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**DISCUSSION PAPER SERIES**

Number 9

**THE LANCASTER HOUSE AGREEMENT AND THE  
POST-INDEPENDENCE STATE IN ZIMBABWE**

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Arnold Elson Sibanda

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The author, Arnold Elson Sibanda, is a Research Fellow with ZIDS.

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## ABSTRACT

Every colonisation and decolonisation process must of necessity be fraught with antagonistic contradictions which may differ in terms of their character and depth (the form) but not their essence. The class contradictions which were perhaps necessarily hidden in the Zimbabwean decolonisation process - but which now have become more open - need to be examined and laid bare by an objective social science. For, never is a social system in a state of permanent rest. So, the constant motion, its driving force and its direction need to be understood and used for the continual and betterment of the condition of human existence. *This essay which characterizes the post-independence state in Zimbabwe as a neo-colonial one par excellence, holds that the armed struggle for the independence of Zimbabwe was led by a militant nationalist petty bourgeoisie whose material objective was to set itself up as a local dominant bloc presiding over a capitalist social economy dominated by imperialism. The question of a profound transformation of the society - sometimes, many times, articulated in the discourses of these nationalists and some social scientists as "a socialist transformation" - was never seriously on the agenda. The consequent Lancaster House Constitutional Conference of 1979, which brought about the Lancaster House Agreement, was simply the climax which started the "sealing" of an important class alliance that would ensure the reproduction of the heavily imperialist dominated socio-economic structure and that would demobilise any popular-based attempt at a profound transformation of the society. This process - of course - is still fraught with deadly contradictions.*

## INTRODUCTION

The empirical details of the actual "Road to Lancaster House" have been documented by several writers - see Mandaza (ed) 1986, his Introduction and Chapter I in this work; also Davidow 1984; Verrier 1986; Astrow, 1983; *et al.* Mandaza's objective, as he states it, was simply to explain "why things are what they are" (Mandaza, *ibid.*, 5) and not to go beyond as Davies suggests (in Stoneman, 1988, 19-20), to what things "ought to be". Nevertheless, the Mandaza objective becomes a very difficult one since a discourse of his sort primarily lands one in a stalemate. In the drive to simply explain why things are what they are, one finds oneself making statements which do contain a yearning for "what ought to be" - perhaps inadvertently - but unless such statements are "stumbled upon" as it were, the mission becomes one of a near-systematised apologia for what exists. For how else can we explain the following bold positions by Mandaza:

**Euphoric and, perhaps, even more surprised at their discovery that Africans could in fact struggle and win total independence, these scholars (who have developed a romanticised view of the "African revolution", a view Mandaza calls "revolutionary mythology" - my addition) overlooked the complexity of both the struggle itself and the Southern African situation. Rather than re-examine those historical, socio-economic and strategic factors - indeed rather than try to understand the nature of both imperialism and the class forces that emerge as a result of its impact in Southern Africa - they are now more inclined to attribute all that has gone wrong to the African petit bourgeoisie without, however, identifying and analyzing the conditions which influence the action of this class, (*ibid.*) (my emphasis).**

There is some truth in the above position by Mandaza. Having stated that there are historical socio-economic and strategic factors in Southern Africa which influence the action of the African petty bourgeoisie - a class which should not take all the blame for what has gone wrong - he calls for our sympathy:

**These problems should be understood sympathetically in the light of a historical conjuncture within which these (imperialist) forces are still so dominant;... (*ibid.*, 19).**

But this same petty bourgeoisie leading the nationalist movement is blamed for having had no "socialist thrust":

**For a socialist thrust would have required a clearly articulated ideology that would fully explain the historical reality of imperialism; reveal the class structure of the liberation movement; and constitute the basis for a vanguard party that would in turn inform, teach, guide and translate the political gains of national independence into an onward movement towards socialist construction.**

**It would have required not only an acceptance that the masses - the peasants and workers - are the basis for such momentous processes of transformation, but also seeking to conscientise and mobilise them towards the socialist goal (*ibid.*, 30).**

This really amounts to a statement of "what things ought to be or to have been" although Mandaza is not really keen to subject the African petty bourgeoisie to "criticism". For he continues:

**This may smack of a degree of historical determinism and voluntarism and yet it is difficult to understand how, in the context of the historical evidence before us, it should have been expected that an essentially nationalist movement could have developed a revolutionary capacity that would overthrow both white settlerism and imperialist hegemony (*ibid.*).**

Surely, we do have a right to expect a modern nationalist movement to develop this way! But we know that these developments are determined in the field of the internal class struggle. The question is, what happened within the liberation movement which precluded this development? I think Mandaza's mission itself is contradictory and perhaps this is symptomatic of an even deeper contradiction - or is it fear: the "fear" to consistently subject to critique the dominant bloc of the petty bourgeoisie which has

hitherto been the agency of history.(1) Perhaps it is this fear which leads Mandaza to an unfortunate stagnation, which he expresses when he calls for "progressive planning for development" without even setting out the political pre-conditions for such "progressive planning for development" to be possible. Writes Mandaza:

**However, it behoves progressive intellectuals and political activists to identify, within the broad framework of the principal contradictions in our society, the possibilities for the development of a progressive development policy. The latter must seek to break (...) with the structures of dependence and must rely on effective planning. It is a difficult and long-drawn task but one that has to be attempted, beginning with a clear perception of the causes of underdevelopment... (ibid., 18-19).**

And further:

**This raises the question about the need to develop not only appropriate planning skills in the state sector but also the correct orientation - and political will - to plan for socialism (ibid).**

Much as it is accepted that socialism requires planning for it, and much as it is accepted that this task is a difficult one requiring "political will"; much as it is accepted that the principal contradiction today in Zimbabwe is between the "masses of workers and peasants" on the one hand and imperialism with the local settler bourgeoisie on the other, nevertheless, a discourse which approximates an "apologia" for the ruling petty bourgeoisie cannot be accepted. Dependence, underdevelopment and imperialist hegemony, yes, these are the evils in Zimbabwe today, but to fight them, to supersede these, *the historic role of the petty bourgeoisie under the domination by imperialism and in the reproduction of oppression and exploitation of workers and poor peasants that characterises it as a neo-colonial ruling class and its post-independence state as a neo-colonial state must be clearly understood. The term neo-colony denotes the subordination of this local ruling bloc to imperialist capital on the one hand and its important class alliance with the imperialist (and local) bourgeoisie against the popular masses on the other.* Once all this is understood, then it should be possible to forge appropriate class alliances for a total anti-imperialist onslaught.

## THE LANCASTER HOUSE AGREEMENT

### Transplanting the Seedlings

**And as in private life one differentiates between what a man thinks and says of himself and what he really is and does, so in historical struggles one must distinguish still more the phrases and fancies of parties from their real organism and their real interests, their conception of themselves, from the reality. (Marx, in Shivji 1978 Rep.: 61).**

Armed conflict in Zimbabwe was terminated by negotiation at a marathon constitutional conference at Lancaster House in London in 1979. The contending forces at this conference were the following : the local settler colonialists led by Ian Smith who had declared UDI from Britain in 1965, part of whose team included a segment of the African petty bourgeoisie led by Bishop Abel Muzorewa who had joined the settler colonialists in an "internal settlement" in March 1978, on the one hand; and the Patriotic Front comprising the armed liberation movements of ZANU-PF and ZAPU on the other. Standing as if it were a neutral ring-holder was the British Government represented by none other than the then Foreign Secretary, Lord Carrington. In actual fact, from historically documented word and deed, (2) the British were a long-time ally of the settler colonial and "internal settlement" combination.

What I seek to establish here is that *the Lancaster House Conference and the resultant*

*Agreement and Constitution represented a high point in the struggle of the contending forces, a point which was the start of a process of transition" from settler colonial capitalism presided over by an indigenous neo-colonial state. This transition process is here euphemistically called the process of transplanting "seedlings" long nurtured in the "nursery" beds, to be watered and cultivated on a new setting over a period of about seven to 10 years, the period required to expire before any changes in the Lancaster House Constitution (LHC) could be made. Thereafter, the "seedlings" would have reached their "own maturity" and the reproduction of "capitalist gardening" itself would be more or less guaranteed. It is pertinent in this context then to look at the salient features of the Lancaster House Agreement and see how they were the provisions for the beginning of this "transplanting" process.*

Fostering the development of an indigenous African "middle class" which would constitute a "buffer" between colonial capitalism and the "rest of the masses" was the yearning of "liberal colonialists" from very early days. The National Trade Unions Survey (NTUS, 1984) records the colonial state's fear of the working classes' politics thus:

**The colonial state feared the prospects of trade unionism developing into radical political movements. Prime Minister Huggins .... expressed the concern and desire of the rising bourgeoisie class to control trade unionism and radical politics by creating an African petty bourgeois class that would be a "buffer class" allied with the white settler bourgeoisie against the rural and urban African working class. In the midst of peasant and proletarian upheavals of 1954, Huggins further declared the need for an African buffer class: "We shall never be able to do much with these people until we have established a native middle class" (NTUS: 1984,16).**

The racial partnership ideology and economic programmes of the Huggins era of the 1950s was simply to cultivate this settler colonial and African petty bourgeois alliance. It was the resistance of mainly the settler agrarian-based bourgeoisie and settler labour-aristocracy which checked colonial liberalism. However, later, these same segments led by Ian Smith were forced by war and other forces to attempt such an alliance with the March 3 1978 "internal settlement" (already referred to). Such alliances were from time to time tried by attempts at splitting the Patriotic Front guerilla movement (Mandaza, *op.cit.*, 36-37).

*It is at Lancaster House that the basics of neo-colonialism were carved. First and foremost, the reproduction of the system of imperialist-dominated capitalism was to be ensured. In every struggle, differing perhaps only in terms of degree and form, the masses of the people become involved politically. They enter the political stage and their protagonism, given the existence of other conducive conditions, chief of all being an appropriate leadership with a correct popular ideology, can pose a potential for the profound reconstitution of the society. The Zimbabwe struggle did appear to pose this potential. Yet, the outward pronouncements notwithstanding, none in the leadership of the national, popular liberation movements espoused an ideology which contained within it a serious programme for the radical reconstitution of society.*

Yet, the fact of this "potential" and the primary need to cultivate and entrench a pro-capitalist neo-colonial ruling class meant that the combination of settler and imperialist capital would not gamble but ensure *on paper* the reproduction of the dominant socio-economic system. The following provisions of the Lancaster House Agreement bear this out.

First and foremost, *the Lancaster House Agreement brought about a Constitution which required the recognition of the sanctity of the institution of private property in the means of*

*production*. (See Section 16 of the Constitution: Freedom from Deprivation of Property). This sanctity was to be guarded not just by such constitutional provision but by a mechanism which required that there be 20 reserved parliamentary seats for white settlers in the new 100-member House of Assembly and 10 in the Senate. To change the Constitution before 10 years was up, the new governing party would need a 100 percent affirmative vote of the parliamentarians. The reserved white seats could not be abolished within seven years from the date of independence without a 100 percent affirmative vote in the House of Assembly (See Ncube and Nzombe: *Zimbabwe Law Review*, Vol. 5, 1987, 8).

This was particularly damaging with respect to *the land issue*. To bar the expropriation of land from settlers who had usurped it was to slap in the face the entire mass of the colonized people for whom *land was a burning issue*. However, white settlers would not have voted for the abolition of the parliamentary seats. Thus, their seven years in Parliament was guaranteed. Neither could the Constitution be changed within those seven years without their consent, thus major constitutional changes were out of the question for at least 10 years!

### **Amending the Lancaster House Constitution**

By the *Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment Act No. 61987*, on August 21, the reserved white seats were abolished and replaced by open seats filled through election by the remaining 80 members of the House of Assembly and 20 senators. Correctly, the question which has been posed is: Of what significance is the abolition of the reserved white seats? Again Ncube and Nzombe offer an interesting argument: The role of the white seats was to control the political and economic direction of the state. The settler bourgeoisie's economic dominance constituted a power base to influence political direction. In fact, Ncube and Nzombe continue, arguing that the settler bourgeoisie and imperialism have no need for the white seats anymore! The removal of white seats did/does not signal the changing of the distribution of power, resources and wealth! Significantly, racist politics was ended but "the fundamental dichotomy is no longer between black and white, but between the propertied and the dispossessed classes . . ." (*ibid.*, 12). The authors above have, in fact, asserted elsewhere that:

**The entrenchment of the reserved white parliamentary seats for seven years and the protection of private property for 10 years were clever imperialist manoeuvres. The imperialists gambled that after 10 years a black government that would have won power at independence would have been co-opted into the capitalist system and would accordingly not be willing to interfere with the capitalist system and private property mostly owned by foreign multinationals, individuals and white locals. (*Journal on Social Change and Development (JSCD)*, 1987:12)**

Scientific analysis and prediction usually has the painful aspect of proving true, the truth being itself painful to those not enthusiastic about accepting it. Like the authors above, I have noted elsewhere and I quote to some length my observation then that:

**The Lancaster House Constitution ... - which was itself an instrument to guarantee non-disruption of the capitalist mode of production - was safeguarded by the institutionalisation, appearing as if it were an institutionalisation of racism, in the form of 20 white seats in Parliament, was a fundamental requirement for the reproduction of imperialist-dominated capitalism in independent Zimbabwe, in conditions where a real possibility for a *national democratic revolution* taking place and affecting a greater part of the spheres of the socio-economic formation *seemed* to exist. The Lancaster House Conference and Constitution were concrete methods of institutional demobilisation of this possibility." (in Stoneman, *op.cit.*, 261-262).**

Perhaps after April 1990, when the Lancaster House Constitution *can* be amended or

it, there is nothing opprobrious about protecting the rights of minorities, the point is, in the context of Zimbabwe, who were the minorities? They were the white settlers only and there was no consideration of other ethnic minorities.

**The question of minorities was given a racial interpretation. Such a narrow interpretation also coincided with British imperialist interests in that it is the white settlers who were the custodians of capitalism in this country. Therefore, protecting their interests by entrenching such protection in the Constitution also meant entrenching and protecting the fundamental principles of capitalist relations of production and social organisation (*ibid.*, 11).**

However, even on this, it can be concluded that *this kind of protection of "white minority interests" is no longer necessary as a condition for the reproduction of the dominant economic system. The class "seedlings" already transplanted and cultivated can take care of this reproduction, even by repressive means.*

Another feature of the Lancaster House Constitution which has seen some post-independence "reform" is that of Executive Presidency. The LHC itself had provided for a purely ceremonial post of President while actual power lay with the Prime Minister and his Cabinet. By the *Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment Act No. 7 of 1987* the ceremonial presidency was replaced with the Executive Presidency. By amendments to the Constitution, the Executive President became Head of State, Head of Government and Commander-in-Chief of the Defence Forces. All executive authority became vested in the President who may exercise it directly or through the Vice-President. He exercises this authority - unless otherwise provided - on advice of his Cabinet which he alone appoints or fires. He acts on his own discretion in respect of the dissolution of Parliament and the appointment and removal of any Minister or the Vice-President (*ibid.*, 13).

He can declare war, make peace, proclaim and terminate martial law without reference to Parliament, though he must do so on the advice of his Cabinet. But the Cabinet serves only at the unlimited pleasure of the President and, therefore, was not intended to and cannot be a check or restraint on the President (*ibid.*).

Only Parliament can approve (within 14 days) the President's declaration of a State of Emergency, and can remove the President from office before his six-year term expires for wilful violation of the Constitution, or incapacity to perform his duties or when he has committed gross misconduct. However, although Parliament can pass a vote of no confidence in the President, the President can either dissolve Parliament, or dismiss his Cabinet or resign his office. He can, in fact, dissolve Parliament and proclaim martial law if that Parliament passes a vote of no confidence in him. This renders Parliament, as Ncube and Nzombe suggest, "a kind of toothless bulldog" (*ibid.*, 14).

*The concentration of executive powers in the Presidency is quite enormous. But the important question is: In whose interest will that power be exercised? (ibid).* Ncube and Nzombe posed it thus and are awaiting the answer with the passage of time.

Yet again we can enumerate some leads in answer to this question with an analysis of more recent developments. *So far these presidential powers have not been used in the interests of the working classes.* The nation was shocked to hear the Presidential pardon for the ex-Minister of State for Political Affairs, Frederick Shava, who had been jailed for lying to the Sandura Commission of Inquiry into the Distribution of Motor Vehicles. The nation further got a shock when the President declared that "perjury was not a crime" and it was not what the Commission was inquiring into. This pronouncement, together with the pardon, prompted the Attorney-General to declare that there would be no more

thrown out and a new one put in place, we shall see a new Constitution reflecting the desire to establish a full national democratic revolution and a basis for a real transition to socialism. However, developments during the first half of the 1980s (or to date) present a gloomy picture of the possibility for this development. (3) Again, I noted in the above work:

**There has been an acceleration of petty accumulation by some petty bourgeois elements, particularly in the areas where imperialist capital had little interest. These areas include petty trading in rural and urban areas, fringe import and export businesses, small hotel and night-club ventures, housing and apartment holding and renting, landholding and pig and poultry production, and so on" (and today I can add the corruption involving swindling of State funds, violating allocation of vehicle privileges and buying vehicles and selling them at exorbitant prices - even violating price control regulations in the process) (4), "areas which even the Lancaster House Constitution hoped would provide opportunities for accumulation by a new indigenous black pro-capitalist class." (*ibid.*).**

In fact, this class formation which imperialism had gambled on its developing over a period of seven to 10 years accelerated immediately after independence. That is why I insist that the Lancaster House Conference and Agreement were the start of a process of transplanting class seedlings from capitalist nursery seedbeds! As early as 1983, Mr Mugabe, then Prime Minister, attacked what he termed "bourgeois Ministers, civil servants and people in public office" who were accumulating wealth! At the Second Congress of his party, ZANU-PF, the following year, a "Leadership Code" was adopted and for Mugabe, the party leaders had two options : "to quit their posts or to relinquish their property, 'for they could not have it both ways'" (*ibid.*).

The Leadership Code itself forbids party leaders and their relatives from owning businesses, receiving more than one salary, serving as director of a private firm or business organised for profit, or owning real estate or other property from which they would receive rents or other royalties or own more than 50 acres of land (*ibid.*, 263).

As I concluded in my analysis of these developments in the above work, I have no reason here to conclude otherwise:

**Under conditions of neo-colonialism, such patterns of class formation are inevitable and are hardly ever fought successfully by leadership codes. Concerning this very process of class formation, the then ZANU-PF Party's Secretary for Administration, Minister Nyagumbo, declared that the party was finding it difficult to implement the code because 'the leaders have become bourgeois'. Nyagumbo even suggested that the party should call an emergency congress to tell the people that because leaders had acquired property, scientific socialism was difficult to implement (*ibid.*).**

As I have indicated in note 4, this Minister was said to have committed suicide upon the Sandura Commission's revelation of the extent of his own corruption. Our quotation from Marx at the opening of this section could not be more relevant and, *true*. Indeed, as the Lancaster House Agreement sought to accomplish:

**It is these violators of the leadership code ("which they themselves drew up and adopted for implementation") who came to constitute the neo-colonial ruling class, who proclaimed the acceptance of the reality of capitalism; that "it could not be destroyed overnight", that (conveniently) "socialism cannot be built in one day!" The neo-colonialism over which the class presided was precisely what the British capitalist state and monopoly/settler capital alliance sought to bring about (*ibid.*).**

Would it not be *reductio ad absurdum* to expect this class to expropriate itself after April 1990 when the LHC can be torn up and a new one drawn up!

A second important but related feature of the LHC which sought to ensure the reproduction of the imperialist-dominated socio-economic system lay in *The Declaration of Rights*. This enshrined a doctrine called "Safeguards Against the Abuse of Majority Power". While, as Ncube and Nzombe point out (*ibid.*, 10), on the face of

prosecutions for perjury as it would be a waste of time and resources. These developments rendered the judiciary itself a "superfluous" and "toothless bulldog". *However, the issue is not one of pardons of persons as such, but of pardons of those persons insofar as they are embodiments of a social category or segment of it, that is, a corrupt petty bourgeoisie bent on the abuse of State office in order to carve out an economic base for itself, in order to achieve primitive accumulation of capital in a primitive way.*

When the University of Zimbabwe students recently sought to commemorate their 29th September 1988 anti-corruption demonstration, they were viciously dealt with by riot police, leading to the arrest of several of them on charges of publishing subversive literature. This was followed by the closure of the University. The Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) secretary-general, Morgan Tsvangirai, was arrested after issuing a statement in support of the students and criticising the closure of the University. He was subsequently charged with being a South African agent! And this, after the court had ordered his release on the grounds that he had no case to answer! Judging from the Presidential pronouncements on these matters, there was a very remote possibility indeed that the Presidential powers would be used in favour of students or the labour leader. The labour leader was subsequently released with all charges against him dropped. Clearly, there is no doubt that the State had intended to harass the citizen purely for bravely supporting students' actions and for criticising the closure of the University. A few months later, the arrested students were also released and charges against them dropped - all had already been thrown out by the courts in any case - supposedly in order to repair State-student relations! There was no use of Presidential prerogatives in these releases as such.

*Perhaps the more important point to note is that the President is the personification of the classes that rule, and those classes are not the working classes, but the combination of the imperialist, the local white settler and the black petty bourgeois blocs. The conjunction of forces at the level of the State simply presents a balance of power which is currently tilted not in favour of the working classes - on whom many students have their social base - but of the latter classes. Again, one can suggest that the thesis argued here is confirmed by the class basis and orientation of the Members of Parliament appointed by the President after the abolition of the reserved white seats. (See note 3). Organised labour actually protested against these appointments and argued for their own representatives to be also appointed. This was rejected on the grounds that if the workers were members of ZANU-PF, then they have the petty bourgeoisie in Parliament (mainly business people) representing them already! They were further advised not to seek to have their own "selfish sectional interests" represented! Apparently, only the captains of industry and agrarian capital could seek such representation!*

## **THE NATURE OF THE ZIMBABWEAN STATE**

In the work edited by Stoneman, Davies attempts, through a sociological interrogation of State actions, to determine whether Zimbabwe was on a course of "transition" to socialism or not. He elects to consider areas like social services (health and education), nationalisation of industry, wages policies and industrial relations so as to be able to denote the class character of the post-independence State. He concludes that in social services, there has been a quantitative expansion, true, but qualitatively, nothing points to a socialist direction. Instead, a capitalist welfarism is reflected more than a transition

*production*. (See Section 16 of the Constitution: Freedom from Deprivation of Property). This sanctity was to be guarded not just by such constitutional provision but by a mechanism which required that there be 20 reserved parliamentary seats for white settlers in the new 100-member House of Assembly and 10 in the Senate. To change the Constitution before 10 years was up, the new governing party would need a 100 percent affirmative vote of the parliamentarians. The reserved white seats could not be abolished within seven years from the date of independence without a 100 percent affirmative vote in the House of Assembly (See Ncube and Nzombe: *Zimbabwe Law Review*, Vol. 5, 1987, 8).

This was particularly damaging with respect to *the land issue*. To bar the expropriation of land from settlers who had usurped it was to slap in the face the entire mass of the colonized people for whom *land was a burning issue*. However, white settlers would not have voted for the abolition of the parliamentary seats. Thus, their seven years in Parliament was guaranteed. Neither could the Constitution be changed within those seven years without their consent, thus major constitutional changes were out] of the question for at least 10 years! /

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Yet again we can enumerate some leads in answer to this question with an analysis of more recent developments. *So far these presidential powers have not been used in the interests of the working classes.* The nation was shocked to hear the Presidential pardon for the ex-Minister of State for Political Affairs, Frederick Shava, who had been jailed for lying to the Sandura Commission of Inquiry into the Distribution of Motor Vehicles. The nation further got a shock when the President declared that "perjury was not a crime" and it was not what the Commission was inquiring into. This pronouncement, together with the pardon, prompted the Attorney-General to declare that there would be no more

thrown out and a new one put in place, we shall see a new Constitution reflecting the desire to establish a full national democratic revolution and a basis for a real transition to socialism. However, developments during the first half of the 1980s (or to date) present a gloomy picture of the possibility for this development. (3) Again, I noted in the above work:

**There has been an acceleration of petty accumulation by some petty bourgeois elements, particularly in the areas where imperialist capital had little interest. These areas include petty trading in rural and urban areas, fringe import and export businesses, small hotel and night-club ventures, housing and apartment holding and renting, landholding and pig and poultry production, and so on" (and today I can add the corruption involving swindling of State funds, violating allocation of vehicle privileges and buying vehicles and selling them at exorbitant prices - even violating price control regulations in the process) (4), "areas which even the Lancaster House Constitution hoped would provide opportunities for accumulation by a new indigenous black pro-capitalist class." (*ibid.*).**

In fact, this class formation which imperialism had gambled on its developing over a period of seven to 10 years accelerated immediately after independence. That is why I insist that the Lancaster House Conference and Agreement were the start of a process of transplanting class seedlings from capitalist nursery seedbeds! As early as 1983, Mr Mugabe, then Prime Minister, attacked what he termed "bourgeois Ministers, civil servants and people in public office" who were accumulating wealth! At the Second Congress of his party, ZANU-PF, the following year, a "Leadership Code" was adopted and for Mugabe, the party leaders had two options: "to quit their posts or to relinquish their property, 'for they could not have it both ways'" (*ibid.*).

The Leadership Code itself forbids party leaders and their relatives from owning businesses, receiving more than one salary, serving as director of a private firm or business organised for profit, or owning real estate or other property from which they would receive rents or other royalties or own more than 50 acres of land (*ibid.*, 263).

As I concluded in my analysis of these developments in the above work, I have no reason here to conclude otherwise:

**Under conditions of neo-colonialism, such patterns of class formation are inevitable and are hardly ever fought successfully by leadership codes. Concerning this very process of class formation, the then ZANU-PF Party's Secretary for Administration, Minister Nyagumbo, declared that the party was finding it difficult to implement the code because 'the leaders have become bourgeois'. Nyagumbo even suggested that the party should call an emergency congress to tell the people that because leaders had acquired property, scientific socialism was difficult to implement (*ibid.*).**

As I have indicated in note 4, this Minister was said to have committed suicide upon the Sandura Commission's revelation of the extent of his own corruption. Our quotation from Marx at the opening of this section could not be more relevant and, *true*. Indeed, as the Lancaster House Agreement sought to accomplish:

**It is these violators of the leadership code ("which they themselves drew up and adopted for implementation") who came to constitute the neo-colonial ruling class, who proclaimed the acceptance of the reality of capitalism; that "it could not be destroyed overnight", that (conveniently) "socialism cannot be built in one day!" The neo-colonialism over which the class presided was precisely what the British capitalist state and monopoly/settler capital alliance sought to bring about (*ibid.*).**

Would it not *bQreductio ad absurdum* to expect this class to expropriate itself after April 1990 when the LHC can be torn up and a new one drawn up!

A second important but related feature of the LHC which sought to ensure the reproduction of the imperialist-dominated socio-economic system lay in *The Declaration of Rights*. This enshrined a doctrine called "Safeguards Against the Abuse of Majority Power". While, as Ncube and Nzombe point out (*ibid.*, 10), on the face of

prosecutions for perjury as it would be a waste of time and resources. These developments rendered the judiciary itself a "superfluous" and "toothless bulldog". *However, the issue is not one of pardons of persons as such, but of pardons of those persons insofar as they are embodiments of a social category or segment of it, that is, a corrupt petty bourgeoisie bent on the abuse of State office in order to carve out an economic base for itself, in order to achieve primitive accumulation of capital in a primitive way.*

When the University of Zimbabwe students recently sought to commemorate their 29th September 1988 anti-corruption demonstration, they were viciously dealt with by riot police, leading to the arrest of several of them on charges of publishing subversive literature. This was followed by the closure of the University. The Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) secretary-general, Morgan Tsvangirai, was arrested after issuing a statement in support of the students and criticising the closure of the University. He was subsequently charged with being a South African agent! And this, after the court had ordered his release on the grounds that he had no case to answer! Judging from the Presidential pronouncements on these matters, there was a very remote possibility indeed that the Presidential powers would be used in favour of students or the labour leader. The labour leader was subsequently released with all charges against him dropped. Clearly, there is no doubt that the State had intended to harass the citizen purely for bravely supporting students' actions and for criticising the closure of the University. A few months later, the arrested students were also released and charges against them dropped - all had already been thrown out by the courts in any case - supposedly in order to repair State-student relations! There was no use of Presidential prerogatives in these releases as such.

*Perhaps the more important point to note is that the President is the personification of the classes that rule, and those classes are not the working classes, but the combination of the imperialist, the local white settler and the black petty bourgeois blocs. The conjunction of forces at the level of the State simply presents a balance of power which is currently tilted not in favour of the working classes - on whom many students have their social base - but of the latter classes. Again, one can suggest that the thesis argued here is confirmed by the class basis and orientation of the Members of Parliament appointed by the President after the abolition of the reserved white seats. (See note 3). Organised labour actually protested against these appointments and argued for their own representatives to be also appointed. This was rejected on the grounds that if the workers were members of ZANU-PF, then they have the petty bourgeoisie in Parliament (mainly business people) representing them already! They were further advised not to seek to have their own "selfish sectional interests" represented! Apparently, only the captains of industry and agrarian capital could seek such representation!*

## **THE NATURE OF THE ZIMBABWEAN STATE**

In the work edited by Stoneman, Davies attempts, through a sociological interrogation of State actions, to determine whether Zimbabwe was on a course of "transition" to socialism or not. He elects to consider areas like social services (health and education), nationalisation of industry, wages policies and industrial relations so as to be able to denote the class character of the post-independence State. He concludes that in social services, there has been a quantitative expansion, true, but qualitatively, nothing points to a socialist direction. Instead, a capitalist welfarism is reflected more than a transition

to socialism (Stoneman, *op.cit.*, 22-23).

On nationalisation (in fact, there has not been anything of this sort in Zimbabwe), rather, on State intervention and public investment in productive activities, he finds that there has only been a rescue of capitalist "lame ducks" while the parastatals are mainly colonial inheritances which have not been transformed. Indeed, with the 1987-88 Parliamentary Committee of Inquiry Reports on these parastatals, the same attacks on them have been made as those of elsewhere in Africa. On this, Davies concludes:

**Thus it can be argued that in this important area of State intervention, we cannot be certain what the class character of the intervention has been. It could at best be argued that there has been some advance made in laying the foundations for State control of industry upon which a transitional policy could be based; but it could equally be the basis for the development of the petty- and grand-bourgeoisie (*ibid.*).**

I think we can be certain that if there is a class that is nourished on the basis of these interventions, that class is, certainly not of workers and peasants. For, as Davies says, "the class character of state-owned organisations depends entirely on the class character of the State..." (*ibid.*). I argued in the same work that perhaps we can be sure of which class has the basis of State intervention as its economic protoplasm in neo-colonial Zimbabwe:

**And in the attempt to establish a foothold in the economic base, the petty bourgeoisie has at its disposal the apparatus of State. Hence the buying of shares by the State (so-called State participation) in some sub-sectors or branches of the economy, mainly in the ailing ones! (the "lame ducks" that Davies refers to!).**

Nevertheless, this process accelerates a neo-colonial class formation in which a certain type of anti-socialist bureaucratic petty bourgeoisie develops through appointments to "Boards of Directors" and "shadow" managements of the State-cum-private sector ventures. This petty bourgeoisie becomes an ally of imperialism because:

- the general structure of the political economy dominated by imperialism has not changed;
- it is only a "shadow" management implementing real decisions which are taken in the metropolis, the proportion of shares held by the host State notwithstanding. This shadow petty bourgeois partner is at a disadvantage since the imperialist partners have more knowledge available to them concerning the productive operation of the enterprise.

(Here I mention the example of Rio Tinto whose Empress Mine was rescued by the State from collapse. At the occasion, its financial director declared that it would be the best scenario if the Government of Zimbabwe owned 51 percent of the shares but "left the company to run the management without any interference from Government.... After all, they (the company) knew the business.")

- without a radical element armed with a proletarian ideology and having organic links with the masses, particularly with the working class, being organiser of this anti-imperialism, the reactionary petty bourgeoisie fills these management posts either with an incompetent element that is ideologically bankrupt in terms of the philosophy of socialist transformation, or that is anti-socialist pure and simple, and sees its appointment as an opportunity to establish links with foreign capital for purposes of carving a base for its own primitive accumulation. Corrupt appointments on the basis of "class friends", "ethnic comrades", or "regional home boys" take precedence over radical ideological inclination, competence and qualification for the job and recognition that the task is a struggle which is part of

the general class struggle against imperialism." (Here I cite the upheavals in the Board meetings of a parastatal, the Industrial Development Corporation - by which *The Sunday Mail* of 22 September 1985 was precipitated to urge the Government to appoint personnel on the basis of *merit* rather *ethnicity!*) (*ibid.*, 272 - 273).

In the areas of wage policy and industrial relations, Davies acknowledged the progressive nature of the setting of minimum wages. However, the problem with this is that the mechanism of wage increases has become that of wage increase controls. Indeed, those workers who have bargained with their employers and achieved certain margins of increases have seen those agreements nullified by government. Some, like the leather and footwear industry workers were threatened with imprisonment after striking for implementation of what they had agreed with their employers (5). The imprisonment of employees has been a mechanism the Zimbabwean post-independence State has resorted to on a number of occasions, for example, the striking junior doctors in June 1989, the striking Posts and Telecommunications Corporation technicians and the National Railways of Zimbabwe artisans around the same time!

In industrial relations in general, a new law came into existence, the Labour Relations Act (LRA) (1985) to repeal the pre-existing colonial legislation. However, although it recognised the right of trade unions to exist, it gave immense powers to the Minister of Labour, and its wide range of what are called "essential services", in which no strikes are allowed, rendered trade unions "superfluous". In fact, both the LRA and the political attitude to the labour movement subordinates labour to the State and political *party, yet there is no effective representation of the working-class in any of the organs of State and party, neither is there a radical pro-working class element strategically placed within the leadership of the party for the working-class cause to be effectively advanced.* As Davies concludes:

**The policy of subordinating unions to the ruling party is in form consistent with socialism. But in a situation like Zimbabwe's, where the party is not a vanguard party and where its class position is still ambiguous, it must be regarded as a means for control rather than for the advancement of the organised working class (*ibid.*, 25).**

Davies concludes that Zimbabwe is simply on a road of capitalist development with a welfare-reformist character to it. He says:

**... we find it difficult to explain why Zimbabwe should be regarded as transitional rather than just capitalist; it is not at all clear whether the base for transition is being strengthened or not. The transitional image is largely imparted by the self-assertions by ZANU that this is its policy. Objectively, however, it is just easy to argue that the Zimbabwean programme is one of capitalist development rather than of transition to socialism (*ibid.*, 29-30).**

*The problem we are faced with when seeking to characterise the present State is that we get locked in the debate on whether it is this or that, socialist or capitalist, neo-colonial or post-white settler colonial!* Although characterising the present is necessary in order to plan a strategy for the way forward, *there must always be a guarding against the drowning of thought as to which way forward.* For example, I have criticised Mandaza's contentment with describing the "post-white settler colonial state", an essentially neo-colonial state - never mind the continued social and economic dominance of white settlers who, by the way, mostly hold national citizenship in the post-independence period (or am I naively expecting that they should be!!) - and *failing to categorically state the way forward!* Similarly, criticisms can be made of Mr Davies who shows what the post-colonial state really is, but only leaves "implied" in his discussion what his hopes for the future are!

## CONCLUSION

*Objective analysis must take a clear partisan political position.*

In conclusion, therefore, I would repeat what I stated elsewhere:

**At Lancaster House, the class forces that objectively had the capacity to be the leading force in the transformation of the mode of production were not represented organically for this purpose, except as the the people in a "people/power bloc" contradiction led by a petty bourgeois class of nationahst militants. We cannot, therefore, justifiably measure the actions of the present Zimbabwean state on the basis of a scientific socialist yardstick, for the socialist project was not seriously on the agenda and *could not have been, without the working class either being organised, or represented, or acting as a combatant class on the stage (ibid., 275).***

Zimbabwe's political economy is dominated by imperialism. The social and economic dominance of the white settler component is simply an indicator of the high degree of development of capitalism in Zimbabwe. It does not alter or soften Zimbabwe's being neo-colonial and presided over by a neo-colonial state which has over the years reconciled itself with imperialist and local settler capital - in a word - with imperialist-dominated capitalism, whether from South Africa or across the seas!

Therefore:

*The anti-imperialist struggle in Zimbabwe can only be genuinely prosecuted if a radical pro-working class element emerges in the field of the present class struggle, to lead all other sections that have a grievance against imperialism in a struggle to achieve a complete national democratic revolution and establish the conditions for the transition to socialism. For this struggle to succeed, there must be a leading role for the working-class and poor peasantry allied with the anti-imperialist forces (ibid., 273).*

## NOTES

1. Perhaps this is not fair on Mandaza since he, in fact, does undertake an interrogation of the nationalist petty bourgeoisie and concludes that it has never been and could never have been "anti-capitalist". It was always pro-capitalist and pro-Western and simply wanted to "wear the shoes of the white settlers" (see *ibid.*, pp. 30-33). The point, however, is that Mandaza's treatise is contradicted sharply by the apologia for the petty bourgeoisie that it contains. Thus, his whole discourse becomes more descriptive rather than *analytical* and *explanatory*. It ends up lacking thoroughly in terms of logical consistency.

2. Again see Mandaza (*ibid.*) for the reference to Britain's long history of connivance and duplicity on the "Rhodesia Question" right up to its clear alliance with the "internal settlement" experiment at the Lancaster House Conference. See also Verrier, A; 1986, and Davidow, J; 1984.

3. The policy of reconciliation which was pronounced at independence was clearly a reconciliation mainly with settler capital. This was seen in the appointment of representatives of commerce, industry and agriculture into Parliament by the President after the abolition of the reserved white seats.

4. This latter corruption actually led to the historic demonstration by the University of Zimbabwe students on 29 September, 1988. Apart from an attack on corruption, the students' historic document of the same date attacked all the features of a classical neo-colonial state. Although violently repressed (and grants suspended for some students), the State was forced to appoint the now famous "Commission of Inquiry into the Distribution of Motor Vehicles" under the chairmanship of the Judge President, Mr. Justice W.R. Sandura (Reports published March 1989 and August 1989, respectively). The revelations of this Commission led to the downfall of several Ministers (and the death of one) and some top civil servants, the would-be revolutionaries!

5. See *The Worker*, November 1987. The Minister of Labour, Manpower Planning and Social Welfare declared at the end of August 1989 that he would not hesitate "to use emergency powers to deal with 'wildcat' strikes". See *The Herald*, 01-09-89.

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