

COMPANY RULE AND AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT:  
THE CASE OF THE BSA COMPANY IN SOUTHERN RHODESIA, 1908-1923

by

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Some nations have given up the whole commerce of their colonies to an exclusive company ... Of all the expedients that can well be contrived to stunt the natural growth of a new colony, that of an exclusive company is undoubtedly the most effectual.

Adam Smith, The Wealth of Nations. (1)

Introductory Note

While Adam Smith's indictment on contemporary monopolies, which operated during the era of merchant capital dominance, has validity, it cannot be properly applied to the British South Africa Company (BSA Co) without very important qualifications which, in the case of Rhodesian white settlers, largely invalidate the indictment. The strictures of this great prophet of capitalism and defender of free trade against his contemporary monopolies, and quoted above only in brief, however, do to some extent apply to much of the history of BSA Co rule in Northern Rhodesia, which the Chartered Company for a long time viewed as a labour reservoir for its more prized territory of Southern Rhodesia. Smith's strictures apply even more to the Chartered Company's contemporary monopolies, such as the Mozambique and the Nyasa Companies in Portuguese East Africa, neither of which can be said to have developed the Mozambican economy in any meaningful way. (2) The reasons for both Britain and Portugal's resorting or agreeing to the expediency of chartered company colonization lie beyond the scope of this paper. Suffice it to say that the primary reason was to finance imperialism on the cheap during the scramble for Africa in the late 19th century.

Although settler agriculture in Southern Rhodesia has been touched upon by historians such as Gann, Murray and Palmer (3), none of their works address themselves specifically to the development of settler agriculture. This paper focuses on the activities of the BSA Co as the power behind the colonial state in the field of agricultural development, and on the development of the Company's own agricultural enterprises, run by its Commercial Branch. It will be argued that, in general, far from stunting the development of Southern Rhodesia, the Company instituted measures directed to facilitate economic development under settler and Company hegemony. (The focus is on the policies under which white agriculture developed.) However, it will also be demonstrated that Company and settler interests were not always identical, and that the period of Company rule was

characterized by a struggle between Company and settler interests, on the one hand, and between white and black interests, on the other, and that in the latter case the Company nearly always supported settler interests.

From the outset of Occupation in 1890, African rights to land were written off and the land was regarded as the Company's commercial asset, to be sold to white settlers on easy terms. (4) Thus the policy of using settlers as the main agent for development and the Company's fiscal and labour policies are central to a coherent understanding of the development of settler agriculture in Southern Rhodesia, as I try to demonstrate below.

Between Occupation and about 1905, the Company's efforts were directed at realizing a "Second Rand" in Southern Rhodesia, so much so that for the first two and a half decades after Occupation the mines were largely dependent on African producers for food supplies. (5) As early as 1891 the Company's directors had stated that "splendid as are the agricultural prospects of the country, it is to the mineral wealth that the Directors look for the most profitable returns". (6) However, by 1912 the Directors were telling shareholders that "In the early years of the territory the mining industry was the Company's chief care. While this industry continues to receive such assistance as its circumstances require, land is to-day claiming a much greater share of the Company's attention, and the industries connected with it are rapidly gaining ground that capital is available for their support." (7) At this time the Company started to build bacon factories, creameries and, not long afterwards, oil and soap factories, to provide markets for settler agriculture and thereby stimulate pig and dairy farming. Such agricultural industries would not only help to lower the cost of living at the mines but also provide the country with export commodities in time.

The myth of a "Second Rand" which had survived the first war of Chimurenga (Liberation) in 1896-7, and the rail link crisis caused by the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1901, finally ended with the financial crisis of 1903-4. (8) The post-1908 period up to the beginning of World War I has been depicted by Palmer as the phase of the "white agricultural policy" (9), different from the period prior to it in that it marked the time during which the BSA Co systematically implemented its new policy of promoting settler farming, settlement and agrarian production. The burial of the "Second Rand" myth thus gave settler agriculture a tremendous boost as the Company began to focus its attention on agricultural development and the realization of "its" land asset.

But before examining the development of capitalist agriculture during the era of Company rule, it is worth noting the following two points. Capitalism developed in Rhodesian agriculture in two ways. First, by the internal accumulation of surplus value. White farmers (and also some black farmers) sought to build up resources of capital from profits. White farmers had an advantage, in that there were a large number of resources at their disposal (taxes, compulsory labour, pass laws, private locations, etc.) by which they could extract surplus value from Africans, who increasingly turned into a local rural proletariat. (The contribution of such compulsory measures to capitalist agricultural development in Southern Rhodesia has been insufficiently recognized in the published literature.) At the same time a large corpus of legislation and practice grew up to ensure that African producers did not become capitalist farmers competing with settler farmers. The CNC, Herbert Taylor, was reflecting government policy when he stated in 1918: "The native should be trained not so much as a competitor with the white man in the business of life, but as a useful auxiliary to help in the progress of the country." (10) It must be pointed out that the estates and ranches set up by the BSA Co's Commercial Branch from about 1910 onwards also benefited from the above repressive measures. The white farmers have had in this struggle the inestimable advantage of political power, both during and after Company rule. Through settler agitation, the number of elected members in the Legislative Council rose from 4 (against 7 Company representatives) to 7 (out of 15) in 1903, and stood at 7 (out of 13) between 1908 and 1913. In 1914 elected members held 12 of the 20 seats in the Council. (11) But the influence of settler representatives on government policy, especially with regard to labour policies and the yearly estimates, is not to be looked at merely in terms of the number of elected

members vis-a-vis nominated members, since it was in the political interest of the Company to carry as much settler support with it as possible.

Secondly, the penetration of international capital is a major factor in the development of capitalist agriculture in Southern Rhodesia. International capital was present in Southern Rhodesia in terms of speculative financial investment right from the 1890s, in the form of big land grants. (12) The BSA Co Manager noted in 1912 that the fifteen principal land-owning companies in Southern Rhodesia held over 8 million acres between them, with the Amalgamated Properties of Rhodesia and Willoughby's Consolidated Co Ltd owning 1,544,000 acres and 1,339,000 acres, respectively. The fact that over 6 million acres of the above land lay within 25 miles of the railway lines gave this land an added importance and value. (13) It is important to note, of course, that the BSA Co, as the largest land owner in the country, had a direct role here through its Commercial Branch, which ran large estates and ranches. Throughout most of the period of Company rule these big land companies, many of which were owned by mining capital, held their land largely for speculative purposes. And when they did go in for farming they tended to limit themselves to the country's three major agricultural commodities, viz. maize, tobacco and, above all, cattle ranching (which required minimal infrastructure on the farm and had an assured market at the local mines and, from February 1916, on the Rand). (14) There was hostility between settler farmers and the land speculators right from the 1890s, the former accusing the latter of "locking up" valuable agricultural land and African labour, and thereby hindering white immigration. This hostility was manifested particularly in the tussles over the Private Locations Ordinance (1908). One result of the promulgation of the above Ordinance was that from about 1910 the State could take action against purely speculative interests in land and international capital was forced to become productive (to a limited extent). It was partly this move by the State at the behest of settler farmers, and the gradual eradication of East Coast Fever and other cattle diseases, that gave a spur to large-scale ranching in the period prior to the 1921-22 cattle market crisis. (15)

#### Capitalist Agriculture Boosted

Between 1906 and 1912 six major factors together boosted capitalist agriculture, so much so that by the close of the second decade of the 20th century settler agriculture had reached a level of self-sufficiency, especially in three of the country's agricultural commodities, viz. maize, tobacco and cattle, and had begun to penetrate external markets in the sub-continent and even overseas, in the case of maize, tobacco and citrus fruits. The six factors are the Wise Report of 1906, the 1907 visit to Southern Rhodesia by a committee of the BSA Co Board of Directors, headed by Henry Birchenough, the reorganization of the Agricultural Department under the directorship of Dr Eric Nobbs in 1908, the promulgation of the Private Locations Ordinance (PLO) in 1908, the Company's embarkation on a policy of developing its own estates and ranches "on strictly commercial lines for profit", and the establishment of the Land Bank in 1912. These factors are now discussed in turn.

C. D. Wise, an experienced British agriculturalist and the Company's land settlement expert, left the UK for Southern Rhodesia in October 1905, with instructions from the Board "to report generally upon the current and future prospects of the agricultural industry, the opportunities for new settlers, and the methods by which cultivating owners could be best established upon the soil". (16) The Directors were impressed by Wise's report and asked him to return to Southern Rhodesia to start operations and prepare a Central Farm on one of the areas selected for settlement, "for the purpose of receiving and training settlers" in general, in accordance with the methods submitted in his report. The Directors expounded a bold settlement policy to their shareholders: "It will be the Company's aim to assist settlers to take up farms already prepared for their occupation, by the support and facilities offered them, rather than by giving them raw land at prairie value" (17), although the Company would not suspend the sale of unimproved land outside the settled areas for settlement. Each district taken up for settlement was to have an experimental farm financed by a special grant from the Administration to assist experimental work, such as trials and selection of seeds and trials of insecticides, under the auspices of the

Agricultural Department. The Department would disseminate the experimental results in the Rhodesia Agricultural Journal, and invite farmers to inspect the trial grounds. As Wise himself had noted, "A great advantage in carrying out such trials on the Central Farm is that the farms will be in different parts of the country, and experiments will therefore be more valuable, being carried out under local conditions of that particular district". (18) The earliest Central Farms/Experimental Farms were established on the Salisbury Commonage, at the Company's Mazoe and Premier estates and Marandellas farm. (19)

Assistance to new settlers would include, inter alia, assisted sea passage and free rail passage to Southern Rhodesia, temporary accommodation and opportunities for practical experience, and a proportion of land to be cultivated before the arrival of the settler and assistance in providing stock. The Directors also took up Wise's recommendation to urge co-operation among settler farmers for the purchase and sale of agricultural materials and produce, and the construction of better roads to connect farming districts such as Melsetter, Enkeldoorn and Victoria to the railway lines, "to enable them to go ahead". But perhaps the most important of Wise's recommendations adopted by the Company was that the Company should "dispose of their land to the first settlers at a low but fair rate, according to the market value of the land in the country to-day, reserving, however, alternate blocks [to be sold later when prices had risen]: they should assist these men as far as possible in reason, without spoon-feeding and make them successful as their success will mean the success of land settlement and the development of the country". In the next few years the Company resorted to the simple expedient of reducing the minimum price of land to 1/6d a morgen. (20)

The declaration of policy issued to settlers at Bulawayo in October 1907 by the Visiting Commission of Directors further confirmed the Company's adoption of Wise's recommendations. The Commission stated that the Company intended to pursue an active and forward commercial policy, and to stimulate in every possible way the opening up of and steady development of the mineral and agricultural resources of the country. (21) As the Directors told shareholders, the time had arrived for the adoption of a vigorous policy of development upon broad lines and the Company would incur expenditure in all the above directions:

The return for expenditure so incurred is to be looked for, not only in direct profits, but also in the natural development resulting from an increase of population, which will bring about the occupation and settlement of vast areas now lying idle, increase in the productive power of Rhodesia, improvement in railway traffics and enhancement of the value of the Company's land. (22)

In order to encourage further land settlement, the visiting Commission proposed (a) as noted above, to reduce the price of land and (b) to accept cash payments for land where there was a reasonable guarantee of genuine occupation. Further, the Company undertook to pay rebates on the purchase price of farms where improvements had been carried out, in the form of fencing, tree planting and general cultivation. In order to carry out the Company's new policy, the Directors proposed the immediate issuing of 3 million new shares.

The reorganization of the Agricultural Department in 1908 by Dr Eric Nobbs, an agricultural scientist from the Cape, who served as Director of Agriculture between 1908 and 1923, revolutionized the functions of the Department, thus giving a boost to capitalist agriculture. The reorganization was planned to increase the Department's administrative efficiency as well as its scientific activities. From this period on, the Department consistently increased its number of agriculturalists, tobacco and cotton experts, veterinary officers, agricultural scientists, etc. In addition to conducting experiments and disseminating the results to farmers, these experts went out to farms regularly to give on-the-spot advice to settler farmers. Dr Nobbs regarded such visits as the most effective method of getting progressive ideas across to farmers in a new country "with a population so largely composed of newcomers, many of them without any agricultural experience ..." (23) Such free state provision of

scientific and technical services to settler farmers must be regarded as an important form of capital made available to settler farmers.

The Private Locations Ordinance (PLO) (24), which was modelled on the Cape legislation, had its roots in the demand of the Matabeleland branch of the Rhodesia Land Owners' and Farmers' Association to the visiting BSA Co Directors in 1907 that legislation be enacted on the lines recommended by the South African Native Affairs Commission (1903-5), to restrict African occupation of white-owned land. The Ordinance limited the number of African adult males on a 1,500 morgen farm to 40, and stipulated the number of months' work the tenant had to work for his landlord at current rates of wages. As the Rhodesia Herald reported Attorney General Tredgold's speech in the Legislative Council:

There were two ideas which must be prominent in all such legislation: one was that the occupier of land, farm owner or any other person whom it may be, should not be deprived of a reasonable quantity of labour for the carrying out of such work as he was doing. The other extreme was that the owner should not congregate upon his land so many natives that the land could not support them, and they thereby become a great nuisance to neighbours, by living and preying on the surrounding country. (25)

It hardly needs to be said that Tredgold's second reason for the Ordinance was largely an ideological justification for the first. As Tredgold himself stated, he was in total agreement with the conclusion of the South African Native Affairs Commission that the system of allowing large numbers of Africans on white-owned land and "Kaffir farming" "restricts the supply of labour; that it fills up with natives much land which would otherwise be better utilized and developed, and it leads to the absence of due control over them". (26) The PLO attacked "Kaffir farmers", i.e. those rentier landlords and share-cropping interests who were extracting capital from Africans living on their land in the form of money rents and agricultural produce, by charging 1s and 5s annually per contract for bona fide farmers actually occupying the land and absentee landlords, respectively. (27) The above section of the PLO was bitterly opposed (without success) by land-owning interests in the Chamber of Mines, who argued that if it was a question of revenue, as it appeared to them, "it would be better to raise such revenue by the direct taxation of the natives rather than by throwing on the large landowners the odium of increased taxation and disturbance of rights". (28) Settler demands for the PLO and the opposition to it by rentier and share-cropping interests must be viewed in the light of the penetration of finance capital into land. Such penetration led to the accumulation of large estates for speculative purposes, and hence also the rise of rent-tenancy and share-cropping and the hostility of the more commercialized settler farmers to both casual labour tenancy agreements and to the rentier landlords for "locking up" land and African labour. In some areas the PLO merely legalized a practice that had been gaining ground for some time. As the CNC, Matabeleland, reported in 1907, "Agreements between owners of farms and natives occupying them are becoming more general, but, in many instances, natives prefer moving to the Reserves to binding themselves to any definite contract". (29) It must be pointed out, however, that the less capitalized farmers neither initiated nor accepted the PLO voluntarily, and, in fact, those in areas such as Melsetter fought a rear-guard battle against the PLO well after the promulgation of the Ordinance. By 1916, the CNC could report that the Ordinance had had a "good effect" on labour supply, as a whole, in that 1,100 locations had been established under Section 3 of the Ordinance. (30)

Although the Company Government started giving out funds to settler farmers in the form of fencing loans as early as 1904, there was no proper institution for the first 22 years of Company rule to enable farmers to borrow money on easy terms, to employ in a wide range of agricultural activities. By 1907 settler representatives in the Legislative Council were demanding that the Government establish a Land Bank, "to assist farmers with loans for purchasing stock, agricultural machinery, seeds and generally with a view to stimulating and encouraging the farming industry". (31) Partly as a result of settler pressure and partly out of the desire to attract new

settlers and to diversify the country's agricultural production and thereby indirectly profit from higher land prices and increased railway freight, the Company set up a Land Bank in 1912, with a share capital of £250,000. Approved applicants could get up to a maximum of £2,000 on first mortgage over landed property or on deposit of other approved security. (32)

Repayment of capital was spread over a period of 10 years and the annual interest rate of 6% was below what commercial banks were charging. The Land Bank's policy, like that of the much larger Land and Agricultural Bank, created by the new all-settler government in 1924, was to make credit facilities "available for persons of European descent only". (33)

Direct BSA Co involvement in agricultural production started with the setting up of Central Farms under the management of C. D. Wise at the end of 1906, at Marandellas, and later on at Sinoia, Mazoe and Premier estates. By early 1912 the Company was also operating Rhodesdale Estate (in the Hartley district), which consisted of 95,305 acres, forming part of 118,000 acres taken over in satisfaction of a debt of £4,698 owed by the French South African Development Co Ltd, and had acquired other farms which were being farmed on a half-share agreement with the Company. (34) The latter farms included the Mazoe Citrus Farm (owned by the Mazoe Syndicate), in which the Company had bought a one-third share interest in 1909 and which the Company soon virtually owned.

Despite the financial, administrative and technical weaknesses of the early history of the Central Farms in 1910, Marandellas and Premier Estate produced tobacco worth £2,000 and £800, respectively, and in 1911 P. S. Inskipp, the Commercial Representative, could state that the three farms at Sinoia, Marandellas and Premier Estate were self-supporting. (35) Additional tobacco plantations were being established on all three estates as the Company set out to promote tobacco culture in the country. Early in 1910, for example, the Tobacco Company of Rhodesia and South Africa Ltd, itself a subsidiary of the BSA Co, was formed to take over the operations of the BSA Co in connection with the purchase and sale of Rhodesian tobacco, including the leases of the tobacco warehouses which the Chartered Company had built for the "scientific" handling of the country's tobacco output. The new company also acquired "the right to select a total of 30,000 acres of land suitable for tobacco cultivation". (36)

In 1910 the BSA Co became the first landowner in the country to develop citrus culture on a commercial scale, first at the Mazoe Estate and not long afterwards at Premier and Sinoia Estates, and to a lesser extent at the Marandellas farm. In January 1912, the six farms being worked wholly by the Company totalled 76,150 acres, 1,418 of which were under cultivation. In addition to the above, 6,118 acres at Sinoia and 73,941 acres at Rhodesdale were being used for grazing. (37) The Rhodesdale Estate, which was enlarged to over 1 million acres, developed into one of the Company's important ranches during the second decade of the 20th century, and had on it 40,000 head of cattle by 1923. (38)

From about 1910 the Company's policy towards the Central Farms began to change from regarding them as mere training centres for settlers. As the Directors reported to the shareholders, "The primary object in the working of these estates is the earning of profits, but their use for secondary objects, such as the training of settlers, is not lost sight of". (39) While increased settler immigration would result in increased land purchases and, therefore, increased profits for the Company, by improving the undeveloped land and showing that good profits could be made the Company could send up the price which it could later ask for the remaining so-called unalienated land (i.e. land which had been expropriated but not yet granted to individuals or companies by the BSA Co). The above view was reinforced by a 1912 memorandum by H. Wilson Fox, the Company's manager and financial expert. (40) In a 1904 report commissioned by the Company, Lt-Col Owen Thomas stated that (at that time) the case for agriculture as a leading national industry of Southern Rhodesia could not be demonstrated to the serious agriculturalist. "I frankly admit my failure to solve the problem of success in agriculture in Rhodesia, except as a minor adjunct of

stock-farming; but I ... recognize the immense suitability of that country for the pastoral branch of husbandry." (41) Another expert employed by the Company, Professor Wallace of Edinburgh University, a specialist on rural economics, reported in 1908 that, "As a supplementary branch of rural industry on livestock farms there is much scope for agricultural extension, but as a primary means by which the country as a whole may be developed, agriculture pure and simple is quite out of the question". (42) The Director of Agriculture added weight to the above conclusions when he reported at the end of 1911 that Rhodesia was "essentially a stock country. The conditions of the country point strongly to meat as the principal ultimate product to be elaborated off [sic] our veld ... Arable farming must rank below stock farming in importance, profitability and usefulness." (43)

Fox concluded from the above reports and others that, if land in Southern Rhodesia were to be valued according to the return which could, on average, be derived from it when employed for the purpose it was best adapted, "that value must primarily be determined with the reference to its value as a stock-raising country". Fox argued, and the Board agreed, that land must be regarded as the Company's principal asset, taking priority over the Company's two other major assets, minerals and railways, and was to be developed "with the object of making the maximum profit for its owners". (44) He argued that even at as low a figure as 5s per acre the Company's land assets, north and south of the Zambezi, amounted to over £20 million, "a sum higher than I can assign to the Company's mining and railway interests combined on the best assumptions that on present knowledge I feel justified in making". Another Director, Lord Winchester, reinforced the above view when he stated in a memorandum the following year that the Chartered Company's Mines and Development Co had already spent £20,000 without any definite results. "If this £20,000 had been expended in the improvement of, say, 10 farms, I think it would have made a better return, taking into consideration the value which each settler is to both the Customs and Railway receipts." (45)

Fox reminded his fellow Directors that, "speaking politically", time was running out for the Company and that it was a case of now or never. The Company could not prove or realize the true value of its estate by establishing a few highly developed estates, small in area, which no one would accept as samples of the country at large, or by selling land on a large scale at low prices. The Company had already alienated 16 million acres in the most accessible districts "for practically nothing so far as cash return is concerned and yet this land remains in comparatively few hands, and the greater proportion of it is undeveloped". (46) In May 1911, only 2,140 whites were engaged in agricultural pursuits, and Fox gave a liberal estimate of 5,000 whites upon the land, out of a white population of 23,606. Between January 1908 and July 1912 the Company itself had settled 2,849 persons on 5,210,549 acres. Clearly the Company's policy of closer settlement, designed to limit farm sizes and to raise the land prices, was not producing the anticipated results and had in fact met with popular disfavour among settlers. Fox argued for a more comprehensive policy by which the value of the Company's vast land holdings of prairie land could be conclusively demonstrated. How was this to be done? "My answer", Fox stated, "is by utilising itself large areas of average land for the purpose of which it is best suited, viz. stock raising" (47), which would have the secondary effect of taming land, especially outside the 25-mile railway zone, and therefore of raising its value when later taken up by new settlers. Fox recommended that £1 million be earmarked for expenditure on five ranches of 500,000 acres each, of which four were to be in Southern Rhodesia and one in the Bechuanaland Protectorate. The Central Farm at Rhodesdale was to be up-graded into a ranch and the four ranches in Southern Rhodesia were to be developed in such a way as to be fully stocked by the end of 1920. (48)

In the memorandum of June 1913, Fox repeated his call for the vigorous prosecution of the Company's ranching policy and listed four areas of policy. (49) These were that the Company should (a) develop estates, e.g. citrus estates; (b) develop irrigable land "on business lines, the object in each case to make a profit on the sale of improved land"; (c) that the above estates should provide young European settlers with the opportunity of working for wages, before launching out on their own account as tenants or proprietors - a system that had already been tried in tobacco growing by Major Frank Johnson at the Inyoka Estate in present-day Gokwe district. But there would be "no room for trade union wages in such cases" (50); and

(d) Fox urged, and the Company agreed, to breed dairy and other cattle for sale to settlers. Although not all Fox's recommendations were fully implemented by the time the Privy Council gave its ruling on land ownership in 1918, by the close of Company rule, apart from owning extensive ranches, the Company had planted 62,000 citrus trees at its Mazoe Estate, 11,000 at Premier and 8,000 at Sinoia, had built irrigation works at all three estates and had started to sell small irrigable holdings on these estates to settler farmers for citrus culture. (51)

It is largely in the light of the above policies that the Company's involvement in agricultural production and in the promotion of settler agriculture in Southern Rhodesia can be properly understood. However, it is important to remember that the above policies were given added impetus by increasing settler demands for a vigorous settlement policy. As Fox, Birchenough and other Company officials reported, settlers were constantly complaining that industry was languishing and that the cost of living was excessive "and rightly attribute these evils to the scanty number of the European population". (52) The Company's decision in 1907 to separate its administrative and commercial functions as from 1908 gave added impetus to the controversy over land ownership, a controversy that was to influence Company-settler relations until the ruling of the Privy Council in 1918, that the unalienated land neither belonged to the Company, the settlers, nor to the African people, but to the Crown. (53) Settler representatives complained bitterly that monies from land sales and certain revenues (e.g. rents charged on Africans living on unalienated land and fines and rents from white landowners and tax on the mines) raised under the taxes and tariffs of the country were going into the Company's coffers instead of the development of the country. Thus in 1908 the 7 elected members forced a resolution through the Legislative Council, demanding that the Imperial Government adjudicate between the settlers and the Company

- (a) with regard to the claim of the BSA Co to be the private owners of all unalienated land in S. Rhodesia;
- (b) as to what imports or charges levied under the authority of Ordinances or other laws, constitute administrative revenue, and what expenditure should be charged against such revenue,

as, in the circumstances, the resolution stated, it was impossible for the Council to deal properly with the budgets submitted by the Administration. (54) It was in part in reaction to such settler agitation that Fox and Birchenough stressed the importance of time in the Company's realization of its land asset, lest the Imperial Government rule against the Company's claim. Hence the recommendations that the Company itself go in for extensive agricultural production and promotion of settler agriculture.

#### State Aid and Settler Extraction of Surplus Value from Africans

The Company's policy towards land settlement was that settlers should be of the "right stamp", i.e. men with capital. C. D. Wise had recommended in 1906 that the average settler should have at least £700. This amount included passage out, erection of temporary accommodation, furniture, implements, harness, stock, seed, wages, poultry, rent, food and £70 for extras. (55) The Directors reported in 1908 that an increasing number of well-to-do persons were leaving the UK to settle in Southern Rhodesia. Statistics seemed to validate the Company's optimism: in 1908 the Company's Estates Department placed 949 persons on the land, with an average capital per family of £800. By 1913 the average capital per family had risen to £1,240. (56)

A very important source of agricultural capital inflow were the ranching companies which invested substantially in the cattle industry between 1910 and 1914. As the Director of Agriculture reported in 1912, ranches "varying as a rule from 10,000 acres to 50,000 acres or thereabouts" were being developed all over the country, using African cattle as the foundation stock, supplemented in some cases by grade stock from South Africa as well as pedigree stock from overseas. (57) A BSA Co shareholder who visited the country in 1910 reported that "There are a number of men

who have made money at mining and are putting it into ranching". (58) Some companies such as Willoughby's had been involved in ranching almost from the time of Occupation, but in 1912 Dr Nobbs was commenting on the "new feature ... that several companies have been formed during the year, and these and others are embarking upon operations on a large scale". The eight companies listed by Nobbs included Liebigs and the BSA Co itself. All eight companies possessed at least several hundred thousand acres, while Liebigs, the Amalgamated Properties of Rhodesia and Willoughby's held well over a million acres each. (59) By 1912 the BSA Co's Rhodesdale Ranch had been extended to over a million acres, and in March 1914 carried over 19,000 head of cattle. The 100,000 acre Tokwe Ranch was being used principally as a collecting depot and carried 4,914 head, while the Company's 3,590,000 acre Nuanetsi Ranch carried 4,524 head and the Company intended to develop it "as rapidly as possible". By 1920 Rhodesdale and Nuanetsi ranches, which by now covered 1,017,216 acres and 2,258,165 acres, respectively, carried a total of 88,487 head of cattle.

But the inflow of settler and finance capital was not enough. Most settlers on the land did not come from the monied classes in the UK. They came from South Africa, as was also probably true of Kenya during the immediate post-Anglo-Boer war period. The white population rose rapidly between 1904 (12,596) and 1911 (23,606), and especially during the period 1907-1911, and stood at 33,620 by 1921. Between 1904 and 1911 agricultural production more than doubled, involving 879 white males in the earlier year and 2,067 in the latter one. Furthermore, the agricultural proportion of the total white population increased at a higher rate than any other occupational class among whites. (60) By 1911 only 8% of the farming population of Southern Rhodesia had come directly from the UK, and in 1913 nearly 95% of the white farmers had come from South Africa. (61)

The Company's policy of keeping impecunious settlers out, especially "low Dutch", was never pursued with vigour, as the continued growth of the Afrikaner "Republic of Enkeldoorn" clearly demonstrates. (62) There were thus a large number of settler farmers throughout the period of Company rule with insufficient capital to farm on a large scale under Rhodesian conditions. Thus both settler farmers and the land companies were involved in Marx's "so-called primitive accumulation" (63) of capital through the exploitation of African land, cattle, labour, and the extraction of capital through rents. However, since settler agriculture in Southern Rhodesia hardly has what can be called "a peasant history", it seems to me more correct to see primitive accumulation not as a point of departure for the capitalist mode of production, as Marx correctly observed in the case of Europe, but as occurring (almost?) simultaneously with capitalist agricultural development. This becomes apparent when the crucial role of the state in the development of settler capitalist agriculture in Southern Rhodesia is examined.

Primitive capital accumulation in Southern Rhodesia went on throughout the period of Company rule in varying degrees. The period was characterized by the violent struggle of the growing capitalism against African subsistence and incipient peasant producers. Repressive legislation ranging from Pass Laws, the PLO, to the Native Labour Contracts Legislation Ordinance was enacted to facilitate settler exploitation of African labour. Roder has observed that

The moment a man pegged his farm, he regarded the African villagers on it as his serfs, who would have to work for him. The chief means of mobilising this pool of labour in the first years was the sjambok or hippo-hide whip, and after 1908 labour agreements which committed tenants to work several months, usually three, for the privilege of remaining on their ancestral land. (64)

In periods of severe labour shortage, settler farmers were able to flex their political muscles and force the Company Government to institute measures designed to procure labour more quickly than the Rhodesia Native Labour Bureau. Thus, in September 1911, settler farmers held a mass demonstration in Salisbury and passed, inter alia, a resolution demanding the Government "to supply at once a minimum number of boys, sufficient to relieve temporarily an unprecedented crisis which otherwise will prove

the ruin of the whole of the farming community". (65) The government responded positively by instructing Native Commissioners "to place the position before their Chiefs" (66), which meant using Chiefs to force "their" subjects into contract labour on settler farms.

Settler farmers and land companies also charged their African tenants rents, grazing and dipping fees, etc., which, the CNC was to report in 1926, were so exorbitant that "within a few years [they went] far towards paying the purchase price of the farm". In 1909 and 1910, for example, the BSA Co's Lands Department collected £18,653 and £35,422 revenue, respectively. African rents, which were not included in the above figures, amounted to £9,863 and £9,316, respectively, for the two financial years. "The small decrease in native rents", the Commercial Representative explained in 1911, "was due to the fact that on a sale of land taking place the rents pass to the purchaser." (67)

Through its control of State revenue, the Company Government diverted funds from African taxation to settler agriculture in the form of experimental stations/farms, technical and scientific provision and advice, loans for fencing, purchase of grade and pedigree stock, the construction of dipping tanks, etc. In the 1909-10 financial year, for example, African taxes and fees totalled £209,423 but the expenditure of the Native Department for the same period was only £52,640. (68) The African contribution to State coffers, and therefore indirectly to settler agriculture, was succinctly noted by the Acting Controller of Customs and Excise in 1918:

... I do not think that the public realises sufficiently what a valuable asset the native in this country is to the Customs revenue. When it is borne in mind, for instance, that for each foreign blanket purchased by the native he pays indirectly in respect of Customs duty a quarter of the home cost, and in the case of a British blanket a fifth, some idea may perhaps be gathered as to the result native purchase has on the revenue of this country. (69)

Since African labour was "the basis of the economic fabric" (70) and even by the close of Company rule was being paid only 10s to £1 in cash per month, plus rations (costing about 7/6 per month) (71), in agriculture, and the settler farmer tended "to become purely an overseer" (72), the African contribution to settler and state capital accumulation went well beyond the payment of taxes and customs duties.

At the end of Company rule in 1923, Southern Rhodesia's white population had grown to 36,183; settler maize production had surpassed one and a half million (200 lb) bags, and the country had become a net exporter of maize; the tobacco industry, which had suffered a market crisis between 1914 and 1918, had recovered from the 1914 low figure of 426,423 lbs and had surpassed the 1913-14 record harvest of just over 3 million lbs, to 3,878,460 lbs in the 1923-24 season. (73) Citrus export (mainly from the Company's estates), which started in a small way with 1,334 boxes during 1916, had risen to 52,961 boxes by 1924. (74) The number of cattle belonging to settler farmers and land companies, which was estimated at only 110,000 in 1910 (when African-owned cattle were officially put at "not less than 261,000"), had risen to about half of the country's estimated 2 million cattle by the end of 1923. Cattle exports to the Rand (and, to a limited extent, to the Congo and Mozambique) started in 1916, with 12,815 cattle, rose to 37,285 in 1920, fell to 12,408 in the 1921 slump, but by the end of 1923 had risen again to 34,841. (75) In addition to building branch railway lines to such districts as Mazoe, Sinoia and Victoria, the government had advanced grants to Road Councils to improve transport facilities.

The settlers had not simply "carved farms out of the bush" and reached the above high levels of production through individual genius and effort. As this paper has attempted to demonstrate, state aid in various forms to capitalist agriculture in Southern Rhodesia was crucial from the earliest days of its development. In 1913 Fox reminded fellow directors of the great competition Rhodesia was facing from the older colonies for settlers of the "right stamp", and stated that the country had to be

satisfied with something less than the best, "and devote special attention ... to the working up of settler material. It must therefore give inexperienced men of suitable qualities and dispositions, opportunities of establishing themselves upon the land". Such a policy has, in fact, characterized much of the history of white agriculture in Rhodesia.

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#### Notes

- (1) Adam Smith, The Wealth of Nations, Vol. II (London: J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd, 1910), p. 73.
- (2) Leroy Vail, "Mozambique's Chartered Companies: the rule of the feeble", J. of African Hist. XVII, No. 3, 1976.
- (3) L. H. Gann, A History of S. Rhodesia (London, 1965); D. H. Murray, The Governmental System in S. Rhodesia (London, 1970); R. H. Palmer, Land and Racial Domination in Rhodesia (London, 1977).
- (4) BSA Co, Report of the Directors for the Year 1889-91, p. 14: "To enable the shareholders to appreciate the value of this land grant [the fraudulent Rudd and Lippert Concessions] it may be mentioned that Matabeleland and Mashonaland cover an area of 125,000 sq. mls. or 80 million acres. The rich and varied potentialities of the development of such a vast extent of territory will doubtless suggest themselves to the minds of shareholders ... As these territories south of the Zambezi, within the field of operations of the Company, are colonized, and become populated by white people, it is obvious that the mere prairie value per acre of land must represent an amount largely in excess of the Company's capital of £1 million. It is understood that there is no land now obtainable in British Bechuanaland, at less than 1 shilling per acre. If the Company's 80 million acres be capitalised at one fourth of this price, say three pence per acre, the shareholders' capital is in this way alone secured."
- (5) Giovanni Arrighi, "Labour Supplies in Historical Perspective ...", in G. Arrighi and J. S. Saul, Essays on the Political Economy of Africa (Monthly Review Press, 1973).
- (6) BSA Co, Directors' Report and Accounts, 31/3/1891, p. 10.
- (7) BSA Co, Directors' Report and Accounts, 31/3/1912, p. 34. See also V. Machingaidze, "Modern Agricultural History of Rhodesia, 1908-1953", ICS, African History Seminar, November 1977.
- (8) Palmer, op. cit., p. 80.
- (9) Ibid.
- (10) CNC Report for 1918, p. 4.
- (11) S. Rhodesia, Minutes of the Proceedings of the Legislative Council and Ordinances, March 1900, and 2nd Council, June-July 1903; S. Rhodesia, Debates in the Legislative Council, 4th Council, June-July 1908, and 6th Council, April-October 1914.
- (12) See C. Carlyle-Gall (ed), Rhodesian Manual on Agriculture, Industry and Mining (published annually by the Mining and Industrial Publications of Africa Ltd: London, 1927 edition) for land held by a large number of mining and land companies or a combination of both. See also, BSA Co, Notes and Information Concerning Land Policy by H. Wilson Fox, 21st November 1912, p. 71, for summary of information relating to land held by subsidiary and other companies.
- (13) BSA Co, Memorandum by Mr H. Wilson Fox upon Land Settlement in Rhodesia with Accompanying Papers and Maps, 21 June 1913, p. 2.

- (14) Ian Phimister, "Meat and Monopolies: Beef Cattle in S. Rhodesia, 1890-1938", J. of Afr. Hist., Vol XIX, 3, 1978.
- (15) On the 1921-22 cattle market crisis, see A Report of the Committee of Enquiry in respect of the Cattle Industry of S. Rhodesia, 1923 (Govt. Printer, Salisbury, 1923).
- (16) BSA Co. Report on Land Settlement in S. Rhodesia by C. D. Wise (London, 1906), preparatory note by the Directors.
- (17) Ibid., p. 6.
- (18) Ibid., p. 16.
- (19) For a detailed study of Marandellas Central Farm, see R. Hodder-Williams, "The BSA Co in Marandellas: Some Extra-Institutional Constraints on Government", Rhodesian History, Vol. 2, 1971, and R. Reynolds (ed), "The BSA Co's Central Farm, Marandellas, 1907-1910 - from the Papers of H. K. Scorrer", Rhodesiana, No. 10 (Salisbury, July 1964).
- (20) Declaration of Policy issued at Bulawayo on 19th October 1907 by the Visiting Commission, contained in BSA Co, Directors' Report and Accounts, 31/3/1907, p. 31. In 1904 land prices in the Cape averaged 33/-; in the Transvaal 28/6; and in Natal 25/-. Average land prices in 1894 stood at 1/6 and 3/- per morgen in Mashonaland and Matabeleland, respectively. Between 1908 and 1911 the Company sold land at an average price of 1/8 per acre.
- (21) Ibid., p. 29.
- (22) My emphasis. BSA Co, Directors' Report and Accounts, 31/3/1907, p. 24. Expenditure was to be incurred in, inter alia, promotion of immigration and settlement, provision of expert advice and assistance for farmers and others, loans for farmers and miners, the introduction of Rhodesian products to oversea markets, facilities for transport, particularly in regard to through rates to the coast for all Rhodesian products. The BSA Co owned 85% of the share capital of the Rhodesia Railways and therefore stood to gain from increased traffic.
- (23) Report of the Director of Agriculture, 1921, p. 16. See also, "Tables on Work of the Department's Technical Staff", listing times spent in office and out of office, in Report of the Director of Agriculture, 1923, p. 26.
- (24) S. Rhodesia, Minutes of the Proceedings of the Legislative Council and Ordinances, 4th Council, 1908.
- (25) S. Rhodesia, Debates in the Legislative Council (Being a reprint of reports in the Rhodesia Herald), 4th Council, 1908, p. 63.
- (26) Quoted by Tredgold, ibid., p. 65.
- (27) Section 10 of the PLO.
- (28) Letter from the Chamber of Mines to the Government, quoted in Debates in the Legislative Council, 4th Council 1908, p. 65. See also, J. K. Rennie, "White Farmers, and Labour Tenants: the formation of Tenancy Legislation in Southern and Eastern Africa in the Early Colonial Period, with particular reference to the S. Rhodesia Private Locations Ordinance", above.
- (29) Extract from the Report of the CNC, Matabeleland, 1906-7, in BSA Co, Directors' Report and Accounts, 31/3/1907, p. 39.
- (30) Report of the CNC for the Year 1916, p. 6.
- (31) S. Rhodesia, Debates in the Legislative Council, 4rd Council, 1907, p. 100.
- (32) "Report of the Commercial Representative, P. S. Inskipp", in BSA Co, Directors' Report and Accounts, 31/3/1912, p. 89.
- (33) Manager, Land Bank, to CNC, 3rd September 1926, quoted in R. Palmer, op. cit., p. 82.
- (34) W. Perry, "A Brief History of the BSA Company's Central Farms", in Notes and Information Concerning Land Policy by H. Wilson Fox, Appendix I (5), p. 88.
- (35) Ibid.
- (36) BSA Co, Directors' Report and Accounts, 31/3/1910, p. 15.
- (37) W. Perry, op. cit., p. 88.

- (38) BSA Co, Farms and Land in S. Rhodesia: particulars of the sub-division of the Rhodesdale Ranch (London, 1924), p. 11.
- (39) BSA Co, Directors' Report and Accounts, 31/3/1911, p. 17.
- (40) Notes and Information Concerning Land Policy, 21st November 1912.
- (41) Ibid., Appendix I (1), p. 44. "Report by Lt Col Owen Thomas on Settlement in S. Rhodesia" (dated 15 March 1904).
- (42) Ibid., p. 5.
- (43) Report of the Director of Agriculture, 1911, p. 9.
- (44) Notes and Information Concerning Land Policy, p. 8.
- (45) "Memorandum on Closer Settlement by the Marquis of Winchester, 7 May 1913", in Memorandum by H. Wilson Fox upon Land Settlement ..., 21 June 1913, Appendix IV (1), p. 122.
- (46) Ibid., p. 4.
- (47) Notes and Information Concerning Land Policy, p. 17.
- (48) Ibid., pp. 23-24.
- (49) Memorandum by H. Wilson Fox upon Land Settlement, June 21, 1913, p. 38.
- (50) Ibid., p. 39.
- (51) BSA Co (pamphlet), Growing Oranges in S. Rhodesia (on the BSA Co's Estates at Mazoe, Umtali and Sinoia): Farms for Sale (London, 1923)
- (52) Memorandum by H. Wilson Fox upon Land Settlement, June 21 1913, p. 1. See also the Legislative Council's resolution calling for vigorous white settlement policy from the Company, Debates, April 1913.
- (53) R. Palmer, op. cit., pp. 133-4.
- (54) S. Rhodesia, Debates in the Legislative Council, 4th Council, May 1909, pp. 112-13. Mrs Tawse-Jollie, a leading settler opponent of Company rule, noted in 1923 that "Land sales and rents, amounting to £1,155,000 were allocated to commercial revenue, and the administrative budgets for the years 1907-18 suffered in consequence": The Real Rhodesia (Bulawayo, 1971), p. 42.
- (55) C. D. Wise, op. cit., p. 24.
- (56) BSA Co, Directors' Report and Accounts, 31/3/1908, pp. 12-13. See also, Directors' Report and Accounts 31/3/1913, p. 19.
- (57) Report of the Director of Agriculture, 1912, p. 7.
- (58) BSA Co, Report of the 16th Ordinary General Meeting (held on 23 February 1911), p. 20. See also Ian Phimister, Meat Monopolies ...
- (59) Report of the Director of Agriculture, 1912, p. 7. The BSA Co at Rhodesdale, Liebig's Extract of Meat Co at West Nicholson, Rhodesia Cattle and Land Co Ltd at Gwanda, Messrs Chambers and Plant at Ndange, the MaKorsi River Ranching Co at Victoria, the Anglo-French Co at Gwelo, the Matabeleland Ranching Co at Selukwe, and De Beers Consolidated Mines Ltd at Shangani, all had very substantial numbers of cattle, while Amalgamated Properties of Rhodesia held 10,000 head by 1913. See also Notes and Information Concerning Land Policy, p. 71, for the amount of land held by the principal land companies.
- (60) Barry M. Schutz, "European Population Patterns, Cultural Persistence and Political Change in Rhodesia", The Canadian J. of African Studies, January 1973, pp. 5-7. See also S. Rhodesia, Figures and Facts, p. 11. Whites engaged in agricultural production rose from 2,532 in 1914 to 3,497 by the end of Company rule in 1923.
- (61) Hodder-Williams, op. cit., p. 46.
- (62) Barry M. Schutz, op. cit., p. 8. Dutch Reformed Church membership rose from 3,256 - 13.8% of the white population in 1911 - to 6,537 - 19.4% in 1921.
- (63) Karl Marx, Capital, Vol. I, Part 8 (Penguin, 1976), p. 873.

- (64) Wolf Roder, "The Division of Land Resources in S. Rhodesia", Annals of the Association of American Geographers, Vol. 54, 1964, p. 51. See also L. H. Gann, A History of S. Rhodesia (London, 1965), p. 124. In 1903 Native Commissioner J. H. Williams (Gutu District) was suspended for beating Africans with the sjambok and for using his position to acquire cattle in his district: CO 417/371, Minute of A. J. Harding to G. V. Finder, 27/3/03.
- (65) Quoted in Frank Witts, "The Native Labour Question in S. Rhodesia", The Empire Review, Vol. 22, No. 131, December 1911, p. 333.
- (66) Extract from the Report of the CNC, Mashonaland, in BSA Co, Directors' Report and Accounts, 31/3/1912, p. 51. For an explanation of Chibaro labour, see C. van Onselen, Chibaro: African Mine Labour in S. Rhodesia, 1900-1933 (Pluto Press, 1976), p. 99.
- (67) BSA Co, Directors' Report and Accounts, 31/3/1910, p. 57. The Company first imposed a rent charge on unalienated land in 1909.
- (68) BSA Co, Directors' Report and Accounts, 31/3/1911, pp. 34-35.
- (69) Quoted in the CNC Report for the Year 1918, p. 3.
- (70) Handbook for the Use of Prospective Settlers on the Land, April 1925, p. 10.
- (71) Growing Oranges in S. Rhodesia ..., pp. 12-13.
- (72) Memorandum by H. Wilson Fox, June 21 1913, p. 6.
- (73) S. Rhodesia, Figures and Facts, p. 7.
- (74) Ibid. and BSA Co Directors' Report and Accounts 31/3/1916, p. 11.
- (75) Reports of the Director of Agriculture, 1910, p. 9, and 1923, pp. 7-8, and A Report of the Committee of Enquiry in respect of the Cattle Industry of S. Rhodesia, 1923, p. 11.