

philosophy; but now they run more risk of being little more than figureheads.

The history of workers' and students' movements is traced through legislation and salient events. This history is one that moves from something fairly free, maybe becoming more radical and eventually facing banning to, in the end, the establishment of a tame and docile national organisation, easily manipulated by the government administrative machine. This process is outlined, sometimes by participants in the key events, and backed with convincing arguments.

An area in which conclusive proof is, in the nature of things, more difficult to offer is that, it is argued, in which growing bureaucratic control of producer prices, selling conditions, choice of crops to plant, supply of inputs and even how the crop is cultivated, is a direct cause of the decline in Tanzania's agricultural production. Figures are massed in support of the argument, which is plausible enough, and they undoubtedly show a more or less steady decline from 1966 to 1981 in agricultural production per head of population for both food and cash crops. Growing bureaucratic control, first by eliminating the middlemen in favour of co-operative unions, then by dismantling the co-operative movement, and now by a return to State-controlled co-operatives, has accompanied the decline in production. The tables showing the simultaneous decline in the price paid to the peasant producer and the total marketed amount of cotton and cashew nuts would be more cogent evidence if they were extended beyond the 5-6 year periods (different periods for each crop) given by Mapolu. It might then be easier to identify particular changes in amounts grown and marketed with particular changes in producer prices or with the introduction of further government control over the whole process of peasant production.

In addition to arguing their cases effectively as regards developments in Tanzania over the past 30 years, the authors have given us an analysis of a case that is not too different from most countries in this part of Africa. The book, therefore, needs to be widely read.

This reviewer prefers to avoid nitpicking about typographical errors, but it needs to be pointed out that one of the lines enumerating 'total non-agricultural use' in table III, ch 5, should be 'total agricultural use'; on page 164, paragraph 2, 14th line would make more sense in the overall context if the word 'liberal' were changed to 'illiberal'; and the second sentence of the second paragraph on page 89 makes no sense; presumably a line is missing.

Reviewed by Brian MacGarry, Silivera House, Harare.

The State and Agriculture in Africa, Thandika Mkandawire and Naceur Bourenane (eds), CODESRIA (Dakar), London, 1987 (385pp, price unknown).

Hazarding a philosophical synopsis of independent Africa's transition to sovereign nationhood, one journalist once stated, "While it may have taken 100 years to put colonialism on a sound footing in Africa, it will probably take twice that time to eradicate its effects on the continent". Indeed, most independent African governments soon discover, to their frustration, that the profound processes and mechanisms used to entrench colonialism are not so easily dismantled or replaced by those purporting to promote the lofty ideals of freedom and independence that characterise nationalist campaigns for popular support.

This collection of articles, by some of Africa's eminent scholars, highlights the many policy imponderables that African politicians, government bureaucrats and technocrats find themselves confronted with as they try to redress the economic imbalances of their colonial past. Significantly, in all the 17 countries covered under this study, a common feature is the universal acceptance of the fact that agriculture and food production are critical to their economic survival. In addition agriculture and food production are important in their attempts to divest themselves of the more fundamental elements of post-independence neo-colonialism, or, more positively, towards attaining what is now popularly known as 'economic independence'.

Four distinct scenarios emerge from these studies:

First, that Africa's food crisis is deepening and not reducing, so that agriculture and food production must, of necessity, take top priority in the development strategies of these countries;

Second, that African governments need to adopt pragmatic and realistic policies that will address this critical area of their economic activities;

Third, that government officials and other state functionaries find themselves strait-jacketed by political, social and other extraneous considerations in the process of policy formulation. This often leads to ill-conceived or inappropriate policies being adopted in their efforts to tackle the issue of agriculture and food production;

Last, that colonial economic superstructures inherited at independence have proved more resistant to change than was apparently expected, forcing most governments to maintain the status quo.

In examining these complex issues, the authors have isolated the particular circumstances of each country, taking into account different ecological conditions, types of colonialism or subsequent decolonisation, social and cultural aspects, the nature of the states, and the strategies and economic policies that they have pursued at any given time. As Mkandawire points out in his introduction, it becomes clear from these studies that the state is, in varying degrees, involved in a wide range of roles in the economic activities of these countries. Almost without exception, governments evolve policies that they consider appropriate for their particular economic circumstances and then create or facilitate the creation of administration structures and institutions for the implementation of such policies.

In these articles, the authors examine the various forces interacting within a given state which influence or cause the failure of policies and programmes for agriculture and food production. Individual case studies highlight the widely divergent perceptions that Africans have of the continent's agrarian crisis and the difficult choices that policy makers face in their approaches to the problem. Notably, it becomes clear from these studies that the so called success stories in African agriculture are those countries that have maintained the status quo. These are countries that have retained the capitalist mode of production, which consigns indigenous peasants to the peripheral role of suppliers of labour, while the neo-colonial state or its agents retain the means of production.

A random choice of Malawi typifies this category of states. In his paper entitled "Agricultural and Food Policy in Malawi" Guy Mhone outlines reasons for Malawi's much acclaimed success, drawing stark comparison between the roles of the marginalised peasant sector and the 'Achikumbwe' estate type of farming which is

heavily subsidised by the government. Swaziland and Mauritius are other examples of countries which have maintained agricultural production systems inherited from their colonial past. In these and many other African countries, the pre-independence rhetoric about improving the living standards of the masses has not been matched with concrete actions to meet these goals.

On the other hand, Zambia typifies the confusion which assailed many newly independent countries in their efforts to bring about an equitable development pattern in rural areas, particularly with regard to agriculture and food production. The study shows that in many instances, political considerations tended to influence policy formulation to an unrealistic extent. In the case of Mali, Kary Dembele points out the discrepancies in policy rhetoric and implementation in that country's First Five Year National Development Plan. The study on Burkina Faso shows that the country's agricultural development programme failed due to ambiguous policies that were not supported by a coherent implementation strategy.

From these articles, it becomes evident that colonial attitudes and strategies which accorded priority to the production of so called industrial crops, such as cotton, tobacco, etc. at the expense of food crops (ie maize, sorghum) still remain widely prevalent in a majority of African states. The large scale commercial producer still enjoys preferential treatment in government support, while his peasant counterpart continues to eke out a precarious existence from the arid regions of his motherland. Indeed, while the manipulation of commodity prices and marketing structures are perceived by some African governments to be major incentives for commercial agricultural production, other elements such as credit facilities, input subsidies and infrastructural developments are seen as playing an increasingly important role by others.

Also worth noting is the fact that although the papers allude to an almost pervasive obsession by African countries to produce for export, at the expense of domestic food crops, it is not clear whether this is merely a colonial legacy or whether perpetuation of this practice is deliberate to an extent where it can be linked with the orchestrated ineptitude of emergent African states.

This is an extremely useful book for politicians, government officials and those whose responsibilities include the implementation of government policy in their countries.

Reviewed by Desmond Kumbuka, Agricultural and Rural Development Authority, Harare.

Peasant Economics: Farm households and agrarian development, Frank Ellis, Wye Studies in Agricultural and Rural Development, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1988 (257pp, £11.95 pbk, £35 hbk).

This is an undergraduate's text on the economic analysis of peasant household agricultural production, although it could also be used as a graduate text in rural development and relevant social sciences. It would also be useful to natural scientists interested in developing commodities and technologies appropriate to the small farm sector. It gives a good basic understanding of the economic principles which govern decision-making in peasant households. There is, however, one serious flaw in the interpretation of comparative advantage which spoils an otherwise excellent book.