6% in 1972/73 (compared, for example, to the high rates in the latter Nkrumah years, when the CPI rose 15.3% in 1964, and 26.4% in 1965). At the same time mineworkers' wages were rising by some 300%. However, when the 1973 oil crisis occurred, its destabilizing effects were aggravated by the gross economic mismanagement of Ghana's military regime, with the result that the Consumer Price Index rose by 23.4% in 1973/74, and 19.7% in 1974/75. By December 1975 the figure had reached 40.4%, by May 1976, 50.5%, and by 1977 the Ghanaian rate of inflation had hit triple digits. Meanwhile, the mineworkers were awarded no wage boost between August of 1974 and April of 1977. Such an erosion of real wages was a recipe for confrontation, and the other realities behind the apparent calm of the industry's labour relations made it a near certainty that the confrontation would be violent.

Confrontation: the End of the 'Alliance'

The first outburst occurred at the Nsuta manganese mine in late 1976 and early 1977. The African Manganese Corporation had been taken over by the state effective from 1 January 1975, and an eight-day strike by workers demanding the same severance pay as AGC workers at the time of the Lonrho takeover was ended with a threat to dismiss the entire work force. The matter lay dormant until taken up again 21 months later in October 1976 by R.A. Yeboah, a fiery radical who had defeated Williams in an election for the post of General Secretary of the GMWU. Yeboah organised a meeting with management on the matter of severance pay, to be held in the Manager's bungalow on 29 October 1976. The meeting ended in complete confusion, with rioting workers surrounding the bungalow, smashing car windows, causing damage to company property, and finally forcing a thoroughly frightened management to sign a promissory note agreeing to pay the severance award. The police quelled the riot, but management later repudiated their promise to pay the severance award on the grounds that it had been signed under duress. The NRC supported this decision, but Yeboah would not accept it, and continued to encourage the workers to force the issue. The rising tension resulted in another strike in January, in which the workers, with red flags waving, rampaged through the streets of Nsuta, severely beating any worker who attempted to return to work, and forcing even those workers still on duty for the purpose of maintaining the mine's essential services to flee for their lives. The military regime reacted by putting sufficient pressure on Yeboah and the local union to force them to call for a return to work. When the workers ignored even the militant Yeboah, the police riot squad was called in, backed by the military in reserve, while management proceeded to sack every single worker, and weed out the 'undesirables' and 'trouble makers' in the rehiring process. As a consequence, 150 workers and six local union executives lost their jobs.

This Nsuta strike had been particularly characterized by the increasingly dominant role played by the state, in the form of the military regime, who had had
to intervene to bolster capital's waning capacity to control labour. The Regional Labour Officer had reported in the midst of the strike that management had abandoned all hope that the workers would resume duty, and thus the state intervened, firstly through the GMWU, and when that failed, by means of direct force. Thus the traditional form of the conflict between capital and labour, in which the state stays in the background, was increasingly taking the form of a confrontation between the state and labour, with management pushed to the background.

In the wake of the Nsuta violence, Yeboah was able to wrest a 60% wage increase out of the Chamber of Mines at the April 1977 negotiations, pushing surface workers from 2.40 Cedis per day to 3.50 Cedis, and underground workers from 2.50 to 4.00 Cedis. However, the state was soon forced to intervene in this realm as well. Serious strikes by students and professionals in May and June 1977 forced the SMC to boost the minimum wage for all workers to 4.00 Cedis per day, in order to prevent workers from joining the anti-regime demonstrations. But mineworkers had always been paid slightly above the minimum wage, and they now demanded a further increase to maintain their differential, irrespective of their recently negotiated one year agreement. Management's offer of a further 50 pesewas was not acceptable to the mineworkers, and there ensued a period of extreme confusion in which the military, fearful of a recurrence of 1968-70, and desperately needing working class support in the face of increasing opposition from the country's professionals and students, created a Tripartite Committee on Salaries and Wages, which effectively scuttled free collective bargaining, and took to itself the right to establish wages throughout the country. The end result, after much pressure from Yeboah, and the ever-present threat that renewed violence by the mineworkers might link up with the anti-SMC forces, was a new wage schedule which gave surface workers 6.27 Cedis per day, and underground workers 6.64 Cedis, or 6.92 Cedis if they worked in the stopes — an almost 300% increase since the start of the year.

But the attempt to purchase mineworkers' support was only one-half of the SMC's strategy for labour control in the mining industry. The other half was to get rid of the radical Yeboah, who had become "... a thorn in our flesh." Yeboah was the most highly educated of all the GMWU General Secretaries to date, having had three years of secondary school, two years of commercial school, and a series of courses on local government, plus previous experience as a civil servant and local government clerk of council. He also had 12 years of practical mining experience, much of it underground, and he was the only General Secretary of the GMWU to have been a Senior Staff member, having reached the level of shift boss. He was a formidable negotiator, and a rousing public speaker, and his four years as Branch Secretary at AGC from 1972 to 1976 still draw grudging respect from management for his trade union skills, and undying support from a large section of the work force for his powerful representation of their interests. He defeated E.G. Williams in elections for General Secretary in early 1976 — despite overt support from the TUC for Williams — but after his part in the Nsuta riots of late 1976 and early 1977, and his role in the 300% wage hike to mineworkers, it was clear that he was too much of a threat both to mines management and to a vulnerable regime, and therefore had to go.

Making matters easier for the military was the fact that the rest of the GMWU executive also wanted Yeboah out. His militancy was anathema to the old guard
in the Union executive, and they resented the new tension and even anger between management and the Union. Thus from a very early stage, the National Chairman was at the centre of behind-the-scenes plotting for an internal coup. As Yeboah’s presence became increasingly threatening, both capital and the state — the latter in the form of the Labour Department — joined the conniving to be rid of him. The Chamber of Mines wrote to the SMC suggesting that he be taken into protective custody, for the sake of industrial peace, and a warrant was put out for his arrest, ostensibly on a charge of embezzling funds while he was Branch Secretary at AGC. Now fearful for his safety, Yeboah turned himself in to the TUC, who he then found had also been involved in the plotting. He was taken to the Castle where Acheampong — in accordance with an agreement secretly reached between the Ashanti Goldfields Corporation, the State Gold Mining Corporation, the Chamber of Mines, the Ghana Mineworkers Union, the Ghana Trades Union Congress, the Labour Department, and the Supreme Military Council itself — told Yeboah that he could agree to never return to the mining areas, in which case he would be helped to start his own business in Accra, and the embezzlement charges against him would be dropped, or he could refuse that generous offer, in which case he would most certainly be found guilty of embezzlement, with or without benefit of trial. It was an offer he could not refuse, and Yeboah now runs a small brick-making business in Madina, just outside Accra, far from the maelstrom of Ghana’s mining areas.

But the persistent assumption, held by both capital and the state, that the control of labour could be effected through the suppression of individual instigators, proved to be naive, as evidenced by a series of increasingly violent strikes between September and December of 1977 which rocked the mining industry to its very core. There were three strikes at Prestea, one at Tarkwa, and three more at AGC.

At Prestea, the first of the three ‘terrible strikes’ was only ended when management conceded to the workers’ demands for the removal of the underground manager plus two other senior staff members. However, when the underground manager returned to the mine in early November, the angry workers immediately struck again. The GMWU was disowned by the rank and file, who not only refused to listen to their attempts to speak at mass meetings, but also stoned them. A militant splinter group emerged, formed mostly of underground workers, and those workers who hesitated to support the strike action were harassed and beaten. At one point the frightened Managing Director was virtually held captive in his office for six hours by demonstrating workers, and when he finally emerged, the workers grabbed him, threw him in his own car, and dumped him in Tarkwa, some 29 miles away. And again, the state had to intervene, this time in the form of the Regional Commissioner who, although greeted by abuse and threats from the workers, finally achieved a resumption of work by ordering management to remove the Underground Manager from the premises for his own safety, and setting up a committee to investigate the workers’ grievances. When this committee reported its findings in December, the recommendations included the immediate dismissal of seven alleged ‘ring leaders’, in response to which the entire workforce once more downed tools in solidarity with their victimized workmates. When several attempts to persuade workers to resume work proved fruitless, the entire workforce of 400 was dismissed, in order to ‘... give management the opportunity to reject all the undesirables and troublemakers when they apply to be re-engaged.’ A member of the Board of Directors of the SGMC
pointed out that a further factor in the choice of this mass dismissal tactic was that, since it was nearing Christmas at the time, the closure of the mine would inflict maximum financial pain on the strikers, and thus teach them a much deserved lesson.

A similar tactic had been threatened at Tarkwa in early December, bringing a quick end to a two day strike — opposed as usual by the union — over the question of Christmas bonus. The effectiveness of this latest labour control tactic is attributable in part to the fact that the threat of mass dismissal forces all but the most determined workers to adopt a defensive posture against the militants, thus driving a wedge between the militants and the rest of the workers, and in part to the fact that the re-hiring process, based as it is on individual assessment by management of workers’ ‘character and behaviour’, serves to atomize the work force, thus further breaking down the solidarity which is the workers’ greatest strength. Thus its success at Nsuta in January, and at Prestea and Tarkwa in December.

Meanwhile at AGC, two strikes in September were quickly resolved by management’s conceding to workers’ demands, but the concessions were not sufficient to prevent a third strike in early October in which the workers demanded the removal of certain senior management personnel, and the payment of the new wage levels arrived at by the Tripartite Committee, which rises had not yet been added to the workers’ pay packets. These demands were accompanied by growing tension and threats of violence, as evidenced by a letter from the General Mines Manager after the strike, which said that ‘... the mood of the underground labour became more threatening each day but fortunately they returned to work before violence occurred’, and the Managing Director, who complained of ‘the increasing use by labour of unofficial strike action (the AGC strikes, like those at Prestea and Tarkwa, were opposed by the Union) accompanied by violence or threats of violence, to gain their ends.’ That violence did not occur in this third AGC strike seems attributable only to the fact that management quickly acquiesced to the workers’ demands with respect to wages, and announced the new rates of 6.27, 6.64 and 6.92 Cedis.

But no sooner had work been resumed than yet another strike was being threatened, this time over Christmas bonus, and the renewed demand for the removal of selected Senior Staff. The local union, its pleas for moderation having been disdainfully ignored in the three previous strikes, now moved overtly to management’s side by announcing at a meeting that it was ready ‘... to take any joint action with management over this issue, even if it requires appealing to the Government for action.’ But management had as little confidence in the Union as had the workers. The Managing Director wrote that ‘... the local branch of the union would appear to be out of effective contact with the labour force,’ and certain Senior Staff began to implicitly realize the seemingly insoluble labour dilemma now facing the industry: i.e. that a union without the support of its membership makes organized and predictable labour control virtually impossible, but that any union leader militant enough to gain the support of the membership is too militant to be tolerated by management, as the Yeboah case had proved.

Meanwhile, the Company’s spies were operating amongst the workers, both at workers’ drinking bars in the town, and at the workplace. The reports being brought to management were that the planned strike would include violence
to mines property and senior mines personnel, and also that separate workers' groups — such as the Blastmen's Association — were being formed underground, where numerous workers' meetings were occurring. Management responded by keeping a close eye on developments, the General Mines Manager informing the Managing Director that 'Our informers have been debriefed to infiltrate the miners' ranks and bring out more items of information. Situation is under observation.' At the same time, secret negotiations going on at the highest levels between AGC, the Labour Department, and the military regime, resulted in troops being moved during December to points just outside Obuasi, and placed on alert to move in at the first hint of the threatened worker uprising. For reasons which are not at all clear, that uprising did not occur, and the AGC workers were spared what almost certainly would have been a blood bath.

Thus the mineworkers' uprisings of late 1977 ended with a whimper, with workers at Prestea, Tarkwa and Obuasi being at least temporarily subdued. Nevertheless, the mineworkers extracted considerable concessions after early 1977, not least of which was a 300% increase in wages, and although peace would appear to have been temporarily restored, the mere absence of strikes is by no means evidence of consensus. Workers are still bitterly dissatisfied with wages and conditions, and the emergent forms of grass roots organisation reported at Prestea and Obuasi, coupled with the mineworkers' unabated militancy and the further decline of the GMWU, mean further labour control problems for capital and the state. At the same time, the labour-control strategies open to both capital and the state lie hopelessly tangled in contradiction. Capital needs a union strong enough to be able to control labour, but not so strong as to threaten capital. The military wants the mineworkers sufficiently happy that they do not join the professionals and students in opposing the regime, but fears the inflationary consequences of paying the wages which alone would keep them that happy. Thus the appearance of consensus cloaks the underlying reality of a fragile truce, pregnant with the possibility of renewed violence.

Class Struggle at the Workplace
This underlying reality is brought into sharper relief when the empirical and analytical focus is shifted from the level of strikes, to the level of day to day relations at the workplace. Here the appearance of consensus is further belied by the overwhelming evidence not only of constant conflict and struggle, but also of a struggle in which, in many respects, labour has gained the upper hand, and capital is on the defensive.

That this should be the case is attributable not only to the militancy of miners-workers, but also to the severe profit squeeze currently plaguing mining capital. As long ago as 1970 the SGMC as a whole incurred a net loss of 5.5 million Cedis, while that same year at Tarkwa Goldfields '.. the total earnings were not even enough to pay half of the salaries and wages of its employees...' Tarkwa Goldfields is now living on overdrafts, and dropping about 1 million Cedis per month on its operations. Similarly at AGC, long considered to be the richest gold mine in the world for its size, the General Mines Manager reported in January 1978 that '.. the 12 million Cedis in reserve at the end of the 1975-76 financial year had been reduced to nil. The company had in fact borrowed 1,095,000 Cedis already and was therefore in a difficult position.' This profit squeeze, which has of course been caused, at least in part, by the struggle between capital and
labour, now makes it even more essential for capital to exercise tight control over labour, while at the same time reducing capital's capacity to effect that control.

For example, management recently embarked upon a mechanization programme at the state mines, where the profit squeeze has been the most severe. The idea was to try to control both labour costs and increasing militancy by sharply reducing the number of underground workers through the use in the stopes of hydraulic-powered loaders and, eventually, mechanized drills. The strategy worked well up to April 1977, especially so since workers were leaving the mines in their numbers anyway, in response to the declining real values of their wages, thus obviating the necessity for potentially dangerous dismissals. However, the 300% wage increase over the rest of 1977 had the effect of at one and the same time making mechanization more necessary — due to the staggering increase in the wage bill — and less possible — due to the consequent decline in profits. When the rash of strikes occurred in late 1977, the contradiction in the mechanization strategy was deepened. The very labour militancy which mechanization was designed to counter was now halting production, and thus aggravating the profit squeeze and making impossible the purchase of capital equipment. Thus for the moment, the mechanization strategy lies in tatters.

Management strategies designed to deal with other, more particular types of workplace militancy have proved equally as ineffective, as workers successfully flaunt management authority in a myriad of ways. One of the most predominant is the various forms of 'loafing' on the job. For example, at AGC, a '... study report recently revealed that for 68% of the time no work was done at 11 level Justice Sublevel and this was largely due to the labour arriving late for work and closing early.' At Tarkwa, sleeping by workers in the mill became such a serious problem recently that the Mill Manager began to record the instances, and his records show that between the 1st and 20th of March, 1978, 72 workers were found sleeping on the job and 26 away from their post. The Manager pointed out that the figure did not include those 'just grabbing a quick nod', but was restricted to those who actually created a makeshift bed in a corner or behind a machine, and had stretched out for a serious sleep. Such worker activities (or inactivities) are seen by management as manifestations of African 'laziness'. But a more accurate explanation for their occurrences is that labour is wresting from management the right to decide how many hours shall constitute a working day, thus eroding management's control of the work place.

A similar erosion of control exists with respect to theft in the mines. At AGC and Prestea, the theft of gold from both underground and the mill is rampant. A recent newspaper account admitted that management has lost control of the problem of theft at Prestea, while a senior manager at AGC estimates that 25% of potential gold output there is being lost to theft. Huge security staffs are employed at the mines to counter this theft, each one now headed by a recently retired or seconded military or police officer. At AGC, for example, the former police officer in charge of security is a specialist in intelligence work, with training in intelligence in both the UK and the USA. In addition to his regular staff of 333, he has a network of informants, as do all the mines, who are kept 'very warm through rewards'. But the theft goes on as workers merely cut the security staff in on the take. So other tactics are employed. For example, in a particular section of the AGC mill, where virtually pure gold is washed over and collected
in ‘blankets’, the company employs only 12 to 15 year old boys, on the premise that their tender years create a fear of authority which will prevent theft. Just to make doubly certain, the boys in this high risk area are forced to work stark naked, thus eliminating pockets into which the gold could be surreptitiously slipped, and creating a scene in the steamy, creaky old mill* that Dickens would recognise instantly. Yet the theft still goes on, the stolen gold being sold to what a senior AGC executive describes as a ‘mafia organisation’ which operates in the town, and which is apparently as uncontrollable as the theft itself.

Mines management is capable of neither understanding nor controlling this theft. They insist upon finding its source in the immorality of workers, as evidenced by an Underground Manager who told me that ‘... these people have no morals, they think the gold is theirs, and that we’re the ones who are stealing it.’ His statement, ironically, reveals both his own misconception of the causes of the thefts, and a clue to the real causes. The more accurate explanation for the theft of gold must be found in the historical working conditions at Ghanaian mines. Until relatively recently, the Ghanaian mines ran seven days a week, and workers received no annual leave, no pension, and were paid a pittance for a job even harder and more dangerous than it is today. Gold theft became a replacement for leave, workmen’s compensation and pensions. It put some security in workers’ lives, and supplemented their paltry pay packets. The theft of gold arose out of necessity, and has less to do with morality than it has with the conflict over who controls the workplace, and who gets the fruits of the mineworkers labour. And the evidence strongly suggests that with respect to the theft of gold, the mineworkers are exerting increasing control at the workplace, and appropriating a growing proportion of the fruits of their labour.

Efforts by management to regain some measure of their lost control at the workplace by bringing loafing and thievery to a halt draw immediate and often harsh reprisals from workers. Thus stories abound, from both management and labour, of overly aggressive supervisors whose admonitions resulted in workers sending ore down the waste chute, and waste down the ore chute, or of the sudden sabotage of the hydraulic hose on a loader, thus downing the machine for a day and wreaking havoc on the supervisor’s production figures. Sometimes the reprisals take a more violent turn. For example, several years ago at AGC, a European underground supervisor who was determined to bring theft in his section to a halt by conducting surprise raids on workers in the stopes, was soon caught alone at the top of the shaft by a group of workers and beaten so severely that he lost an eye. And many underground supervisors now insist upon having a worker above them while crawling up and down ladders, so great is their fear of being ‘accidentally’ hit by a falling rock from a stope above. The net result is that underground supervisors now readily admit to the necessity of turning a blind eye to considerable theft and loafering, in order to avoid reprisals.

*The Acting Mill Manager offered the opinion that the mill at Obuasi would not be allowed to operate in any other country in Africa, so archaic are the working conditions with respect to health and safety. Similarly the mill at Prestea spews out 4 tons of arsenic and 32 tons of sulphur dioxide into the atmosphere every day. As a result, when hair samples from 26 randomly sampled people in the fall-out area around Prestea were tested, they were found to contain between 30 and 500 parts per million (PPM) of arsenic content, ‘... and it is supposed that values exceeding 2 to 3 PPM indicate arsenic poisoning.’ See C.G. Farmilo, E. Sandi and S. Mempel ‘Arsenic Poisoning of Prestea People’, 5th International Meeting of Forensic Science, Toronto, 1969.
European supervisors newly arrived from mines in other parts of Africa heighten the struggle. They see the Ghanaian mines as sluggish cesspools of inefficiency, and immediately resolve to slap their sections into shape with their more efficient labour control techniques learned elsewhere. However, mineworkers in Ghanaian mines take great pride in the fact that they cannot be pushed around like workers in South Africa,* and as a consequence the new supervisors soon come to realise that they too must tread softly, since the consequence of not doing so is worker reprisals which cause even further reductions in output. A 'technical' management problem having to do with efficiency and technique, is in reality a struggle over control of the workplace.

Other forms of workplace struggle show the same result. Management used to be able to sack militants or 'troublemakers' on the spot. To do so now in the present militant atmosphere is immediately to court reprisals in the form of sit down strikes or go-slow, regular features of life at Ghanaian mines, as workers act in solidarity with those dismissed. As an example of the extent to which the management tactic of on the spot sackings has been wrested from them, one expatriate manager at AGC reported that he no longer sends the department vehicles to the Transport Department to be serviced, since the Transport Department has become a 'black power shop', effectively taken over by workers who defy management's control, and laugh at their fulminations. Finding sackings counter-productive, management has tried to buy off militants, especially those in the trade union hierarchy. But this tactic too has proved counter-productive, resulting in a weakened union unable to control its membership, and therefore creating even more labour control problems.

Because management stubbornly persists in the mistaken belief that labour discontent is fomented by isolated 'agitators', their labour control efforts, including the payment of large networks of worker informants,** are directed towards ferreting out these mythical agitators. But worker militancy in its various manifestations derives from genuine grievances rooted in the very nature of the capital/labour relationship, and so management finds that for every agitator eliminated, another rises to take his place. As a consequence, the struggle for control of the workplace goes on, with capital increasingly on the defensive.

Thus increasingly capital finds it necessary to turn to the repressive arm of the state. In 1968-70 the result was violence. In 1977, however, the SMC appeared inclined to use violence only after attempts to buy off worker demands with wage increases had failed. And the mineworkers for their part were satisfied to force their demands, take the pay-off from the state, and avoid direct and violent confrontation. But now the state appears to be losing the capacity to buy off workers' demands with wage rises, as the IMF makes its usual restrictive demands in return for the injection of the capital which the military feels it must have in

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*Many different workers told me stories of fellow workers who had reacted to overly harsh treatment by Europeans by saying something to the effect that: 'You can't treat me like that. This isn't South Africa.'

**The informants used to report on gold thefts are also paid for reports about agitators. Furthermore, at AGC certain former trade union officials who have been sacked by their members for being too conservative, are now employed in the company's Personnel Department and have as part of their responsibilities the sending in of reports on 'suspicious' activities.
order to control inflation and hold off the growing opposition from professionals and students. With all evidence pointing to the complete unwillingness of a now very militant mines work force to bear the brunt of any austerity programme, and with a trade union long since incapable of controlling its members and mediating between workers and the state, the result can be nothing but a renewal of violence on the 1968-70 scale, or worse.

Mineworkers’ Consciousness and the Struggle for Socialism

If it is correct to argue that the relations between capital and labour have moved — sometimes by degrees and sometimes by quantum leaps — from being ‘the best in the country’ in the early 1960s, through the growing tension of the late Nkrumah years to the outbreaks of 1968-70, then again through the developing tensions of 1974-76, to the outbreaks of 1977, and finally to the present state of daily confrontation at the workplace and the potentially imminent renewal of violent confrontation, then what conclusions can be drawn about the nature of the social category which has been referred to throughout as the mineworkers? How has the long struggle with mining capital shaped this fraction of the Ghanaian working class, and how are the mineworkers likely to shape the future struggle, not only in the mining industry, but in the Ghanaian social formation as a whole?

The mines work force has become, relative to earlier years, a highly stabilized social category. Workers now bring their families to the mines and stay for years, acquiring training and skills in mining, and making it their life’s work. Furthermore, the social category is reproducing itself, as evidenced by the growing numbers of second generation mineworkers, especially amongst the previously most migratory northerners. The result is that it is less and less the case that the cultural experience of Ghanaian mineworkers is derived from the village, and only slightly leavened by occasional stints at the mines, as was the case in the past. Rather, it is increasingly the case that the culture of Ghanaian mineworkers is derived from the workplace, and from a community of fellow workers, and is only leavened by occasional visits to the village. Traditional life with its ethnic affiliations and customs lives on, to be sure, but there is now among mineworkers in Ghana a common sense of themselves as being a single coherent group, with common interests, ‘we the workers’, as they refer to themselves.

This phrase, ‘we the workers’, should not be taken to mean that Ghanaian mineworkers have any well-defined sense of themselves as members of a working class which stretches beyond the mines. Their consciousness of themselves as a group has been shaped by their historical relationship with mining capital, and because mining capital is peripheral social formations tends to operate in an enclave, it follows that the social category created by the workers in the course of their historical relationship with such a capital should be similarly structured, and that mineworkers should act and conceive of themselves accordingly. Thus it is not especially surprising that Ghanaian mineworkers have seldom, if ever, acted in concert with workers from other industries, and that they tend not to speak of themselves as members of such a broad social category.

What is more, the structure of the mining industry is such that the workers at any given mine are physically separated from those at any other mine, and the relative demise of the Ghana Mineworkers Union as an effective representative of mineworkers interests has loosened the only formal institutional link binding them together. What interconnection that exists now is informal, and is sub-
ordinated, in the course of the struggle, to the workers' concern with activities at the level of the workplace. Inherent in such a development are both strengths and weaknesses. On the one hand, the atrophy of the workers' inter-plant organisation has made the struggle more immediate to workers, thus increasing their active involvement, and resulting, as has been shown, in the spontaneous emergence of grass roots organisations which are much more militant than the union. On the other hand, however, the situation threatens to deprive the workers of their greatest strength: their unity in action. The full and contradictory implications of this demise of the union remain to be worked out in the struggle.

Nevertheless, it is clear that mineworkers see the relationship between capital and labour as being conflictual, rather than consensual; that this sense of conflict has, as the paper has tried to show, increasingly manifested itself in confrontations, the mineworkers have been increasingly able to win victories, both by extracting concessions with respect to wages and fringe benefits, and by forcing back the extent to which capital is able to dictate labour's behaviour at the workplace. It is from the crucible of this struggle that the Ghanaian mineworkers have emerged as a social category, and it is this increasingly militant social category which, in confrontation with capital, will shape the struggle of the future in the Ghanaian mining industry.

But to what extent are the mineworkers political, and how do they, as a social category, fit into Ghana's politics, both now and for the future? Firstly, the very fact of the struggle against capital, and the demand for greater control at the workplace, is political. It is political in that it denies the legitimacy of the existing configuration of power relations in the society, and acts to change those relations. The mineworkers are very conscious of, and skilful at, the politics of the workplace. But their political concerns stretch beyond the workplace, to an active concern with national politics, as more traditionally defined. And, to the extent that this is the case, it would appear that their response to any ruling regime tends to be dependent upon how that regime affects their struggle at the workplace.

For example, the vast majority of Ghanaian mineworkers had strongly-held opinions on the recent debate over the Union Government referendum, as evidenced by much spirited argument in the drinking bars of the mining towns. The majority of mineworkers appeared to have favoured the regime, and although this would at first appear to be a reactionary position for workers to take — in view of the disastrous condition of the Ghanaian economy, and the consequent increasing repression being employed by the military regime — still the position makes considerable sense from the mineworkers' perspective. The SMC, in promoting its populist image, has provided substantial benefits to the mineworkers, including a 300% wage increase in 1977, the introduction of the long cherished five day week, and the 55% takeover of AGC and subsequent promotion of a house building campaign for AGC workers. Furthermore, mineworkers see the alternative to the SMC as being a carbon copy of the hated Busia regime, with its much despised lawyers and businessmen. Therefore the choice has been seen by workers to be between a military regime which, whatever ills it might promote elsewhere in the country, has at least paid heed to the needs of mineworkers, and an elite group of lawyers and businessmen who have, by their past actions, already shown their contempt for these needs.
However, this choice is no real choice at all, and offers little scope for positive political expression. Furthermore, the mineworkers’ level of consciousness is not yet sufficiently politically sophisticated to enable them to perceive the possibility of transcending these two non-choices, and consciously directing their struggle towards an alternative political future. The consciousness which has emerged from their struggles thus far is a defensive consciousness, heavily laced with cynicism. Thus their attitude to the present regime and its bogus Union Government proposals is regularly expressed by workers as being that they will continue to support the Government as long as the Government continues to meet their wage demands. Should such wage demands not be met, their support will be withdrawn. They are still thoroughly dissatisfied with their wages, their working conditions, and their deplorable housing conditions, and are in no mood to tolerate a refusal to their justifiable demands with respect to these issues. At the same time, the SMC’s capacity to meet such demands is waning rapidly, and a cut in expenditures to regain control of inflation is imminent. Such a contradiction — when combined with the consciousness generated by the mineworkers’ recent struggles, and with the virtual dissipation in the course of those struggles of the labour control functions of both the union and mining capital represents a recipe for renewed, and very likely violent, confrontations between mineworkers and the state.

One might hypothesize that such confrontations could be a catalyst for a working class led socialist attack on the socio-economic structures which perpetuate poverty and underdevelopment in Ghana. But such an hypothesis would most likely be wishful thinking. As has been shown, the mineworkers’ undeniable militancy is not as yet guided by any kind of all-embracing, socialist-oriented political philosophy, and any leap to such a consciousness is made the more difficult by, for example, the fact that the Ghanaian political system is sufficiently repressive that the spreading of socialist propaganda amongst mineworkers, and the development of a socialist party with which they might link their struggle, are extremely hazardous undertakings. Further, the small core of progressive Ghanaian intellectuals have seemingly not — since the 1930s when I.A. Wallace Johnson had mining capital in a state of near panic with his radical speeches to mineworkers, made any effort whatever to link their theory to the emergent power of the mineworkers, nor do they appear any more willing to do so today. The mineworkers are seen as a rough and uneducated lot, incapable of understanding the intellectuals’ theories. Meanwhile, the mineworkers fight their isolated struggle, proving daily by their actions that they understand the roots of exploitation much better than do the intellectuals.

Thus on the one hand, the limitations of their own fiercely militant but essentially defensive consciousness, together with their relative isolation in the midst of the repressive reality of the Ghanaian social formation, will very likely prevent the mineworkers from being the cutting edge in the struggle for Ghanaian socialism in the near future. But on the other hand, this defensive consciousness, derived from years of struggle and rooted in a clear understanding of the conflictual and exploitative nature of the capital/labour relation, represents an imposing obstacle in the path of any regime which would undertake a plan of economic ‘development’ to be carried out at the mineworkers’ expense. The mineworkers have shown by their recent history that they will no longer willingly be the victims of any austerity programmes which offer them distant rewards in return for immediate restraint. That such austerity programmes are on the cards
is a certainty. The current military regime desperately needs an injection of capital into the economy in order to increase production and reduce an inflation rate officially calculated at 144.6% for the year ended 30 June 1977. They have turned to the International Monetary Fund for this capital, and the IMF will without doubt demand a severe cutback in public expenditures, which cutback will be felt by the mineworkers in the form of frozen wages, and reductions in various ‘benefits’ which they have long since struggled for and won. Whatever the form taken by the mineworkers’ inevitable resistance to this economic warfare, it will have a profound impact, since Ghana’s minerals are foreign exchange earners in an economy starved of foreign exchange. The mineworkers therefore have the potential — both in terms of their proven consciousness and their strategic position in the economy — to decimate the country’s foreign exchange position (mineral exports have earned slightly more than 10% of Ghana’s foreign exchange in recent years) through strike action. If the state resorts to legalised violence to force them back underground, which it assuredly must given the mineworkers’ militancy, and if it proposes to freeze their pay demands, then the workers’ resistance will take on the more subtle forms already described in this paper, thus reducing the country’s flow of minerals to a fraction of its potential, and causing serious damage to the forthcoming IMF-style ‘recovery’ programme, and any other such programmes which may follow. Thus, we can expect a continuation, and in fact, an intensification, of the class struggle in the Ghanaian mining industry, as the relentless resistance of the Ghanaian mineworkers increasingly forces its way into the economic calculations of the national and international exploiters who have for so long oppressed them.

Bibliographic Notes

Material for this article derives almost entirely from primary sources consulted, and interviews conducted, during a seven month field trip to Ghana from October 1977 to May 1978. The most important documentary sources were the files of the Labour Department head office in Accra, to which I was very kindly granted access for the period right up to February 1978. Of most importance for this article were the following files: KD13/volume 10; KL188/volumes 1-3; and KL331, volumes 1-5. I also consulted the files at the District Labour Office, Tarkwa, where, among many others, files LT4 and LT12 proved most useful for this article. Of additional use were the Chamber of Mines Minutes Books, and the Ghana National Archives, at Accra, Sekondi and Cape Coast.


The many people interviewed during the seven month period included: workers and trade union officials (at both the branch and national levels), most of whom were interviewed at the Ashanti Goldfields Corporation, Obuasi, during March 1978, and Tarkwa Goldfields Limited, Tarkwa, during April 1978; mines management at various levels, in Obuasi, Tarkwa, and Accra; Chamber of Mines Officials in Accra; Labour Department Officers in Obuasi, Tarkwa and Accra; and Department of Mines Officers in Takoradi.

I am indebted to all those people in Ghana who were kind enough to provide me with access to documentary materials, and to those who took the time to answer my many questions, and to discuss at length various of the issues raised in this article. Although they are too many to thank individually, I hope that they will accept my collective expression of gratitude.
ZAMBIA: OPENING THE GATES AND TIGHTENING THE BELTS

Geoffrey Hodges

As the advanced capitalist countries evolve new patterns of accumulation in response to crisis, the consequences for dependent countries can be profound. In Zambia, the Presidential and parliamentary elections of 12 December 1978 have overshadowed the realities of the shifts in the country’s economic situation. The election campaigning, fairly obviously, diverted public attention. The large foreign loans that the government took on, in part to improve its electoral standing by tackling shortages of commodities and international credit-worthiness, have had some temporary stabilising effect. However, some fairly fundamental things have been happening to the economy.

Roughly speaking, for the first half of the fourteen years since Independence there was economic growth, optimism and a high copper price; and in the second half economic deterioration, growing mass disillusionment and a low copper price.

In one recent major speech — the opening address to the United National Independence Party’s National Council in December 1977 — President Kaunda said that the budget due in January 1978 would be ‘tough, sharp and painful’ and that the government would be striving to ‘invite friends who had the means and capacity to make financial and other resources available’. Taking its cue, the Party translated this outline into resolutions for the withdrawal of price subsidies to the parastatals, and for ‘foreign firms wishing to invest in the country to be allowed to do so on a large scale without bureaucratic obstacles’.

Though the economic situation has worsened throughout the 1970s, the response of the Party, government and bourgeoisie has on the whole been to allow the economy to drift. However, more recently other forces, particularly the international capitalist institutions, have overtaken the efforts of the national ruling classes to develop the economy. The direction in which the economy is now heading is to discard economic nationalism (which had largely ceased to work) and Zambia seems headed to a more familiar pattern among African countries, run more overtly by the dictates of the consortia of aid agencies and Western bankers and governments.
The Foreign Exchange Crisis

The crisis that has brought about these responses has intensified dramatically since the price of copper first fell in 1970. Since then the copper price has fluctuated greatly, but for much of the time it has been well below that required by the mines to show a profit. Over the past two years, as it happens, the performance of the companies has greatly improved. Roan Consolidated Mines, one of the two mining holding companies, made a profit of K9.7 million for the June quarter (1 Kwacha = $1.5). This has been the result of a fairly high and stable price coupled with cuts in production costs. But over the past two years losses have been large and there has been heavy local borrowing to finance operations. Zambia now has to compete with other countries much more highly favoured by international capital (such as Chile) as well as having to bear the added cost of being landlocked. For these reasons the Zambian mines have a relatively poor cost effectiveness. Their production costs have been rising at twice the world average (Financial Times, ‘Survey on Zambia’, 15 December 1977) and in the long term this remains one of the main problems facing the mines.

Attempts to influence prices through CIPEC (Intergovernmental Council of Copper Exporting Countries) have not been successful. The producer countries have to sell in a highly monopolistic market, and, since more producers entered in the early 1970s, one that increasingly favours speculators. The half dozen giant copper companies are linked by shareholdings, are vertically integrated (so they speculate in the commodity they produce) and operate under the umbrella of a monopolistic price-setting agency, the London Metal Exchange. In the early 1970s the nature of the world copper market changed dramatically against the producers’ interests. In 1970 the ratio of world stocks to consumption was 19 per cent (Financial Times Survey), and in spite of this year’s improved demand the ratio is now more than 40 per cent. At any one time there is something like two million tons of copper unconsumed on the world market. Some of the poorer CIPEC countries, Zambia among them, have in the past tried to organize a reduction in output but have usually failed to get a response from Chile. And for Zambia a substantial cut in production which failed to secure a higher copper price would be disastrous.

The mines’ recent results have been varied. Because of a fairly high and stable price, coupled with some major cuts in production costs, the profits of the companies considerably improved during 1978. In the June quarter Roan Consolidated Mines, one of the two holding companies, made a profit of K9.7 million. However, in the last few months the mines have hit some very serious production problems. The Zambia Daily Mail (9 January 1979) reported a projected cutback of some 83,000 tonnes, which would mean a loss of about K100 million in foreign exchange at current prices. And production is already well below the capacities being achieved around 1970.

There are several reasons for this cutback. First, the skilled expatriate labour force, upon which the mines are still entirely dependent, has become unstable. As a result of uncertain supplies of both essential and luxury commodities, the relatively low salaries offered and the deteriorating internal security situation (nicely exaggerated particularly in the British newspapers) the expats are leaving faster than they can be replaced. Second, the problem of getting copper out has greatly worsened with the inability of the TanZam Railway and Dar es Salaam port to handle sufficient cargo. Long delays, with the consequent delay in
getting foreign exchange payments, have been common for the past two years. The re-opening of the Southern route through Rhodesia and South Africa (a point taken up later) is the only thing that might improve the situation and is certainly regarded by the mines as about the only 'silver lining' in the clouds gathering over the industry.

Industrial Development

Zambia's almost total dependence on copper for foreign exchange is well known, but the country's relatively large industrial base has still left it heavily dependent on imports. Some agricultural products (wheat, milk, animal feed), heavy chemicals, steel and building supplies, agricultural machinery and the vital mining machinery, as well as a great mass of spare parts, raw materials and machinery, all have to be imported. The decline in earnings from the mines has brought both a decline in foreign exchange and in the revenues available to the state. (Revenues from mineral taxes were K252 million in 1974, when the price of copper recovered, and K12 million in 1976. Similarly, foreign exchange assets at the Bank of Zambia have declined steadily from their peak of K271 million in 1970 to only K76 million in 1976.) This means that there is little money for imports or for development projects.

Between Independence in 1964 and the early 1970s the government was building plants and extending existing ones. There was an active programme of partnership with foreign capital: some multinational firms such as Dunlop, Fiat and Phelps Dodge entered into joint ventures with the state at this time; and well known firms such as Tate and Lyle, Bookers and OK Bazaars were part-nationalized. During this period, too, the multinationals were starting wholly private enterprises like Phillips, IBM and ITT. And established firms, such as Anglo-American and Lonrho, were expanding. But although output grew enormously during these years, the kind of industry being created left a lot to be desired. Very little of the private manufacturing capital was productive. Most of it was simply a local base from which to market and repair imported goods, or at best was an assembly-type operation. They were in fact ideal mechanisms for over-invoicing.

The decline in foreign exchange available for imports and for capital transfers, coupled with inflated world prices, have undermined this very fragile employment base. Closures of firms began in 1974, always the ones with a dependence on import licences, and since then manufacturing output has declined at an increasing rate. In 1977 it fell by nearly six per cent.

The closures have meant some appalling losses in employment: up to 1976, some 30,000 jobs were cut from a total employment of just under 400,000. For Zambians this is doubly serious as the population is highly dependent on wage labour, with about 45 per cent living in the towns. Those seeking work have always been a large group. An International Labour Office report published in January 1977 (Closing the Gaps) estimated 180,000 to be thus defined as unemployed, which gives an unemployment level of 35 per cent.

Prices

Inflation has been kept down to some extent by controls on the prices of such commodities as milk, mealie meal and cooking oil. Nevertheless, prices have been steadily increasing. For those with low incomes inflation has been running at
more than 20 per cent for the last two years. Against this must be seen the very effective control of wages. These have been limited since 1968 to a maximum rise of five per cent per year — a maximum which by no means all workers received. Between 1972 and 1975 the average yearly industrial wage rose from K1,038 to K1,116 (six per cent), and the average agricultural wage from K434 to K453 (0.7 per cent). Prices during this period rose by 21 per cent.

One of the main targets of pressure over prices has been the parastatals. These provide many essential consumption commodities, and several of them are heavily subsidised in order to control their prices. However, recently many of the individual parastatal companies, as well as other state bodies (a notable one here is the National Agricultural Marketing Board) have been making losses. In addition, they are often not able to meet demand which results in shortages of commodities. The parastatals have thus faced pressures to cut their subsidies. In the early part of 1978 leaders were making speeches that government would no longer subsidise their operations. However, an interesting case was that of the staple food, mealie meal. As part of its election campaign the government appealed to farmers by raising the producer price of maize from K6.50 to K8 per bag. And there was a more recent hint that it might be improved even further to K9. This did not result in higher consumer prices; instead it was financed by an increased subsidy to the parastatal buyers. But after the elections a rise in the price of mealie meal to allow this subsidy to be cut must be regarded as highly likely.

The trend to reduce subsidies and to make people pay 'economic prices' goes back to a Party National Council resolution in 1975. Subsidies in fact rose again in 1977 but since then the state has seemed resolved to cut them back progressively. In the budget in January 1978 the entire existing subsidy of K8.6 million was taken off maize meal resulting in a 22 per cent price rise of this staple; and half the fertilizer subsidy was cut resulting in a 28 per cent price rise (Budget Speech, Times of Zambia, 28 January 1978). As the original requests for parastatal subsidies in 1978 were K118 million they were an obvious target.

**Parastatal Management**

The parastatals represent a large part of the productive sector. Apart from the mines, which in many respects are cut off from direct pressure from the rest of the economy, there are some 35 manufacturing enterprises under the umbrella of the Industrial Development Corporation (INDECO), the state holding company. As we have seen, many of these companies have had difficulties, both in their ability to deliver the goods and in their financial performance. The profits of INDECO were rising steadily until 1974, but then began to fall and in 1978 INDECO's pre-tax profit was only K8.8 million on a turnover of K348 million.

There is no doubt that these problems have been in part the result of foreign exchange shortages, international inflation and Zambia's perennial problems with transporting its imports. But as well as this the parastatals have a continuing problem with management. Half have foreign equity partners and most have a management contract — the foreign managers are often the direct representatives of the foreign equity partner. Only about one quarter of technical posts are held by Zambians. Thus the management of the parastatals comprise a Zambian general management (general managers, company secretaries, and other senior enterprise
management together with the corporate managers in the INDECO hierarchy), plus an expatriate technical management that for the most part runs the production side of the enterprises. Policy decisions on marketing, buying, personnel and so on are in large part the province of the Zambian corporate and general management (apart from the mines), and the tough conditions in which the parastatals have now to operate are badly exposing this group.

The relationship between the local and expatriate management and the state is often complicated and contradictory. On the one hand, the position of the Zambian general management is constantly being undermined by their inability to match the technical skills and experience of the foreign experts they have to work with; but on the other hand the Zambian management is dependent on the foreign experts and the two groups obviously do form alliances. Similarly, the state has at times sought to curb the Zambian management; but at the same time it depends on them as its representatives in the industries.

The most serious attempt by the state to curb the Zambian management group came with Mwanakatwe Commission in 1976. This rationalised parastatal salaries, and cut back certain of the fringe benefits of top management. But there was a considerable struggle over the Mwanakatwe conditions, and throughout 1977 there was a clamour to come off them. One ploy, for example, was to claim that it was impossible to recruit the ‘indispensable’ expatriate experts on Mwanakatwe salaries, so higher ones had to be offered and of course Zambian top management salaries must keep pace. In one parastatal, for instance, the Zambian general manager forced the resignation of most of his management team (one of whom happened to be a Zambian) so that he could go abroad to recruit more expatriates at higher salaries.

The controls of the Mwanakatwe Commission have been partly undermined. However, it would be mistaken as a result of this to impute too much influence to this ‘bureaucratic bourgeoisie’. In many respects they are declining along with the lack of expansion in their base, the parastatals — these posts no longer offer much of an avenue for advancement.

General managers of operating companies — one of the most usual positions for non-technically qualified Zambians to occupy — earn in the region of K11,000; and this is certainly not an enormous salary. But what is more important is that such jobs are too open to rationalisation (even if only partly successful as was the case with Mwanakatwe). They offer no real opportunities to amass wealth other than by salaries, and so cannot compare with influential jobs in the Party and government.

Apart from such curbs on personal accumulation, the state has attempted to control the operations of the parastatals through the ministries. The degree of state control has varied. For some years ministers intervened in the running of companies and often chaired boards. But in the last few months there has been total decentralisation. In his September 1978 speech to the UNIP General Conference Kaunda announced that the existing structure, in which ministers and permanent secretaries controlled divisional and company boards, was to be replaced by an inspectorate headed by a relatively unimportant member of the Central Committee. He also indicated that management would have a free hand as far as operational control was concerned, that their salaries would be made
more attractive, and that price controls would be used more ‘positively’ (Zambia Daily Mail, 11 September 1978).

In part the aim was to attract more capable Zambians but with the poor performance of the parastatals it was also necessary to involve the multinational partners more. This influence had in fact been on the increase: Tate and Lyle had been showing an interest in running the Nakambala sugar estate in which they have a minority share; Chilanga Cement, Zambia’s oldest parastatal, recently discovered the need to take out a management contract.

In the past government criticism of the parastatals has at times emphasised high overhead costs and other forms of management inefficiency (for example, Kaunda’s ‘Watershed’ speech in 1975). What parastatal management have been demanding in response is to be allowed to charge ‘economic’ prices, with the corollary that subsidies must be dropped. ‘Economic’ prices and no subsidies mean less state interference. And this suits both multinational partners and Zambian management. Without state control neither over-invoicing nor inefficiency are likely to be detected. The state, in its turn, is clearly frustrated at the failure of the Zambian management to run the parastatals effectively but reacts not by pointing to those management inefficiencies with its inflated costs, which would have implied greater state control, but by focusing on declining profits as the consequences of subsidies — and thus to seek ‘efficiency’ by deferring increasingly to multinational partners.

Private National Capitalists
Pressure to open the economy to foreign investment comes from local private businessmen. This class is difficult to analyse as the various ‘bourgeois factions’ — parasitic, commercial, productive, etc. — tend to cut across concrete groups producing a complicated class structure. A particular capitalist may have interests in a productive business, or in trade or distribution, a monopoly on some choice import, a place on the board of a multinational’s subsidiary, or businesses outside the county.*

The local bourgeoisie is in one way or another parasitic on the previously abundant foreign exchange. Indeed the scarcity of productive entrepreneurs was always a significant problem in the drive towards import substitution. Hitherto, by far the easiest way of making money for local businessmen was to get an import licence to re-sell luxury foreign goods at high prices. Another wholly parasitic group of powerful local businessmen depend on the patronage of the multinationals. And, unlike Kenya, there is hardly any question of this latter element emerging as independent. With reduced foreign exchange both multinational investment and easily available import licences have dried up, and as a consequence both of these elements of the local bourgeoisie are broke and angry.

The issue that most effects the commercial bourgeoisie is that of price control. As well as the many everyday consumer goods that the parastatals produce, a wide range of other items is also price controlled. Earlier last year there was much pressure from the traders and businessmen to remove or to relax price

*The author’s analysis is thus closer to that of Eriksen in RAPE No.9 in seeing the interlinkage of interests in this class rather than Southall’s (see Debate, page 114) that sees a conflict between a well-defined private, comprador commercial bourgeoisie and a bureaucratic, bourgeoisie. Editors.
controls. The rural traders in particular were very bitter as they have to provide transport to obtain their stock which is a considerable added cost. However, this conflict seems to have been resolved in favour of the state. Price control inspectors are now quite active, especially in pursuing the smaller traders. And recently it was announced that control would be extended even further over the prices of all imported goods (though, interestingly, motor car spares were exempted — this is a very lucrative business in which the Party itself and Lonrho have large interests). Of course, traders may well have lost interest in this issue as so few goods are coming into the country anyway, and in any case inflation is still high. But it does appear that the government is making an attempt to control the prices that traders charge.

In October 1978 the Zambian government announced that the border with Rhodesia would be opened to limited rail traffic. Apart from the crucial consequences for Front Line strategy and solidarity, there were important consequences for the local business classes, and these may come, in turn, to reflect on Zambia's foreign policy.

Zambia has in fact never stopped importing from South Africa. In 1976 total trade was K36.8 million, with K35 million worth of this as imports. But this is mainly in mining and agricultural machinery, not in the sort of imports that the private businessmen want. Imports of cheap commodities from South Africa would prop up ailing businesses, also the state would benefit greatly by easing its problem of shortages. And the South Africans would no doubt offer generous credit in order to get into the Zambian market.

In one sense the announcement of the border opening only amounted to formally recognising a situation that already existed. A good deal of traffic, especially in the last few years, has been passing by rail into Zambia from Rhodesia. Also in the past when Zambia has been in really desperate need of some import she has turned to South Africa. This is the case at present. The traffic is officially limited to fertilizer coming in (this was urgently required to save this year's maize crop) and copper going out. But the significance of formally sanctioning this is that it opens the possibility inside Zambia of fully opening the Southern trade route.

The expansion of demand in the local market caused by the border closure and the foreign exchange crisis provides greater opportunities for anyone willing to manufacture locally. Some of these have been taken. Some commercial farmers are now also processing foodstuffs. It is possible that manufacturers will eventually be forced to turn to local inputs. But for the most part private manufacturers have simply sat back and waited. Earlier in the year their common call was for an end to price controls, for more foreign investment and for streamlining the flow of import licences. Now the part-opening of the border may serve to focus their voices once again. Businessmen are, in fact, always calling for trade with the 'cheapest sources'. But there is also more widespread support for trade with South Africa (in part an expression of anti-government feeling, as the border closure was seen as UNIP's official position).

International Capital

These shifts in the relative power of the state with regard to the various elements of the internal bourgeoisie reflect a worsening of the national economy's strength
in relation to international capital. The state has been forced to take several initiatives about this: there has been a large growth in the overseas debt, an investment code to attract outside capital, and in the long term there is a hoped-for diversification in mining.

The immediate response in an election year was to borrow heavily in order to pump foreign exchange into industry. In March 1978 the International Monetary Fund lent K323 million. This was largely to maintain Zambia's international credit-worthiness as an estimated K400 million worth of unpaid import bills had built up. But in June Kaunda toured Europe and the US and returned with further loans and pledges. Prior to this Zambia was already heavily indebted. By 1976 the overseas debt was $1.2 thousand million, with more than one third to the big Eurodollar banks and to other private banks that are tougher than private donors in their terms of repayment. Since the country's per capita income fell with the decline in the price of copper she now qualifies for softer World Bank loans. But the tendency to take on large private debt remains: on his US tour Kaunda was promised K100 million from the City Bank of New York; a syndicate of Western banks formed by Citicorp International put up K85 million in September 1978.

Both IMF and World Bank now play a larger role in managing the economy than ever before. The package of economic changes that the IMF demanded for its loan was the familiar set of economic measures designed to bring an economy to heel. It included large cuts in government spending (in the civil service, the armed forces, by the re-introduction of school fees and by the removal of parastatal subsidies), a devaluation of the Kwacha, a reduction in the mines workforce and the closure of unprofitable mines, and making investment attractive for outside capital.

The threat of mine closures has always been a sensitive issue. It could easily precipitate a confrontation between the state and the militant mine workers. At one stage the companies were making it clear that the closure of the high-cost mines was a condition for keeping up their levels of investment. And the IMF reputedly regarded mine closures as one of the essential elements of its package. However, the need to force redundancies on the hard core of underground miners now seems to have been avoided. Over the last year the companies have been cutting costs, and they have managed to shed a good deal of labour without overtly creating redundancies — by early retirement, redeployment and by laying off contract labour. So for the present this threat has receded.

As for government spending, the overall deficit projected for 1978 in the January budget was K90 million. This maintains the tendency to reduce deficits from the very high ones of the mid-1970s. However, this improvement has only come about as a result of cutting out most of the capital expenditure in rural areas and in development projects. Spending on the civil service and on defence was down slightly from 1977 (from K682 million to K653 million), but this too has to be placed in context. There was an enormous expansion in these sectors between 1974 and 1977 when government recurrent expenditure grew at 16 per cent each year. And now when productive employment has fallen severely the civil service is maintaining virtually all of its jobs. Defence spending as such is not debated in Parliament. But spending on 'constitutional and statutory' — the heading in government accounts under which defence comes — rose from K164
million in 1974 to K270 million in 1977. The 1978 projection was reputedly K220 million on defence (about 10 per cent of GDP), so the army, though large, is kept on a fairly tight rein.*

However, the overall balance of payments is in very bad shape. In 1977 the total deficit was K224 million as compared with K136 million in 1976. This situation is the result of virtually all of the credit items having gone down and all of the debits having risen. Between 1976 and 1977 the export receipts from copper fell from K752 million to K704 million, partly this was the result of the continuing low price but in addition Zambia was able to get much less of its copper out. Production fell from 713,000 tonnes in 1976 to 660,000 tonnes in 1977. Second, the cost of imports rose from K496 million to K566 million. And third the cost of invisible payments rose from K360 million in 1976 to K426 million in 1977. These latter are a particular burden and invariably transform a considerable balance of trade surplus – K138 million in 1977 — into an overall balance of payments deficit. They include profit and capital transfers, expatriate remittances and payment for non-factor services such as management fees. Non-factor payments alone for 1977 came to the enormous sum of K257 million — yet one more indicator of the dependence of the economy.

Foreign investment has never come into Zambia in great quantities and, unlike Kenya and Malawi, a significant part of the foreign investment that was in the country at Independence has since left — the disinvestment of the mines and other industries nationalised in 1968-70. Many influential local businessmen and a few Central Committee members have pushed for an attractive investment code, but by and large the government has always been half-hearted in its attempts to bring in outside capital.

However, in 1977 the Industrial Investment Act was passed to replace the old Pioneer Industries Act which had always been a total failure in attracting outside capital. The new legislation enables the Minister of Industry to grant a range of incentives including the remittance of up to 100 per cent of profits, certain safeguards against nationalisation, and the remittance of full value of outside investment on closure of business. But few new firms have registered and most of these have been local. Certainly no new multinational has come in.

In the past foreign business has often grossly exploited the Zambians by the familiar trick of borrowing locally and remitting the profits (this was one of the main reasons that prompted the nationalisations in 1968). The new Act offers incentives only to those firms that bring in capital. But the Act is only a loose enabling legislation and the real power still lies with the Minister. It seems fairly clear that outside businessmen will want much firmer guarantees and more incentives if they are to invest. In fact a country such as Zambia has no power at all to dictate the terms on which foreign capital will enter, and there is much talk in the ministries that the Act in its present form is insufficient. The main problem is that what foreign businessmen really want is to be able to get their profits out quickly, and in the last few years this is exactly what they have not

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*The role of IMF in keeping defence spending down, and thus leaving Zambia open to Smith's aerial attacks is suggested by as 'respectable' a source as The Economist which commented on 18 March 1978: 'The IMF can legitimately urge Mr Kaunda to cut government spending which does not contribute to Zambia's economic development, while preserving a heavy-breathing silence on where the cuts should fall — defence'. (Editors.)
been able to do. With foreign exchange levels where they are, even if the government seriously wanted outside investment, there is not much they could do to attract it at present.

A third initiative has been to diversify mineral production away from copper. This was a policy laid down at the part-nationalisation of the mines in 1969 and the subsequent problems experienced in the industry have only increased its importance. As well as the obvious problem of low copper prices government is concerned at the limited influence it has over its multinational partners, and the way its fingers were burned over nationalisation.

49 per cent of the shares of the copper industry's operating companies are owned by the American AMAX and the South African Anglo-American Companies. Since the companies were part-nationalised in 1969-70 the Zambian government has held the (supposedly) controlling 51 per cent shares through its holding company Zambia Industrial and Mining Corporation (ZIMCO). But the state has never been able to get the companies to expand. Up until 1974 employment and output were increasing slowly, too slowly for the state's wishes, and since then both have declined. Expansion of new mines is especially critical since, with a low price, some of the marginally profitable mines are threatened with closure. There are several known copper deposits that could be commercially exploited, but since they got half of their capital out in 1970, the companies have been content to merely run the existing operation. (It would probably cost K500 million to start a large copper mine at today's prices.) In the past the state has also tried to persuade Anglo-American to expand into other sectors, but apart from some commercial farming and minority shareholding in manufacturing Anglo has resisted.

Nationalisation has been a long and complicated saga. The gist is that in the 1969-70 nationalisation the companies secured a deal in which much of their income was shifted onto secure management and service fees and guaranteed repayments. But the method of reckoning the government's tax revenues was altered from being based on sales (which was the method used by the old British South Africa Company) to being based on profits. Thus most of the risk in the event of a fall in copper prices was borne by the government. And of course prices did fall more or less immediately the deal was concluded, as the companies knew they would. Then in 1973, on the basis of a recovery in the copper price (which later proved to be speculative) Kaunda broke the contracts and redeemed the ZIMCO bonds that had been issued as compensation to the companies. The bonds were originally supposed to be paid off out of future profits from the government's 51 per cent share of the shares. In 1973 they were in fact redeemed at par when the market value was only 48 per cent (Financial Times Survey), and hard Eurodollar loans had to be raised to pay for this.

With this background it is not surprising that the state would like to look to other minerals and to other formulae for their exploitation. However, the policy of diversification in mining has to be looked at in the long term. Non-copper mineral production has always been small (around 10 per cent of total sales) and has hardly expanded. MINDECO, the parastatal body responsible for developing new mines, already leases out exploration rights to private companies but there has been a consistent decline in the number of licences since the early 1970s, with companies allowing leases to lapse. Now the government bears much of the
considerable cost of exploration.

In his speech in December 1977 to UNIP's National Council Kaunda laid great stress on diversifying into cobalt and uranium. Cobalt is at present mined in fairly small quantities from some of the copper workings — around 2,000 tonnes per year and declining slightly. To increase output significantly it would need to be exploited in new mines. But there is no reason to assume that a new quest for investors would be successful. Uranium was the great hope. In January 1978 the Finance Minister, Mwanakatwe, stated that its 'potential for viable extraction is now firmly established and the government is forging ahead'. But the technical problems of establishing whether the uranium deposits are worth exploiting are in fact considerable. Prospecting rights at the most promising site around Kariba have been given to the Italian firm Agip; Rio Tinto have surveyed and done pre-feasibility studies at Kasempa in the North West; other areas are being investigated. But there is still no indication that Agip or Rio Tinto or anyone else intends to bring in large amounts of capital.

Conclusion

It seems that neo-colonial solutions — some of which have been forced on the state and others apparently sought — have been cutting through many of the more nationalist-oriented economic structures thrown up since Independence. Many questions hang over this new approach, the most important being the political implications: whether the state will be able to impose the 'necessary sacrifices', such as price rises and increased unemployment.

If price rises are introduced selectively then they would probably be accepted, as have the high rates of inflation of the past three or four years. But if subsidies were removed on the scale that has at times been threatened it is hard to see how the resulting price rises would not bring about mass protest. In the past price rises of key commodities, such as mealie meal, have met with Party cards being torn up and leaders shouted down. And the Party is still very sensitive to this sort of thing. On the other hand, if price controls go, and these apply to a much wider range of goods than just those subsidised, then the state would have relinquished its only real check on inflation. Private traders would certainly cash in. In fact this is unlikely. More likely is that with the elections over, certain prices will be allowed to rise along with a gradual removal of parastatal subsidies.

Whether there would be large scale resistance from the trade unions is uncertain. The state comes down hard on strikers, whereas it is wary of mass opposition. There are regular cases of strikes being broken and leaders sacked, and of trade union branches and Party work place committees being curbed. The Zambia Congress of Trade Unions is highly centralised and the leadership docile. It would certainly not lead strikes to restore wage standards. Indeed in practice its role is more often that of strike breaker.

The Copperbelt, however, is another matter. Though traditionally a UNIP stronghold, it is equally traditionally the source of opposition to UNIP. Copperbelt politics have at their base the contradiction between the irresistible force of the state and the immovable object of the mineworkers. In the past the miners have taken on both the colonial and the Independent states. However, the last national miners' strike was in 1966 and the head office of the Mineworkers' Union would do their utmost to avoid leading one now. But the miners have
always retained an independence from their national leadership. Also solidarity is much easier on the mines than it is in other industries where strikes are quickly isolated. A national strike is difficult to envisage. In any case a straight struggle over economic issues is unlikely for the simple reason that resentment on the Copperbelt is much more broadly based now than has been the case in the past. It ranges over a large number of issues from commodity shortages and inflation, to the political exclusion of the Bembas who predominate on the Copperbelt.

Most of the policy speeches made by leaders in the last year have discarded even the rhetoric of the old economic nationalism. But some leaders are well aware of past exploitation and more cautious notes have been struck. Kaunda, for example, has stated:

I don't think it is anything to speak of proudly. There are so many of us who keep shouting private enterprise, private investment. No one has been able to show me how many hundreds of millions of kwacha have come to Zambia since 1964. (Enterprise, December 1977.)

But such statements only amount to a desire for 'genuine investors' and still imply dependency as the only development strategy to come from the leadership.

At the beginning of the year Kaunda was predicting that 1978 would be the year of the country's 'economic take-off'. At face value seemingly a little far fetched, but it has to be understood as a promised return to the golden days of the immediate post-Independence period. Then foreign exchange and mining revenues were abundant and the parasites and barely qualified bureaucrats were guaranteed an income. When the rhetoric 'take-off' was first being welded together in the Party and the ministries its factual basis was such things as uranium and export-oriented agriculture. Subsequently these faded and unity was maintained on the basis of loans and the promise of foreign investment. Now it is clear that outside investment is now flowing in and that the loans will have to be used to keep dependent industry going. So the crisis is a continuing one. At heart it is really about control. The Zambian economy was always run by foreigners, but the Zambianisation of jobs and the expansion of the state's productive sector were intended to gradually change this. Now this localisation has largely come to a halt and on some fronts has even been driven back. New patterns of neo-colonial dependency that have been taking shape in the last few years have seen a considerable degree of economic control once again pass outside the country.

DEEP SEABED MINING: IMPLICATIONS FOR ZAIRE AND ZAMBIA

Richard J. Payne

The objective of this article is to outline the impact that mining manganese nodules from the seabed beyond the current jurisdiction of any particular nation state will have on the economic development of Zambia and Zaire and to examine the response of both these copper mining countries in relation to the international machinery which might govern the seabed exploration of manganese nodules.
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The objective of this article is to outline the impact that mining manganese nodules from the seabed beyond the current jurisdiction of any particular nation state will have on the economic development of Zambia and Zaire and to examine the response of both these copper mining countries in relation to the international machinery which might govern the seabed exploration of manganese nodules.
What are manganese nodules?

Manganese nodules are black or dark brown potato-sized nuggets, irregular in shape, and are composed of, among others, copper, nickel, cobalt, manganese and iron ore. They are found throughout the world, but primarily in the portion of the seabed which is currently beyond the jurisdiction of any particular state. In other words, manganese nodules are located in the area beyond the 200 mile economic zone in which nation states exercise control over mineral resources and fishing.

When manganese nodules were discovered approximately a hundred years ago by the British ship *HMS Challenger*, not much attention was paid to the 'black rocks'. However, in 1958, a study conducted by the Institute of Marine Resources of the University of California revealed the economic importance of manganese nodules. Subsequent to this finding, the interest in them has grown to such an extent that they are now the object of contention in perhaps one of the most important debates in the United Nations and elsewhere.

There is enough evidence to suggest that manganese nodules are virtually inexhaustible at current consumption rates because of the extremely large deposits already on the seafloor and their rapid accumulation due to chemical processes of the oceans. It is estimated by Wertenbaker that there is sufficient copper on the seafloor ‘to last the entire world for 6,000 years, compared with 40 years’ reserves on land; and enough nickel to last 150,000 years, versus 100 on land’. In view of this, Zaire and Zambia, as well as the vast majority of Third World Countries which belong to the ‘Group of 77’, are extremely concerned about the negative impact deep sea mining will have on their economies and their political stability and influence. Despite the fact that there is currently no exploitation of nodules, there exists the technological and financial capability to mine them economically.

Seabed production of copper, cobalt, nickel and manganese would have a profound effect on the development plans of Zaire and Zambia, largely because it reduces the ability of these countries to influence the price of raw resources which provide approximately 90% of their foreign exchange. Unlike OPEC, CIPEC (Intergovernmental Council for Copper Exporting Countries, which represents the main copper producing countries, Chile, Peru, Zambia, and Zaire) has virtually failed to effect increases in the price of copper. Seabed exploitation will further reduce the effectiveness of commodity price agreement. It will also limit the economic power of Zaire and Zambia and thus their ability to restructure international trade relations in order to facilitate industrialization and economic growth. As will be examined later, the over-reliance on one main source of revenue can be detrimental to the economic, political, social, and educational development of a country. In the case of Zambia and Zaire, low copper prices have been a major factor in effectively paralyzing their economies, and here some attention should be paid to the role of multinational corporations (MNCs).

One of the major objectives of MNCs is to decrease their dependence on a few suppliers of raw materials in order to gain more flexibility and increase their economic and political leverage *vis-a-vis* developing countries. In an effort to control the multinationals engaged in copper production, Zaire and Zambia proceeded to nationalize their property and to assume greater participation in
decisions relating to the rate of production and the price of copper. The exploitation of manganese nodules will obviously frustrate nationalization as a strategy, because it will increase the supply and sources available to multi-nationals and simultaneously contribute to their economic and political power. While it is relatively easy to nationalize a copper mine in Zambia or Zaire, it is extremely difficult to do so on the deep seabed which is beyond the jurisdiction of any state. Thus the technological and financial capabilities of MNCs enable them to continue to be viable transnational actors.

Due to the highly sophisticated nature of nodule mining and processing, and the high cost of establishing a profitable mine (estimated at $250 million), the companies involved are forming consortia rather than working individually. Mining consortia include (1) Kennecott Copper, Noranda Mines, Rio Tinto Zinc and Gold Fields, and Mitsubishi Corporation; (2) Tenneco, which created Deepsea Ventures in 1968 solely to explore and exploit manganese nodules, has joined Union Minière, and United States Steel; and (3) International Nickel Group. All of these companies have made substantial investments in exploration activities and technology.

Developing countries, Zaire and Zambia in particular, do not have the appropriate technologies, nor the necessary capital resources to exploit the seabed. Given their developmental problems, it is unlikely that they will acquire the required technology in the near future. Naturally, they are trying to influence international rules governing the exploitation of manganese nodules. The desire to do so is directly related to their dependence on the constituent metals of the nodules and their current economic difficulties. Copper and cobalt are the most important metals, as far as Zambia and Zaire are concerned. In 1974, together they accounted for more than 20% of the world total production of copper and, along with Morocco, for approximately 70% of the world's cobalt production.

**Economic Implications for Zaire and Zambia**

In 1975 copper accounted for almost 95% of Zambia's foreign exchange earnings, approximately 60% of the government's revenues, and employed 15% of the country's labour force. In addition to these direct contributions, copper has influenced the growth of secondary industries which generates government revenues and employment. In late 1974 copper prices, which stood at $1.50 per pound, declined to $1 per pound in February 1975 and to an all time low of 60 cents per pound in April. Copper production declined from 735,000 tons to 630,000 tons between 1974 and 1975. Because of this reduction in output and lower prices, the metal that was responsible for $1.3 billion in export earnings and $490 million in Government income in 1974 did not provide any revenues in 1975 because the sales price was below production cost. In 1977 Zambia, along with Zaire and Peru, tried unsuccessfully to obtain higher prices for copper. The two other major producers, Chile and Indonesia, failed to support an agreement calling for a reduction in copper output. Additionally, both the conflicts in Angola and Zimbabwe placed severe strains on the ability of Zambia to transport its copper to the ocean economically.*

While the debate concerning the exploitation of manganese nodules is occurring in the United Nations, Roan Consolidated Mines Ltd. is planning to increase

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*For more details on the Zambian economic crisis, see Briefings below.*
cobalt production by roughly 2,000 tons by the end of 1978. Unlike copper, the price of cobalt was increased by the marketing agency, Societe Zairois de Commercialization (SOZACOM), by 13% on the international market, but when companies begin to mine the seabed commercially, cobalt is likely to be affected negatively.

The case of Zaire is quite similar. Copper is responsible for 80% of Zaire’s foreign exchange. Between 1973 and 1974, copper production went from 460,697 tons to 471,072 tons. However, Zaire’s total copper revenues for 1975 were less than half those for 1973, which is clearly an impediment to economic development and political stability. Although copper prices have fallen sharply, Zaire, in its second Five-Year Plan, is trying to expand production to 600,000 tons by 1980. In order to finance production, approximately $460 million had to be borrowed from the European Investment Bank, the World Bank, and the Libyan Arab Foreign Bank.

Low copper prices have halted Zaire’s growth rate and created a balance of payments deficit of $537 million in 1975 (equal to 55% of all exports), preceding another $156 million deficit in 1976. At the same time the price of imported goods increased by approximately 80% in 1976 and the annual rate of inflation is roughly 100%. Many of the transportation problems and the political instability in southern Africa, which are affecting Zambia, are also hurting Zaire’s economy. Economic difficulties have caused a delay in the development of the large Tenke Fungarume copper field, a $700 million venture. The construction of the world’s largest power transmission line (1,600 miles) has also stopped. Thus, despite the enormous potential of Zaire, its dependence on copper for most of its revenues makes it extremely vulnerable to world copper prices. The exploitation of seabed copper and cobalt, two of the main constituent metals of manganese nodules, is very likely to be detrimental to the future economic development of Zaire and Zambia. Realizing the nature of the challenge presented by advanced technologies and the desire of MNCs to have access to more sources of raw minerals, both countries, in conjunction with the Group of 77, have supported a strong international machinery which would regulate mining on the deep seabed.

The Position of Zambia and Zaire on Deepsea Mining
The United Nations’ debate concerning the ‘reservation exclusively for peaceful purposes of the seabed . . . underlying the seas beyond the limits of present national jurisdiction; and the use of their resources in the interest of mankind’, began in 1967. Since then, the United Nations Assembly has adopted several resolutions relating to this area and its minerals, especially manganese nodules. Zaire and Zambia believe that the exploitation of seabed resources will not be as beneficial to them as it will be to advanced technological societies such as the United States, Japan, West Germany, and Britain. This view is shared by the vast majority of Third World states. It is not surprising, then, that one of the first actions by the General Assembly was the creation of a ‘Committee on the Peaceful Uses of the Seabed . . . beyond the limits of National Jurisdiction’, to find ways and means of ‘promoting the exploitation and use of the resources of this area, taking into account . . . the economic implications of such exploitation and bearing in mind that that exploitation should benefit mankind as a whole’.

Later, in 1969, the ‘Moratorium Resolution’ was passed, which stated that until
the formulation and acceptance of a set of international regulations and an international machinery to regulate the production of seabed resources,

a. States and persons are bound to refrain from all activities of exploitation of the resources of the area of the seabed and ocean floor, and the subsoil thereof, beyond the limits of national jurisdiction and that,

b. no claim to any part of the area or its resources shall be recognized.

The Third World in general, and Zaire and Zambia especially, stressed that the minerals found in the area beyond national jurisdiction (the international area) are part of the 'common heritage of mankind'. This means that (1) the area cannot be owned by any state or individual; (2) exploitation of the resources should be governed by an international body; and (3) revenues obtained from mining the nodules should be equitably distributed in such a manner as to reduce economic disparities between developing and developed countries.

The emergence and adoption of the 'common heritage' concept demonstrate Third World concern, not only with the power of MNCs and the additional leverage they would exercise by mining manganese nodules, but also with the growing economic gap between themselves and industrialized countries. Essentially, they argue that the economic and political interests of the Third World should be recognized and given special consideration.

Article 9 of the Declaration of Principles, which is the foundation of the discussions of the type of international regime to be established, states that the regime shall, *inter alia*, provide for the orderly and safe development and rational management of the area and its resources and for expanding opportunities in the use thereof, and ensure the equitable sharing by states in the benefits derived therefrom, taking into particular consideration the interests and needs of the developing countries.

Both Zambia and Zaire have endorsed the Declaration of Principles, the 'Common Heritage of Mankind' concept, and support a strong International Seabed Authority to regulate the exploitation of minerals. The Authority itself would be directly involved in mining operations. Zaire and Zambia also support the establishment of such an Authority and of an 'Enterprise' operated by it to explore and exploit minerals directly, or in conjunction with, corporations.

Article 150 contains provisions designed to benefit Zambia and Zaire. It stresses that seabed mining should be conducted in 'such a manner as to foster healthy development of the world economy and balanced growth of international trade', and that 'provisions should be made that would ensure the protection of developing countries from any adverse effects on their economies or on their earnings resulting from a reduction in the price of an affected mineral, or in the volume of that mineral exported, to the extent that such reductions are caused by activities in the Area...'. The Authority, and its various organs, are seen as playing a crucial role in relation to the rate of exploitation of manganese nodules. Production of the various minerals would be regulated in such a way as to prevent the long-range plans of land-based producers from being frustrated.

The Response of Industrial States

In response to these proposals, countries whose multinational corporations have access to and control over deep sea mining technology are trying to create a deep seabed authority which would have minimal supervisory capacities — thus
allowing private companies to determine where, when, and how to exploit manganese nodules.

The position of industrialized states, such as Japan, the US, West Germany, and Great Britain, is obviously influenced by their dependence on minerals from less developed countries, such as Zaire and Zambia. Exploitation of manganese nodules would reduce their dependence on land based producers and simultaneously diminish the ability of Zambia, Zaire, and others to have an effective cartel — similar to OPEC (Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries). Availability of minerals from another sources, which is virtually inexhaustible, would permit industrial states an opportunity to continue to exercise leverage over countries such as Zambia and Zaire.

The position of these states also reflects the power and influence of multinational corporations, which have argued that their interests are intertwined with those of their home countries, and that, in order to have access to minerals which are vital to an industrial economy, unilateral action should be taken. In the light of the failure of countries to reach agreement on a comprehensive law of the sea treaty, the United States, for example, is under pressure to allow companies to mine manganese nodules commercially. For example, Marne Dubbs, the director of Kennecott's Ocean Resources Department, appeared before several congressional committees urging the United States to adopt a policy encouraging economic development of the ocean. He argued that by so doing, substantial contributions could be made toward national economic development and, simultaneously, the nation would achieve a secure supply of essential raw materials. He emphasized that, 'industry is prepared to go ahead, but government must establish the climate; and it must do it now ...'.

A bill (S.1134, formerly S.2801) has been in Congress since 1974 which would provide the Secretary of the Interior with authority to promote the development of manganese nodules, until an international legal machinery for the area is adopted by the participants at the law of the sea conference. This bill, called the 'Deep Seabed Hard Mineral Act', states that the US is totally dependent on foreign sources for some of the constituent minerals of manganese nodules and that 'the national security interests of the US require the availability of mineral resources which are independent of the export policies of foreign nations'. Ocean mining companies have found more support in Congress than in the Executive branch.

The Executive branch reluctantly supports legislation that would permit unilateral action by the United States on behalf of mining companies. In late 1977, officials representing the President told congressional committees that the administration would agree to legislation permitting exploitation of manganese nodules if there are provisions for sharing the revenues with the international community in order to be consistent with the principle of the common heritage of mankind. Such legislation would be of temporary duration, and would provide no guarantee of protection for US companies against an adverse international agreement. However, unilateral action by any industrial country would result in a total breakdown in the law of the sea negotiations. Areas on which there is substantial agreement would be sacrificed and the US would be jeopardizing other interests, including freedom of navigation for the military, scientific research, commercial passage through straits, and pollution control. The complexity of the issues has prevented the US from actually allowing companies to exploit the
nODULES, despite the fact that in 1975 President Ford created regulatory machinery within the Department of the Interior, the Ocean Mining Administration, to license and regulate US mining companies with or without the authority.

The official position of the United States is one that favours an International Authority with little control over private companies. At the Geneva Session of the Law of the Sea Conference in 1975, the US introduced a system for the reservation of certain areas or a banking system. Under this system, a company would submit two mines of approximately the same size. The International Authority and its Enterprise would exploit one and the private company the other. Essentially, the US as well as other industrial states, would like to create a weak Authority and to reserve certain parts of the seabed for private companies which would operate outside of the Authority's jurisdiction.

Not surprisingly, the US does not share the enthusiasm of Zaire and Zambia for the Informal Composite Negotiating Text (ICNT). US representative at the Law of the Sea Conference, Elliot Richardson, argued that the ICNT, would not give the reasonable assurance of access that is necessary if we and others could be expected to help finance the Enterprise. It would set an artificial limit on seabed production of minerals from nodules – far more stringent than would be necessary to protect specific developing country producers from possible adverse effects. It would give the Seabed Authority extremely broad now, open ended power to regulate all other mineral production from the seabed as 'appropriate'.

Because both sides at the Law of the Sea Conference have vital interests to protect, there is a stalemate on seabed exploitation. In light of the foregoing discussion, one can see that the future development of Zaire and Zambia may be intertwined with the final outcome of the debate on mining manganese nodules. When commercial exploitation of them begins, greater emphasis will be placed upon the relationship between ocean resources management and the developmental process. The seriousness of the challenge of deep seabed mining cannot be overstated.

Bibliographic Notes


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TOWARDS A POLITICAL ECONOMY OF LIBERIA
Kadallah Khafre

As Frantz Fanon pointed out: ‘The bourgeoisie dictatorship of underdeveloped countries draws its strength from the existence of a leader’. Thus, the death in 1971 of William V.S. Tubman, Liberia’s leader for 27 unbroken years, was an important turning point in the country’s 130 years’ history.

For the local ruling class alliance, this death meant a shift from its assiduously comprador, state bourgeois wing to the faction of nascent local capitalists, headed by present president William R. Tolbert.* For progressives, the death of the Tubman era signalled a return to active political life after long stints in prison, exile or enforced dormancy. For the mainly youthful population — many of whom had known only the extremely repressive Tubman regime — the brief period of transition and consolidation within the ruling class presented them with their first opportunities for free expression and mass organization. These opportunities were quickly and decisively seized with the springing up of a number of progressive organizations and publications.

Embracing a land area of 43,000 square miles and a population estimated at 1.6 million, Liberia was the only area in West Africa that escaped direct European colonization. Liberia grew out of the efforts of the American Colonization Society, a group formed by some members of the United States ruling class

* Tolbert himself holds controlling interests in the Mesurado Group of Companies, which includes a chemical plant producing oxygen and other industrial chemicals, a soap factory, poultry and rubber farms of several thousand acres, Mesurado Fishing Company, and an import business which has the dealership for Leyland Motors, Yamaha, etc. Mesurado Fishing Company, equipped with several modern trawlers, has a virtual monopoly on fishing and the sale of seafoods in Liberia. In addition, it exports seafoods to several African countries, Britain and the US. Tolbert also owns a decisive number of shares in the only locally-owned bank, the Bank of Liberia, which now has financial control over the country’s only oil refinery. Aligned with him are the several bourgeois families involved in the construction business, exploitation of the nation’s forest resources, and banking.
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(including Thomas Jefferson and President Monroe) in 1816 to rid the United States of the growing body of freed blacks who were becoming an increasing threat to that 'peculiar institution' of slavery.

Break away of settler colony
Beginning in 1822, several thousand freed blacks from North America were settled on the coast of what is now called Liberia. Soon, contradictions between the settlers and the American Colonization Society over administrative questions developed into a full-scale power struggle for control of the colony. Encouraged by the apparent prospects for independent capitalist development, the settler community declared its independence in 1847.

For the first two decades the settlers’ economy experienced a period of relative prosperity based on the plantation system of agriculture as practised in the Caribbean and southern United States. Indentured and slave labour on these plantations were supplied mainly by the indigenous peoples who were being increasingly alienated from their land.

By the time of the North American settlers arrival, the area now called Liberia was already inhabited by many ethnic groups with various social formations. The groups considered indigenous to the area (relative to the North Americans) began arriving in present-day Liberia about 100 B.C. from around the Nile and Lake Chad. The Golas brought the practice of agriculture to the area about that time. By 1600, most of the Liberian peoples were already within the boundaries of the territory.

Most early Liberian societies were organized around communal modes of production of the 'African' type. By the 1600s when visits by European merchant ships were becoming regular, the tribute-paying mode was already dominant in some areas, especially where immigrants from the Sahelian empires had settled. In fact, before the arrival of the North American settlers the nucleus of a state had been laid in the form of the Poro secret society which linked eleven ethnic groups covering over half of present-day Liberia. However, a thorough examination of the pre-capitalist modes of production is beyond the scope of this study.

By the 1860s, the capitalist mode was dominant in the coastal areas of Liberia. In the small areas they occupied, the North American settlers completed the destruction of the previous modes that was begun during the Atlantic slave trade. Along with the plantation agriculture system, the settlers established trading houses. Lured by quick profits from the trade of forest and agricultural products, some settler merchants expanded into the area of shipping. This gave rise to a local ship building industry.

However, the local bourgeoisie was still at a primitive level of accumulation when capitalism was maturing in Europe and the United States. Though the local incipient capitalist class was beginning to diversify its economic activities, the settlers’ economy was still based mainly on plantation agriculture using slave and indentured labour, a system which was on its way out of history. While the implications were not immediately obvious to the local bourgeoisie, the defeat of the moribund slave system in the United States civil war in 1865 meant a worldwide victory for rapidly expanding industrial capital.
Soon, low-cost shipping lines from Europe began plying the waters of West Africa, stimulated by the growing demand in Europe for coffee, camwood, cane sugar and other African produce. This led to the demise of the local ship-building industry and the fleet of over 50 ships owned by Liberian merchants at the time. Gradually, trading slipped from the hands of merchants in the settler communities to representatives of the big European manufacturers of margarine, soap and coffee.

Competition from other primary producing countries and a depression in the capitalist economy dealt a collective blow to the local capitalist class which has never fully recovered since. The prices of such leading Liberian exports as coffee, camwood, palm oil and sugar fell sharply in the 1860s. These difficulties of the local merchants were further aggravated by the policy of protectionism instituted in Europe at the turn of the century.

With competition from Liberian coffee now grown in Brazil, exports of that commodity were cut in half. The price of Liberian coffee grown at home fell from 24 cents per pound to 4 cents per pound. The rise of the beet sugar industry in Europe, heavily subsidised by their governments, killed the Liberian sugar industry. After synthetic dyes were perfected in the 1890s, the demand dropped for camwood, another important Liberian export. This crisis in the economy soon had its repercussions in the political realm.

**Death of national bourgeoisie**

From the beginning of Liberian history, there were three social groups in the settler community which can best be described as castes because they were based on the static concepts of skin colour and ancestral origin. At the top of the hierarchy were the small number of light-skinned Afro-Americans who, for the most part, directly controlled the state machinery and formed the bureaucratic wing of the bourgeoisie; the dark-skinned Afro-Americans were next; then came the large group of ‘Congoes’ (Africans from abroad intercepted slave ships). Under these three groups were those indigenous Liberians who lived in the few coastal towns that were then controlled by the settler state.

Deprived from access to the revenues of the state, it was mainly the dark-skinned Afro-Americans who turned to farming and industry. Two decades of economic prosperity led to the development of a group of wealthy and powerful dark-skinned merchants, shippers and plantation owners and the crystallization of classes with sharper outlines. With the developing crisis in the Liberian economy, the members of the national bourgeoisie decided to step in and take over the state machinery directly. Although this group was publicly led by James Edward Roye, one of the country’s wealthiest merchants and shipowners, their ideology was provided by Edward Wilmot Blyden, often referred to as the father of Pan-Africanism.

From about 1857, Blyden had begun denouncing the growing European encroachment in Africa, criticizing the country’s ‘subservient mulatto leadership’, and calling for an alliance between the powerful black settlers and the indigenous ruling classes in order to develop an independent capitalist base. These ideas won ready acceptance among the rising dark-skinned merchants and industrialists who were finding themselves increasingly in conflict with European and mulatto competitors in their drive for control of new markets and means of production.
In 1870 the wealthy dark-skinned settlers came to power. Their programme for development of an independent capitalist economy was ‘ambitious and comprehensive’, yet it was in essence the last desperate cry of a class drowning in the sea of world history. It called for:

- a thorough financial reconstruction and the establishment of a national banking system,
- the general education of the masses, the introduction of railroads, the improvement and incorporation of the native tribes (sic) contiguous to Liberia, and the formation of a friendly alliance with distant and powerful tribes (Emphasis added) (Lynch).

However, this group held power directly only for one year before a simmering disagreement erupted within the ruling class over the direction of the country’s future.

While the struggle was couched in terms of colour, the basis was really economic and political differences among the bourgeoisie. The light-skinned bureaucrats had developed a total dependence on foreign sources of income and were determined to continue their alliance with the United States ruling class through the American Colonization Society, North American churches and other institutions. The incipient national bourgeoisie of mainly dark-skinned settlers wanted to lay the foundation for the independent development of the country under their hegemony. In 1871 the struggle became violent and the comprador elements overthrew the new government of the national bourgeoisie.

Faced with a rising and aggressive European imperialism, the ruling class soon patched-up its differences. However, unlike its counterparts in Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, the dependence of the Liberian settler bourgeoisie on trading and export crops made it particularly vulnerable to imperialism. It could not resist the united armies of finance and industrial capital and was quickly reduced to its present subservient partnership by neo-colonialism.

The beginnings of neo-colonialism

After the failure of the national bourgeoisie to fulfill its mission, it merged with the bureaucratic, comrador sector. Since then, the ruling class has auctioned the nation’s people and resources to three successive neo-colonial masters: Germany (around the turn of the century), Britain (from the first imperialist war to about the 1930s), and the United States (with the entry of the Firestone Rubber Company in 1926, but especially since the second imperialist war).

The 1920s were a crucial time in Liberian history. The country was practically untouched by the relative prosperity being enjoyed in Europe and the United States. The local economy sank to an all-time low. Liberian traders, whose fathers once owned all of the country’s big trading houses and plantations, were now working as agents and helpers for European business chains. Government became the major or only source of income for many of those who were formerly independently prosperous. The government had an accumulated debt of around $2 million.

The rulers of the country reacted to this economic depression as they had during the crisis of 1869-1871. A split begun developing within the ruling class around 1920. One group, including the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, aligned itself with a radical black anti-imperialist organization based in the United States, called the Universal Negro Improvement Association. The UNIA was an international mass movement with several hundred chapters in Africa and the
Americas. The expressed aim of the Association was to end colonialism in Africa and establish black rule with a form of state capitalist economy. In 1920, the UNIA sent a delegation to the Liberian government with a request for land on which it could establish a base for its work in Africa. The delegates promised the movement's support in helping the government to meet its debt payments. In 1923, the concession was approved by the Liberian government.

However, there was another wing of the Liberian ruling class which could not risk withdrawal from its dependence on capital from Europe and the United States. In reaction to the economic downturn, some members of this comprador group resorted to selling indigenous Liberians as workers to the Portuguese colonialists in the 1920s. When the Firestone Rubber Company of the United States approached the Liberian government in December 1923 about a possible concession, this group consented. Since the comprador wing had held the upper-hand within the ruling class since the coup of 1871, they immediately nullified the UNIA concession, banned the organization, arrested its agents and seized agricultural equipment it had imported into the country. Among the one million acres of land given to the Firestone Company in 1924 was land in Cape Palmas that had originally been awarded to the UNIA.

The thorough penetration and domination of the economy by foreign capital did not occur until the 1940s. Until then, the central government exercised effective control only over small pockets of Liberian territory. The majority of the indigenous population remained outside the settler economy, unaffected by political and economic decisions taken in Monrovia. In large areas of the country, the original social structures remained dominant, though somewhat distorted by their slight and irregular contact with the settlers' economy and society. Until then, the primary contradiction in the area known as Liberia was between all the settlers on the one hand and the various indigenous peoples on the other. With the infusion of foreign capital in the 1940s, however, all that began to change rapidly.

It was during the 1940s that classes solidified on a national level. First of all, it was during this period that a truly national ruling class developed. This came about in two ways. On the one hand, the ruling class based mainly in the settler communities simply extended its control over the entire country for the first time. On the other hand, the ruling classes of the recently incorporated areas were quickly absorbed into the already established settler ruling alliance.

Secondly, it was during this period that a national working class began forming. On the plantations and in the mines, workers from various ethnic groups melted together into a new group based on economic interests. The central antagonism between the descendents of the settlers and the indigenous peoples began to wear away due to greater social intercourse at all levels of the society, brought on by the sudden growth of the economy. Gradually, wars between various ethnic groups and the central government were replaced by class struggle on the national level. The first labour union appeared in the 1940s. It was only in the early 1950s that several social formations occupying an area that was legally considered to be a nation, were truly welded together into the nation of Liberia.

These important shifts in the economic system produced yet another split in the ruling class. Those powerful Liberians who directly controlled the government were dependent on and firmly united with foreign capital in its exploitation of
the country. Many were lawyers and bureaucrats who had represented the foreign companies in their bids for concessions. This group, headed by William V.S. Tubman, had initiated Liberia's 'Open Door Policy' toward foreign capital.

Another wing of the country's rulers opposed what they considered the much too blatant 'selling out' of Liberia. This group was composed mostly of rich plantation owners (like former President Edwin J. Barclay and S. David Coleman) and indigenous members of the ruling alliance (such as Dihdwo Twe). Apparently, this wing thought they could have gotten a better deal for their class or that they should have tried to exploit the newly discovered resources themselves. The split, which began growing soon after the second imperialist war, erupted in the early 1950s. Twe was driven into exile and Coleman and several others were killed. This left control of the country firmly in the hands of those rulers who were completely aligned with and subservient to foreign capital.

Thus, after 130 years of 'independence', government publications show that the following conditions have developed: Peasant families which make up over 70 per cent of the total population have incomes of less than $70 (US) per year. About 80 per cent of the people above age 10 cannot read and write English, the national language. The death rate is high, even though underestimated to be at 21 per 1000 persons. About a third of the labour force in the capital is unemployed and that figure is growing. About 4 per cent of the population consumes over half of the national income. Five our of every seven businesses in the country are foreign-owned.

The nation is still being consolidated and further integrated into the unequal world capitalist international division of labour:

as a supplier of raw materials, (rubber, iron ore, forestry products); as a profitable and reliable area for the export of capital, (in 1974 foreign private investment was valued at $655.4 million); as a secondary market for manufactured goods (in 1975, imports were valued at $331.2 million); and as a bridgehead for imperialist aggression (the United States has a "mutual defense" treaty with Liberia and its propaganda network, the Voice of America, has its headquarters for Africa here). (Mayson).

It is primarily this neo-colonial arrangement that has drawn the greatest fire from the growing left, progressive and patriotic forces. The sudden upsurge in progressive activity among the Liberian people since 1971 has resulted in the establishment of a number of progressive organizations and the publication of a spate of progressive writings. In these publications and in popular discussions, attention has been focused sharply on what is known throughout West Africa as the 'monkey work, baboon chop' system; in other words, the capitalist mode of production. The mobilization efforts of the progressive forces were helped along by a) the relatively mature class antagonisms that existed due to Liberia's unique history and b) the country's blatant neo-colonial relationship with the United States of America.

It is primarily this neo-colonial arrangement that has drawn the greatest fire from the growing left, progressive, and patriotic forces. Some of the progressive movements that have sprung-up since 1971 include:

1. The Movement for Justice in Africa (MOJA), a mass based pan-African liberation support movement which puts out the monthly \emph{MOJA News} and other material, available from P.O. Box 1559, Monrovia, Liberia (and from Clearing House for All-Liberian Literature, P.O. Box 6237, Syracuse, New York, 13217, USA).
2. The All-Peoples Freedom Alliance (APFA), an organization of students, workers and
peasants whose manifesto states that it is dedicated to the struggle against neo-colonialism and for the establishment of a government of the exploited masses; APFA publishes a monthly which is available from APFA-FANGA, P.O. Box 3282, Monrovia, Liberia;

3. The Progressive Alliance of Liberia, which recently announced its intentions of forming a type of social-democratic party; its periodical *The Revolution*, is available from P.O. Box 240, Adelphi Station, Brooklyn, New York 11238, USA;

4. The Committee Against Political Repression in Liberia (CAPRIL) and its publication *Rice and Rights*, P.O. Box 6237, Syracuse, New York, 13217 USA;

5. SUSUKUU, a mass-based anti-poverty organization which provides legal services to the poor, organizes workers' education programs, and gives agricultural and managerial advice to peasant communities.

**The class struggle mounts**

Since 1971, these organizations have placed the ruling class on the defensive. After a number of successful mass rallies and marches organized by MOJA in support of the African revolution, the regime banned 'unauthorized' mass meetings. In a feeble attempt to undercut the already established popular base of the SUSUKUU anti-poverty programme, the regime declared its own 'War on Poverty' in 1976. In response to a southern African liberation fund created by MOJA in early 1977, the government announced a National Fund for Southern African Liberation and ordered that all funds collected in the country for that purpose had to be turned over to the National Fund authorities. The fund has lost most of its original meaning since workers are now being coerced into contributing.

The last seven years have seen a rapid deterioration of the legitimacy of the present exploitative social order. Capitalism has become so discredited in the eyes of the masses that the ruling class in 1974 toyed with the idea of adopting 'African socialism' as an official ideology, but settled last year for 'Humanistic Capitalism' instead. Due to mounting social consciousness, the ruling class has been forced to initiate changes in the flag, motto and constitution, all of which are modelled after those of the United States.

Along with each of its small concessions, the ruling class has responded with increasing vengeance against the awakening masses. After a more than 20 year ban on capital punishment, hanging has been re instituted for violent crimes and political offences. Several people convicted of murder prior to the reinstitution of capital punishment have been publicly executed in order to intimidate the people. Public whippings of petty thieves began in 1976. On the unofficial level, some members of the ruling class formed a death squad which roamed the countryside killing, mutilating and terrorizing peasants. All public whippings and official and unofficial executions have received wide-spread publicity in the public media to insure that their message is not lost on the people.

In addition, leading MOJA and APFA cadres have been cut off from all access to public or private employment. Three years ago MOJA had its offices raided and mostly personal effects of cadres were seized. During a particularly intense period in 1975, editors of a petty-bourgeoisie monthly, *The Revelation*, were imprisoned for a week. When mass demonstrations in support of the editors erupted in Monrovia, the capital, the regime resorted to a show of force. Soldiers appeared throughout city streets armed with sub-machine guns; one MOJA cadre was whisked off to a maximum security prison. He has since been released.

However, these acts of intimidation have only served to expose the class nature
of the regime and to provoke large segments of the population. Strike actions are growing more commonplace and serious on all levels. Last year, students struck, closing down one university for several months. Clerical workers also struck and included among their demands a call for unionization rights to be extended to agricultural workers — the largest segment of the working class. Strikes by industrial workers occurred in several sectors. The most important strike took place at an iron ore mine that was being phased out earlier than scheduled without compensation to the workers. The strike resulted in the arrest and torture of several rank-and-file leaders. All of these actions were successful in winning the fulfillment of immediate demands. A few strikes in the industrial and agricultural sectors reportedly resulted in unpublicized loss of workers’ lives.

Last year started off with strikes at LAMCO, a Swedish-American mining company; Bong Mines, a German iron concession; and Firestone rubber plantation. One of the political demands that has emerged from these recent actions is a call by the workers for the formation of a new national union under the leadership of the progressive forces. The present national union is headed by the son of President Tolbert.

In the last few months, the regime has responded with renewed aggression. A model village development programme, organized around a communal farm of about 1,000 acres by the SUSUKUU anti-poverty programme has been brought to a complete halt by big landowners in the surrounding area in collusion with the central government. The aim of the programme was to use the surplus from the communal farm to build a clinic, school, and centre for the development of Liberian medicine. Charges that SUSUKUU is attempting to ‘introduce Communism’ are being seriously investigated, according to a March 1978 letter from President Tolbert to an Area Director of the organisation.

However, intimidations and harassments are only a half of the problems organizations like MOJA, APFA and SUSUKUU are faced with. The other half are mostly internal constraints. Many leading progressives, including a trained political economist and a Ph.D. in economics, have been without income-providing jobs for several years now. Typewriters, projectors, jeeps and printing facilities are sorely needed, but as the class struggle mounts, liberal sources of internal material support will undoubtedly dry-up. With incomes of about $70 a year, the peasants and workers can hardly afford to sustain their movements completely at this stage, although mine workers, rubber tappers, students and market women alike continue to donate their pennies and nickels at cultural and other fund-raising programmes.

What is needed though, are consistent sources of periodic support. Liberian interest units at various institutions could organize new, begin studying the Liberian situations and channelling support to progressive organizations. Often foreign publicity and pressures from academic circles, especially in the metropoles, are enough to get a progressive out of prison or reinstated in a job. As MOJA notes in one of its publications:

The contribution to our struggle by progressive organizations abroad is welcome and will no doubt assist our early victory. But, in the final analysis, what matters most is what we do here in Africa. AND WE WILL WIN.
Bibliographic Notes


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Debate

ZAMBIA: CLASS FORMATION AND DETENTE — A COMMENT

The article by Karen Eriksen in RAPE 9 attempts to explain the Zambian government's recent international stance as resulting from the rise of an "indigenous bourgeoisie" that is in "alliance with international capital . . . likely to increase its demands on, and influence over, the state" (pp.26). In the recent past the government has become "more prone to compromise and to deliver (liberation) movements up to the negotiating table as a result of the country's perilous economic crisis."

There is no intention to quarrel with most of the factual content of this piece, although further details could have reinforced this latter point. Government culpability in its dealings with ZANU, for instance, involved the killing of 11 cadres who were protesting their 'protective custody' plus the production of the Chitepo Commission report. Officially the work of an international team of investigators, this was actually written by local officials and, by falsification of evidence, deliberately laid the blame on Zambia's own political opponents within the organisation. In the dealings with SWAPO, Shipanga and other dissidents were turned over to the Tanzanian government for custody in direct defiance of Supreme Court instructions.

The economic trends, despite difficulties posed by outdatedness of government statistics could have been more fully documented, notably the fall in real wages (see Briefings — eds.). The main problem with the piece is not however factual inadequacy but a confused theoretical framework that leaves unanswered many of the questions posed, while others at least as important are not even raised. A whole group of problems arise because at no time is the question of possible differences amongst sections of the Zambian ruling class directly confronted. It is stated that some 'have become champions of the interests of foreign capital'. The important implications of this qualification are not however drawn out fully and we are left with 'a close correspondence between indigenous property owners and multinational corporations in their pursuit of foreign policy objectives'.

In fact it is extremely doubtful that there is such a close correspondence. Debates which took place in the political arena during 1977 and 1978 cast doubt on this congruence of interests. In particular Ms Eriksen's analysis does not explain why it is that, to date, despite the re-opening in October 1978 of the Rhodesian border for Zambian trade, pressures to re-enter full economic relationships with the white south, denationalise sections of state enterprise, reintroduce school
and hospital fees etc., have been firmly resisted by Kaunda? All these things, with the exception of the border re-opening, were suggested in December 1977 by a parliamentary select committee under then Minister of Finance John Mwanakatwe. Despite constant parliamentary questions however, the President managed to delay this issue with the excuse that he was still 'carefully considering it'. The dissolution of Parliament in September 1978 meant the death of the report.

Unless we proceed from entirely idealist conceptions, we can only explain this by seeing that differences over such issues are reflections of different specific interests within the Zambian ruling class.

Any explanation must begin by exploding one crucial myth common for different reasons to most Zambian politicians and apparently accepted by Ms Eriksen. Government spokespersons have continually assigned chief responsibility for Zambia’s current economic plight, problems of supplies to all the repercussions of Rhodesian UDI. They stress ‘the sacrifices made by the country in the struggle to liberate southern Africa' (Eriksen p.4). Most importantly, it has been used to distract attention from the inadequacies of government itself by laying the blame elsewhere. Proceeding from the same analysis, politicians like Arthur Wina (see p.12-13) called for a resumption of full economic relations with the white south and blamed government for putting abstract principles before harsh economic reality.

Is it actually the case that the economic balance for Zambia from Rhodesian UDI is all on the debit side? In 1965 the economy was almost totally integrated with that of the south. 40% of imports came from Rhodesia: another 21% from South Africa. Since these two countries both possessed much bigger internal markets, there was no reason to think that independence would change this pattern and that there existed any objective basis for significant industrial development in Zambia itself. UDI changed all that. The political pressures it set up to end such economic patterns actually meshed in conveniently with the aspiration of Zambia’s new governing class to create its own independent base. The economic growth that resulted would have been impossible had the former pattern remained. Employment for instance, in which there was zero growth in the 10 years of Federation, 1953-63, jumped from 268,700 in 1964 to 377,570 by mid 1973. The development of projects like the Ndola petrol refinery, Kafue Textiles, Livingstone Motor Assemblers, would have been inconceivable under the former economic links.

Of course most such enterprises were run on the basis of partnership agreements with a diversity of foreign capital and provided the latter with a favoured status. But because the arrangements involved the growth of the state sector, they were the basis for the development of the power of Zambia’s ‘bureaucratic bourgeoisie’ — and importantly also of the size of its working class. As Eriksen correctly explains (p.19), since it had no initial economic base, manipulation of the state machinery was the only way in which the ‘elite’ at independence could struggle for its own economic aggrandisement.

Looking at developments in this way enables us to see that there now exists in Zambia a significant group in the leadership of state controlled industry that objectively benefited from the effects of UDI. Such an interest provides the material base for the present political leadership. It helps one to understand why
Kaunda can remain meantime at least partially resistant to pressures for a more 'flexible' line on Zimbabwe from some of his imperialist backers whose weight Ms Eriksen cogently describes.

It also incidentally provides a basis for interesting speculation about what will be the repercussions for Zambia of the reopening of full trading relationships with an independent Zimbabwe, and even more of course with a liberated South Africa. If Southern Rhodesia economically dominated the north so comprehensively under Federation, how much more capable is it of this after thirteen years of a siege economy forced to generate substantial internal economic growth? There are good grounds for suspecting that even the final political liberation of Zimbabwe will not provide the economic salvation that Zambian politicians so frequently evoke.

There is however one grouping within Zambia that does have an interest in reopening such links. If the politicians currently in power represent the most important 'indigenous property owners' (although this has to be qualified by pointing out that most of their property has been acquired through their control over the state machine), then people like Arthur Wina, who is correctly singled out for his leading role in advocating the reopening of trade with the south, are the spokespersons for the multinational corporations that have interests in the whole of southern Africa. Ms Eriksen thinks there is a 'close correspondence between the two in their pursuit of foreign policy objectives'. This does not explain their divergence in practical policy. Those who advocated reopening economic relations with the south, relaxation of investment controls etc. actually objectively represent the view of international corporations that would if possible prefer to have a wide open southern African common market for maximally effective exploitation. The Wina grouping expressed these attitudes and it did so because its own acquisition of economic power has come in general through acting individually as local agents for the multinationals and not through control of the state machinery. (To substantiate this point fully would require fuller research on the precise business interests involved. An impressionistic view is however that such positions are most frequently expressed by those politicians who owe the least economically to the state).

A third grouping with quite different origins can be found expounding the same line as Wina. Ex-members of the United Progressive Party (UPP), which was led by ex-Vice President Simon Kapwepwe and banned in early 1972, which re-admitted to the United National Independence Party (UNIP) in September 1977. That they came back as a group confirmed the well known fact that they had continued to co-ordinate over the intervening five years. One of their members, Musonda Chambeshi, elected to parliament in a by-election at Luanshya at the beginning of 1978, rapidly became one of the most articulate of government's critics. The stress that he laid on economic hardships currently being felt, especially by the working population, and the contrast with the visible wealth of Zambia's rulers, linking this in turn to the sacrifices made for the Zimbabweans, indicated that this group would try to use such a 'populist' approach during the elections due in late 1978.

Kapwepwe's own attempts to stand for the Presidency confirmed this. In the one statement of his that received any publicity (his declaration of intention to seek nomination made on 1 August 1978) he made clear his adoption of a populist position criticising Kaunda from the right. His Fourteen Point Pro-
gramme included a full reopening of the Rhodesian border and the purchase of imports from the ‘cheapest available source’, the return of inefficient state enterprises to private ownership, further encouragement to overseas investors and to the development of private and mission schools. All these measures were presented as essential in order to place the interests of Zambians above all else. ‘Mr Kapwepwe said that although his government would be socialistic he would first introduce a capitalist economy in the country in order to have something to share among the people’ (Times of Zambia, 2 August 1978).

Kaunda moved rapidly to crush the ex-UPP threat which was rendered more potent by its long time historic base amongst the Copperbelt’s miners. Chambeshi was arraigned before a Party disciplinary committee for allegedly abusing the Luanshya District Secretary. He was eventually suspended for 9 months, thus making him ineligible to stand in the end of the year elections. Kapwepwe’s candidacy was snuffed out by bureaucratic means. Motions making it mandatory for presidential candidates to have had 5 years continuous party membership and then one to make Kaunda sole candidate were pushed through ‘on the nod’ at the Mulungushi party conference in September 1978. John Chisata, ex General Secretary of the Mineworkers’ Union of Zambia and another likely parliamentary candidate from amongst ex-UPP members, was arrested late September along with fourteen others for alleged involvement in starting a fire that killed twelve people in a dance hall in Chililabombwe. No charges were ever brought, but on 9 October their detention was quite made indefinite by presidential order.

Finally Kaunda seized the political initiative by announcing on 6 October the reopening of the route through Rhodesia to Zambian trade. The opportunity to do this was afforded by the grave crisis over the arrival of fertilizer essential to planting at the rainy season in November. Up to 100,000 tons was marooned in ships and on the docks at various points in the Indian Ocean. A snarl-up of the Tazara railway to Dar es Salaam made it impossible to move it by that route. The promised reopening of the Benguela railway through Angola to Lobito had once again not materialised. Rail from Maputo to Gaborone in Botswana and road thereafter could not cope with the necessary loads. Rail through Rhodesia was the only alternative.

The precise effects of this move cannot yet be gauged. Kaunda was careful to say that it did not involve reopening commercial arrangements with Rhodesia and that its only purpose was to alleviate a desperate transport crisis. Yet no date was fixed for closing the route down again. Meantime just before Christmas, the arrival of substantial consignments of South African consumer goods fuelled suspicion that it would lead to a resurgence of trade with that country. What was crucial of course to Kaunda was that, although it did not involve the resumption of the full trading links which Wina and Kapwepwe had demanded, it did effectively slice away the central and most popular plank of the oppositionists’ programme in the crucial pre-electoral period.

So far stress has been laid on some of the differences amongst Zambian politicians which cannot be understood via Ms Eriksen’s schema. It is equally important to take issue with some of her generalisations about supposed changes in the class structure, economy and international orientation and to lay emphasis on the real continuity in these areas. At various points in the text we read statements like
'the Zambian government has lost some of its earlier resolve' (p.4).
'co-operation with South Africa became more open' (p.5).
'the mid-seventies witnessed Zambia's increasing integration into the international capitalist economy' (p.17).

(referring to the above mentioned report of the Mwanakatwe Parliamentary Select Committee, which as was indicated was in fact never implemented) 'the country has been committed firmly to a straightforward capitalist course therefore' (p.24).

'We have then a picture of fundamental changes occurring in Zambian social relations and social structure which promote important shifts in the direction of internal and external politics on the part of the government' (p.26).

'The change in direction will not be a temporary one . . . In the immediate future this portends entrenchment within, rather than disengagement from, the Southern African regional economy and the web of western imperialism' (p.26).

According to this picture, Zambia's economy is moving toward further integration with western imperialism in general and with southern Africa in particular. From this follows a supposedly new political stance. Such a view is quite misleading and invites two questions:

1. When exactly was Zambia not 'integrated' in the web of western imperialism? In 1964 imports from the Soviet bloc were 0.2% of the total. In 1973 they had increased to 0.6%. Hardly dramatic! Every one of the parastatal companies' foreign partners came from the capitalist countries. The only significant project involving co-operation with a non capitalist country was the TAZARA railway.

2. Is Zambia in fact moving toward 'entrenchment within the southern African regional economy'? In 1964 imports from South Africa were 21% of total. In 1973 they were 12%. For Rhodesia the figure went from 40% to 2%.

The most important tendencies are not those idenified by Ms Eriksen. What has occurred however is that the nature and direction of Zambia's relationships with imperialism have changed: first, the most important imperialist investments are now guaranteed through the state's majority shareholding in almost all key industries. Second, investment and trading relationships have been diversified around the imperialist world and away from the southern African region.

This picture could of course change in the direction suggested. But it has not to date. Nor does the recent border reopening make such a change certain, although it certainly increases the possibilities. A conclusive turnabout would require:

1. The exertion of further economic pressure by those sections of imperialist capital that have an interest in effecting such a shift. While this probably includes those with substantial investments in South Africa, it does not necessarily incorporate some of Zambia's newer economic partner (Italy? . . . Japan? . . .). Nonetheless we can say that the present grave economic crisis and the reopening of the border makes such a resolution slightly more likely.

2. A shift in political power in Zambia involving a weakening in the political weight of the existing state and parastatal bureaucracy and an increase in that element possessing its own independent links with imperialist capital, especially southern African and/or of the Kapwepwe-type populist wing. Kaunda's success in the December election involving the effective crushing of the opposition, suggests this is not imminent and that the grip of the existing leadership of the bureaucracy remains firm.

Finally, is Ms Eriksen correct to suggest that Zambia's political stance on southern
African questions has changed? From 1964's Independence statement by Kaunda of his willingness to co-operate economically with South Africa, through the well-publicised 1969 correspondence with Vorster, to the 1974 'dialogue' up to the latest manoeuvrings with Smith, Zambia's substantive attitude has not changed. This is determined not so much by immediate economic interest as by fear of the potential dynamic of permanent revolution that could be unleashed by the opening of successful mass struggles against South African capitalism. Similar fears were far more important in determining Zambia's attitude to the Angolan civil war than the concern for the fate of the Benguela railway that is evoked by Ms Eriksen. It was above all the exemplary and contagious effect of the struggles developing amongst MPLA's radicalising popular base that motivated support for the imperialist backed opposition. Such attitudes will not change this side of a takeover of power by Zambia's workers and small farmers.

Tony Southall, January 1979

Richard Jeffries' study of Ghanaian railwaymen, a revised version of his 1975 thesis for the London School of Oriental and African Studies, is a significant contribution to the growing volume of publications on African labour and trade union history. At the same time, this book provides important new insights into the patterns and dynamics of political change in Ghana over the last forty years.

The first, longer section of the book is a political history of railway unionism in Ghana which describes how the railwaymen of the twin towns of Sekondi and Takoradi, more than any other group of unionized workers, have played a leading role in determining the pace and nature of political change in Ghana. Unlike other workers the railwaymen overcame the many obstacles to unionization in the pre-1945 period. They rejected the apolitical model of trade unionism encouraged by the colonial administration. Led by the charismatic engine drive Pobee Biney, they acted as the radical vanguard of the colony's emerging proletariat. The railwaymen became the most important organized mass basis of support for Nkrumah and his Conventional People's Party, and in 1950 forced Nkrumah to support a general strike in furtherance of the party's campaign of 'Positive Action' against the colonial regime. In the following decade the Railway Union resisted the deradicalization of the party and the centralization of the national labour movement. This resistance culminated in a seventeen-day strike in September 1961, a protest inspired by a sense of communal deprivation and which attracted the support of the whole of the urban mass. Like the Positive Action strike, the 1961 strike led to the intensification of state controls over organized labour. It was not until after the coup of 1966 that the national labour movement, in the form of the TUC, was remodelled along the independent and democratic lines consistently advocated by the railwaymen and their union. The incompatability of this new model with the increasingly elitist and authoritarian policies of military and civilian regimes between 1966 and 1971 finally resulted in open confrontation between labour and the state. Again, the railwaymen of Sekondi acted as the principle source of working class opposition to the inequities of the post-colonial political economy.

Jeffries describes and analyzes these events with admirable lucidity, providing the first comprehensive and accurate account of the politics of the Ghanaian
trade union movement between 1945 and 1972, illuminating the decisive role played by the railwaymen. The author draws on his extensive informal association with the railwaymen to demonstrate how the radical policies and ideologies of railway union leaders have been informed by rank-and-file consciousness. Unlike many other groups of Ghanaian workers, the railwaymen have succeeded in maintaining the democratic procedures of their union in the face of persistent state interventions designed to replace popular and responsive leaders with loyal appointees.

The success of the railwaymen in this respect has, perhaps, led Jeffries to underplay the degree of tension between workers and union officials in the 1966-1972 period when B.A. Bentum headed the TUC. The unprecedented strike wave of 1968-1971 is not discussed at any length, and therefore the fundamental ambiguity of Bentum's role as a broker between organized labour and the state is left unexplored.

This first, historical section of the book would also benefit from some examination of the protest activities of the railwaymen in the periods between the major confrontations of 1950, 1961 and 1971. Jeffries' failure to examine the railwaymen's perceptions of their working situation and to explore conflicts over industrial issues stems from his narrow definition of political activity as that which 'extends beyond immediate occupational interests to disagreement over broad societal issues and goals' (p.3). It is, surely, wrong to suggest that conflicts over wages, conditions of service, managerial authority and workers' rights are totally irrelevant to the issue of 'the legitimacy of the prevailing political and social order' (p.3). For Jeffries, as for many other radical scholars, progressive political change can be achieved without any corresponding changes in the organization of work. In looking at the workplace activities of the railwaymen Jeffries may have found a more distinctively 'proletarian' strain in railway worker ideology than his discussion of their 'radical populism' allows.

In the second section of the book, Jeffries considers more systematically the analytical and theoretical issues raised by his account of railway unionism. Firstly he examines the socio-economic position and the political role of the railwaymen in Ghana's evolving class structure, convincingly arguing the case against the 'labour aristocracy thesis' propounded by Arrighi and Saul. Next, Jeffries discusses the obstacles to the mobilization and organization of urban and rural masses in Africa, examining the unique sources of the railway workers' political strength. Finally, he describes the distinctive political culture of the railwaymen, showing how it differs from the ideal-type of class consciousness regarded in Leninist theory as the basis of revolutionary proletarian activity.

In dealing with these issues Jeffries shows a healthy disrespect for any deterministic tendencies within radical scholarship. While the militancy of the Sekondi railwaymen stems ultimately from their role in the social formation, their political consciousness and ability to organize in defence of the interests of the urban poor is shown to be the result of specific situational factors which are generally not shared by other groups within the Ghanaian working class. Not surprisingly, therefore, Jeffries avoids any general assessment of the 'revolutionary' or 'political' potential of African workers, and consistently reminds the reader of the different sets of situational factors moulding political consciousness in other urban areas of Ghana.
Perhaps the most valuable new theoretical perspective brought by Jeffries to the study of African workers is to be found in his extensive analysis of the railway workers’ political culture. Recognizing the use of this concept by conservative political scientists, the author prefers to adopt an approach similar to that used by E.P. Thompson in his classic study, *The Making of the English Working Class*. Like Thompson, Jeffries shows that political consciousness is embodied in traditions, values, ideas and institutions. Political action is therefore informed by past experiences and the mythology of those experiences, as well as by contemporary circumstances. The railway workers’ ‘sense of history’ ensures that the victories and defeats of yesterday are remembered by those participating in the conflicts of today.

Readers who come to this book expecting the author to herald the working class revolution in Ghana will be disappointed, for Jeffries’ position is almost uncompromisingly incrementalist. Ghana’s workers can hope to limit the worst excesses of exploitation and authoritarianism, and to contribute towards the creation of democratic and accountable political structures. Only if such hopes are completely frustrated might reformism give way to ‘a more explicitly revolutionary orientation’ (p.208). While this realistic perspective is preferable to unthinking proletarian messianism, it also underestimates the political flexibility of capital and the post-colonial state. Hitherto African regimes have, as Jeffries suggests, attempted to suppress mass political expression. However, the historical experience of working class struggle in other areas of the world suggests that in the future trade unions might actually be encouraged to adopt the reformist position advocated by Jeffries as a means of averting conflict over the fundamentals of the post-colonial political economy.

This book is essential reading for anyone seeking to understand the political expression of class formation and conflict in Africa. For students of Ghanaian politics it represents an overdue shift of focus away from the essentially elitist and institutional perspective of the existing standard works. One can only hope that a cheaper, paperback edition of the book will give it the wide circulation it deserves.

*Jeff Crisp*


In assessing this work, its context within the Department of Political Science of the University of Uppsala to which Kowet submitted this dissertation has to be considered. Within the department a struggle is taking place, as elsewhere and as always, as to the scientific status of critical enquiry. More specifically, a group of students under the general direction of Dr Lars Rudebeck* has sought to contribute to the universal quest for a better theoretical and methodological

*Lars Rudebeck and the Akut group have been closely involved with this Review since it began. Two of his many published works have appeared in English: *Guinea Bissau, A Study of Political Modernisation*, (Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, Uppsala, 1974) and *Party and People. A Study of Political Change in Tunisia*, (Hirst, London, 1969).*
understanding of the third world. This group, to which Kowet has not been formally linked, has been heavily attacked and the criticism has focused on the scientific validity of the work of a Marxist like Lars Rudebeck. While Rudebeck's work is certainly not above criticism much of the attack has been polemical and, as always, ignores the question of class struggle within the University milieu. More specifically, the whole debate about the scientific capability of Lars Rudebeck has ignored the question of whether such studies as are undertaken by the 'Akut' group to which he belongs are capable of undertaking and carrying out field studies and other forms of empirical research to which the general paradigm of critical and Marxist enquiry can be tested. The attempt to 'defeat' critical enquiry by ignoring what Englishmen would call the proof of the pudding is not confined to the Political Science Department of the University of Uppsala.

This context becomes relevant when we examine the approach adopted by Kowet for the study of politics in three small southern African states — Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland (BLS). Kowet's approach is guided by Samir Amin's typology of three types of colonial penetration in sub-Saharan Africa in which the BLS states are characterised as 'labour reserves'. In so doing, and in contrast to the hegemonic paradigm of political development in the fifties and sixties, Kowet draws attention to:

The importance of analysing the BLS states in terms of their international context, to which Rudebeck drew attention in his book _Utveckling och Politik_ (Development & Politics) in 1970.

The existence of a set of centre-periphery relationships vis-à-vis Britain, South Africa and the BLS states.

The primary economic function of these territories of providing cheap labour to white capital located in the Republic of South Africa.

In sum, this book is, for better or worse, the product of a more general quest for a paradigm for understanding third world politics and this general quest ought to be, but seldom is, attacked by asking a very simple question: does it work?

The specific theoretical framework of this study is that the BLS states became and were sustained as labour reserves of white capital by a process of appropriation and control over the principal productive resource, land. In analysing the process of colonial penetration in southern Africa in terms of appropriation and control over land, Kowet's work is not original and indeed might have been strengthened by reference to a number of southern African studies which have focused on this process (including that of his colleague Dr Gabriele Winai Ström's _Development and Dependence in Lesotho: the enclave of South Africa_, Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, Uppsala, 1978). What is original and provocative in this study is the claim that access to land continued to determine the basis of the labour reserve economy in the post-colonial situation.

Kowet further argues that the maintenance of the labour reserve economy necessitated:
1. the fragmentation of political power within the labour reserve,
2. the obstruction of a 'Pan-African' politics.

These functions were performed and made possible by a series of alliances between chiefs, colonial authorities and European capital in South Africa and, in the case of Botswana and Swaziland, within the BLS states.
For those engaged on substantial research work on southern Africa there is little doubt that the study has succeeded in its primary objective. Kowet indicates how control over access to land can, as a tool of scientific enquiry, be used to make a series of historical comparisons of the BLS states. In doing this Kowet has a firm grasp of traditional and neo-traditional usufruct rights to land and of the methods by which traditional chiefs accumulated control over land and hence access to political power. And this task is carried out without collapsing particular historical experience into predetermined categories. Given the relatively wide scope of the study — of three states over a period of approximately 100 years — this is a singular achievement.

The problems cannot, however, be ignored. This is particularly evident in the question of the links between the BLS states and the Republic of South Africa which receives superficial treatment and rests on certain interpretations of the detailed basis of the political arena of Lesotho where Kowet has chosen to attack Ström.

Initially, the importance of the context of this study was emphasized. These contextual comments are vital as much in the assessment of this work as anywhere else. The 'silent class struggle' is fought not only at the University of Dar es Salaam!

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6b. NAMIBIA

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6c. BOTSWANA, LESOTHO, SWAZILAND

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6d. ZIMBABWE

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