

of the complacency nurtured by a history of indifference towards the original human settlers of the continent.

THE URGENT need, however, is not just a backward-looking examination of land rights as they existed in pre-colonial times.

The problem is to define systems of property rights and patterns of land use which recognise the right of every human being, everywhere in the world, to share in the natural resources of the globe.

This might entail, in the case of the Amazon, consciously deciding to leave alone the existing land users. For mankind has a direct interest in preserving the forests of the basin for their vital oxygen-giving properties on which we all depend.³ It is therefore in everyone's interests to preserve the traditional cultural practices as the most effective.

Where such special considerations do not apply, it is possible to integrate both the aboriginal populations and the recent-comers into single social systems which operate in terms of justice and economic equilibrium.

Ecuador's distribution of land rights, for instance, is designed to create social friction. According to the latest figures (1974), 28% of all landholdings are smaller than one hectare; together they cover only 0.8% of cultivated land. At the other extreme, farms over 1,000 hectares account for only 0.12% of all holdings but cover 20% of cultivated land. The problem in Ecuador, as Gustavo Rodriguez reports, "is fundamentally a land problem".⁴

The challenge is to ensure that, whoever uses the land, the benefits are shared equally among all of Ecuador's citizens, be they European commercial farmers or Indian subsistence farmers in the Andes. The fiscal mechanism for securing this end is outlined on pages 36-39. Until steps are taken to actively define and implement such a solution, the conflicts over the control of natural resources will continue to jeopardise peace. War can be the only end, when one competing group loses its supreme power to repress its neighbours.

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The Wrecking Of A New Constitution

REBEL PREMIER Ian Smith of Rhodesia shed crocodile tears when he proclaimed the end of white domination over the country's Parliament.

The event was heralded as the end of 88 years of white rule. In fact, while the political composition of Parliament is changed, Smith ensured that the economic structure guarantees white control in perpetuity (barring the outcome of war). For everything turns on who owns the land.

Robert Mugabe, leader of the Patriotic Front's guerrillas, has announced that an independent Zimbabwe would nationalise foreign-owned land,¹ thus beginning a restructuring of the economy and a redistribution of income.

The importance of this single element – land tenure – in Rhodesian society was summarised by the guerrilla organisation in a statement last year:

The Land Tenure Act, the Magna Carta of Rhodesian racialism, remains the principal law governing race relations and the rights of individuals on the basis of race.²

Ian Smith has ensured that the land tenure system which guaranteed exploitation was written into the new constitution under the internal agreement reached with the black leaders.

AFRICAN resistance to the white colonialists was crushed in the 1890s, and land owned by tribes of indigenous peoples was appropriated under the Southern Rhodesia Order in Council. Thus began the systematic acquisition by white farmers of much of the most fertile land.

But it was not just farmers who moved in on the lush land. The Chartered Company, which made deep in-roads into the heart of Africa, transferred enormous areas to so-called "development companies" which turned out to consist of

speculators who were not interested in development!³

The "natives" were herded onto reserves, but after the Matabele Rebellion it was decided that they ought to be given additional land. But as Hanna records:

It was understood that the land allocated as native reserves must be land which had not been alienated to Europeans: the vast, empty spaces in European ownership on the high veld were sacrosanct.

By the 1920s the reserves were 1m acres smaller than an earlier (1902) settlement. About 23% of the land consisted of communal, rent-free reserves; 32% was owned by Europeans, and 45% was Crown land.⁴

In 1914 a commission was appointed to report on the reserves, with the explicit instruction to take account of the needs of black Africans, and to allocate enough land to meet their requirements *for all future time*. It was not to be.

For the whites who trekked from the south with guns to stake their claims to new territory had taken to heart the words of Rhodes on December 19, 1893: "You will be the first entitled to select land, and you will deal with it after provision has been made for the natives.... It is your right, for you have conquered the country."

HISTORICALLY the land of Rhodesia was divided 50:50 between blacks and whites. But the division is not as equitable as that split suggests.

For the whites consist of 3.5% of the population (1978), and their half incorporated most of the fertile land, enjoying easiest access to the major industrial and infrastructural installations (which enhance land values and are important for marketing produce).

It has been calculated that the white to black differential in per capita land availability is 88:1.⁵ The skewed distribution of natural



Ian Smith with Salisbury's new Prime Minister-elect, Bishop Abel Muzorewa of the UANC, and Ndabaningi Sithole.

resources has taken its toll, evident in declining income to African farmers and diminishing productivity of the over-exploited soil.⁶

This effect was a calculated one. White farmers, fearing the competition from the efficient black cultivators, set out to undermine their possession of the basic resource — land — on which they relied.⁷

Thus, in the countryside, there is not only social tension but an ecological crisis of ever-increasing proportions. The whites rigged the economic structure to line their pockets in the quickest possible time, and the massive exodus of Europeans in the past two years demonstrates the unwillingness of many of them to hang around and pay the price in the future.

IAN SMITH engineered his internal settlement on the basis of certain concessions in the law, which he promoted as contributing fundamentally to the reform of the socio-economic system.

The Land Tenure Act was abolished, followed by the publication of the new republic constitution which incorporated a Declaration of Rights. Among these rights was protection against the deprivation of property. So what were the economic concessions?

There were none!

Lip-service was paid to the right of blacks to buy land formerly reserved for whites, but there are economic and legal barriers to the effective equalisation of opportunities vis a vis the country's natural resources.

Few poor blacks will be able to afford to buy the fertile land and supplement their inadequate land-holdings on the Tribal Trust Lands, which are below optimum economic size because of enforced subdivisions.

The same economic obstacle exists with the desirable schools, which have

raised their fees to ensure that few blacks will have the chance to make use of their nominal legal right of access!

Although residential areas have now been opened up to blacks, the regulations effectively hinder families from enjoying this opportunity, even if they had the cash to do so. For there is a provision that formerly white residential areas are limited to occupation by single family units, i.e. parents and children. This does not allow for the African's extended family system, in which grandparents also live as part of an integral family.

ON THE OTHER hand, the reserves are being opened up to the whites: and they will exploit this opportunity.

For the communal ethic preserved in a fragile form on the tribal trust lands will be dismantled in stages — instead of being built upon, as proposed by some of Smith's black political partners — to free anyone to own the title to the land they occupy; the first stage of this process of alienation of communal rights begins with commercial and industrial areas.

This will free the white-owned corporations to acquire land for their private, instead of communal, benefit!

We can doubt, therefore, that the so-called reform of the land tenure system will diffuse the benefits; past experience throughout the world suggests that, on the contrary, there will be even further concentration of ownership, intensification of exploitation of the people, and increasing disparity of incomes.

Our suspicions, in fact, are intensified when we learn that even South Africa's Prime Minister, Pieter Botha, has now stated that he is willing to review their 1936 Land Act. Under this, land is divided up on a ratio of 15.4% (blacks) to 84.6% (whites),

even though about 70% of the population is black.

Yet South Africa has no intention of weakening its policy of using territorial segregation as an instrument for social and economic control.

IT SHOULD be clear by now that the concessions under the internal agreement do not satisfy the guerrillas.

The transitional period has not led to greater social harmony, mutual respect and reduced casualties. On the contrary, there has been — and predictably will continue to be — a growing death rate in the battle with nationalists.

The new regime in Salisbury, aided by its political cosmetics, will now rely on securing western military help to prop itself up against the onslaught of the nationalists. This is the reason given by Ian Smith for not quitting politics, despite international pressure (especially from Britain) on him to do so.

For the black Africans, however, the present options are loaded against them whoever wins: there is little comfort in knowing that some of the landlords are now black! Nor would the nationalisation of land under the Marxist creed advocated by Mugabe improve the prospect of political liberty and economic progress for the black Africans.

The ideal model for land reform — one which would form the basis for a constitution based on social justice and economic efficiency — is outlined below.

It is endorsed by some of the leading black politicians, and so is more than a pipe-dream. Only time will tell whether they can peacefully succeed in over-coming the entrenched interests of the white land-owning class and begin to transform Zimbabwe into a multi-racial society based on the equal enjoyment of natural resources.

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Fred Harrison analyses Ian Smith's strategy to retain control