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ESSAY REVIEW

EPIPHENOMENA OF THE STRUGGLE

The Pearce Commission to enquire into the acceptability of the Home-Smith agreement was in the early weeks of 1972 the first important turning point in the history of Rhodesia since the events of 1962-5 (the rise of the Rhodesian Front, the break-up of Federation and U.D.I.) had set the country on its path towards isolation and war. The idea of a test of acceptability was something of an afterthought (the fifth of the original Five Principles) and was of little importance as long as the negotiations centred on the details of an independence constitution that was to be offered to the White Government. Once put into effect, however, the test provided the first real expression of African opinion; and once the answer was ‘No’, it became clear for the first time—at least for the Whites in Rhodesia and the British Government1—that the constitutional details of independence were not the real issue. The real problem was how to transfer power to the African majority and to arrive at the minimum safeguards for Whites that would make this possible—a problem that was to become increasingly obvious from the end of 1972 when ZANU launched its new guerilla offensive in the north-east.

This basic change, however, was only slowly perceived in the academic literature, whereas some pamphlets published by interested bodies2 at the time of the Pearce Commission did, by their advocacy of a ‘No’ answer, implicitly seize the point, and then go on to develop it.3 Few of the numerous pamphlets that have appeared since 1972 have had the same impact but their very number, and their ephemeral nature, creates the need for some record and review, particularly as they are often derivative one from another and share certain characteristics that are crucial for understanding the international context of the Rhodesian problem.

After the flurry of activity in 1971-2, there was something of a lull in this sort of publishing on Rhodesia—the last days of Portuguese rule tended to divert attention perhaps—and the tendency was to publish fewer but with more extended

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2 Periodicals are not included in this essay; also excluded are the publications of the direct participants—the Rhodesian Government, other White political parties and the African nationalist parties. There are different reasons for this in each case. The Rhodesian Government’s publications are more easily identifiable and available—as White Papers, or as Press releases in the library of the Ministry of Information—than the more scattered ephemera discussed here. Secondly, the ephemera of the other White parties are being written up by another author and it is hoped to publish that study in a later issue. Lastly the ephemeral and periodical publications of the nationalist parties have not been generally available for study in this country and present an enormous task of collection which has been begun by the National Archives Library, but so far without great success or co-operation from the parties concerned; nevertheless it is hoped that at least a preliminary survey will be published soon.

Also excluded are pamphlets that deal more with the actual fighting and those of the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Rhodesia; these will be reviewed later.

3 The first of these pieces was Christian Council of Rhodesia, A Guide to the ‘Proposals for a Settlement’: The Proposals Promise but... (Salisbury, The Council, 1971), 8 pp. This brief pamphlet
background material. Notable among these was a series of booklets by the UNESCO Press. Only one of these, by Dr K. Weinrich (Sr Mary Aquina), is of academic value—a sociological survey of Mucheke which has already been reviewed in this journal. The two other books on Rhodesia, Racism and Apartheid in Southern Africa: Rhodesia and Southern Rhodesia: The Effects of a Conquest Society on Education, Culture and Information, purport to be factual, 'to assist those who wish to inform students and pupils'; but the UNESCO Secretariat took great pains to not endorse the contents even in respect of an indisputable matter as the legal status of Rhodesia. The caution was understandable, because both books were polemical rather than academic, determined to condemn out of hand, without understanding; their tendentious treatment of the non-racial University of Rhodesia is a typical example. Even more serious in both of these books as factual records was the refusal to admit that things did change in Rhodesia. Thus Austin (p. 49) gave the small annual numbers of Africans registered as apprentices but stopped his figures in 1969, just when they began to rise significantly (from 3 per cent of the total in 1968 to 18 per cent by 1975). The inevitable effect of this sort of distortion is that other authors accept these fictions for fact. Thus the International (only two pages really as it contains a translation into Shona and into Ndebele) was probably the most decisive single publication in the liberation struggle and was far more influential with African opinion than the more publicized Catholic publications. In fact it mobilized Africans, who at first tended to accept the Proposals, not only to oppose but also to reorganize politically.


For the Rhodesian Government's reply to the Pearce Commission's report, see Where Did Pearce Go Wrong? (Salisbury, Ministry of Information, Immigration and Tourism, 1972), 4 pp.


6 A good example of extended distortion both of logic and fact is to be found in Austin's Racism and Apartheid (p. 51) where he claimed that any beneficial effects which the multiracial University of Rhodesia might have had was destroyed because some European students went to South African universities—thus leaving more room for more African students (45 per cent African to 48 per cent European in 1974 when Austin was writing!). To fortify this strange argument, he then used statistics to show that in 1972 there were about 2,500 Europeans at universities and about 5,000 qualified European school-leavers, and thus this therefore meant that 50 per cent of European school-leavers could expect a
Commission of Jurists in a similar sort of background booklet largely devoted to
detailing repressive legislation repeated both Austin’s incomplete figures on
apprenticeship and his claim that 50 per cent of European qualified school-leavers
go to university—but with a new exaggeration to the effect that they are all state-
aided.7

Very similar to these books were two pamphlets of factual information by the
International Defence and Aid Fund; and again there was, amidst the facts, the
straining to create an effect: for example in one it is implied that mining companies
actually expropriated Tribal Trust Lands, whilst in the other it is said that the
amendment to the Land Tenure Act was passed by the bare necessary two-thirds
majority, implying extensive, die-hard White resistance even to limited change,
whereas in fact, of course, it was almost equally the lack of support by the African
M.P.s who naturally felt that the amendment did not go far enough.8

The common denominator of such books is a simplistic approach to human
and political problems, due perhaps to the excessive involvement of lawyers in their
compilation. Discrimination is presented largely in terms of legislation with the
implicit assumption that the laws cited are all equally and ruthlessly applied—thus
giving the impression that there has been effective influx control or that ZAPU, for
example, could not function at all as a political group in the mid-1970s, or that
African nationalist groups did not receive financial help from abroad. There is also
an underlying assumption that it is law that creates discrimination and inequality
and that repeal will solve such matters simply: thus great emphasis appears
throughout on the Land Apportionment Act but little consideration of the fact, both
before 1930 and since 1977, that it has been the high level of market-prices for
commercially profitable land that stops Africans from purchasing—in other words
a complex situation in which poverty has helped create discrimination as much as
discrimination has created poverty, a situation which law, by itself, will not change.

A similar sort of approach can be seen in the companion volume, O’Callaghan’s Southern
Rhodesia: The Effects of a Conquest Society where it was half-heartedly admitted that there seemed to
be no racialistic discrimination against Africans at the University of Rhodesia in the awarding of
scholarships to school-leavers (p. 161); the fact, of course, was that this scholarship money had always
been given to Africans, almost in its entirety, to the virtual exclusion of Europeans, but for the author to
admit this might detract from the general impression that was sought after. To confirm this impression the
author seized upon the fact, in the University’s 1975 Prospectus, that some private donors restricted their
scholarships to Europeans—carefully not telling the reader that her source equally showed that other
donors restricted their scholarships to Africans, to Coloureds, to Zambians etc., etc.—and so determined
was she to prove discrimination that she quoted as evidence the British Goldsmiths Company
Scholarships, which, however, are British scholarships, granted in Britain, to graduates of British
universities and of United Kingdom (not White, let it be noted) parentage, and were merely tenable at the
University of Rhodesia amongst other universities in Britain and the Commonwealth.

These points may not be important in themselves but it will be seen below how they contribute to an
overall impression.

7International Commission of Jurists, Racial Discrimination and Repression in Southern
Rhodesia (London, Catholic Institute for International Relations; Geneva, International Committee of
Jurists, 1977), p. 119 pp., £1.00 (see pp. 23-4).

8International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa, Zimbabwe Quiz: Basic Facts and
Figures about Rhodesia (London, The Fund, 1975), 41 pp., £0.20 (see p. 19), and The Facts about
Rhodesia (London, The Fund, 1977), 76 pp., £0.60 (see p. 23).
The same stock in trade of attitudes also ran throughout several special issues of more academic publications which were remarkably similar, and often drew their contributions from the same small circle of "professional" Zimbabweanists. Of slightly more value to the scholar are more general surveys, or pamphlets dealing with more specific subjects, which by their nature are more factual, such as British and South African business links with Rhodesia, the Rhodesian closure of the border with Zambia in 1973, the use of the death sentence, the details of political prisoners, the Law and Order (Maintenance) Act, and lastly, but best of all, labour conditions.

It is noticeable that the vast majority of the works mentioned so far were again in a cluster, around the years 1975–7, when detente, talks with Nkomo, Kissinger's intervention, the Geneva Conference, and the Anglo-American Proposals made a settlement again appear likely. As such they were again largely the spontaneous expression of the interests of outside bodies, and negative rather than positive. Notably absent in fact in all this publication was the sort of considered, topical discussion that South Africa's problems had attracted for some time. For example, the South African Study Project of Christianity in Apartheid Society (SPRO-CAS) had begun a series of studies, first to analyse the South African situation, and then to propound strategies for change. Most of the resultant publications were issued by 1975 and two of the more important were reviewed in this journal and the Ravan Press, an ecumenical publisher, continued the thrust of such enquiry; similarly an

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8 See, for example Ufahamu (1975), V, iii: Southern Africa: Zimbabwe Next?, 180 pp. US$7.00; African Perspectives (1976), i: White Minorities, Black Majorities, 136 pp., D.9.13; Africa Today (1977), XXIV, ii: White Rule under Pressure in Southern Africa, 112 pp., US$2.50. R.M.F. Austin for example, the author of the Unesco volume contributed one of the articles to African Perspectives; and another contributor, K. Maxey, has been cited above (fn. 3) as author of a pamphlet.


15 D.G. Clarke, Labour Conditions and Discrimination in Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) (Geneva, International Labour Office, 1978), 145 pp., Swiss F. 17.50. This booklet is really in a different class from the others and covers its subject in a wide-ranging manner that shows that commitment and scholarship are not necessarily incompatible.


international effort began in 1974 as the Study Project on External Investment in South Africa and Namibia—a project sponsored by universities in Britain, the U.S.A., Sweden and West Germany.19

The only topical studies of Rhodesia that approached this sort of level in Rhodesia were those published by Mambo Press as a series of brief Socio-Economic Occasional Papers commencing in 1974 and a series of even briefer pamphlets in the 'Rhodesia to Zimbabwe' series commencing in 1978 (which were reviewed in this journal as they appeared19) and these are not so much as a planned series as the result of the particular academic interests of Dr D.G. Clarke and other members of the Department of Economics at the University of Rhodesia a few years ago, who between them wrote 14 out of the 24 so far published.

Perhaps the reason for this disparity was that Rhodesia, since the time of the Pearce Commission, was much nearer, psychologically at least, to meaningful political change than South Africa, even if the actual resolution of the political problems dragged on from year to year. Consequently, whilst there was not much meliorative, academic discussion of Rhodesia's problems, there have been more practical, non-academic attempts to propose concrete solutions for immediate implementation.

The first of these was by R.S. Walker, a well-known businessman in Salisbury,21 who proposed rather ingenious separations of power, not simply between the Executive and Legislature but also between 'higher-franchise', mainly European urban-counties, and 'lower-franchise', mainly African rural-provinces. Schemes such as this might have been useful gradualist solutions to racial fears in the 1950s. But after the Pearce Commission the question was one of power, not simply one of justice and removal of discrimination; and such separation of power or functions could never be acceptable to Africans, in Zimbabwe or South Africa, particularly in the case of Walker's 'urban-counties', where African political consciousness is at its highest and where the inevitable African influx would sweep away such delicate mechanisms.

The second such booklet came as soon after the Kissinger proposals and the Geneva Conference, written by A.J.A. Peck who some ten years earlier published two books attacking British policy towards Rhodesia.22 There was nothing of particular note in the proposals but the way in which Peck in late 1976 saw things developing was very close to what in effect happened—the Rhodesian Government...
trying to introduce its own majority-rule constitution retaining a considerable and separate representation for Whites.

A third such booklet was a sincere but impractical plan to unify Rhodesian society by abolishing class divisions by means of profit-sharing and political parties by means of 'best man government' selected by personnel-selection techniques. 23

A fourth booklet which appeared in 1978 indicated that further deterioration in the situation since Peck wrote his book; for although such a constitution had been agreed, the author of these last proposals, D.N. Scott, was concerned more with financial guarantees for Whites. 24 The more thoughtful White politicians, particularly in the Centre Party, long realized the psychological importance to Whites of externally supported guarantees of their pensions and assets, and did much to ensure their acceptance by the British and American Governments and Nationalist leaders. After the collapse of the Kissinger-Geneva initiative, such guarantees fell into the background while the Rhodesian Government was negotiating its own settlement first with Nkomo and then with Muzorewa, Sithole and Chirau.

While these private and ineffective, but positive, proposals were being made, the Anglo-American proposals for a settlement were published in September 1977. 25 and these produced a new flurry of pamphlets much as had happened over the 1971 proposals.

The British Council of Churches, after a long review of events and its attitude over the years, basically accepted these proposals as a working basis for a transfer of power. 26 The Anti-Apartheid Movement, however, came to the opposite conclusion and argued for total sanctions and aid to the Patriotic Front. 27 In the event, of course, the Anglo-American Proposals came to naught and were superseded by the Internal Settlement of March 1978. This was rejected as a suitable agreement by the Commonwealth Secretariat which simply dismissed it as a subterfuge 28 and by the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace which argued, more reasonably, that it would not stop the war and that the Anglo-American proposals were preferable. 29

Later in the year the Commission in conjunction with the Catholic Institute for International Relations in London summarized the events in Rhodesia following the internal settlement and sought to show that far from the war being ended it was being intensified with danger of civil war; and the International

23 F. Pessina, An Urgent Demand for the Citizen of today (Bulawayo, B.E.M., 1977), 72 pp., no price indicated.
24 D.N. Scott, 'Rho-Plan 60' or Guarantees That Will Work (Salisbury, privately, 1978), 43 pp., Rh$0.95.
Defence Aid Fund came to the same conclusion. The only real defence of the Internal Settlement came from Ndabaningi Sithole and, obliquely, from his brother Masipula— and even their enthusiasm waned as events favoured Muzorewa and won him the elections of May 1979. Those elections, and the hope of international recognition, aroused widespread interest again, as in 1971-2 and 1977-8. There were predictable reports on the election and equally predictable recommendations not to recognize the new government, not on the logically acceptable ground that the war would not thereby be stopped but on the assertion that the elections had not been free and fair and that the settlement was not acceptable to the people as a whole (despite the high turnout and negligible spoiling of papers). All of these views were brought together in a report by Counter Information Services in 1979, which, just after the Lusaka Conference, turned out to be as wrong in its prognostication as it was stale in its reporting.

When the Lancaster House talks were announced pamphlets were quickly published to emphasize the urgency of a settlement and provide background material by updating Grant's 1972 publication and to provide details of political prisoners held in Zimbabwe-Rhodesia and bring attention to the fact that such detentions had continued since the Internal Settlement.

The success of Lancaster House and the 1980 elections led to some pamphlets celebrating Zimbabwean Independence—but remarkably few in proportion to the plethora of hostile publications on Rhodesia, thereby tending to confirm the largely negative nature of the self-righteousness that seems to have prompted most of this writing by people outside the actual struggle (shared indeed even by the couple of pamphlets celebrating independence for they harped largely on the past).

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34 C. Hitchens, *Inequalities in Zimbabwe* (London, The Minority Rights Group, 1979), 16 pp., £0.75. For Grant, see above, fn. 3.


The notable characteristic of the ephemera reviewed is their sameness, their repetition one of another’s facts (and, often, errors, as has been pointed out). The appearance of a closed system of thought is remarkably reinforced by their frequent use of the same photographs, which themselves are often plucked out of context to create an exaggerated impression. Compared with the pamphlets reviewed above, those written from a right-wing stance are few but interestingly different in character. Some, like the broadsheets put out by Women for Rhodesia, adopt the same ‘factual’ approach of the opposition to White Rhodesia, but most, of the few, are much more politically combative, arguing in terms of the West’s interests in face of a Communist threat. These tend to be American or church-orientated and range from fairly academic to violently polemical tracts on alleged conspiracies and weakness in the West, because of their more political approach, the struggle in Rhodesia does not hold the centre of the stage but is only part of a world-wide struggle; consequently as propaganda they are much less effective than the more numerous opposition pamphlets which focused intensely on Rhodesia itself. The opposition’s success was to influence Western opinion against any sort of internal settlement with the result that even carefully argued pieces from an academic as influential as Chester Crocker had little effect when it counted.

R.S.R.

