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Mining, Nationalism, and Decolonization in Zambia

Interpreting Business Responses to Political Change, 1945–1964

Although cultural and social interpretations of colonialism have enjoyed an undeniable intellectual hegemony in the past two decades, there have nevertheless been indications in recent years of a renewed interest in the material underpinnings of the colonial period and of its terminal phase. Among British historians, particularly, this has been expressed in fresh curiosity about the economic dimensions of the later colonial period and decolonization, focusing on the economic aspirations of Britain and of emerging anti-colonial movements in Africa and elsewhere, relationships between business and the late colonial state, and on the strategies adopted by big business in response to political change in a colonial setting. Earlier interpretations, which emphasised the scope for ›neo-colonialism‹, have been challenged by empirical studies apparently highlighting the repeated failure of big business to defend its interests during the years of colonial ›retreat‹.¹ Although there has been a widening of historical research to include the possible significance to decolonization of larger political developments, above all the Cold War, there has also been a recognition that anti-colonial movements, for example in Africa, often drew their initial momentum from the economic grievances of colonial populations, calls for the redistribution of economic power, and a conviction that only by securing control of a territory's natural and other economic resources could meaningful political independence be achieved.² Although political aspirations might have to take precedence, and although priority might have to be given to winning control over the mechanisms devised by the late colonial state in its pursuit of economic development, it is, perhaps, artificial to separate the political and economic goals pursued by various independence movements: the two complemented and fed one another, and an impatience with the progress of development under colonial rule may have been among the most important accelerants of colonial political mobilization.³ Political nationalism, the aspiration to achieve or recover political sovereignty, therefore had as its natural counterpart the force of economic nationalism, which would become an increasingly attractive solution for developing countries as the age of formal colonial rule came to an end.

This article is a contribution to the historical debates triggered by recent re-evaluations of the relationship between political change and economic interests during the period of decolonization. It examines the case of copper mining in Zambia (previously Northern Rhodesia), which presented an unusual situation in which business was confronted by *two* competing nationalisms – white settler and Black African. Its focus, copper mining, was

1 Important recent examples include *Sarah Stockwell*, *The Business of Decolonization. British Business Strategies in the Gold Coast*, Oxford 2000 and *Nicholas White*, *Business, Government, and the End of Empire: Malaya, 1942–1957*, Oxford 1996.

2 See, for example, *John Darwin*, *What was the late colonial state?*, in: *Itinerario* 23, 1999, S. 73–82; *David W. Throup*, *The Economic and Social Origins of Mau Mau 1945–53*, London 1987; *Frederick Cooper*, *Africa since 1940: The Past of the Present*, Cambridge 2002, S. 38–65, 91–93.

3 For an important discussion of the evolving context of colonial development thinking in the later years of colonial rule, see *Monica M. Van Beusekom* and *Dorothy L. Hodgson*, *Lessons Learned? Development Experiences in the Late Colonial Period*, in: *Journal of African History* 41, 2000, S. 29–33.

a dynamic, volatile and rapidly expanding sector during the later colonial period, one of overwhelming economic importance to the territory, and equally vital, on strategic and economic grounds, to Britain and to its long-term plans for Central Africa.⁴ What gives this case study a particular value to explanations of decolonization is that in Central Africa, the powerful mining industry found itself caught between two contrasting visions of *economic* nationalism, linked only by the common goal of securing control of the mineral resources of Northern Rhodesia in order to pursue differing trajectories of development, one committed to the maintenance of white settler hegemony, the other committed to drawing on mining wealth in order to promote the economic and social development of the Black African majority. The fundamental question to be explored here is how the copper mining industry, the region's most powerful and organised expression of expatriate capital, attempted to negotiate a ›safe‹ passage between these two conflicting sets of aspirations, how it responded to rapid political change during the 1950s and early 1960s, what strategies it evolved to deal with this process, and how far it may itself have become a political ›actor‹ in the events leading to Zambia's independence in 1964, attempting to influence their outcome in its own long-term interests and, perhaps, opting to support the contender for post-colonial leadership whose brand of economic and political nationalism the mining industry judged to be the least threatening. Finally, an attempt will be made to gauge the degree of co-ordination within the mining industry as it confronted these tasks, and the scope for divergent attitudes and strategies between the two expatriate-controlled firms which dominated Zambian mining in this period.

From its inception in the late 1920s/early 1930s, copper mining in Northern Rhodesia attracted political controversy, especially concerning the distribution of the wealth it generated. White settlers in both Northern Rhodesia, under direct British rule, and in Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), which enjoyed a unique ›semi-colonial‹ status after 1923, dreamed of creating a territorial bloc under their control, fuelled largely by copper revenues. Moreover, first settlers, and subsequently African nationalists, raised the possibility of nationalising the mining industry, to give them unquestioned control over its development. Similarly, successive colonial governments, the settler lobby and African nationalists periodically showed interest in imposing special taxes on mining, to fund economic and social development, or to ease Northern Rhodesia's regular budgetary problems. Labour relations in the mining industry formed an equally sensitive political issue, centred on the exclusion of African workers from most categories of skilled work, and the growing, and mutually reinforcing, militancy of both European and African labour. After 1945, both mining groups on the Copperbelt, the American-controlled Rhodesian Selection Trust (RST) and the South African-controlled Anglo American Corporation, enjoyed buoyant demand, fuelled by rearmament and the Korean War, and boom conditions produced a period of growing profitability, confidence and expansion.⁵ Yet the Copperbelt also faced increased competition, thanks to the global expansion of the copper industry, the escalating challenge of cheaper substitutes for copper, and rising costs as operations became more technically demanding, and labour more expensive. The mining groups' response was to attempt to cut wage costs, and, imitating the mining industry in the neighbouring Belgian Congo, to employ an increasing proportion of relatively cheap African labour, a policy described as African ›progression‹ or ›advancement‹.⁶ This brought them into conflict with

4 Many of the themes raised in this article receive more detailed discussion in *Larry J. Butler, Copper Empire: Mining and the Colonial State in Northern Rhodesia, c.1930–1964*, Basingstoke 2007.

5 *Simon Cunningham, The Copper Industry in Zambia: Foreign Mining Companies in a Developing Country*, New York 1981, S. 34.

6 On the precedents of developments in the Belgian Congo, see *John Higginson, A Working Class in the Making: Belgian Colonial Labor Policy, Private Enterprise, and the African Mine-worker, 1907–1951*, Madison 1989, S. 130–152.

the powerful white mineworkers' union, which had exploited wartime conditions to secure a ›colour bar‹ on the Copperbelt, reserving the most skilled categories of work for white miners.⁷ Determined to maintain its members' privileged position, the Mine Workers Union (MWU) insisted on the principle of ›equal pay for equal work‹ which, if implemented, would have robbed African advancement of its value to the mining industry. Simultaneously, the mining groups were coming to accept the reality of an increasingly ›stabilised‹, or settled, African workforce. Given the swollen costs of providing for the needs of these workers and their dependents, extracting the maximum value from African labour, and so replacing more expensive white workers, had obvious attractions.⁸ Yet the mining industry was reluctant to confront the MWU on this issue unless it could be sure of securing government support.⁹ Consistently denied this, the mining groups instead concluded an agreement with the MWU in 1946, prolonging the colour bar for another decade.

I. THE MINING INDUSTRY AND THE CENTRAL AFRICAN FEDERATION

In 1953, Britain created the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, one of the most ambitious initiatives in post-war British colonial policy. A device imposed by Britain despite clear African opposition¹⁰, the Federation brought together Northern Rhodesia, Southern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, in what was intended to be a barrier to the northwards spread of South Africa's apartheid philosophy, aided by the recent influx of Afrikaner migrants to the Copperbelt.¹¹ The British government envisaged the Federation as being a ›middle way‹ between the extremes of Black nationalism to the north and settler nationalism to the south. For the British government, political considerations apparently outweighed the economic justification for closer territorial association in Central Africa.¹² Central to Britain's public case for Federation, and to its continuing justification after 1953, was that it would permit the construction of a multiracial ›partnership‹ as the foundation of future constitutional development. Based on a restricted franchise, the Federation would, in theory, allow for gradually increasing African political participation, while preserving effective white hegemony for the foreseeable future. The Zambian mining industry had traditionally been suspicious of proposals for territorial amalgamation, on the grounds that they would lead to the introduction of discriminatory labour practices from Southern Rhodesia, and so increase production costs in copper mining. In the post-war period, with the industrial colour bar already a reality, such objections were irrelevant, and a fun-

7 *Elena L. Berger*, *Labour, Race and Colonial Rule. The Copperbelt from 1924 to Independence*, Oxford 1974, S. 49–64.

8 *W. J. Barber*, *The Economy of British Central Africa*, Oxford 1961, S. 233.

9 *Sir Ronald L. Prain*, *Selected Papers 1953–1957*, London 1958, S. 57. In 1950, Prain privately lamented that the Northern Rhodesian government seemed willing to interfere in a wide range of issues, except the one which really mattered, that is, the colour bar: American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming (AHC): Prain Papers, Box 1, Folder 2, Prain to Harold K. Hochschild, 26.4.1950.

10 See, for example, The National Archives, Kew (hereafter TNA): DO 35/3588, Relations of the Two Rhodesias and Nyasaland, memorandum by A. B. Cohen, 15.3.1950.

11 TNA: CAB 129/45 CP(51)122, Joint Cabinet Memorandum by Colonial Secretary and Commonwealth Relations Secretary, Closer association in Central Africa, and annex, confidential minute by G. H. Baxter and A. B. Cohen, 3.5.1951.

12 TNA: CAB 129/47 CP(51)265, Joint memorandum by Colonial Secretary and Commonwealth Relations Secretary, 12.10.1951. For a full account of Britain's motives in creating the ill-fated Federation, see *Philip Murphy* (Hrsg.), *British Documents on the End of Empire*, Series B Volume 9 Central Africa, 2 parts, London 2005.

damental shift in the mining companies' thinking became evident.¹³ Although they would have preferred full territorial amalgamation between the Rhodesias, reasoning that this would create a political unit capable of attracting large numbers of settlers, and lend itself to effective economic co-ordination, the mining groups supported the campaign for Britain's less ambitious, but more readily achieved goal of Federation, by funding key lobby groups such as the United Central Africa Association and the Capricorn Africa Society. The mining groups were anxious to integrate the Central African territories more closely, especially to overcome the region's chronic energy and transport problems after 1945.¹⁴ Heavily reliant on the near-exhausted Rhodesia Railways system, and on unpredictable supplies of coal from the Hwange colliery in Southern Rhodesia, the mining companies had strong practical reasons to promote closer infrastructural co-ordination between the neighbouring territories.¹⁵ It was even rumoured that Southern Rhodesia, the prime mover in the campaign for territorial amalgamation, was exploiting the coal shortage to pressurise the copper companies into support for closer union.¹⁶ The groups may also have had political motives: some form of association between the two Rhodesias was seen as offering the best means of creating a counter-balance to the growing power of Northern Rhodesian settler politicians, who were often sponsored by, or linked to, the Mine Workers Union.¹⁷ Since 1948, it had been customary for the colonial government to defer to the views of settler representatives entrenched in Northern Rhodesia's legislature. Settler assertiveness had been seen, for example, in mounting pressure on the copper companies to move their headquarters from London to Northern Rhodesia (where, it was argued, they would be more accountable to local opinion), and to the companies' growing conclusion that the colonial state was impotent in the face of the settler political demands, and incapable of delivering rapid economic development.¹⁸ The Northern Rhodesian settlers were led by Roy Welensky, a longstanding advocate of heightened state regulation of the mining industry: ironically, Welensky would soon be criticising African politicians who called for the nationalisation of the copper industry, because of the impact this might have on investor confidence.¹⁹ Symbolising the settlers' growing political strength had been their success in 1949, after many years of dispute, in imposing new arrangements for the collection of mineral royalties payable on copper. While the mineral rights were left, anoma-

13 TNA: CO 795/30/1, minute by W. Ormsby-Gore, 20.3.1929; see also *J. R. T. Wood*, *The Welensky Papers. A History of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland*, Durban 1983, S. 57; *John G. Phillips*, *Roan Antelope: Big Business in Central Africa 1890–1953*, PhD thesis, Cambridge 2000, S. 240–1.

14 *Philip Murphy*, *Party Politics and Decolonization. The Conservative Party and British Colonial Policy in Tropical Africa 1951–1964*, Oxford 1995, S. 74. The groups' preference for amalgamation had been made clear when representatives of the Northern Rhodesia Chamber of Mines (NORCOM) met the British Colonial Secretary, James Griffiths, at Kitwe on the Copperbelt in September 1951: see AHC Prain Papers, Box 1, Folder 2, memorandum by Ronald Prain, *Federation and Closer Union*, 14.9.1951.

15 TNA: CO 852/878/1, Report of the Colonial Development Working Party, October 1948; CAB 134/65 CD(49)34, *Coal for the Copperbelt in Northern Rhodesia*, memorandum by the Colonial Office, 17.9.1949. See also *Phillips*, *Roan Antelope*, S. 298–300.

16 TNA: SUPP 14/29, K. D. Rogers (Ministry of Materials) to J. S. Gandee (Commonwealth Relations Office), 13.8.1951, citing opinion of A. W. Durrant, former secretary of the Rhokana and N'Changa companies.

17 AHC: Prain Papers, Box 1, Folder 2, Ronald Prain to Harold K. Hochschild, 21.4.1950.

18 TNA: CO 1015/347, Welensky to Prain, 5.5.1952; *Cunningham*, *The Copper Industry in Zambia*, S. 191; *L. H. Gann*, *The Northern Rhodesian Copper Industry and the world of copper, 1923–52*, *Rhodes-Livingstone Journal* 18 (1955), S. 14; *Berger*, *Labour, Race and Colonial Rule*, S. 198.

19 *Northern Rhodesia Debates*, col. 148 f., 3.7.1952.

lously, in the hands of the British South Africa Company, they were now scheduled to expire in 1986, with the Northern Rhodesian government meanwhile receiving a considerably larger share than hitherto.²⁰ The new agreement did not affect the mining companies directly, but it was, perhaps, a timely reminder of the economic interventionism characteristic of many white settler regimes in central-southern Africa.

Believing that the British authorities had repeatedly capitulated to the demands of local white politicians, the Northern Rhodesian mining companies hoped that association with Southern Rhodesia would create a more ›balanced‹ political climate.²¹ Both the mining groups not only gave discreet financial support to the campaign during 1952 to launch the Federation²², but also subsequently helped fund the Federation's major settler political party, the United Federal Party. At the time, this was defended on the grounds that political life within the Federation was in its infancy, and that the UFP effectively embodied the political system. In order to ensure that the Federation functioned efficiently, it was therefore necessary to ensure that its governing party was efficiently organised and adequately financed. However, this entire issue was politically delicate, fuelling resentment among settlers towards the high profile the mining industry enjoyed in the Federation, particularly the influence it was believed to have within the political establishment, typified by claims that the UFP was the ›stooge‹ of the mining industry.²³ In these circumstances, leading figures in the mining industry sought to discourage public speculation concerning their political activities. Nevertheless, their close links with the Federation's governing party may explain why the mining groups did not apparently seek separate representation for business in the Zambian legislature, unlike mining companies in other colonial territories, for example Ghana.²⁴ Both mining groups felt that African opposition to the proposed Federation should not be permitted to obstruct the project, privately regarding the British Colonial Office's attempts to ›consult‹ African opinion as inept.²⁵ Significantly, both groups also supported the idea of encouraging mass European immigration into Central Africa, an idea much discussed in the early 1950s, and associated particularly with bodies such as the Capricorn Africa Society, which endorsed the ›Two Pyramid Plan‹, developed by the Southern Rhodesian Prime Minister and staunch advocate of amalgamation, Sir Godfrey Huggins.²⁶ The alternative, as some leading business figures predicted as early as 1951, might be an African-governed Northern Rhodesia resembling the Gold Coast model, which might adopt unpalatably radical policies. Always sensitive to public relations, the mining groups would also respond subsequently to Federal government pleas by investigating the scope for establishing a distinctively pro-Federation newspaper. The plan came to nothing, however, because foreign newspaper publishers did not see the venture as commercially attractive.²⁷

20 *Peter Slinn*, Commercial concessions and politics during the colonial period: the role of the British South Africa Company in Northern Rhodesia, 1890–1964, *African Affairs* 70 (1971), S. 365–384.

21 American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming: Prain Papers, Box 1, Folder 2, Ronald Prain to Harold K. Hochschild, 21.4.1950.

22 See, for example, AHC: Prain Papers Box 2, Prain to Welensky, 10.3.1952. Sir Ernest Oppenheimer, on behalf of Anglo American, was reported to have adopted a similarly supportive position: *ibid.*, Welensky to Prain, 22.3.1952.

23 AHC: Prain Papers Box 2, Welensky to Prain, 23.1.1954; *ibid.*, Welensky to Prain, 23.2.1954.

24 *Stockwell*, *The Business of Decolonization*, S. 111–134.

25 AHC: Prain Papers Box 1, Folder 2, Prain to Harold K. Hochschild, 17.10.1951.

26 See letter from David Stirling, President of the Capricorn Africa Society, to *The Times*, 30.5.1951. Briefly, the plan envisaged the development of distinct European and ›native‹ spheres in Southern Rhodesia, ostensibly allowing Africans to progress economically and politically, while creating opportunities for large-scale white immigration.

27 AHC: Prain Papers Box 2, Prain to Welensky, 7.7.1954 and 23.8.1954.

In 1953, breaking ranks with Anglo American, and seizing the opportunity created by the termination of bulk-purchasing of copper by the British government, RST took a tough public stand on the ›advancement‹ of African mineworkers, a cost-cutting measure the group had been contemplating for some time.²⁸ Having sought to avoid confrontation with the MWU since the war, in the interests of uninterrupted production, the group now issued an ultimatum to the white workforce. The evidence suggests that the timing of this initiative was chosen partly to impress potential opponents in Britain of the plans for Federation, and convince them that Federation and African aspirations were not incompatible, an aim which implicitly acknowledged the extent of current African suspicions. Significantly, the British government privately recorded the view that RST's behaviour at this sensitive time had been ›helpful‹ to the Federal cause (in contrast to the cautious public position of Anglo American on advancement), demonstrating a sympathetic understanding of what London judged to be in Rhodesia's long-term interests.²⁹ A further factor in RST's desire to promote advancement was the dramatic post-war growth of African labour militancy, witnessed in a major strike in 1952, possibly in imitation of the militant strategies of white mineworkers, but also a feature perhaps unwittingly fostered by the British authorities' encouragement of African trade unions, organised along ›acceptable‹ lines, that is, orientated towards an identification with Western values and practices.³⁰ The cultivation of a ›moderate‹ and co-operative African trade union movement, a key strategy in the Cold War, seemed unavoidably to require progress on African advancement, which had been thwarted by the wartime and post-war conditions of economic emergency, and by the British government's unwillingness to risk any action which might antagonise white miners and so jeopardise precious dollar-saving copper production.³¹ For RST, then, African advancement held out the promise of reduced costs and, ultimately, industrial peace among the African workforce. Perhaps of critical importance in explaining RST's behaviour was the ever-spiralling wage bill. A generous pay award, agreed after arbitration in January 1953, was predicted to cost the mining groups around £870,000. Increased labour costs in turn enhanced the appeal of further mechanization in the mines, and created a greater incentive to employ African labour more efficiently and extensively, hence the groups' renewed interest in ›advancement‹.³² Yet despite a succession of pious government endorsements of this principle, the colonial authorities were adamant that this was a problem for the two sides of industry to resolve for themselves. Progress remained slow until, without government help, RST induced the MWU in 1955 to agree to a theoretical elimination of racial restrictions.³³

Perhaps the most important practical help the mining industry could give to the Federation was to ensure prosperity by maintaining high copper prices, although given the world copper industry's poor record at concerted action, this was not a matter entirely in the

28 *Prain*, Selected Papers 1953–1957, London 1958, S. 29–30.

29 TNA: CO 852/1177/11, Swinton to Sir Harry Railing, 25.7.1952; AHC: Prain Papers Box 2, Prain to Welensky, 14.5.1953.

30 *Frederick Cooper*, Decolonization and African Society. The Labour Question in French and British Africa, Cambridge 1996, S. 263.

31 *Ronald Prain*, The problem of African advancement on the Copperbelt of Northern Rhodesia, African Affairs 53 (1954), S. 91–102.

32 AHC: Prain Papers Box 1, Folder 3, Harold K. Hochschild to Prain, 7.5.1954; *ibid.*, Prain to Hochschild, 21.5.1954. See also *Robert E. Baldwin*, Economic Development and Export Growth: A Study of Northern Rhodesia, 1920–1960 Berkeley 1966, S. 99–100; *Andrew Roberts*, A History of Zambia 1976, S. 216–217.

33 *Berger*, Labour, Race and Colonial Rule, S. 200–201; *Richard L. Sklar*, Corporate power in an African state: the Political Impact of Multinational Mining Companies in Zambia, Berkeley/Los Angeles 1975, S. 105–6.

mining groups' hands.³⁴ Some figures in the mining industry warned periodically that the Federation was becoming too dependent on high copper prices, which experience showed were unlikely to persist.³⁵ When the boom in copper prices eventually collapsed late in 1956, the effects were felt within the Federation immediately. Soon afterwards, the Federation faced serious, ultimately fatal, political problems, following attempts by the federal government to engineer constitutional change reinforcing the settler minority's privileges, which triggered alarm, and political mobilization, among the African majority, reflected in the dramatic growth of the African nationalist movement, which in turn was able to draw upon the effective post-war organisation of African labour, especially on the Copperbelt. Ironically, Britain's own actions in creating the Federation, and in promoting trade unionism, had helped encourage the development of effective mass African resistance. Suspicions were already widespread among the African population that the Federation's structures were designed not only to maintain white hegemony, but also to siphon off Northern Rhodesia's copper wealth, to the disproportionate advantage of Southern Rhodesia's white population.³⁶ But above all it was fear of becoming trapped, permanently, in a white-ruled, self-governing Federation, an outcome which seemed highly likely given the impending review of the Federation's constitution in 1960, which fuelled mounting African protests. Escalating violence led to the imposition of states of emergency in the Federation early in 1959, leading to protracted attempts by Britain first to salvage something from the seemingly doomed Federal experiment, and then by efforts to steer each of the Federation's component territories towards separate self-government, under arrangements acceptable to African majorities in each of them. The Federation itself disintegrated at the end of 1963, with Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland gaining independence in 1964 under Black majority rule, leaving the problem of Southern Rhodesia unresolved for another 17 years. The response of the Federal government during the Federation's terminal years was highly revealing: while relatively unconcerned about the prospect of impoverished Nyasaland's secession, the government was determined to retain control of copper-rich Northern Rhodesia, or, at least, of its wealth-producing mining region, the Copperbelt.

II. THE MINING INDUSTRY AND AFRICAN NATIONALISM

Intimations that the mining industry quickly began to distance itself from what it perceived to be a failing political structure can be detected even before the Federation entered its final phase. Early in 1959, shortly before the declaration of the state of emergency, Sir Ronald Prain, chairman of the RST group of companies, had warned the Federal Prime Minister, Sir Roy Welensky, about his unease over the political direction the Federation was taking. Having previously backed the Federation publicly, for example in Britain, and before prestigious groups such as the Council of Foreign Relations in the United States, Prain now demanded to know what steps were being taken to make ›partnership‹ between the races a reality.³⁷ It is striking that Prain anticipated by a year the central mes-

34 Rhodes House Library, Oxford: Welensky Papers WP 657/5, ff.42–3, Prain to Welensky, 22.4.1958.

35 *Sir Ronald Prain, Reflections on an Era. Fifty Years of Mining in Changing Africa*, London 1981, S. 103. By the mid-1950s, Prain had become convinced that what the Federation needed was long-term stability in copper prices, to reinforce its credit-worthiness and allow it to budget »sensibly«: AHC Prain Papers Box 2, Prain to Welensky, 7.2.1955.

36 *Patrick Keatley, The Politics of Partnership. The Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland*, Harmondsworth 1963, S. 209.

37 Rhodes House Library, Oxford: Welensky Papers WP 657/5, ff.61–65, Prain to Welensky, 16.1.1959.

sage of Harold Macmillan's celebrated »Wind of Change« speech, pointing to the growth of African nationalism and the need to respond to this constructively. Prain identified a practical motive – the fact that fresh investment would require confidence in the Federation's political stability. He detected a circular problem, in that political stability depended on continuing economic development; however, without stability, investment would dry up, preventing further economic development, leading in turn to greater political instability, and so on. Equally striking is the fact that even before the Belgian Congo's disastrously precipitate independence in 1960, Prain was warning that African populations had to be prepared adequately for self-government, for example through involvement in the administration, business, the military and other sectors. Stressing that the core African demand was for greater political, economic and social participation, Prain saw the creation of employment opportunities for Africans as an important example of this, and argued that it was necessary to make concessions to African aspirations while time still permitted.³⁸

Once the Emergency had been declared, Prain reassessed RST's position in relation to the Federation. In May 1959, RST withdrew its support for the UFP, and ostensibly disengaged from Federal politics, on the grounds that the Federation had failed to achieve its basic objectives.³⁹ Not only had the Federal government done virtually nothing to help the mining industry over the issue of African advancement, partly, no doubt, because Federal ministers relied on the votes of white miners⁴⁰, but it had also been all too willing to employ »strong-arm« methods to extract financial contributions from the mining industry for prestige projects such as the Kariba Dam (or risk the imposition of an export tax on copper).⁴¹ Admittedly, under the Federal system, labour questions remained the responsibility of the Federation's component territories, but Federal ministers had shown little interest in pressing the cause of advancement.⁴² Moreover, by the end of 1952, RST had lost confidence in the Northern Rhodesian government's ability to deal effectively with the advancement question.⁴³ Late in 1953, Welensky had declared flatly that advancement was not a Federal concern⁴⁴, prompting Prain to seize the initiative by announcing publicly that the Federation's success hinged on its ability to resolve the problem of the industrial colour bar. Endorsing Africans' right to insist on change, Prain had encouraged them to demand it.⁴⁵ Shortly afterwards, he proclaimed that RST was giving the MWU notice of RST's intention to terminate its recognition agreement, leading Welensky to respond that there might, after all, be substance in the union's longstanding claim that RST's true aim was to secure plentiful cheap labour.⁴⁶

By the summer of 1959, Prain had already discussed the entire question of the Federation and its future with the British Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan, who was embarking on a fundamental review of British colonial policy. While it is unclear who influenced whom in these exchanges, it seems possible that it was Macmillan who drew on Prain's impressions of local conditions in Central Africa. A degree of pragmatism is clearly visible in Prain's position, in that he argued that business must always align itself with the strongest prevailing political force. In the African context, it was clear to him that

38 Ibid.

39 *Prain*, Reflections on an Era, S. 138, 193–4.

40 *Murphy*, Party Politics and Decolonization, S. 74.

41 Between them, RST and Anglo American contributed £ 20 million, plus a further £ 10 million surcharge on the power they would buy from Kariba: *Prain*, Reflections on an Era, S. 132–3.

42 *Murphy*, Party Politics and Decolonization, S. 74.

43 AHC: Prain Papers Box 1, Amco/AMAX folder, Prain to Walter Hochschild, 26.7.1954.

44 Rhodesia Herald, 22.10.1953.

45 *Wood*, The Welensky Papers, S. 396, 431.

46 *Murphy*, Party Politics and Decolonization, S. 74.

power would inevitably shift to the African majority, and he had already begun to identify the next generation of potential African leaders.⁴⁷ Hitherto, Prain had generally aired his political views privately, but in October 1959 he used the occasion of his annual statement to shareholders to publicise his views more widely. He stressed that economic development alone was not the key to the Federation's future, and stressed instead the importance of African political and social advance.⁴⁸ Significantly, only weeks earlier, Welensky had publicly declared the diametrically opposed view – that political and social advance must evolve out of economic development. Welensky was, evidently, still wedded to the gradualist ethos of African development, originating in the Second World War and enshrined in a new British commitment to eventual self-government for the colonies, following a lengthy process of material and social preparation. Prain, on the other hand, was clearly attuned to the radically revised timetables for political development currently being discussed in London as part of Macmillan's ›Wind of Change‹ revolution.⁴⁹ Late in 1959 and early in 1960, helped by the Quaker organisation, the American Friends' Service Committee, Prain actively sought contact with Zambian nationalist leaders, especially with Kenneth Kaunda, who would lead the country to independence in 1964.⁵⁰ The British authorities in Lusaka were sometimes uneasy about these contacts with Kaunda, who was, at the beginning of 1960, still in detention. Whitehall, however, was more positive in its response, regarding Prain as having a clearer idea of Zambia's prospects than most members of the local European community.⁵¹ Arguably, Prain became an important intermediary between British policy-makers and Zambian nationalists. His position at the head of a ›progressive‹ example of modern business made Prain especially valuable at a time when the record of business in colonial contexts was increasingly vulnerable to nationalist criticism, while his ready access to key British politicians offered Zambian nationalists a useful channel of communication to London. Although it is not clear precisely when the two men first met, Prain was certainly successful in developing close and friendly links with Kaunda. Kaunda subsequently paid tribute to Prain as the man who had taken him seriously at a time when the authorities still ignored him.⁵² Above all, Prain urged the British government to make concessions to Kaunda, judging him to be much more ›moderate‹ than some of his political colleagues. Prain had been consistently advocating the cultivation of African nationalists at least since 1956. Then, he had advised the Colonial Office that the growing power of the African National Congress (currently the leading nationalist force) should be recognised and responded to constructively, allowing its energies to be channelled along ›useful‹ lines: otherwise, it would be driven underground and become dangerous.⁵³ An important point here is that after 1959,

47 TNA: DO 35/7620, M.R. Metcalf (Office of the High Commissioner for the UK, Southern Rhodesia) to Lord Home (Commonwealth Relations Secretary), 29.8.1959.

48 London School of Economics Library: Selection Trust Papers, ST G1/15/3, Statement by the Chairman, 15.10.1959.

49 TNA: CO 1015/1747, Presidential address by the Federal Prime Minister, Sir Roy Welensky, to the UFP Congress, 17.9.1959. It is conceivable that Prain's statement was a form of ›trial run‹ for Macmillan's celebrated speech, delivered to the South African parliament in 1960.

50 *Robert I. Rotberg*, *The Rise of Nationalism in Central Africa. The Making of Malawi and Zambia, 1873–1964*, Cambridge, Mass. 1965, S. 308. Prain had approached Governor Hone about the possibility of a meeting with Kaunda as early as September 1959: see AHC: Prain Papers Box 1, Folder 5, Prain to Harold K. Hochschild, 29.9.1959.

51 TNA: DO 35/7620, Sir Evelyn Hone to W. B. L. Monson (Colonial Office), 1.10.1959; *ibid.*, minute by D.A. Scott (Commonwealth relations Office), 5.11.1959; PREM 11/3069, de Zulueta to Bligh (Accra), 9.1.1960.

52 TNA: DO 183/216, minute by W. B. L. Monson, British High Commissioner, Zambia, 17.12.1964.

53 AHC: Prain Papers, Box 2, Zambia Folder, Prain to A. Lennox-Boyd, 23.7.1956.

Prain's views were both sought and respected by leading figures in the British government, including not only Macmillan, but also Iain Macleod, the minister most closely associated with the acceleration of British decolonization after 1959. Moreover, Prain's contributions to British government thinking were especially valuable because the flow of information from Zambia to London was not always reliable, in part a consequence of settler politicians' lingering resentment of continuing control from London.⁵⁴ Developing one of the classic themes of British decolonization, Prain warned Macleod in June 1960 that Kaunda's moderation had to be cultivated and rewarded, otherwise he might be displaced by »extremists«. Secret surveillance reports by Northern Rhodesia's Special Branch soon highlighted the problems Kaunda faced in restraining his more radical associates.⁵⁵ Although Prain continued, publicly, to endorse the idea of Federation (repeating this point in the evidence he gave to the Monckton Commission, which reported on the Federation's future in 1960), he stressed the urgent need for political reform, describing the will to self-determination as one of the strongest political forces of the twentieth century.⁵⁶

Under Prain's guidance, therefore, RST adjusted pragmatically to the advent of mass African nationalism, but the group was not complacent about its likely position within an independent Zambia. While seeking to establish good relations with Zambian nationalist leaders, RST also sought to invest some of its African-derived profits in Chilean copper mining, thus reducing its dependence on the Copperbelt, and was only prevented from doing this by the Federation's imposition of exchange control, itself a response to foreign investors' dwindling confidence in the country's prospects.⁵⁷ Explanations of RST's »progressive« attitude tend to emphasise the influence of American opinion, expressed through RST's major shareholder, the American Metal Company (AMC). The latter had a long record of identifying with liberal causes. As early as 1950, AMC was urging the Copperbelt mining companies to lobby the Northern Rhodesian government to abolish the industrial colour bar, seeing this as necessary to allow the companies to retain the initiative in shaping the industry's future development.⁵⁸ Particularly significant is the fact that AMC privately stressed the *ethical* aspect of the problem, not only its financial implications (as a route to cost-cutting through the advancement of cheaper African labour).⁵⁹ Specifically, AMC felt that the companies should not endanger their own reputations by being seen to be merely responding to external pressure concerning the sensitive labour question. As African political and industrial mobilisation intensified, AMC became concerned that advancement should be seen as the product of the mining groups' initiative, and not as a result of an African strike, which might strengthen the hands of »extremists« within the African Mineworkers Union.⁶⁰ AMC was particularly renowned for its early identification with the cause of African independence from colonial rule. In 1951, the company's chairman, Harold Hochschild, had predicted the rapid growth of African nationalism in Central Africa, foreseeing a dominant African political role in Rhodesia.⁶¹ In 1953 – the year the Federation was created – Hochschild reputedly told a future Federal minister that political power invariably passed eventually to indigenous populations, and

54 TNA: DO 183/477, G. W. Jamieson (CRO) to J. A. Molyneux (Adviser on Commonwealth and External Affairs, Deputy Governor's Office, Lusaka), 31.7.1964.

55 TNA: DO 35/7620, Prain to Macleod, 15.6.1960; TNA CO 1015/2275, Sir Evelyn Hone to W. B. L. Monson, 2.9.1960.

56 TNA: DO 183/221, Foreign Office paper, Neo-Colonialism, 31.7.1963, Annex D.

57 TNA: CAB 134/1358, AF(61)3 (Final), Cabinet Africa (Official) Committee, Economic consequences of political development in East and Central Africa, 12.7.1961.

58 AHC: Prain Papers, Box 1, Folder 2, Prain to Harold K. Hochschild, 8.5.1950.

59 Ibid.

60 AHC: Prain Papers Box 1, Folder 3, Harold K. Hochschild to Prain, 20.9.1954.

61 AHC: Prain Papers, Box 1, Folder 2, H. K. Hochschild to Prain, 18.6.1951.

that AMC therefore planned to accommodate itself to this, and to adjust its policies accordingly.⁶² When it grasped the nettle of confrontation over African advancement, late in 1953, RST enjoyed the full support of AMC.⁶³ Similarly, in May 1961, when Northern Rhodesia's political future was still unclear, following an abortive British attempt to introduce a new constitution for the territory in February, an AMC representative told a committee of the US Congress that RST was already preparing to operate under Black majority rule. Against the background of deepening international pessimism caused by the civil war in the Congo, AMC declared publicly that Northern Rhodesia offered an encouraging example of development in Africa.⁶⁴

An advantage RST may, arguably, have enjoyed in dealing with political shifts within the Federation was that it could draw on the earlier experiences of big business facing the challenge of decolonization elsewhere in Africa. For example, by the time political uncertainty began to affect the Federation, expatriate mining companies in Ghana already had a decade's experience in adjusting to African nationalism. One of the firms most affected by developments in Ghana was the Consolidated African Selection Trust (CAST), a member of the Selection Trust group of companies, registered in London, the group which had originally created RST in 1928.⁶⁵ Although Selection Trust no longer had a direct interest in RST, it did have an indirect interest in RST's affairs through its holdings in AMC.⁶⁶ Selection Trust was also represented on the board of RST and AMC, and performed a variety of services for RST in London. Numerous useful conduits therefore existed for the transmission of one mining group's African experiences to the other.

What makes RST's stance on African development in the political and employment spheres particularly interesting is the apparently contrasting attitude of the other mining group on the Copperbelt, Anglo American. Much slower than RST to digest the implications of the ›Wind of Change‹, Anglo American's response to political developments remained cautious and conservative.⁶⁷ Of critical importance is the fact that, in business terms, Anglo's ›centre of gravity‹ was in South African mining. The group was therefore obliged to consider the effect developments in Central Africa might have on its wider, regional interests, particularly the impact changes in labour policy might have on industrial relations in South Africa, whose powerful white mineworkers' trade union enjoyed close links to its Zambian counterpart, and which Anglo was especially reluctant to provoke.⁶⁸ This is perhaps why Anglo American was happy to allow RST to take the lead in pursuing African advancement from the early 1950s onwards.⁶⁹ Yet there may be a danger

62 Rhodes House Library, Oxford: Welensky Papers WP 231/11, ff.1–8, 8.3.1963. This strand of political realism within the American mining industry can be detected much earlier. Even before the First World War, the mining engineer and future President, Herbert Hoover, had warned publicly that among the priorities of the indigenous governments of newly-emerging nations would be to secure control over the exploitation of natural resources: see *A.J. Wilson, The Life and Times of Sir Alfred Chester Beatty*, London 1985, S. 277.

63 *Cunningham, The Copper Industry in Zambia*, S. 195.

64 *Sklar, Corporate Power in an African State*, S. 143, citing Statement of F. Taylor Ostrander, Assistant to the Chairman, American Metal Climax Inc., New York, in *Activities of Private United States Organizations in Africa*, Hearings before the Subcommittee on Africa of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, 87th Congress, May 8 1961, S. 38.

65 *A.D. Roberts, Notes towards a financial history of copper mining in Northern Rhodesia*, *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 16 (1982), S. 348.

66 TNA: DO 183/221, Foreign Office paper, Neo-Colonialism, 10.10.1963.

67 *Miles Kahler, Decolonization in Britain and France: The Domestic Consequences of International Relations*, Princeton 1984, S. 285–6.

68 *Berger, Labour, Race and Colonial Rule*, S. 128.

69 *Theodore Gregory, Ernest Oppenheimer and the Economic Development of Southern Africa*, London 1962, S. 476–484, 488–489.

of exaggerating the differences between the two mining groups. Like RST, Anglo American signalled its dissatisfaction with the Federation by withdrawing financial support to the UFP in 1959, a move which was more than merely symbolic. It is also clear from Prain's private correspondence that RST scrupulously observed the convention of consulting Anglo American before making pronouncements on the advancement of African labour. Furthermore, a major theme which may have helped to draw the groups (and the British government) closer together was the claim, increasingly heard in the early 1960s, that political ›decolonization‹ was an illusion which concealed the reality that economic power in former colonies remained in the hands of big business in a situation of ›neo-colonialism‹.⁷⁰ In the context of an increasingly globalized Cold War, such allegations were naturally of great concern to both business and the Western powers, offering to the Soviet Union and China a useful propaganda weapon with which to attack ›Western imperialism‹, and to appeal to newly-independent members of the United Nations. The British government, in particular, feared that these attacks would deter investors and so jeopardise the future development of African states, undermining the latter's alignment with the West which both London and Washington were so keen to ensure.⁷¹ In 1963, RST and Anglo American collaborated with the British Foreign Office to produce detailed briefings for the British delegation at the UN, designed to demonstrate how the activities of the mining companies had benefited both Northern Rhodesia and the Federation. Whitehall itself took a very positive view of the mining industry's record, seeing the sector as having exercised a ›moderating and liberal influence‹ in Central Africa, as well as making a very significant contribution to government revenues through taxation, and providing a wide range of social services and amenities for its workers and their families. British officials privately drew a sharp contrast between the mining companies and the other major example of big business in the region, the British South Africa Company (BSAC), whose almost parasitical role as a bastion of rentier colonialism was seen increasingly as an embarrassment.⁷²

Whitehall's efforts to anticipate attacks on the mining groups at the UN were apparently successful: not only did Kaunda promise not to support such criticism, but he also appears to have persuaded the Tanganyikan nationalist leader, Julius Nyerere, to adopt a similar position.⁷³ This was particularly important, because of Nyerere's authoritative position within the emerging Afro-Asian bloc of nations. Mounting criticism of Western business at the UN also encouraged a closing of ranks between the mining groups, leading to the unusual suggestion by RST that Anglo American had actually been more progressive, for example over labour issues, than its public statements might sometimes have suggested.⁷⁴ Similarly, although Anglo American's public position remained highly circumspect, the group's chairman, Sir Harry Oppenheimer (already a leading figure within the dwindling white liberal community in South Africa), reportedly approved of RST's attempts to develop good links with Kaunda and other nationalists.⁷⁵ Nevertheless, a striking example of Anglo's slower adaptation to political change is the fact that Oppenheimer

70 The classic, highly influential expression of this thesis remains Kwame Nkrumah, *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism*, London 1965.

71 TNA: DO 183/221, H. G. M. Bass (Central Africa Office) to Hone, 12.7.1963.

72 TNA: DO 183/221, C. T. Crowe (UK Delegation, United Nations, New York) to J. G. Tahourdin (Foreign Office), 26.11.1962; *ibid.*, P. M. Foster (Foreign Office) to H. G. M. Bass (Central Africa Office), 8.10.1963.

73 TNA: DO 183/221, Hone to H. G. M. Bass (CAO), 19 Sept. 1963; *ibid.*, Hone to Bass, 25.9.1963.

74 TNA: DO 183/221, Foreign Office paper, *Neo-Colonialism*, 10.10.1963.

75 TNA: DO 35/7620, M. R. Metcalf to Sir Alexander Clutterbuck (Permanent Under-Secretary, Commonwealth Relations Office), 9.10.1959.

did not meet Kaunda in person until late 1962, almost three years after Prain had first made contact, and not until *after* the elections which guaranteed the formation of an African-led coalition government in Northern Rhodesia. This suggests that Anglo American may have been ›hedging its bets‹ politically, awaiting developments before committing itself too firmly to any particular nationalist grouping.⁷⁶

At his meeting with Kaunda, Oppenheimer had hinted broadly about his plans to increase investment in Northern Rhodesia, and to contribute more to the territory's development, but he stressed that this would depend on assurances of future political stability.⁷⁷ These comments touched on an issue of escalating importance to Northern Rhodesia which, despite its enormous copper wealth, faced perennial shortages of the funds needed to promote territory-wide African development, in turn emphasising the sharp contrast between material conditions on the relatively well-provided Copperbelt and those in the impoverished rural expanses of the country. This problem had been aggravated by the fact that large proportions of Northern Rhodesia's revenues were appropriated during the Federal period to help subsidise Nyasaland and, especially, Southern Rhodesia. This situation created valuable opportunities for the mining companies to reinforce their public image, and so enhance their post-independence prospects, by offering to provide much-needed development aid. In 1956, for instance, RST made substantial donations to the Northern Rhodesian government, insisting that the money should be spent on projects to benefit the African population. Politically, this was a sensible move, since the money was spent largely in the areas from which the group recruited most of its African labour. Similarly, in 1960, RST gave the Northern Rhodesian government over £1 million to help develop African education services, a source of deep concern at least since the 1930s, and an instance of inequitable public expenditure which contradicted the Federation's supposed commitment to ›partnership‹.⁷⁸ Such assistance from the mining industry was especially important at a time when Britain's capacity to provide development aid was being questioned in Whitehall⁷⁹, and when uncertainty about the political future had shaken the confidence of external investors. The mining companies were naturally anxious to derive the maximum propaganda benefit from their actions, and the Northern Rhodesian government appreciated this and was happy to assist.⁸⁰ In the case of RST, a high-profile commitment to development aid was also a shrewd reaction to complaints in the early 1960s that an excessive proportion of the group's profits was being repatriated to Britain and the United States to benefit shareholders.

It might be argued that the broad position adopted by the mining groups on the eve of decolonization reflected their fears of being nationalised by an independent African regime. It has been suggested, for example, that RST's position on African advancement, and the support it received from AMC, arose from a concern to minimise the danger of possible expropriation by a future African government.⁸¹ State ownership of the mining industry had become a popular platform among African nationalists, as it had long been

76 TNA: DO 183/217, R. E. Luyt (Acting Governor, Northern Rhodesia) to Lord Alport (British High Commissioner, Salisbury), 29.12.1962.

77 Ibid.

78 *Roberts*, *A History of Zambia*, S. 218. AMC had already voiced its concern that the disparity in educational provision for European and African children would become a cause of ›spreading criticism‹. The rationale for expenditure by the RST Group was that it would foster improved race relations, and equip Africans to undertake the kind of work which the policy of advancement would make available. See AHC: Prain Papers Box 1, Folder 4, Harold K. Hochschild to Prain, 11.5.1955, and Box 1, Folder 5, Harold K. Hochschild to Prain, 25.11.1959.

79 *D. J. Morgan*, *The Official History of Colonial Development. Volume Three: A Reassessment of British Aid policy 1951–1965*, London 1980, S. 84–86, 211–231.

80 AHC: Prain Papers Box 2, Governors Folder, Sir Evelyn Hone to Prain, 4.11.1959.

81 See, for example, *Roberts*, *Notes towards a financial history*, S. 358.

among white settlers.⁸² According to one influential view, the industry's position was in reality very secure, since any post-independence government, constrained by scarcities of both capital and essential expertise, would depend on the companies to run the mining industry and to continue generating wealth. By the same logic, as mining operations expanded, the more secure the companies' position would become.⁸³ Certainly, before and immediately after independence, Kaunda went to great lengths to reassure the mining industry (and foreign investors) that their interests would be safe under African rule – this is one reason why both Britain and the United States regarded him as their preferred candidate for power.⁸⁴ Nevertheless, real fears persisted that Kaunda's party, the United National Independence Party (UNIP) contained radical elements, in contact with Moscow and Beijing.⁸⁵ Because so much depended on Kaunda's ability to retain control of the Northern Rhodesian government, it was therefore necessary to reinforce his position as leader at every opportunity.

The argument advanced here is that the mining companies actually had very few grounds for complacency about their future position. The climate of the early 1960s suggested a clear and growing preference in the developing world for state economic controls, an outlook certainly not confined to governments of the left, as shown by the interest shown by Chile's right-wing government in the early 1960s in bringing the country's copper mines under greater state control.⁸⁶ This context accounts, for example, for the British government's nervousness when the Ghanaian government proposed, in 1961, to nationalise several British-owned gold mines.⁸⁷ Of particular concern to the British government were the UN's discussions which culminated in Resolution 1803, the Declaration on the Permanent Sovereignty of Natural Resources, passed in 1962. This confirmed the right of nations to use their natural resources to further their own development, if necessary through nationalisation. London feared that this move would become a tool in the wider Soviet-orchestrated campaign against neo-colonialism.⁸⁸ Examples such as these suggest that, for a variety of reasons, the atmosphere in the early 1960s, as Northern Rhodesia drew close to independence, was unsettling for business and Western governments alike. In Northern Rhodesia's case, this was encapsulated in the debate during 1964 on the future of the country's mineral rights. Periodically discussed since the 1930s, the position was anomalous in that the territory's very lucrative mineral rights (and the royalties they generated) were in the hands of the BSAC and not of the government. First white settlers, and later African nationalists, made the recovery of these rights a cardinal political objective. Immediately before independence, Kaunda's government threatened to expropriate the BSAC, unless the British government helped buy out the BSAC and transfer its mineral

82 In 1951, for example, Prain considered it more likely that a white-controlled Zambian government would nationalise the copper industry than that a British Labour government would take this course.

83 *Kahler*, *Decolonization in Britain and France*, S. 286, 297–8.

84 See, for example, speeches reported in *Sunday Mail*, 22.4.1962, and *Rhodesia Herald*, 25.6.1962.

85 TNA: DO 183/475, minute by G. W. Jamieson (Central Africa Office), 30.4.1964. For Prain's continuing misgivings, disclosed to the British Cabinet Secretary, shortly before Zambia's independence, see TNA: PREM 11/5026, note by Sir Burke Trend, 13.8.1964.

86 TNA: FO 371/155980, R. A. Sykes (British Embassy, Santiago) to Lord Home (Foreign Office), 24.7.1961; *ibid.*, R. H. G. Edmonds (Foreign Office) to Miss G. G. Brown (British Embassy, Washington), 17.11.1961

87 TNA: PREM 11/3367, F. Mills (Commonwealth Relations Office) to D. F. Hubback (Treasury), 7.2.1961.

88 TNA: FO 371/166966/UNS22615/9, draft brief on PSNR by N. P. Bayne (Foreign Office), 12.9.1962.

rights to the Zambian government.⁸⁹ After much last-minute wrangling, this was arranged, but, tellingly, not only was this problem handled in London at prime ministerial level, but the Cabinet Secretary, Sir Burke Trend, stressed the need for compliance by the British government, on the grounds that Kaunda might otherwise turn his attention to the mining companies and nationalise them, damaging the interests of British investors, and compromising Britain's future relations with independent Zambia.⁹⁰ To the British government, then, the danger of nationalisation was more than theoretical. From another point of view, the transfer of the mineral rights held out the possibility of negotiating a new royalty formula, long sought by RST.⁹¹ This would encourage the development of lower-grade deposits and so stimulate the operation of smaller mines. These considerations were, arguably, of greater significance to RST than to Anglo American, which, as a major shareholder in the BSAC, had benefited indirectly from the pre-1964 royalty system.⁹² It could be argued, then, that RST's deliberate cultivation of good relations with the leading Zambian nationalist movement was inspired not only by the possibility of expropriation, but, more positively, by the anticipation of outcomes in the field of economic policy from which the group hoped to gain substantially and which had long remained elusive under colonial rule.

III. CONCLUSIONS

In the two decades preceding Zambia's attainment of independence in 1964, the country's largest single industry, copper mining, was exposed to an extraordinary spectrum of pressures, taxing both its political acuity and the flexibility of its business strategies. External pressures, over which the industry had little control, included fluctuating patterns of consumption of its product, alarming price volatility, coupled to both of which was the ever-present danger that consumers might turn to cheaper substitute materials. Compounding these anxieties was the reality of rising costs in a climate of industrial relations on the Copperbelt in which the temporary success of the white workforce in preserving its privileges served only to galvanise African labour into comparably efficient organisation and counter-veiling militancy. Within Northern Rhodesia, arguably, the greatest challenges for copper mining revolved around the development of polarised nationalist visions of Central Africa's future, the one centred on enduring white ›tutelage‹, the other aspiring to replace colonial rule with African independence. The former, apparently so confident at the beginning of the 1950s, the high-point of the copper industry's post-war fortunes, imploded in less than a decade, the hollowness of its pretensions exposed by the escalation of majority African grievances and the effectiveness of African nationalist mobilisation. Having apparently endorsed the Federal experiment with enthusiasm at its outset, the mining industry was obliged to adapt itself to the likelihood of Black majority rule within a time-scale few would have thought feasible in the early 1950s. It is, of course, possible to account for the industry's political reorientation as a pragmatic response to realities. The Federation, despite its early promise, had failed the Copperbelt in most respects. Crucially, to an industrial sector notoriously suspicious of government interference, it had failed to provide leadership in the one area in which such interference would have

89 TNA: PREM 13/111, CRO Representative (Lusaka) to Commonwealth Relations Office, 20.10.1964.

90 TNA: PREM 11/5028, minute by Sir Burke Trend, 15.9.1964; PREM 13/111, minute by Sir Burke Trend, n. d., but 20.10.1964.

91 AHC: Prain Papers Box 1, Folder 4, Prain to Harold K. Hochschild, 21.5.1955; TNA: DO 183/201, 15.1.1963; see also *Prain*, Reflections on an Era, S. 155–159.

92 *Prain*, Reflections on an Era, S. 155; *Roberts*, Notes towards a financial history, S. 355.

been welcomed: the removal of racial barriers to employment. Overcoming the colour bar had brought the mining industry into closer contact with the African labour movement, the precursor of African nationalism. While it would be an exaggeration to say that this process had removed company anxieties about the scope for extremism within African organisations, it arguably made subsequent dialogues with African nationalist leaders less fraught, and helped prepare the way for good relations between the two.

While it had traditionally attempted to speak publicly with one voice, the copper industry revealed important cleavages in its responses to African nationalism. Here, the more enlightened attitude of RST, when compared with that of Anglo American, remains striking. Anglo's business horizons were framed clearly within central-southern Africa, and the possible repercussions of developments on the Copperbelt for the group's more important interests in South Africa could never be ignored. In this respect, RST appeared to enjoy greater latitude, and proved willing to explore fresh opportunities not only within Africa but far beyond, in Latin America, Australia and elsewhere. Yet each group faced broadly similar practical problems associated with rising costs, an uncertain market and rising competition among global producers of copper. Of inescapable significance is the apparent contribution made to RST's outlook by its key American shareholders, the AMC. At least a decade before an independent Zambia was being contemplated by the British government, and longer still before many settlers would accept the inevitability of majority rule, AMC appeared to be preparing itself, and by extension RST, for this outcome. Crude pragmatism seems an inadequate explanation of this remarkable shift in corporate thinking, although the security of AMC's considerable investments in the Copperbelt was certainly an important consideration. These concerns are clearly expressed in the voluminous (private) correspondence between AMC and RST head offices in Africa, but so, too are underlying misgivings, couched largely in ethical terms, about the *morality* of the settler project in post-war Central Africa. An equally consistent strand of thought is the danger of propelling political ›moderates‹ into the arms of ›extremists‹. Whereas British approaches to decolonization commonly stressed the need to detach moderates from extremists, and so identify future collaborators, American business, in this case, seemed keen to prevent moderates from developing into extremists. This, perhaps, accounts for the enthusiasm AMC exhibited towards programmes of development, education and African ›advancement‹ generally, though all of these could be expected, eventually, to meet the needs of the mining industry as well as promoting political stability in Northern Rhodesia. It is possible that, in the Copperbelt, and in the mining industry's response to political change, we see a microcosm of a larger development closely related to the unfolding of British decolonization against the background of a widening, and threatening, Cold War – the growing interest of the United States in the progress of Third World countries towards independence, and the increasing co-operation between London and Washington in the management of this process.⁹³ Just as RST, arguably, served as a go-between in the developing relationship between British policy-makers and African nationalists, so the group's activities could tentatively be said to reflect a convergence in British and US political priorities for Central Africa, one which emphasised liberal political solutions for the region's problems as an alternative to more radical prescriptions, which would challenge not only Western business interests, but a much more fundamental strategic stake, too.

93 On this, see especially *Wm. Roger Louis/R. Robinson*, *The Imperialism of Decolonization*, in: *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 22, 1994, H. 3, S. 462–511, and *Ronald Hyam*, *Britain's Declining Empire. The Road to Decolonisation 1918–1968*, Cambridge, 2006, esp. S. 301–326.