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Since Independence, Zimbabweans have been urged to work towards the establishment of a socialist State. However, no particular brand of socialism is to be imposed; rather, a brand of socialism which takes into account the characteristics of Zimbabwe is expected to evolve. As part of this process of evolution, there will be considerable differences of opinion as to the relationships between socialist theory and Zimbabwean culture, no less so among academics. In the interest of furthering the debate on this issue, Prof. C. S. Banana was invited to respond to the critical review of his book, Towards a Socialist Ethos, by Dr L. Brewster. It is hoped, therefore, that these two views will provoke further debate, and the Editor will welcome any academic contributions on this question.

R. S. R.


‘This small book is a humble attempt to stimulate a genuine debate on the challenges and imperatives of socialism...’ (p. iii). The author, in thus stating his objective, initially leaves it unclear whether he wishes this ‘genuine debate’ to take place among socialists or between socialists and non-socialists. He then precludes either possibility by setting forth nothing less than a Manichaean vision of the relation between socialism and capitalism: ‘The struggle becomes the realisation and crowning of good in the lives and history of the enslaved and dispossessed versus evil incarnating itself as capitalism whose might rests on absolute immorality and plunder’ (p. 1). With whom, then, are we to debate? Not the capitalist, for he is absolutely immoral and deserves no hearing. Not the socialist, for in opposing this absolute immorality, he is absolutely virtuous, and how can anyone argue with that?

After this rather self-destructive launch, the balance of the book may, I think, be summarized as follows:

(1) Africans, through their communal tradition, naturally tend towards socialism, and this tendency is reinforced by Christianity if it is given its proper interpretation.

(2) The West, inspired by capitalism, ‘the father of imperialism’, and, as we recall, the incarnation of evil, has led Africans away from their inherent socialist virtue into selfishness and unconcern.

(3) This must be countered by ‘a complete regeneration of both the individuals and the system.’

In support of (1), we read such extraordinary statements as, ‘This is the heart of African culture. We believe the individual must die in order to find his true self within the context of the collective’ (p. 13). Whenever anyone takes it into his head to speak of African, European, or Oriental cultures as if they were homogeneous lumps lending themselves to simple tags, we can be sure that some convenient caricature will quickly follow. The author has not disappointed us.

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Just how misleading it is to label all African history and culture as collectivist was seen from Prof. D. N. Beach’s discussion of Shona society in the Zimbabwean plateau around A.D. 1400: ‘The basic underlying fact in the political economy was that society was not based upon equal sharing of resources or wealth, in spite of ideology that often insisted that it was’. He goes on to point out that the control of the land ‘was vested in the ruler’, who had in theory ‘the right to grant land... to withdraw it from some of his subjects in order to grant it to others or to cede it to an outside group’. This does not seem much like a tradition in which the individual voluntarily smothers himself in the collective. Further evidence can be found in traditional proverbs:

“What is shared by everybody is hair, riches are not shared equally.”

“It is up to the owner of the blanket to put it on or spread it.”

The author shows great virtuosity in ignoring anything that might complicate his dramatic picture of pristine socialist virtue against unspeakable capitalist evil. Capitalism is indeed ‘the father of imperialism’. We thus learn by implication that the Romans either were not imperialists or that they were capitalists, and that all the unpleasantness in Afghanistan is mere illusion. The author appears similarly unconscious of the authoritarian implications of such statements as, ‘The clergy must not pontificate from pulpits about the human situation but must facilitate for the people to preside over the process of the historical and revolutionary transformation now taking place in Zimbabwe’ (p. 22). A translation of this is that the church has no other function than to support the current government. To criticize state policy is to oppose the people and thus ‘to pontificate’. We also read: ‘Whereas a capitalist system of education saw nothing wrong in perpetuating the exploitation of man by man education in socialist Zimbabwe should be a vehicle of liberating the individual from exploitation and thus free our people from the crippling and suffocating passions of greed, domination and self-aggrandisement’ (p. 30). There is no question here of Zimbabweans receiving an education suited to enabling them to make up their own minds on these questions. This, presumably, would be a subtle kind of ‘self-aggrandisement’. Education is here regarded as merely another instrument of manipulation in which, for example, only capitalist imperialism is regarded as worthy of mention, and in which African history is to be purged of all inconveniences.

It is not so much that the author is wrong about all this, though I believe he is. The real problem is that he presents such feeble justification. What he asserts is often so transparently wrong, and what he omits so glaring, that he does damage to his own cause. For example, if socialism in Africa could only be supported by the obviously careless generalizations in which the author indulges, or if Christianity could only be an outlet for state propaganda, then neither would have such importance as they have. What is lacking in this book more than anything else is an honest attempt to think through the problems raised. Exhortation, exaggeration and forgetfulness are no substitute.

I must report that the book is very badly written. This is evident from some of

1 D. N. Beach, Zimbabwe before 1900 (Gweru, Mambo Press, 1984), 21.
2 Tsumo-Shumo (Gweru, Mambo Press, 2nd edn., 1987), 151, No. 637.
3 Ibid., 300, No. 1277.
the quotations already cited, but there is one passage so bad as to deserve special mention:

The past confronts us as a violent odd, as defeat, deformation and shame. It confronts us as unsightly grotesqueness threatening to engulf our fragile and tender present. We look in our present for confidence, just a semblance of order and direction to provide us with a starting point, to keep us going. But, lol incertitude, the chagrin of unrealised prospects and impious interference rock our entrails and threaten to sap our determination. The future says nothing more than that it is an amalgam of a distorted past and an inchoate present (p. 4).

The author takes off well enough, but never seems to land on anything. Perhaps that is better than further 'rocking our entrails'.

I do not know to whom to recommend this book. Those who agree with the author will be unsustained; those who disagree will be unpersuaded; and those who need an introduction to the issues will remain uninformed.

University of Zimbabwe

L. BREWSTER

A reply to Dr Brewster

My first reaction to Dr Brewster's review of my book was to ask: can he spell my name correctly? Then I wondered if he had in fact read my book. Realizing that in fact he had, but wearing his own ideological glasses which made him constantly mis-state and distort my views, I felt tempted to respond like an adolescent would do to a censorious adult: 'You don't and can't understand'. I resisted the temptation because I realized that my book and Brewster's review of it represent opposed views or perspectives of the world. Since I see myself as a class warrior for the working and dispossessed classes, my disagreement with Brewster appears to me to be part of the ideological struggle. Our contradictions represent the contradictions between the working classes and the capitalists. I am on the side of the working classes which are held in bondage by capitalism. I do not know which side Brewster is on.

All intellectuals consciously or unconsciously choose on which side they are. On the side of a minority of exploiters — a handful of capitalists — or on the side of the dispossessed millions. I make no pretence at professorial neutrality — I am clearly objectively partisan and articulate the demands and the agenda of the working people. Although Brewster does not admit it, he appears to be on the other side.

I will not bore my readers by restating the points I make in my book. I will confine myself to responding to the main threads of Brewster's critique of the book.

As I have already indicated, on several occasions Brewster mistakes and distorts my position. He reads the book through his own ideological glasses, not mine. In the preface of my book I stated, 'This small book is a humble attempt to stimulate genuine debate on the challenges and imperatives of socialism' (emphasis added). Later on I elaborate on this point and state:

I trust that this book will serve primarily as a challenge that will provoke debate and self
examination for, without an accurate and realistic assessment of where we came from and the challenges that face us, we will not be adequate to the momentous tasks that lie ahead. Our task is that of transforming Zimbabwe into an egalitarian society, a nation in which social justice will replace the deluminizing deprivation of yester-years. It is, therefore, a sacred vocation of every Zimbabwean to strive towards the realisation of our chosen path of socialism (p. 3).

These statements read within the context of the whole book clearly show that the debate is not to be between socialists and capitalists. That would be a sterile debate serving no purpose for the capitalists cannot commit class suicide and debate 'the challenges and imperatives of socialism'. Yes, Brewster is correct; the debate cannot be with the capitalist for he is the exploiter who must be dislodged. How can the enemy participate in a debate whose aim is to refine strategies for his/her total defeat? Thus it is clear that the debate can only be between socialists and their allies. The debate is for purposes of correctly identifying the enemy and for refining strategies against him/her. This is what the book is all about. Brewster appears not to understand this, hence his view that the debate cannot be between socialists because in their opposition to 'immorality' they are 'absolutely virtuous'. Yes they are, but they still have to discuss and debate the 'challenges and imperatives of socialism'.

Brewster then pounces on this statement. 'This is the heart of African culture. We believe that the individual must die in order to find his true self within the context of the collective' and chooses to read it totally out of context. This context is clear from the paragraph and sentence preceding this statement which reads:

For us the ethics of collectivism and the African system of the extended family remain the only positive and redemptive force in a world where there is so much paralysing coldness and insensitivity to the plight of the marginalized and the dispossessed. African tradition and culture maintain that we are our brother's keeper. No human soul can be regarded as a stranger and an intruder... We do not talk of colleagues or workmates; we talk of brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers, uncles and aunts, sons and daughters. [Then follows the statement Brewster pounces on.] This is the heart of African culture.

Brewster reads all this as constituting an inflexible argument that African feudal society was naturally democratic and collectivist. No, that is not the point. The political institutions of the feudal state were exploitative. They were not democratic, nor were they collectivist. They could not be otherwise because the state presided over a system based on private property — on the private ownership of the means of production. Accordingly, the political system was not collectivist but naturally exploitative.

But then the culture of the dispossessed was not precluded from being collectivist because the feudal production system does not and did not alienate the "peasantry" from their labour and from their selves as human beings. Under feudalism, while the dispossessed are alienated from the means of production they are not alienated from their labour, from themselves and from each other. Thus, in their dispossessed state they can and did develop a collectivist culture in the production and consumption of food and other resources for their livelihood — hence the collectivist character of the African extended family which is a far cry from the bourgeois individualistic nuclear family under capitalism. The working
people are alienated not only from the means of production but from their labour and from themselves as human beings and as individuals.

They are lonely in the midst of millions of their fellow workers. To this extent the collectivist feudal culture was certainly closer to socialism than the capitalist 'culture' of total alienation. However, somehow Brewster chooses not to understand this and seems to be blind to the degradation, misery and dehumanization of millions of people under capitalism.

Then from the sky Brewster pulls the Romans and their plundering empire into the argument. Because capitalism is 'the father of imperialism' it must (according to Brewster's logic) follow that since the Romans enslaved other nations they were therefore capitalist. There is a basic misconception here. Slavery as a system was based on the enslavement of nations — of human beings who became the property of their captors and lost their character as human beings. That was not and is not imperialism. Imperialism is capitalism at a particular stage of its development when capitalist countries colonize less-developed nations.

Again from the sky Brewster pulls out the Afghanistan question. All one can say is that the dispute in Afghanistan (pleasant or unpleasant) has no relevance to my book. How Brewster links it defies all logic.

Brewster distorts and misreads my call on the clergy to be partisan and be on the side of the people in their struggle against exploitation. To him this means that the church should have 'no other function than to support the current government'. There is nothing in the statement he quotes which remotely suggests that 'to criticize state policy is to oppose the people'.

I conclude by accepting that my book is not perfect and, as any author, I must bear the responsibility for any misunderstandings due to my failure (if any) to use clear language. However, my disagreements with Brewster do not lie on that front, in my view; they are purely ideological, because our positions represent opposed perspectives of the world.

University of Zimbabwe

C. S. Banana


This is a detailed description of leadership issues in a number of independent churches, based on the author's close involvement with the churches concerned. We are presented with accounts of the different types of organization to be found, the techniques by which leaders maintained their positions, and details of the problems of succession when church leaders die. It is an invaluable addition to the author's already substantial contribution to our knowledge of independent churches.

The book has more than academic interest. One of the aims was to write down the histories of the churches; and the author includes more detail than might
be necessary for an academic argument, precisely because church members will be looking to his work for such a record.

A further aim of the book is to present the churches as genuinely Christian, both in their leadership and in church doctrine and practice. The argument is against those who regard independent churches as deriving more from traditional culture than from Christianity. Daneel argues that the churches are fundamentally Christian. He also points to areas in which older churches might learn from them, in paying attention to dreams, for example, and how to cope with witchcraft.

There is, however, a lack of theoretical substance behind much of the arguments. The author speaks of church fission as following the cultural pattern of 'kraal splitting'. The process is more fundamental. The kind of personal control that Daneel describes so well can have only limited extension: as the size of a church increases beyond a critical point, fission occurs, whatever the cultural background. And at the death of the leader whose personal influence provided unity, one expects fission. The techniques by which leaders maintained their authority, denigrating potential rivals, trying to exercise personal control over subordinate officials, and so on, reflect the techniques of micro-politics to be found in any society.

There is a problem about what constitutes a Christian response as opposed to any other response. Simply using biblical symbols to replace older ones does not comprise any radical kind of conversion. Simply to refer to biblical stories does not make an argument theological. The fact that prophets are hostile to traditional healers could be interpreted as competition between equivalents rather than radical difference or inspiration by the Holy Spirit.

What are the defining characteristics of Christianity? One such characteristic is the central place of the life of Christ in the expression of ideology; and Daneel shows, against doubts that have been expressed, that the independent churches satisfy this criterion. Another criterion is the opening up of social boundaries, accepting obligations beyond the family, or ethnic, or national groups; again this criterion is fulfilled. Then the story of the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ introduces a new attitude to material misfortune, and to power, both over the material world and over other people. Here is an area which needs to be probed (perhaps in the older established churches as much as in the newer independent churches).

Daneel touches lightly on most of these points, and provides further data for those who wish to probe. He does present less attractive characteristics of independent churches, including struggles for power among leaders. But his approach is to try to understand rather than to judge. This must be right, both from the academic and the Christian point of view.

University of Zimbabwe

M. F. C. BOURDILLON
Ethiopianism and Afro-Americans in Southern Africa, 1883–1916

In the study of Christianity in Africa attention is necessarily given to local Church movements, which develop independently of --- and sometimes in contrast to --- missionary-related mainstream churches. Since B. Sundkler’s pioneering study Bantu Prophets in South Africa was published in 1948, increasing attention not least among anthropologists — has been given to enthusiastic religious movements which identify their place of worship with the Old Testament Mount Zion and which attach considerable apostolic authority to their specific founder. In scholarly discussions in Zimbabwe (which are informed by M. L. Daneel’s extensive inventories) such Zionist churches are combined with the Vapostori within the class of ‘Spirit-churches’.

This extensive scholarly interest in enthusiastic religious Zionism has given the more culturally nationalistic Ethiopian churches second place in the study of independent church movements. However, there are some useful studies by G. Shepperson, J. Webster and F. Welbourn on Ethiopian church movements in Central Africa, Nigeria and Kenya, respectively. In Facing Mount Kenya Jomo Kenyatta gave some interesting details about the Ethiopian Kenya Independent Churches and schools. In Zimbabwe T. O. Ranger initiated the scholarly study of the Ethiopian churchman Matthew Zwimba.

Ethiopianism remains a significant dynamic within the independent type of Christianity in Southern Africa — including Zimbabwe — but we lacked a comprehensive monograph on Southern African Ethiopianism, which can match Webster’s and Shepperson’s contributions from their respective areas of interest. Now we have what we wanted in the late Dr Chirenje’s book.

References to Ethiopia among African Christians in South Africa reflect the symbolic significance of both the African and the Biblical Ethiopia; as was noted by Sundkler, independent South African churchmen supported with prayers and collections the case of Emperor Menelik against the invading Italians at the time of the Battle of Adowa. However, the name of the movement also tries to convey the sense of African self-reliance which Ethiopia represents and which has inspired enterprising — and often well-educated — African churchmen who could not endure what they experienced under missionary patriarchalism to found their own independent African churches.

In his comprehensive and well-written study Chirenje highlights the personal experiences and leadership of such African pioneers as the Revd Mangema Mokone from Kilnerton, who broke away from the Wesleyan Methodist Church in the Transvaal and founded his own Ethiopian Church of South Africa before he was affiliated to the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AMEC); the Revd James Mata Dwane, who ended up as the spearhead of the lbandla Lase Tivopia within the Anglican Church of the Province of South Africa; and the Revd Micah Makqatho, who left the Dutch Reformed Mission at Morgenster, in reaction to Revd A. Louw’s determined leadership, and pioneered Ethiopianism and the cause of the AMEC in Zimbabwe.

However, Chirenje does not see the rise and subsequent development of Ethiopianism in Southern Africa simply as the result of local frictions between
patriarchalistic missionaries and enterprising African churchmen. More de- 
cidedly than Webster and more like Sundkler (who, in his continuing studies of 
Southern African Zionism has highlighted the impact in Natal of the enthusiastic 
Rvd A. Dowie and his Zionist centre near Chicago), Chirenje explores the 
interaction of local Southern African Ethiopianism and the political and 
missionary outreach of the AMEC. He, thus, gives a comprehensive account of 
the determined ventures of the enterprising Bishop McNeal Turner from his first 
involveinent in South Africa in 1893 until his retreat and the more careful 
ecclesiastical — and economic — policies of the new AMEC leadership 
represented by Bishops H. B. Parks and L. J. Coppin which had far-reaching 
ramifications within Southern African Ethiopianism.

At a time when — in the name of Black Theology — new combinations 
between Afro-American and Southern African theologians have developed (and 
we could note that John E. Cone who has articulated the Black Theology of 
Liberation has his denominational background in the AMEC!) Chirenje's study is 
most welcome. It is of immediate interest in the study of Christianity in Africa. It 
also contributes to our understanding of the history of the African National 
Congress, especially by placing the Rvd H. R. Nqayiya in his ecclesiastical 
context. Chirenje's study also marks a milestone in the intellectual history of 
Southern Africa, with his detailed study of the pre-history of Fort Hare Univer-
sity College, where the ideas of Booker T. Washington were contrasted to those of 
Bishop Turner and where Ethiopian churchmen with American degrees provided 
a challenge to Jabavu, Dube and other distinguished representatives of 
mainstream Christianity. The significance of this dimension as well as that of Fort 
Hare is underlined by the choice of 1916 as the terminus ad quem of this study.

There is one area where Chirenje's new book invites further discussion. It 
concerns the comparative analysis of the motifs and ideology of Ethiopian 
church-leaders, on the one hand, and determined pioneers of the African National 
Congress from within mainstream Christianity, such as John Dube, Sol Plaatje 
and others, on the other. John T. Jabavu's statement on Native Churches in Imvo 
Zabantusundu (14 November 1898) which Chirenje includes as Appendix D in 
his collection of contemporary texts, for instance, illustrates that there were basic 
issues concerning the understanding of the Church involved in their choice of 
mainstream Christianity.

Uppsala University

C. F. Hallencreutz

Zimbabwe: An Introduction to the Economics of Transformation By P. Roussos. 

Peter Roussos's book is yet another work by a local scholar intended to improve 
our understanding of the Zimbabwean economy and its problems. The book 
consists of seven chapters and three appendices, and has numerous tables, boxes 
of information and pictures, all aimed at simplifying the discussion.

The book is aptly titled, since after almost nine years of Independence, people 
have begun asking if there has been any significant change in the social and 
economic lives of ordinary Zimbabweans. Unfortunately, Roussos defines
transformation in a general way as 'the transfer of economic and political power to the mass of the people', and is therefore not able to deal with issues of transformation in a concrete way. If, however, we understand transformation as changing the structure of production and capitalist relations of production, then it is clear on reading the book that there has not been any significant transformation of socio-economic relations in Zimbabwe.

In chapters three to eight, we read that in such sectors as agriculture, manufacturing, mining, money and banking, and foreign trade, pre-Independence capitalist relations have not been altered. For example, agriculture is characterized by dualism and any attempts at transformation have been largely unsuccessful. The author cites the case of the resettlement programme whose results have been marginal. Out of an expected 162 000 families to have been resettled between 1980 and 1985, only 36 000 families had been resettled by 1985. Although not mentioned in the book, this is partly due to the failure by government to articulate an agrarian and land reform policy.

Similar conclusions can be gleaned from reading the chapters on the manufacturing and mining sectors. In these sectors over 70 per cent of the capital stock is foreign owned. Government attempts to alter this have been half-hearted and ad hoc. In the case of manufacturing, 'little progress has been made in the formulation of a comprehensive industrialisation strategy' (p. 92).

There is not much to disagree with in the book, since it seems intended mainly as a source of information rather than an evaluation of transformation in Zimbabwe. However, one can take issue with Roussos's conclusion that minimum wages caused unemployment after their institution. Data supplied in the book show that employment levels have been falling since 1980, suggesting that unemployment is largely due to other chronic causes, rather than just minimum wages. We therefore need to distinguish between initiating and propagating causes of unemployment; minimum wages merely propagate unemployment.

On the whole the book makes pleasant and easy reading. Anyone seeking factual information on the progress and direction of policy in Zimbabwe is advised to read this book.

University of Zimbabwe

K. Mlambo


This unusual and impressively produced book strings together a series of experiences from the war in Zimbabwe — atrocities, dramatic conversations, macabre fancies — with a view, it seems, to writing a harrowing elegy to the Blacks who were killed, an acerbic indictment of the Whites who promoted the war, and a plea to Whites in independent Zimbabwe to commit themselves without reservation to the new society. Written by a soldier who served in various units of the Rhodesian Security Forces it is an attempt to bring Whites to be honest with their past and their relation to the present. The past as told in horrific incidents of callous brutality by Whites on Blacks is particularly ugly because so
lacking in human compassion. Soldiers are presented as zombies, roaming through the country 'tired, filthy, hot, irritable, bored' (p. 13). They have been dehydrated of sympathy and reflection by 'the elders' in government who themselves are victims of myths about White civilization. Moore-King writes not from guilt, he says, but from a desire to see the past for what it was -- dehumanized and dehumanizing.

One of the strengths of his account and an interesting difference from that, say, of the reports of the Justice and Peace Commission — The Man in the Middle of Civil War in Rhodesia1 — is the terse dramatic manner of the prose. At times the writing is lyrically violent. It is designed to recapture the speed and ruthlessness of the action, as if to confirm the point that there was no desire, nor indeed time, for reflection or analysis. The very layout on the page is often used to draw attention to the beguiling attraction of action for action's sake.

But these very points also make this an intensely personal account of particular aspects of the war, and this has its limitations. The book is the credo of a man who fell victim to the Smith ideology. He fought without question for the Smith regime and returned to Zimbabwe after Independence shocked by a past which the outside world and many inside it could have told him was shocking long before the war ended. The shock prompts him to write an imaginative rerun of that past in order to put it in a moral perspective. At moments in the book certain Whites are shown as still caught up in that nightmare, and others continue to speak the language of the 'elders', but the thrust of the book is that Whites should put the past behind them and commit themselves to the new Zimbabwe. Praiseworthy sentiments, but hardly original.

However, the book is evocative of experiences and attitudes which may become increasingly difficult for future generations to credit. They were the stumbling blocks and set the price for Independence. Told as they are with the frank immediacy of one who participated on the side of the Security Forces they are a reminder of the awful past which the nation has had to recover from.

University of Zimbabwe

T. O. McLoughlin