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ESSAY REVIEW

LAST DAYS OF WHITE RHODESIA

THE TITLE OF this essay review is that of Dennis Hills's book on events in this country from mid-1978 to mid-1980.¹ This is his second book on the subject within three years,² and, although enjoyable, is symptomatic of the tendency of writers and publishers to saturate a market. Thus we have had 'Rhodesian Problems',³ 'Ending Eras',⁴ 'Rhodesias to Zimbabwe's'⁵ and 'Roads to Zimbabwe',⁶ 'Racial Conflicts',⁷ 'Triumphs or Tragedies'⁸ or simply 'Tragedies',⁹ 'Short Thousand Years',¹⁰ and 'Pasts Are Another Country'¹¹ often with sub-titles that confuse one with another even more, sometimes, as in the case of the last two mentioned, with revised editions (and revised subtitle in one case) to keep up with the march of events. Such is the plethora, in fact, that distinguishing one from another becomes difficult, particularly as they all go over similar ground with little originality; the purpose of this essay, therefore, is simply to provide a brief record of the more recent of these books and of those which for one reason or another were not reviewed earlier.

Perhaps the most blatant example of 'over-publishing' on Rhodesia was that of Kwame Nkrumah's *Rhodesia File* which was but a half-written manuscript and working file that the publishers have seized upon; nevertheless, and despite Nkrumah's lack of real knowledge of the problem, one is constantly struck by the vigour of his mind and the continental sweep of his ideas.¹²

Another aspect of saturating the market for works on Rhodesia has been the

¹D. Hills, *The Last Days of White Rhodesia* (London, Chatto & Windus, 1981), 187 pp., £9.50.

²D. Hills, *Rebel People* (London, George Allen & Unwin, 1978); reviewed *ante* (1978), VI, 221.

³E. Windrich, *The Rhodesian Problem: A Documentary Record 1923-1973* (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975), 312 pp., £5.95.

⁴H.P.W. Hutson, *Rhodesia: Ending an Era* (London, Springwood, 1978), 198 pp., £5.95.

⁵C.C. Crocker, *From Rhodesia to Zimbabwe* (Washington D.C., Georgetown University, Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1977), reviewed *ante* (1982), X, 150; D.W.H. Morris-Jones (ed.), *From Rhodesia to Zimbabwe* (London, Frank Cass, 1980), 123 pp., £12.00; H. Wiseman and A.M. Taylor, *From Rhodesia to Zimbabwe: The Politics of Transition* (Oxford, Pergamon for International Peace Academy, 1981), xxi, 170 pp., £11.00.

⁶C.M.B. Utete, *The Road to Zimbabwe: The Political Economy of Settler Colonialism, National Liberation and Foreign Intervention* (Washington, D.C., Univ. Press of America, 1978), 170 pp., US\$8.50.

⁷G.C. Kinloch, *Racial Conflict in Rhodesia: A Socio-Historical Study* (Washington, D.C., Univ. Press of America, 1978), xiii, 321 pp., US\$10.75; P. O'Meara, *Rhodesia: Racial Conflict or Coexistence?* (Ithaca, Cornell Univ. Press, 1975), 217 pp., £5.75.

⁸M. Hudson, *Triumph or Tragedy: Rhodesia to Zimbabwe* (London, Hamish Hamilton, 1981), 252 pp., £9.95.

⁹E. Dumbutshena, *Zimbabwe Tragedy* (Nairobi, East African Publishing House, 1975), 138 pp., no price indicated.

¹⁰P.L. Moorcraft, *A Short Thousand Years: The End of Rhodesia's Rebellion* (Salisbury, Galaxie, 1979), 248 pp., illus., Z\$9.95; a revised and updated edition was published in 1980 (Z\$3.95 p/b) with an additional chapter on the Lancaster House Settlement and the resumption of British control.

¹¹M. Meredith, *The Past Is Another Country: Rhodesia 1898-1979* (London, André Deutsch, 1979), 383 pp., £9.95; an updated edition, a new subtitle *Rhodesia: U.D.I. to Zimbabwe* (London, Pan Books, 1980), 430 pp., £2.50 (p/b).

¹²K. Nkrumah, *Rhodesia File* (London, Panaf, 1976), 168 pp., no price indicated.

encouragement to write books that could well have remained useful articles in a learned journal, or to write long books that could well have been much briefer. With this tendency to inflation also often comes a certain priggishness, particularly among academics, which was well exemplified in Larry Bowman's *Politics in Rhodesia*.¹³ The only sections of real value in his book were those on the structure of the Rhodesian Front, the substance of which had already been published,¹⁴ and much of what comes earlier in the book is inaccurate padding. Portentous, rather than priggish, is Graham Kinloch's *Racial Conflict in Rhodesia*, a socio-historical study that attempted to uncover the dynamics of the (allegedly changing) relationship between the races over time.¹⁵ The essence of this overlong book also has been published before and adds nothing to our understanding.¹⁶ Similarly overlong was Lord Blake's massive tome on the history of Rhodesia¹⁷ that also has little that is new by way of fact and hardly anything by way of analysis. The two introductory chapters on African history before 1890 are laughable; thereafter Africans drop out of the picture and there is little on the political economy. The length of the book is due to old-fashioned narrative that ignores recent research but is padded out with Establishment gossip dignified in the footnotes as 'private information' (like the claim that individually the wives of Rhodesian Front ministers dissuaded their husbands over lunch at home from accepting the Tiger Proposals (p. 399)).

The approaches of these three authors are very different — Bowman's sympathies are self-righteously with the African Nationalists and Blake's snobbishly with the old, liberal, White Establishment, whilst Kinloch's interests are jargonistically in overarching theoretical explanations — but common to all three is a reluctance to grapple with the historical problems of a White minority trying to build a modern economy in the heart of Africa, seen most clearly in their complete incomprehension of the Rhodesian Front. As this party, and what it represented, is really their point of departure, this failure on their part makes the length of their works even harder to bear.

Such failures of understanding, nevertheless, seem to have been common among academics in the 1970s, and similarly vitiated other books. Elaine Windrich, for example, was for some reason impelled to write two books, *The Rhodesian Problem* and *Britain and the Politics of Independence*.¹⁸ The first is a documentary record from 1923 to 1973, but the problem is never clearly explained and the commentary on the extracts from documents is superficial, whilst even the 'documents' themselves are often but journalistic pieces and not primary sources at all. Similarly, her second book plunges straight into the detailed negotiations over the Five Principles and NIBMAR; and there is no analysis of the political reality behind the Principles and absolutely no attempt

¹³L.W. Bowman, *Politics in Rhodesia: White Power in an African State* (Cambridge, MA, Harvard Univ. Press, 1973), [xii], 206 pp., US\$9.50.

¹⁴L.W. Bowman, 'Organisation, power and decision-making within the Rhodesian Front', *Journal of Commonwealth Political Studies* (1969), VII, 145-65.

¹⁵See above, fn. 7.

¹⁶See, in particular, G.C. Kinloch 'Changing Black reaction to White domination', *Rhodesian History* (1974), V, 67-78, and *Flame or Lily? Rhodesian Values as Defined by the Press* (Durban, Alpha Graphic, 1970); a review of this book appeared, *ante* (1971), II, i, 90-1 and was replied to by the author: 'Flame or Lily? revisited: A response and elaboration', *ibid.* (1973), III, i, 95-101.

¹⁷R. Blake, *A History of Rhodesia* (London, Eyre Methuen, 1977), 430 pp., £12.50.

¹⁸E. Windrich, *Britain and the Politics of Rhodesian Independence* (London Croom Helm, 1978), 283 pp., £10.95; for *The Rhodesian Problem*, see above, fn. 3.

to understand, or explain, the Rhodesian Front's negotiating position. Then the author awards with Olympian detachment black marks to British politicians, especially those of the Labour Party (which sometimes passed resolutions on the subject which the author, perhaps because employed by the Party, regards as Holy Writ), as they tried to negotiate a settlement. This peculiar book, written in a convoluted style that is often ambiguous, ends in mid-sentence as it were, with no conclusion or analysis; in fact, it adds little except self-righteous certainty (the Pearce Commissioners get a patronizing good mark for arriving at the 'correct conclusion' (p. 187) on the 1971 proposals) to what Young and Good have already said on the subject.¹⁹

After these exercises in self-righteousness it is a relief to turn to one of the few books by academics in the 1970s which will retain usefulness. This is Patrick O'Meara's *Rhodesia: Racial Conflict or Coexistence*²⁰ Much of the book goes over well-trodden ground but the latter part provides a very useful survey of the 'constitutional' opposition to the Rhodesian Front, notably the United People's Party and the Centre Party. It could be argued that he makes too much of these groups as effective political parties — the one became a party because there happened to be fifteen African M.P.s, the other was a party virtually without parliamentary representation; and certainly his own conclusion is that there has been no meaningful political opportunity for constitutional, moderate opposition. Less dispassionate but well argued was Martin Loney's *Rhodesia: White Racism and Imperial Response*²¹ which set out to explain White Rhodesian politics in economic and class terms and to argue for British complicity because of a shared capitalist interest; that his argument is thinnest where it matters most (i.e. in the economic history of Rhodesia) is but a reflection of the unbalanced nature of Rhodesian historiography which, like the books reviewed above, has been almost exclusively concerned with political superstructure.

Of a very different character from these academic works have been two books based upon personal reminiscence. Enoch Dumbutshena had to leave Rhodesia illegally, having been denied a passport in 1967, in order to take up a job with the Zambian Ministry of Justice. This painful episode was used as the peg on which to hang his reminiscences and interpretation of Rhodesia's history.²² The tragedy of the title was, of course, the war situation brought about by White racialism and intransigence but with hints that African nationalist disunity has contributed. The rise of the A.N.C., at the time of the Pearce Commission and a new unity, however, was the climax of the book, with independence and freedom then regarded as imminent, somewhat prematurely as it turned out. Nevertheless, in keeping with these views, the author soon returned to Rhodesia, to become the first African to sit as an assessor in the High Court, and then the first African judge. Remarkably different from the moderation and thoughtfulness that went into the writing of Dumbutshena's book, was Fr Roland Pichon's similar mixture of reminiscence and historical overview, *Le Drame rhodésien*, which is a wild, inaccurate tirade — the emotional point of which appears to be to denigrate his own Catholic colleagues in Rhodesia, particularly English Jesuits and,

¹⁹K. Young, *Rhodesia and Independence* (London, Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1967); R. Good, *The International Politics of the Rhodesian Rebellion* (London, Faber & Faber, 1972).

²⁰See above fn. 7.

²¹M. Loney, *Rhodesia: White Racism and Imperial Response* (London, Penguin, 1975), 235 pp., £0.70.

²²See above, fn. 9.

mirabile dictu, Bishop Lamont.²³ French readers will be better advised to rely on Eisemann's study for *La Documentation française*, *La Rhodésie*,²⁴ which is severely factual and like many of this series translates in full basic documents such as the 1969 Constitution — in which matter French readers are better served than English readers of Windrich's documentary record (which prints only an extract from a White Paper on the subject²⁵) or Mutiti's *Rhodesia Constitutions* (which prints part of the 1923 and 1965 Constitutions and is an extremely muddled, dreadfully produced book, with almost incomprehensible footnote references²⁶).

Of a similar factual nature to Eisemann's work was the first survey of race relations in Rhodesia, for an eighteen-month period from the beginning of 1972 to mid-1973, organized by the Centre for Inter-Racial Studies of the University of Rhodesia.²⁷ This useful reference book is very much like the well known annual survey published by the South African Institute of Race Relations, now in its thirty-fifth year of publication;²⁸ it is based largely upon local newspaper items and official publications, notably Parliamentary Debates. Reliance on these sources does, of course, have its limitations, particularly in view of the local newspapers' reluctance to follow up some aspects of the war; for these one has to turn to various pamphlets by the International Defence & Aid Fund, the Anti-Apartheid Movement, the International Commission of Jurists or, better, the publications of the Roman Catholic Justice and Peace Commission.²⁹ Nevertheless, despite the limitations, it was a great pity that the Centre for Inter-Racial Studies was not able to keep the survey going as originally planned.

Unusual among serious books on the 1970s is Major-General Hutson's book, *Rhodesia: Ending an Era*,³⁰ which is a general survey of the Rhodesian independence problem written very much from the side of the settlers — an approach not common among former Colonial Office officials with a working lifetime in Africa. Neither a historian nor a journalist, and no doubt influenced by his relatives and friends in Rhodesia, Hutson was concerned to present a case — for White rule and against the policies of the British Government; in particular Hutson was concerned to sway opinion against the Anglo-American proposals of 1977 in favour of an internal settlement which, he believed, would quickly destroy popular support for the guerrillas. In his survey there are many

²³R. Pichon, *Le Drame rhodésien: Résurgence du Zimbabwe* (Paris, IDOC — France, 1975), 247 pp., no price indicated. Rather similar in this respect, is the work of a Shona Catholic, L.T. Kapunga, *Rhodesia: The Struggle for Freedom* (Maryknoll NY, Orbis, 1974) is quoted with approval by Pichon but shocked Bishop Lamont because of its lack of objectivity; the attack on the Church, however, is only a minor part of Kapunga's book and has, in any case, already been discussed by the Revd Dr Peaden (*ante* (1979), VII, 191–3); the book is essentially an analysis of the Rhodesian problem, rather like but less detailed than E. Mlambo, *Rhodesia: The Struggle for a Birthright* (London, Hurst, 1972). Like Dumbutshena, the author was greatly encouraged by the burgeoning unity following 1972 and returned to Rhodesia, at least temporarily, but he is much more concerned with politicization of the people than Dumbutshena.

²⁴P.M. Eisemann, *La Rhodésie: Evolution politique et le constitution* (Paris, La Documentation française, Notes et Etudes Documentaires, No. 4151–2, 1975), 56 pp., FF6.

²⁵Windrich, *The Rhodesian Problem*, 72–4.

²⁶M.A.B. Mutiti, *Rhodesia Constitutions and Politics in a Dispute for National Independence* (Nairobi, Kenya Literature Bureau, 1979), 218 pp., no price indicated.

²⁷D.K. Davies (comp.), *Race Relations in Rhodesia: A Survey for 1972–73* (London, R. Collings, 1975), 458 pp., £6.50.

²⁸The latest to be published is M. Horrell: *A Survey of Race Relations in South Africa, 1981* (Johannesburg, The South African Institute of Race Relations, 1982).

²⁹See R.S. Roberts, 'Epiphenomena of the Struggle', *Zambezia* (1982), X, 143–50.

³⁰See above, fn. 4.

factual inaccuracies, including the Freudian slip of referring to the governing party in Rhodesia as the 'National Front' (p. 41); but he does have a point when he wonders (p. 188) whether Britain would ever accept *any* internal settlement lest that appear to justify U.D.I. British officials had, until the mid-1970s, been prepared to settle without the participation of the African nationalist parties, but, after years of bungling, they were not prepared to have a settlement without their own participation — hence the impact of Kissinger's intervention.

Less *parti pris* than Hutson, although written from a conservative point of view, was Hudson's more recent work, *Triumph or Tragedy* which is basically a survey of events since U.D.I. with emphasis on the negotiations with the British Government.³¹ As a research worker for the Conservative Party he gives the other side of the story from that given by Windrich and shows how Conservative policy was in many ways more consistent and realistic. Inevitably the key difference of approach between his and her interpretation is over the Smith–Home agreement and the Pearce Commission of 1971–2 which, Hudson feels, was another missed opportunity, like the 1961 Constitution, for working out a solution that had the merit of avoiding the loss of life, mostly African, that followed over the next eight years.

After all these serious-minded but limited works, it is something of a relief to read the more recent books which, for all their lack of academic pretensions, in some ways give greater insight into the Rhodesian problem. First there is Hills's book mentioned at the beginning of this essay.³² Written in a diary-like form, it describes his rather aimless journeys around the country from mid-1978 to mid-1980. It is, however, his impressions and reflections that are of interest rather than his direct observations of events; with an unerring traveller's eye he seizes upon the significant amongst the trivial and tellingly summarizes the mood of a variety of Whites in their last days before Zimbabwe was born. Perhaps because that end was now clear and inescapable, Hills is much less critical of White Rhodesians than in his earlier book; indeed he almost comes to admire them and is somewhat gloomy about Zimbabwe's future government, perhaps because of his experiences under Amin in Uganda. Dick Pitman's modest book, *You Must Be New around here* (Smith's reply to a journalist who asked if there was to be a settlement) covers much of the same period, the time of the March 1978 Agreement and the Transitional Government.³³ A journalist, but entirely new to Africa and its politics, he relates his slow, faltering introduction to war-torn Rhodesia; based largely in Salisbury he captures something of the interminable, enervating discussion among Whites about what was going to happen, whether there would be a settlement, when and how retaliation would be made for the Viscounts. Of no great insight, he has at least recorded the strange mood of White Rhodesia in 1978–9, that mixture of uncertainty, bellicosity and nostalgia. Something of that same mood comes through Paul Moorcraft's

³¹See above, fn. 8.

³²See above, fn. 1.

³³D. Pitman, *You Must Be New around here* (Bulawayo, Books of Rhodesia, 1979), 214 pp., Z\$3.75 (p/b).

A Short Thousand Years.³⁴ Written in a racy, wisecracking journalese this survey of events from 1976 is easy to read, and occasionally — but only occasionally — amusing. It adds little to our understanding of the problem or the events, although by the irreverent tone it does prick not a few bubbles of pretentiousness and self-righteousness on the part of White Establishment liberals and academics. Because of this tone some readers have interpreted the book as being pro-settler but its concluding remarks on the implications of Rhodesia for South Africa show that beneath the jocular approach is a realistic assessment of the futility of minority rule. Similar, but more staid, is *The Past Is Another Country* which is a survey of events from 1965 by a journalist who was based in Salisbury for several years; written without any particular argument to prove, without any display of high-minded moralizing, it straightforwardly records the facts in a prosaic manner which will make it a useful book to turn to for checking the chronology of events, etc. In so far as it has a thesis, it is that all parties in the country have displayed greed, intransigence, miscalculation and recklessness, and no-one comes out of the mess that was Rhodesia with honour. Much the same could be said of most of the books under review which can only have added to misunderstanding if they have been taken seriously at all.

Thus it is refreshing to turn to Charles Utete's *The Road to Zimbabwe* and W.H. Morris-Jones's *From Rhodesia to Zimbabwe* which do not dwell entirely on the past but look to the future. Utete's book is a compact and analytical survey of the Rhodesian problem which has the merit of putting it in a wider perspective of past underdevelopment and future needs.³⁵ Morris-Jones's book is a collection of essays (some originally delivered as papers to a conference on The Economic Future of Zimbabwe Rhodesia at the University of London in 1979) and first published in the *Journal of Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* (1980), XVIII, i. The essays by R. Riddell, C. Stoneman and D.G. Clarke on land, industry and trade do not add much to what these authors have written elsewhere but the contributions by R. Hodder-Williams, J. Barber, J. Day and A.R. Wilkinson are interesting surveys of the legacy bequeathed to Zimbabwe by a decade of political isolation, regional upheaval, nationalist divisions and war.³⁶ That seemingly unattainable objective, peace, that finally did come to Zimbabwe in 1980 with the end of White rule, is the subject of Henry Wiseman and Alistair Taylor's *From Rhodesia to Zimbabwe*. Their useful work is focused narrowly on the making of the Lancaster House Agreement and the work of the Monitoring Force and the Observers as an example of a successful peace-keeping operation.³⁷ Although the book is rather boring in its presentation it must be hoped that it is its lessons that will be the ones to survive the passage of time.

R.S.R.

³⁴See above, fn. 10. The 'Thousand Years' (typically unexplained by Moorcraft) are, of course, in reference to Ian Smith's declaration in 1976 that he did not 'believe in black majority rule ever in Rhodesia...not in 1000 years', *The Sunday Mail*, 21 Mar. 1976. He later explained this as opposition to Black majority rule *qua* Black just as he opposed White majority rule *qua* White, *The Rhodesia Herald*, 25 Mar. 1976. The problem was, as always, that this sort of belief in a meritocracy, *if sincere* (which Nationalists doubted) needed a thousand years to evolve.

³⁵See above, fn. 6.

³⁶See above, fn. 11.

³⁷See above, fn. 5.