

BOOK REVIEWS

Wangli Kolia: Coal, Capital and Labour in Colonial Zimbabwe 1894-1954
By Ian Phimister. Harare, Baobab Books; Johannesburg, Witwatersrand University Press, 1994, xiv, 194 pp., ISBN 0-908311-69-9; 1-86814-279-5, Z\$65.

This book traces the history of capital accumulation and class struggle on the Wankie Colliery of Zimbabwe between 1894-1954. It also analyses the relationship between settler colonialism and imperialism in Zimbabwe. The author adopts a gendered approach to the study by capturing the experiences of women on the colliery in general and their role during the 1954 strike in particular.

The book begins by introducing the political circumstances surrounding the establishment of the colliery and the prospecting and speculation that took place in the 1890s. With the floatation of the Wankie (Rhodesia) Coal, Railway and Exploration Company Ltd in 1899, the development of coal mining was on the road to success.

From the outset, the problem faced by the colliery was that of shortage of labour. In order to solve its labour crisis, the colliery relied on indentured *chibaro* labour supplied by the Rhodesia Native Labour Bureau (RNLB). In an effort to lower production costs and expand output, the colliery's working day was extended and violence was used on the local Black population since 'The only thing that will appeal to the raw native is the sjambok' (p. 9). However, the workers, especially those who worked underground, suffered from various diseases (eg ulcers and tuberculosis) as a consequence of the nature of their work. The labour intensive nature of the mining methods meant that production could only be expanded, at least in the short term, at the cost and lives of the Black labourers. Thus with state support, the colliery was saved from periodic crises of accumulation through the supply of cheap Black labour.

The author argues that for a long time the despotic management at Wankie had relied on a constant supply of 'skilled' White workers. The outbreak of the First World War in 1914 meant that most White workers went to the war front and the few who remained behind turned the shortage of skills to their advantage. In this regard, in 1919 the Rhodesia Mine and General Workers' Association (RMGWA) was formed and it was open to all categories and grades of White miners (p.48). However, whatever demands were brought forward by White workers, the state, in conjunction with capital, always divided the labour movement along racial lines by warning the White workers against 'the possibility of the native superceding the white man in his work' (p. 52).

Phimister gives us a clear picture of the squalid living conditions of Black workers in the compounds which had been established to stabilize the increased labour force. In an effort to seek release from stress, workers sought refuge in such organizations and associations as the Watch Tower and *muchape* movements and resorted to oppressing their wives. Thus for refusing to cook for her husband when he came off night-shift, Famy, wife

of Jerenje, was knocked unconscious with a steel bar (p. 69-70). These inward responses were oblivious to the position of women and would at times become a hindrance to organization. However, the history of the colliery is also a history of strikes — a reflection of the super exploitation of Black workers for purposes of capital accumulation.

The book is well illustrated with maps and photographs which help to give a very vivid picture of the history of the Colliery in all its ramifications *viz.* — the geographical location of the company in the country, key people who were closely associated with the development of the company, labour issues, and other important production activities on the colliery. By using secondary and archival sources, in addition to oral testimony, the author comprehensively documents the history of an aspect of mining whose centrality to the development of the country, if not the subregion, is not in doubt. The book is a welcome addition to the history of mining in colonial Zimbabwe which should find its way into the shelf of every historian, economic historian, political scientist and other scholars who have an interest in the history of the colliery.

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The Transport and Communications Sector in Southern Africa *Edited by S. Ngwenya.* Harare, SAPES Books, 1993, 135 pp., ISBN 0-7974-1224-7, Z\$38.

The book is a sectoral study conducted under the auspices of SAPES and is primarily based on Integration papers on regional cooperation presented at a Southern African Development Community (SADC) conference held in Gaborone in 1991. The study attempts to evaluate the strategy of SADC in the light of the main objectives of the 1980 Lusaka Declaration, involving co-operative development within the group and a reduction of dependence on countries outside it.

In the first three sections of the book, the reader is given a succinct account on the formation of SADC and an overview of the regional transport and communications programme. Of importance is the role played by the Southern African Transport Co-ordination Conference (SATCC) in coordinating the use of existing systems of transport and communications as well as planning and financing new ones.

The body of the book covers specific areas related to ports and transport systems, intra-regional surface transport projects, civil aviation, telecommunications, posts and meteorology. Seven transport corridor systems are covered in detail. The book undertakes an appraisal of each transport corridor in terms of its development, capacity, constraints and performance. An important area covered by the authors is that of freight modal choice which does not solely depend on the least cost route but in most cases the choice of the freight forwarder. The freight forwarder's choice is in turn influenced by considerations related to freight forwarding companies in the transit country, which in most cases are branches of the