

**Ruth First in Mozambique: Portrait of a Scholar,
Teacher and Academic.**

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By

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Abstract

Ruth First was an activist, journalist and Sociologist trained by experience and credentialed by her numerous publications. Having lived most of her adult life as an intellectual and activist, First died in August 1982 at the hands of a regime and its supporters who intensely detested all these pursuits. This research project sketches the intellectual contributions made by the South African Sociologist during her time at the Centre of African Studies at Eduardo Mondlane University, Mozambique. Her life like the newspaper she edited in the early 1970s was a *Fighting Talk* and this research project is about celebrating that life and valorising some of the life's work that she left behind.

Making use of qualitative research methods such as archiving, semi-structured interviews and contents analysis, this thesis sought to document Ruth First's intellectual interventions while at the Centre of African Studies. Engaging with her work while she was in Mozambique and inserting her intellectual contributions, which like those of many African scholars have given way to debates from the global North, into our curriculum would perhaps be the real refutation of the assassin's bomb. This engagement is also crucial as it extends much further than the striking accolades which take the form of buildings and lectures established in her honour.

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Table of Contents

Title Page.....	1
Abstract	2
Acknowledgements.....	3
Acronyms	8
Chapter 1: Experiences of the Social Science Curriculum in a South African Higher Education Institution: A Personal Account.....	9
1.1 Introduction	9
1.2 Background and Context to the Study	9
1.3 Curriculum Transformation.....	13
1.4 Research Objectives.....	16
1.5 Scope and Structure of Thesis	18
Chapter 2: A Review of the Literature.....	20
2.1 Introduction	20
2.2 The State of the Social Sciences in the Global South.....	20
2.2.1 The Global Division of Labour and Northern Theory	28
2.3 Centre-periphery Relations and Social Scientific Knowledge Production in Africa	33
2.4 Centre-Periphery Relations in the Realm of Sociological Knowledge.....	39
2.5 Alternative Discourses	45
2.6 Conclusion.....	49
Chapter 3: Research Methods.....	50
3.1 Introduction	50
3.2 Preliminary Research: Finding the Focus	50

3. 3 Research Aims.....	52
3. 4 Qualitative Research	53
3. 5 Research Methods: Semi-Structured Interviews and Content Analysis of Documents.....	55
3. 5. 1 Semi-Structured Interviews	55
3. 5. 2 Content Analysis of Documents.....	60
3. 6 Data Analysis.....	62
3.6. 1 Getting to Know the Data and Focusing the Analysis	63
3. 6. 2 Coding and Interpreting the Data.....	63
3.7 Conclusion: Limitations to the Study and Reflections on Fieldwork.....	64
Chapter 4: Ruth First: A Biography.....	66
4.1 Introduction	66
4. 2 “A Fighting Talk”, Ruth First the Radical Journalist and Political Activist.....	68
4. 3 Exile	73
4. 4 From Dar es Salaam to Maputo.....	82
4. 5 Life after Death.....	86
4. 5. 1 The Truth and Reconciliation Commission Hearings	86
4. 5. 2 The Ruth First Memorial Lectures and Unfinished Projects	89
4.6 Conclusion.....	94
Chapter 5:“The Search for an Emancipatory Epistemology”: Ruth First at the Centre of African Studies	95
5.1 Introduction	95
5.2 The Mozambican Struggle	95
5.3 Engaged Scholarship: The Centre of African Studies.	100

5.3.1 The Centre of African Studies and Frelimo: “A Teleological Problematic”	107
5.4 “The Iron Lady”: Research under the Leadership of Ruth First	110
5.4.1 Creative Tensions	113
5.5 Conclusion.....	116
Chapter 6: The Development Course: “Producing People who could Produce Knowledge.” ..	118
6.1 Introduction	118
6. 2 Objectives and Structure	118
6.3 Content and Method.....	122
6.4 CEA Field Studies	128
6. 5 Conclusion.....	134
Chapter 7: Black Gold: A Historical, Economic and Sociological Analysis of Labour Migration	
.....	136
7. 1 Introduction	136
7.2 The Mozambican Miner.....	136
7. 2.1 Methods	138
7. 2. 2 Recommendations	141
7. 3 From the Miner to Black Gold	143
7. 3.1 Publication and Reviewers’ Reports	144
7. 4 Black Gold: No Ordinary Piece of Academic Enquiry.....	148
7. 4. 1 Work Songs and Interviews	151
7. 4.2 Workers or Peasants?	156
7. 4. 3 A Few Shortcomings	157
7. 5 Conclusion.....	160

Chapter 8: Black Gold and the Literature on Migrant Labour in Southern Africa.....	162
8.1 Introduction	162
8.2 The Origins and Causes of the System	162
8.3 Effects of the System	168
8.4 Migrant Labour from Mozambique to South Africa	172
8.5 Conclusion.....	177
 Chapter 9: Conclusion.....	 179
9.1 Introduction	179
9.2 Academic Dependency and the Social Sciences in the Global South	179
9.3 Ruth First: Portrait of a Sociologist.....	181
9.3.1 The Centre of African Studies	181
9.3.2 The Development Course	183
9.3.3 Black Gold	185
9.4 Recommendations for Further Research.....	186
9.5 Conclusion.....	187
 Bibliography	 188

Acronyms

AAM	Anti- Apartheid Movement
ANC	African National Congress
CA	Congress Alliance
CEA	Centro de Estudos Africanos (Centre of African Studies)
CPSA	Communist Party of South Africa
FRELIMO	Front for Liberation of Mozambique
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
IHP	Intellectual Heritage Project
ILO	International Labour Organisation
ISES	Institute for Social and Economic Studies
MULPOC	Multinational Programming and Operational Centre for Eastern and Southern Africa
NELM	National English Literary Museum
NRF	National Research Foundation
RENAMO	Mozambique Resistance Movement
SACP	South African Communist Party
UEM	Eduardo Mondlane University
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

Chapter 1

Experiences of the Social Science Curriculum in a South African Higher Education Institution: A Personal Account

1.1 Introduction

This research project forms part of a larger National Research Foundation (NRF) funded study on 'Endogeneity and Modern Sociology in South Africa', led by my supervisor Professor Jimi Adesina under the Intellectual Heritage Project (IHP). This research programme was designed to address the crisis of epistemic dependence and the inadequacy of self-knowledge through the valorisation of, and intellectual engagement with, the works of scholars such as Bernard Magubane, Archie Mafeje and Ruth First (among others). According to Adesina (2008) 'intimacy with the self' is important for transcending epistemic dependence and research projects like this one might help in developing a new generation of scholars with an acute 'intimacy of the self' and able to shed epistemic dependence by gaining inspiration from a focused engagement with the works of scholars like Ruth First.

1.2 Background and Context to the Study

Before my arrival at Rhodes University in 2006, and being informed that I would reside in Ruth First House I had no knowledge of whom Ruth First was, and I was even more puzzled by why in 2003 70 women had deemed it appropriate to name their residence Ruth First House. In a lecture on the legacy of Ruth First during my Orientation week, I was informed by one of the Hall Fellows, a lecturer in the History department, that Ruth First was an investigative journalist and political activist who had made a momentous contribution to South Africa's liberation struggle. This was later confirmed by two books I read on Ruth First written by journalist Don Pinnock: the first titled *Voices of Liberation: Ruth First* and the second *Writing Left: the Radical Journalism of Ruth First*. *Voices of Liberation* is a collection of Ruth First's journalistic writings on subjects such as migrant labour, the 1976 Soweto uprisings, the 1956 women's march and her arrest in August 1963 under the 90 day detention act. The second book *Writing Left: the Radical Journalism of Ruth First* is a reworked version of Don Pinnock's 1992 PhD thesis.

The information for *Writing Left: the Radical Journalism of Ruth First* and the thesis was gathered around the question of why First felt her life had reached a point where she wished it extinguished when she attempted to commit suicide while in solitary confinement in 1963. Pinnock (1992) argues that the answer for this question involves who Ruth First was, what she believed in and her perception at that moment in time of the magnitude of the defeat of all she had worked for. Interestingly in both these works very little attention is given to the intellectual work conducted by Ruth First subsequent to her exile in 1964. It is also worth noting that the question posed by Pinnock is itself problematic because when Ruth First attempted to commit suicide she was not concerned so much with her life's work as she was concerned with the idea that she could have betrayed her comrades. This is revealed in her prison memoir *117 Days* when she writes "I was in a state of collapse not for fear of what would happen to me physically... but for the gnawing ugly fear that they could have destroyed me among the people whose understanding and succour I most needed, and that once they had done that I would have nothing to live for" (Ruth First, 1965: 128).

In August 2007 the women of Ruth First House along with the rest of Rhodes University commemorated the 25th anniversary of Ruth First's assassination. In an effort to highlight the many facets of First, the week-long event involved seminars by her daughter Gillian Slovo, friend and fellow comrade Albie Sachs, and lecturers from the Journalism and History departments. These seminars followed the common trend of focusing on Ruth First the anti-apartheid militant, socialist, journalist, and human rights agitator with minimal attention being paid to Ruth First's intellectual work.

At the end of the week all those involved in organizing the events (myself included) declared that the week of commemoration had done justice to First's legacy. At this point I was a second year student and not aware of how unfounded this claim was until my first year as a postgraduate student. In my first year of postgraduate study we were tasked with conducting a research project as part of the Honours programme and while looking for prospective supervisors within my department I discovered the work that was being conducted under the IHP. This project was dedicated to the critical intellectual engagement with the lives and works African scholars, one of which was Ruth First. This is when I came to discover that the commemoration week and much

of what has been written about Ruth First had done a great injustice to her legacy by neglecting her contribution to the world of scholarship, much of which has been to the discipline of Sociology.

The realisation that Ruth First was much more than an activist and journalist also left me questioning the curriculum I had been exposed to, and I came to realise that I had been the victim of what Adesina (2005) might describe as an “alienating curriculum” which he argues is the result of “absent intimacy in the teachers”. For three years as a social science undergraduate student I “sat through courses and with teachers whose epistemic gazes were firmly planted on the global North” (Adesina, 2006: 243). Reviewing the course outlines for my undergraduate courses I realised that my exposure to scholars from the continent in the classroom did not extend beyond brief encounters with Mahmood Mamdani in my first year, Jacklyn Cock and Archie Mafeje in my third year.

The lack of serious engagement with local scholars like Ruth First, Bernard Magubane or Archie Mafeje, scholars with strong international reputation, can be attributed to what Farid Alatas (2003:602) describes as academic dependency and Adesina (2006a) refers to as epistemic dependency, a result of absent ‘self-knowledge’ and a ‘failure of intellectual nerve’. Academic dependency is analogous to political economic dependency, the domination of one people by another in their world of thinking. According to Farid Alatas (2003:603) intellectually dependent societies are shaped by the institutions and ideas from the global North such that the classification of problem areas, research agendas and standards of excellence are borrowed from the West. This has been particularly evident within South Africa’s social sciences as in most universities the social sciences are taught within the scope of American, British or Continental European traditions (Togni, 1996: 5). This results in a neglect and lack of awareness of the debates, scholarships and scholars from the continent—past and present (Arowosegbe, 2008a: 24).

Farid Alatas (2003: 605) observes that while this problem has been identified, there continues to be few works that delineate the structure of academic dependency or offer practical ways in which it can be reversed or transcended. According to Adesina (2006b:248) the transcendence or

reversal of epistemic dependency or what he describes as the recovery of the 'intellectual nerve' in South Africa requires among other things a commitment to endogeneity, which refers to an intellectual standpoint derived from a rootedness in local conditions and involves not only deriving distinct epistemological insights from the locale but also taking the locale and its ontological locations seriously as the base of knowledge production. He further urges that this should be done without engaging in intellectual autarky.

The commitment to endogeneity in this context involves a critical engagement with the 'self' through the valorisation of the scholarly contributions of local scholars such as Ruth First. The self is used in this context in the sense that one arrives at the 'personal self' through an awareness and intimacy with the 'collective self'- a process that involves intimacy with one's antecedents (Adesina, 2008a: 3). As part of this process of self-knowing I have chosen to engage with the intellectual work conducted by Ruth First while she was in Mozambique from 1977 until her untimely death in 1982. I chose this particular period not only because it is the least documented in all the works on Ruth First but also because Ruth First herself considered it to be one of the most productive and militant phases in her life (Aquino de Braganca & Bidget O'Laughlin, 1984).

On Tuesday 17 August 1982, Ruth first was in her office at Eduardo Mondlane University with close friend and colleague Bridget O' Laughlin, director of the Centre of African Studies Aquino de Braganca and Pallo Jordan celebrating the end of a successful United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) conference. She was going through her mail and talking to her friends, when a terrific explosion ripped through her office. Windows were shattered, a hole torn in the wall, her steel desk snapped in half, and the concrete ceiling cracked. O'Laughlin, Jordan and de Braganca were injured, but First who was bending over her desk, took the full force of the blast and died. The news of her passing sent shock waves around the world but in South Africa where her writings were banned, the news was hardly mentioned in the press. In Llanguene Cemetery near Maputo over 3000 mourners gathered around her coffin which was covered in the flag of the African National Congress (ANC). Messages of sympathy were received from over 67 countries (Don Pinnock, 1997: 3).

Ruth First's analyses of the African condition- both pre and post-independence- were adumbrated in several book-length studies, from South West Africa to Libya that, Harlow (2002: 250) argues, “stand today as prescient and persistent readings of the story of Africa and African politics”. Her engagement with the country of her birth was riddled by engagements with the various movements that distinguished the years of decolonization- from the ANC to the South African Communist Party (SACP) to London's Anti-Apartheid Movement (AAM). The contradictions Ruth First addressed in her writings remain riddles that challenge both her critics and “those who have found in her example- precisely that, an example, one to be followed, but only along the probing paths that she herself pursued” (ibid).

She wrote as a journalist, historian and sociologist, trained by experience and credentialed by her numerous publications; she lived as an intellectual and activist: dying at the hands of men representing a regime and its adherents who abhorred all of these pursuits (Harlow, 2002: 250). Her bio-bibliography as well as her political trajectory- in the public sphere, in her personal papers, as the critical--even acerbic at times--commentator on colleagues and curricula; as in her pedagogical practices, demanding, for example, that her students distinguish between “growth” and “development” exemplifies what Harlow (2002: 250) describes as a “teleological problematic”.

First was forthright champion of African liberation, unrelenting reader of post-independence development, one of the most gifted and dedicated South African revolutionaries. She was by virtue of her work and her writings, a source of growing influence and inspiration (Miliband, 1982: 313). Having lived most of her life as an intellectual and activist First died in August 1982 at the hands of a regime and its supporters who detested all these pursuits. This research project sketches the intellectual contribution of the South African scholar and activist during her time in Mozambique and is intended as a valorisation and celebration of the life that Ruth First lived and the life's work that she left behind.

1. 3 Curriculum Transformation

The lack of engagement with the works and debates of scholars from the continent in the curriculum I have been exposed to as an undergraduate student in favour of the works of scholars

from the global North suggests a need to make changes in this curriculum. The idea of a curriculum refers to all the learning which is planned and guided, whether it is carried on in groups or individually, inside or outside the classroom (Kelly, 1983: 10 cited in Smith, 2000).

According to Smith (2000) there are four ways of looking at the curriculum

1. as a body of knowledge to be transmitted
2. as a product attempting to achieving certain ends in students
3. as a process and
4. as a praxis

A distinction can also be made between the explicit and the hidden curriculum. The explicit (or official) curriculum is that which is constructed around formally stated content or outcomes. What is learned however includes much more than this. It also encompasses the unstated norms, values, and beliefs that are transmitted to students through underlying structure of meaning. It therefore embodies a tacit framework of meaning and grammar that is seldom explicitly spelt out, which is below the level of articulated consciousness but which shapes what is learned in far more profound ways than the explicit outcomes: the *hidden curriculum* (Smith, 1996; Nzimande, 2011).

South Africa's Minister for Higher Education and Training Dr. Bonginkosi Nzimande (2011) states that “in our curricula lie the very identity of our society”. Therefore any attempt at changing society, addressing inequalities, and developing a just and healthy society should begin with a change in the content of the vehicle through which young people are taught and developed. Social transformation is embedded in curriculum transformation. Curriculum transformation therefore becomes in itself a vehicle towards wider transformational goals (Nzimande, 2011).

Attempting to transform the curriculum however, is as Wally Morrow (2003) puts it similar to attempting to move a cemetery. Taking into consideration that the introductory text to first year Sociology at Rhodes University has remained Haralambos & Holborn's *Sociology Themes and Perspectives* for the last decade one might be compelled to believe this analogy. Cemeteries for most people are not just places to deposit the physical remains of the dead, but rather

repositories of precious memories and traditions, some personal, and some communal. Desecrating the graves or gravestones is considered a serious violation. They are also symbols of the pervasive power of history in human life and the importance of the sacred to humans (Morrow, 2003: 10- 11). Moving a cemetery is therefore always difficult, problematic and characterised by passionate conflict, anxiety and resistance even in cases where there appears to be overwhelming practical justifications to do so.

To others a traditional curriculum is held as sacred and like the cemetery it is viewed as repositories of precious memories and traditions, as texts from which we can learn history. Curricula in the Social Sciences are bridges between the past and the future and the traditional curriculum can be viewed in some measure as a celebration of the work of those currently understood as the heroes in that field (Morrow, 2003). Those who subscribe to this belief might therefore argue that the curriculum I have been exposed to is more than just the “storehouse of dead texts, or the work of dead white men- such as Emile Durkheim or Max Weber- whose power is hereby extended beyond the grave” (Morrow, 2003: 2).

According to Nzimande (2011) the traditional curriculum is often held and revered as sacred, supposed to induce a sense of awe and humility in those entering the domain of higher education for the first time; it contains the remnants of deep seated traditions and memories of those great and timeless philosophers and exponents of ideas and thought; traditional curricula embody sets of intellectual habits with which academics are comfortable, having spent years mastering the methodologies and developing their own identities; curriculum transformation is therefore seen as antithetical to existing ideology as upheld at academic departmental, faculty and institutional levels.

Wally Morrow (2003: 12) writes that usually a teacher's self-image, professional identity and fundamental convictions about the values and standards of academic practice, are likely to be deeply embedded with the curriculum they teach. Asking them to change the curriculum can therefore be equated to asking them to develop a new professional identity and in their eyes even fatally compromise their standards, and abandon their arduously acquired understanding of the disciplines they teach and the significance of their academic practice.

Yet, as Edward Said (2004: xix) argued, the function of academics is to enlarge spheres of debate rather than establish limits that suit 'the dominant authority'. The primary task of teachers is to enable students to achieve a rich operational understanding of and commitment to the relevant epistemic values and how to become participants in disciplined inquiry. This involves among other things learning and becoming committed to the grammar of inquiry in some field-epistemological access therefore requires that they come to understand and care about the relevant epistemic values. Unless in their practices teachers maintain and demonstrate their own commitment to epistemic values, they are as Morrow (2003) argues betraying the students and societies they are committed to serving.

In a post-colonial, post-apartheid South Africa it is extremely difficult to resist the demand to change the higher education curriculum and in the words of Morrow (2003) “those tempted to resist are digging their own graves, or are likely to be seen as dead wood which needs to be cleared to allow the new growth to flourish”. Here the analogy between curriculum transformation and moving a cemetery becomes particularly useful. A cemetery is a place where the dead are laid to rest- and it appears that while there exists in the South African higher education system some curricula that are full of vitality, energy and promise, there also exists those which fit the description of a cemetery or belong in one (Morrow, 2003).

1.4 Research Objectives

This research has largely been a venture in 'self-knowledge', a process which Adesina (2008a) argues involves 'intimacy with one's antecedents'. The study sought to identify, document and analyse South African political activist and scholar Ruth First's contribution to knowledge from 1977- 1982. First spent this period as the director of research at the Centre of African Studies in Mozambique. The significance of the work she was conducting in Mozambique can be judged from the decision by South Africa's security agencies to kill her. When Ruth First was alive she was declared an enemy of the State and not a word that she wrote could be legally read within South Africa. Twenty nine years have passed since her untimely death in 1982 and one might argue that the silence regarding her scholarship is itself a form of censorship. Don Pinnock (1997: 4) notes that these writings are remarkable for their conceptual and political consistency

as much as for their diversity. Almost all her work shares a focused criticism of apartheid and the institutions which held it together.

This research was not an attempt at a biography, and the initial research objectives were to:

1. Assemble the scholarly outputs of Ruth First during her time at the Centre of Africa Studies, in Maputo;
2. Examine the contribution she made to knowledge while locating her discourse within the wider political and social contexts which shaped her ideas;
3. Examine her methodological approach to knowledge production; and
4. Identify the themes running through her work, and assess her works as a scholar from the global South as texts to learn *from*, not just *about*.

Stated above are the initial research objectives which were significantly altered during the fieldwork. Having conducted a desktop search during the early phases of the research process and prior to going into the field I expected to find Ruth First's contribution in the form of published and unpublished documents. However the visit to the Centre of African Studies and the interviews conducted with colleagues and students in Maputo and colleagues in South Africa revealed that while in Maputo Ruth First's contribution to knowledge was through three activities:

1. In the building and day to day running of the Centre of African Studies, a social research and research- training institute, which through the history of its development, on-going work, and its organisation, expressed much of what was central and significant to the strategy of social research in Mozambique (CEA, 1982a: 29).
2. In the Development Course through which she organised in the practice of the Centre of African Studies a distinctive and revolutionary conception of university teaching. The course was not only innovative in its objectives it was also extremely productive in research result (Aquino de Braganca & Bridget O'Laughlin, 1984: 161).
3. And through the writing of what was to be her final book *Black Gold* subtitled *The Mozambican Miner, Proletarian and Peasant*, which according to Peter Gutkind (1983: 346) is an “informative and very detailed exposition of the effects of migration on the peasant economy, on subsistence and export production”.

Following the fieldwork the research was altered to focus on these three different areas.

1.5 Scope and Structure of Thesis

This thesis is divided into nine chapters. **Chapter One** serves as the general introduction to the study. The context of the study and motivations for pursuing the study are elaborated on. Also incorporated is a brief outline of the objectives of the study.

Chapter Two is a review of the literature on academic dependency. The chapter looks at the philosophical and theoretical assumptions underlying academic dependency, a strand of dependency theory, which draws on the centre-periphery model. The key argument made by academic dependency theorists is that academic work being conducted at the periphery (global South) is informed by and dependent on the works being produced at the centre (global North).

Chapter Three elaborates on and gives reasons for the chosen qualitative research design and methodology used in conducting the study. Included in the chapter are details on the data collection, data analysis methods and some of the challenges faced during the research process.

Chapter Four provides a short but detailed biography of Ruth First. Focusing on the work First conducted as an activist, journalist in South Africa and her lecturing and writing activities while in exile the chapter traces the path that led her to Mozambique's Centre of African Studies.

Chapter Five focuses on the Mozambican struggle in an effort to provide context for the work First was conducting in Maputo. The chapter looks at First's contribution to knowledge by focusing on the role she played in the building of the Centre of African Studies and the direction of research at the centre under First's leadership.

Chapter Six continues to examine Ruth First's contribution to knowledge by examining the objectives, structure and content of the Centre of African Studies Development Course which was envisioned by Ruth First. The course formed part of the larger nation-building efforts and

was directed at working individuals in the hope that they would be able to integrate the tools acquired through the course into their everyday work.

Chapter Seven traces the path that led to the production of the book *Black Gold, Mozambican Miner Proletarian and Peasant*, and also provides a critical analysis, evaluation, meaning and significance of the book which is a substantial monument to Ruth First's contribution to knowledge.

Chapter Eight takes a look at some of the significant labour migration literature prior to the publication of Ruth First's *Black Gold, The Mozambican Miner: Proletarian and Peasant*, which was her final contribution to knowledge. These studies are evaluated in an effort to highlight the gap filled by the book as well as its significance.

Chapter Nine concludes the study by examining the research findings in relation to the research questions and also presents recommendations for further research.

Chapter 2

A Review of the Literature

2.1 Introduction

The literature on the state of the social sciences and humanities of the last 50 years has expressed disapproval at the state of knowledge in the social sciences in the global South, highlighting numerous problems that can all be subsumed under concepts and expressions such as extroversion (Hountondji, 1990), epistemic dependence (Adesina, 2006), academic imperialism (Alatas, 1969) and academic dependency (Altbach, 1977; Gareau, 1985; Alatas, S. F., 1999, 2000). These problems are viewed as part of the larger context of relations between the former western colonial powers and the former colonies, including those countries that were vicariously colonised (Alatas, 2003: 599). In an attempt to illuminate the problem of epistemic or academic dependence the chapter begins with a review of the literature on the state of the social sciences in the global South followed by a review of literature on the state of knowledge production on the African continent. I also take a look at some of the debates on the state of the Sociology discipline in particular and I conclude the chapter by taking a look at some of the ideas put forward to transcend the current situation

2.2 The State of the Social Sciences in the Global South

According to the press release on 2010's World Social Science Report produced by the International Social Science Council (ISSC) and co-published with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the social sciences from the global North continues to have the greatest global influence, with the field expanding rapidly in countries in the global South like Asia and Brazil. In sub-Saharan Africa, the field is dominated by social scientists from Nigeria, South Africa and Kenya who produce a combined 75% of academic publications in the region. According to the press release social scientific knowledge is often least developed in the parts of the world where it is most needed and they attribute the dominance of Western social science to the brain drain.

Abdullah *et al* (2011: 51), however argue that the lack of development of the social sciences in the global South cannot be reduced to the large scale emigration of a group of individuals with knowledge. They further note that the starting point to understanding the state of social science

knowledge in developing countries is understanding that knowledge is linked to power and that knowledge, once used to regulate the conduct of others, entails constraint, regulation and the disciplining of practice. There is therefore no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, or any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time, power relations (Foucault, 1977: 27 cited in Abdullah *et al* 2011: 152). The dependence on the global South for knowledge transfer and imitation is therefore suggestive of the power of the global North over developing societies, especially in dealing with discourses relating to social science.

The relationship between the social sciences in the global South and North has historically been analysed by making use of the centre-periphery model. Drawing on the work of Lengyel (1985) and von Gizycki (1973), Alatas (2003: 602) states that there exists within the social sciences a centre- periphery continuum that corresponds to the North-South divide. Von Gizycki (1973: 474, cited in Alatas, 2003: 604) defines the centre as “constituted by the fact that works produced there command more attention and acknowledgment than works produced elsewhere. A centre is a place from which influence radiates”. This geometrical metaphor of the centre and periphery which dependency theorists draw from is often used to describe opposition between the basic types of places in a spatial system, the one which is benefiting, the centre, and those which are subjected to it, in a peripheral position. For the pair to work there must be a relationship between the two types of places, thus flows of persons, money and information among other things. These relationships must be asymmetrical, unbalance of flows of information, hierarchy of power relationships (Grataloup, 2004). The centre is central precisely because it benefits from this inequality and, in turn, the periphery is characterised by a deficit, which maintains its dominated position. The system is auto regulated as the centre reproduces conditions for its centrality and the periphery does the reverse. It is thus a pleonasm to talk about a dominated periphery. However, precisely because it is based on the logic of unequal exchange, that the system is dynamic (Marshall, 1998: 1).

In Sociology the model is often used to explain models of economic dependence and tends to draw on the Marxist tradition of analysis. The use of the model in this context assumes that underdevelopment is not a simple descriptive term that refers to a backward, traditional

economy, but rather a concept rooted in a general theory of imperialism. According to the model, underdevelopment is not the result of tradition, but is rather produced as part of the process necessary for the development of capitalism in the central capitalist countries and its continued reproduction on a world scale. The model is a valid tool for the description and comprehension of processes of social scientific knowledge production, reception and scholarly communication at an international level (Keim, 2008).

Connell (2007: 212) notes that recognising the pattern, being able to identify the centre and register the different positions of centre and periphery, is “an absolute requirement for social science to function on a global scale” and that theories such as cultural hybridisation, that fail to recognise this pattern fail at the first real test of realism. The same Connell (ibid) argues can be said of theories that embody a false sense of universalism that “ build a model on the experience of the most privileged 600 million people, then assume it accounts for the whole 6000 million who are actually in the world”. Using concepts such as periphery is therefore not the end of an analysis but rather the beginning. The periphery, she argues is constituted by poor countries like Benin and astonishingly rich countries like Australia. Even within these regions the patterns of dependence and paths of development differ greatly. Simply naming the centre/ metropole and the periphery is however not enough, the job of social science is to analyse it. This involves understanding the social processes--the institutions, interests and strategies--that generate the catastrophes (Connell, 2007: 216).

Applying the centre-periphery model to the social sciences Frederick Gareau (1985) distinguishes between three social scientific blocs, namely Western social science in the United States of America (USA) and Western Europe, Soviet Marxism-Leninism and the peripheral social sciences of the global South. He further maintains that these three distinct blocs communicate in hierarchical relationships and also notes the ethnocentric perspective of Western social science, the intellectual dependence and subordination of the South, as well as the unilateral communication that forms part of these relations. Taking a critical and relativistic stance towards what he labels 'multinational social science', Gareau (1985) assumes an external determination of the observed intellectual hegemony. The dominance of US social science is in his view not widely spread due to its intrinsic values but due to political, economic and cultural

domination of the US. Gareau (1985) argues that social scientific power corresponds and relies on economic and political power, because the social sciences form part of the knowledge industry.

Keim (2008: 24) notes that Gareau's perspective, which emerged during the cold war period would require some revision if it were to be applied today. She views the unilateral economic and geopolitical determinism as problematic as such views neglect the fact that institutional and material factors within academia cannot be exclusively reduced to the broader economic situation. She notes that if one were to characterise the US social sciences as the most ethnocentric, forming a closed, self-referent communication system, largely ignoring the rest of the world, the geopolitical position of the US does not present a satisfactory explanation. The level of development and size of the US scholarly community means that there is a sufficient critical mass within the country that ensures scholarly discussion and development of the discipline. If one subscribes to this view then external communication is thus not of the same, vital importance as in smaller communities. Gareau in Keim's (2008: 28) view also underestimates the power position of the United States in the publications sector and the effects of the disciplinary division of the social sciences. The argument made by Keim (2008) however does little to refute Gareau's cultural dominance argument. Size alone cannot explain the dominance of the US social science because the Chinese and Indian social sciences are similarly large but neither possesses the same dominance on the world social science community as the US.

One of the earliest works to take a look at the complicity of the local or the native in the dominant power of the coloniser is Frantz Fanon's 1952 book *Black Skin, White Masks* (Mielants, 2007: 297). In the book Fanon posits the role of languages in the Black's dilemma of marginalisation in Africa. He argues that the acquisition of foreign language over local language provides power creating cultural differences and power imbalance (Abdullah *et al*, 2011: 53). Under colonialism the history, culture, and beliefs of the white coloniser's were considered universal, normative and superior to the culture of the colonised. This in turn created a sense of inferiority in the colonised subject leading to an adoption of the coloniser's culture, language and customs as a way of compensating for these feelings of inferiority (Fanon, 2008). Although the

book was originally written to combat black oppression, Fanon's insights are still relevant today and have been used by various social science theorists including those analysing the relationship between the social sciences in the global South and North.

Such works have also drawn on the work of literary theorist Edward Said who uses the term Orientalism to describe a pervasive Western discursive misrepresentation of the East that has been shaped by the ideologies of the West since the modern era. The term Orientalism is used in this context to refer to Western discourse for its dominating discourse over the Orient (Abdullah *et al*, 2011: 54). Orientalism consists not of blatantly racist statements about the Orient; rather they take the form of the marginal status of non-Western thinkers and concepts that are the result of the imposition of European concepts and theories (Alatas, 2009: 142). Said's critique and evaluation of Orientalism highlights the inaccuracies of a wide variety of assumptions as it questions various widely accepted paradigms of thought and forms an important background for postcolonial studies (Sered, 1996).

Orientalism coincides with the idea of intellectual imperialism, which is analogous to political and economic imperialism. Imperialism can be understood as the economic domination of colonised nations by the more advanced nations through military conquest; it is equivalent to colonialism (Stone, 1987: 57). Alatas (2003: 600) argues that since maintaining control of the colonised required the application of disciplines such as Sociology, Geography and Economics, social scientific research and scholarship served political and economic imperialism we can refer to the academe as imperialistic. This form of imperialism is similar to the domination of one people by another in their way of thinking--an intellectual dependency of those who were once colonised upon their former coloniser's, a tie that binds unevenly and unequally even after colonialism (Jaya, 2001 cited in Kwek, 2003: 2). According to proponents of intellectual imperialism, there exists in the social sciences imperialistic relations that parallel those in the world of international political economy.

Dipesh Chakrabarty's influential book *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* addresses the mythical figure of Europe that is often regarded as the original site of modernity in many histories of capitalist transition in non-Western countries.

Chakrabarty (2000) argues that this imaginary Europe is built into the social sciences where the very idea of historicizing conveys with it some peculiarly European assumptions about disillusioned space, secular time, and sovereignty. The perceptions and paradigms that are seen to have emerged from the European intellectual tradition form the dominant modes of understanding and explanation in the (academic) world today. Insofar as they are indispensable to our understanding of the social world they have, at the same time, been increasingly posited as inadequate to that understanding. This inadequacy arises from particular misconceptions and misinterpretations which form the thematic backbone of Chakrabarty's book.

Chakrabarty's (2000: 20) stated purpose in writing the book "is to explore the capacities and limitations of certain European social and political categories in conceptualizing political modernity in the context of non- European life- worlds... the point is not to reject social science categories but to release into the space occupied by particular European histories sedimented in them other normative horizons specific to our existence and relevant to the examination of our lives and their possibilities. To provincialise Europe is therefore to undertake the enormously difficult task of demonstrating that Europe is not the centre of the world, but only a small group of nations occupying a small region of the world that has attracted attention to itself during the last few centuries- an instant in the wider scheme of things (Argyrou, 2011: 217).

"It is to show that far from being the source of all legitimate signification, Europe and more broadly the west is simply one among many other such sources- past and, no doubt, future ones; and that therefore it cannot decide for all of us, once and for all, what it means to be. To provincialise Europe, in short, is to try and make room in the world for other ways of being" (ibid).

The social sciences have witnessed epistemological and ontological shifts in viewing their subject matter and authors like Alatas (2003), Gareau (1985), who have examined the relationship between the social sciences in the global South and those in the global North have traced academic imperialism back to the colonial period when colonial powers set up and directly controlled schools, universities and publishing houses. The economic structure of imperialism therefore generated a parallel structure in the way of thinking of the controlled

people (Alatas, 2000: 24 cited Alatas, 2003: 601). With colonialism having come to an end, academic imperialism is now referred to as academic neo-imperialism or academic neo-colonialism and now exists in indirect forms as the global North retains monopolistic control over the nature and flows of social scientific knowledge even after political independence.

While during the colonial period academic imperialism was maintained via colonial powers, in the post-colonial period academic neo-colonialism is maintained via academic dependency, which provides an adequate framework to understand the relationship between the global South and North. The idea of academic dependence, which has been a recurring concern for peripheral intellectual communities, refers to the unequal structure of production and circulation of knowledge. It is therefore a dependency theory of the global state of the social sciences and the debate over cultural imperialism. It arose in Brazil during the 1950s as a theoretical problem intending to re-diagnose underdevelopment within a collective and interdisciplinary reflection, with its proponents recommending that Latin American social scientists cut ties with the social science powers of the West and develop instead an autonomous or indigenized social sciences (Gareau, 1985: 114- 15 cited in Alatas, 2003: 603).

Dependence is outlined as a theoretical situation that occurs under certain national and international conditions, as a result of the global structure of underdevelopment. It is therefore not viewed as an external position, but as a relation between industrialised and peripheral countries. Analogous to political or economic dependency, academic dependency forms part of the larger context of relations between the former colonies and the contemporary social science powers in the global North, which retain monopolistic control over the flows and nature of social scientific knowledge in the global South even after political independence has been achieved (Alatas, 2000: 602).

Contemporary social science powers in this context are defined not only in geographic terms but also as countries which (1) generate large outputs of social science research , (2) have a global reach of the ideas and information contained in peer reviewed journals, books and research papers and (3) have the ability to influence the social sciences of other countries due to the consumption of works originating from the powers, (4) command a great deal of respect both at

home and abroad (Alatas, 2003: 602). It is important to make a distinction between the dominance of certain authors and the global dominance of entire schools of thought. Academic dependency, a strand of dependency theory refers to the latter. The central contention of the theory is that intellectually dependent societies are dependent on institutions and ideas from the global North such that research agendas, the definition of problem areas, methods of research and standards of excellence continue to be conditioned by the development and growth of the social sciences to which the former is subjected.

Academic dependence can be gauged from the relative availability of First World funding for research, the prestige attached to publishing in American and British journals, the high premium placed on a Western university education, and a host of other indicators. As far as intellectual dependency on ideas is concerned, this can be readily understood from a survey of theoretical perspectives in vogue across a range of disciplines in the global. For example, in former British colonies the social sciences are likely to be dominated by Anglo-Saxon theoretical traditions. The influence of the global North over the social sciences in most of the global South is shown by the dependence of intellectuals on western social science and the importation of ideas from the North which is often done without consideration of their socio-historical context (Alatas, 2000: 96).

Due to a shared sense of inferiority against the West, academic dependency may also assume a psychological dimension where the intellectually dependent scholar becomes a passive recipient of methods and ideas from the global North (Alatas, 2000:98). Alatas (1974) referred to this as the 'captive mind' arguing that it is characteristically uncritical and imitative in manner restricting one from having an own perspective of one's own reality and in turn impeding progress. The captive mind lacks the ability to discern between the universal and the particular, imagining that all that is learned from the West and own colonial experience, are universally true and can be applied anywhere else in the world (Jalil, 2011). The captive mind is mainly trained in the Western sciences, read books written by western authors and taught directly or indirectly by Western teachers and its uncritical acceptance of Western social science is manifested in the selection of research problems and research methods (Alatas, 1993: 308).

Alatas (2003: 604) has argued that the mode of conditioning of the captive mind in academically dependent social science communities is determined by the dimension of academic dependency that is operating. He further lists these as (a) dependence on ideas; (b) dependence on the media of ideas; (c) dependence on the technology of education; (d) dependence on aid for research and teaching; (e) dependence on investment in education; and (f) dependence of scholars in developing societies on demand in the knowledge powers for their skills. This resulted in a structure of international academic hierarchies in which the social science powers have a global reach, while peripheral social science communities in the Third World rely on research agendas, theories, and methods from the social science powers. A third category is made up of semi peripheral social science powers that hold an intermediate position: while they are dependent on the social science powers they also exert considerable influence on the peripheral science communities (Alatas, 2003).

2.2.1 The Global Division of Labour and Northern Theory

Alatas (2003: 606) not only argues that academic neo-colonialism is an existing phenomenon defining the unequal relationship between the social sciences in the global South and global North, he further maintains that the nature and consequences of this inequality can be understood by analysing the global division of labour in the social sciences. Originally maintained by the colonial mode of knowledge production this global division of labour is evident between those who work on their own countries and those who work on countries other than their own, do comparative research and arrive at considerably higher degrees of generalisations (Keim, 2008: 34). This global division of labour hinders the development of original concepts, theories, models and methods is not only a consequence of academic dependency but it also perpetuates it. Academic dependency is therefore maintained by specific features of the current global division of labour and has a number of characteristics.

The first of these characteristics can be observed when scholars from the South and North engage in collaborative research and there is a tendency among social scientists in the global North to engage in both theoretical as well as empirical research while social scientists in the South mainly engage in empirical research. For evidence of this Alatas (2003: 607- 8) proposes that we look at a number of social science journals that publish mainly North Atlantic authors.

Volume 20 (2002) of the journal *Sociological Theory* for instance, carried 20 articles authored by 28 authors and while the journal calls for submissions in all areas of social thought with no specification on theoretical or geographical area of interest all the authors were based in the United States. According the generally accepted hierarchies of knowledge (Gaillard, 1996: 128 cited in Keim, 2008: 30), the social sciences in the global South produce knowledge at the lower levels in the sense that they deal with local problems at a low level of abstraction and generalisation, while the global North holds almost a monopoly on what is considered comparative research and general theory building.

Another aspect of the global division of labour is the tendency of scholars in the global North to conduct research of both their countries as well as other countries including the countries in the South. Scholars in the South however tend to confine themselves to conducting research on their own countries (Alatas, 2003: 608). Keim (2008: 32) notes that this is due to local scholarly discourse being regarded as interesting only if it refers to local realities. The idea is that the African historian, sociologist, anthropologist ought to do African history, African Sociology and African anthropologist. This often arises from Northern scholars (especially those in Area Studies) who steer African graduate students supervisees towards working on their countries. By conforming to this practice, the researcher in the Third World leaves to others the theorising and interpretation inhibiting himself access to the universal (Hountondji, 1995).

A third aspect of the global division of labour is the division between comparative and single case studies. Alatas (2003) argues that there are far greater frequencies of comparative work in the global North as compared to the single case studies that mostly coincide with own country studies in the global South. For empirical evidence of the second and third characteristics of the global division of labour Alatas (2003: 608) suggests we look at the distribution of authors by country of residence in the journal, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*. In 2002 Vol. 44 of the journal carried 19 articles from 34 authors, 20 of which were based in the United States, four in the United Kingdom, one in France and the remaining nine authors were from the global South. The majority of the articles on subject matter related to the global North were mainly authored by scholars based in one of the social science powers. A further study of the same

journal reveals that articles with a comparative perspective tend to be authored by scholars based in one of the social science powers.

The difference in abstraction and locality can be further traced by examining the titles of social science publications. Publications produced in the periphery typically contain in their title the geographical location, signalling the regional status of their knowledge production. Baber (2003: 618 cited in Keim, 2008: 33) concludes from this observation that “there is a topographic dimension to social scientific production, reception and validation: a specific geography of knowledge where spatial location of the researcher and site of research also play a significant role in the reception and valorisation of the work is in operation”.

Keim (2011) has argued that the unequal division of labour further manifests itself at institutional and personal levels when researchers from the global North cooperate with those from the global South. According Gaillard (1996: 12 cited in Keim, 2008) the main problem in North-South relations is the hierarchy between the participants. These hierarchies refer to the fact that Northern partners became more involved in the conceptualisation, interpretation, theory building and publication, whereas their Southern colleagues were responsible for the collection and processing of the data. Researchers from the global South who participate in North-South collaborations complain that they become subjected to a narrow agenda and their role is limited to suppliers of data, or developers of solutions devised out of context, following a standardised model (Waast, 2002: 43 cited in Keim, 2008: 31).

The unequal division of labour, combined with local scientific development, and the prestige of institutions in the centre, have an effect on the cognitive level of knowledge production. Due to the global division of labour social theory is overwhelmingly produced in the global North resulting in the importation of ideas, terminology and research agendas from the centre to the periphery. Connell (2006) identifies four problematic textual moves in the ideas, terminology and methodology imported from the global North: claims of universality, reading from the centre, gestures of exclusion, and grand erasure. These textual moves remain unspoken in theoretical discourse except in a specialised literature of post-colonial theory.

Northern theory established very early a conceptual style in which theory is monological, declaring one truth in one voice. This kind of theorising attempts to formulate a broad vision of the social, and offers concepts that apply beyond a particular society, place or time. Such texts attempt to make hypotheses or propositions that are valid everywhere and propose methods of analysis that will work under all conditions. This Connell (2007: 28) argues is the dominant kind of theorising in the metropole, where the very idea of theory or theorising involves talking in universals. The assumption being that all societies are knowable and are knowable from the same point of view. While the idea of a universal social science Connell (2007: 48) points out has a certain “grandeur, and a certain usefulness” when the claim of universal knowledge or universal values is made from a position of privilege, it is likely to serve hegemony and not liberation.

The claim of universality is not only made through making universal statements it is also made through method. This Connell (2007: 44) suggests can be seen from the rewriting of other social scientists' work in one's own conceptual language. This rewriting is never just a translation: it is a subsumption, in which the universal relevance of the preferred theory is implicitly claimed and each re-writing is offered as an example, with the implication that any other case could be subsumed in the same manner (Connell, 2006: 259). The theory generated from the periphery however cannot be universal because its specificity is immediately obvious and attracts a name such as African Philosophy or Latin American Dependency Theory.

Ake (cited in Arowosegbe, 2008: 344) argues that far from being universal, the European invention of historical consciousness is only the result of its own perspectival imaginings, just as 'other' perspectives are also implicated in the polemics of their own positionalities. The universality of empirical and theoretical knowledge is only a ruse, which should be carefully broken down into distinctive cultural and historical components to be explored and pursued within the frameworks defined by one's cultural milieu and social experience. In other words, searching for the universals vaguely defined as 'the truth' or 'knowledge' must proceed from an appreciation of one's context, experience and history.

Adesina (2008: 135) states that in spite of the claims of being nomothetic in aspiration, social analysis is deeply ideographic and those who exercise what he views to be “undue anxiety”

about being 'cosmopolitan' or universalist fail to grasp this about much of what is considered nomothetic in the dominant strands of Western 'theories'. "All knowledge is first local; 'universal knowledge' can only exist in contradiction" (Mafeje, 2000: 67 cited in Adesina, 2008: 135) and it is precisely because Max Weber spoke distinctly to the European context of his time, as Michel Foucault did for his that guaranteed the efficacy of their discourses (Adesina, 2008: 135).

The social theory imported from the global North embeds the viewpoints, perspectives and problems of metropolitan society, while presenting itself as universal knowledge. The formulation of these universalistic aspirations by theorists from the global North is often without reflecting their particular location. According to Adesina (2006: 134)

We are asked to take particular ideas of culture, forms of governance, philosophical expositions, rights discourses, patterns of interpersonal relationship, and accounting for history, among others as universal, when in fact what is presented in the name of universalism and cosmopolitanism is fundamentally a closure. This closure involved an erasure; a silencing of non-Western voices and knowledge systems.

As Connell (2007: 46) notes,

Social theory is built in a dialogue with empirical knowledge- sometimes derived from the theorist's own research, more often other people's. When that empirical knowledge derives wholly or mainly from the metropole, and where the theorist's concerns arise from the problems of metropolitan society, the effect is erasure of the experience of the majority of human kind from the foundations of social thought.

In explaining this grand erasure she draws on three prestigious sociological texts of general theory, James S. Coleman's *Foundations of Social Theory*, Pierre Bourdieu's *Logic of Practice* and Anthony Giddens' *Constitution of Society*. The grand erasure in these texts is found in the way experiences from the global South are referenced. For instance Bourdieu's *Logic of Practice* dwells on kinship strategies but the historical experience of colonial war is erased. Making use of

the ethnographic present Bourdieu erases colonial relationships as a social structure (Connell, 2006: 259).

The reading lists of theorists from the global North are always interesting documents, and who is not on the list is always as interesting as who is. Connell (2006: 260) notes that there is a significant absence of Frantz Fanon and the entire Algerian liberation movement from Pierre Bourdieu's exposition of the theory of practice. Theorists from the global South are rarely cited in the metropolitan texts of universal theory. Also often absent from metropolitan reading lists is any reference to Islamic thought despite the historic interplay of Islamic culture, and the wealth of Islamic discussions of modernity. When texts from the non-metropolitan world are included they include exotic items that add colour to the texts but do not affect their intellectual structure. They fail to introduce any ideas from the global South that can be considered as part of the dialogue of theory (Connell, 2006: 260- 261).

Social theory from the global North is often presented as resolution of some problem, or weakness in previous theory. Connell (2006: 260- 261) argues that the popular texts from Giddens, Bourdieu and Coleman present themselves this way and address problems that arise in a metropolitan theoretical literature. In their writings Giddens and Bourdieu focus on the problem of objectivism vs. subjectivism, which is a classical problem for European cultural and social sciences but not a problem for colonial intelligentsia. Metropolitan theorists use universal language based on personal knowledge or local research to generalise the specific experience of metropolitan countries. Coleman's model of agency which is based on the entrepreneur in the North American market-place is an example of this kind of theorising.

2.3 Centre-Periphery Relations and Social Scientific Knowledge Production in Africa

One of the most thoughtful voices on African development over the last thirty years Claude Ake (1982 cited in Arowosegbe, 2008: 30) notes that, just as Africa has been reduced to raw material production and Europe specialises in the production of capital goods and finished products, the continent has also been ideologically reduced to a source from which data are generated and exported to Europe for advancing the frontiers of knowledge, so that theories are perpetually imported into Africa from the West in a global system dominated by the West. Ake argues that

Western social science is propaganda forcing capitalist values and interests on Third world countries and calls instead for a social science based on Third World notions of development (Harris, 2005).

Ake (1979: ii) states that the imperialist nature of Western social science plays a major role in maintaining the dependent and subordinate position of the social sciences on the continent as it inhibits our understanding of the problems of our world, feeding us noxious values and false hopes, making us pursue policies that undermine our competitive strength and guarantee our permanent underdevelopment and dependence. Drawing on the works of Claude Ake, Arowosegbe (2008: 23) argues that the dependence in knowledge production, appropriation and dissemination noted by Ake is mainly reflected in the notion that the global North continues to determine the orientations and research directions governing the social science vocation on the continent. This dependence is evident not only in the importation of theory and methods of seeking knowledge but also in the kind of literature and scholarship defining the various disciplinary vocations.

Making use of the centre-periphery model and drawing on dependency theory Hountondji (1990: 7- 10) makes the same observation as Ake and maintains that the practice of scientific and technological activity, as practiced in Africa remains as externally orientated, alienated, dependent on an international division of labour and theory formulation remains a monopoly of the global North, confining Africa to the importing and application of such theory. This extraversion manifests itself in the sense that intellectual production is pushed out toward the global North, and meant primarily for external consumption. African researchers, prefer to publish in Western journals and publishing houses and when they do publish in local journals, this is done with the knowledge that most of their reading public is outside Africa and under the assumption that those journals conform to international norms. This has consequences for their ways of writing, methodologies, their intellectual procedures, their ways of dealing with issues as well as the criteria used in the selection of issues (Hountondji, 2004: 5).

Reflecting on the position of Africa in international studies, Zeleza (2006) notes that there is no region in the world which has suffered more from “theoretical extraversion”, than Africa, where

externally derived intellectual perspectives and perversions play a critical role not only in policy formulation but also in scholarship. As a result the terms of intellectual exchange are decidedly unequal with African studies forming a peripheral part of the Western academy, whereas in the African academy the Western epistemological order remains central. There is according to Zeleza (2006) hardly ever a discourse in the West on Africa for Africa's sake, and the West has often used Africa as a pretext for its own subjectivities, its self- imagination and no amount of new knowledge seems challenging enough to bury for good the ghost of simplistic assumptions about Africa.

Extroversion according to Mkandawire (1997) is further aggravated by the global division of labour. This has meant that when it comes to field research scholars from the global North carry out the conceptual work while African researchers conduct interviews and fill out forms. This division of labour pushes African scholars towards conducting research shaped by the needs of the North and reduces African researchers to knowledgeable informants. As a result African scholars are “tethered to local minutiae in such a manner that they are “incapable of and not very eager to rise to the universal” (Hountondji, 1994: 24 cited in Mkandawire, 1997: 29).

Collaborative research has often worked in the interest of the Western partners, who, armed with assumed theoretical sophistication and economic resources, have usually reduced their African collaborators to data collectors and research assistants. Because the leading journals and publishers are based in the West and controlled by Western academics, African debates and perspectives find it very difficult getting fair and adequate representation. When manuscripts by Africans are not simply dismissed for being 'uninformed by current debates and related literature', they may be turned down for challenging conventional wisdom and traditional assumptions about their continent. The few African academics that succeed in penetrating such gate-keeping mechanisms have often done so by making serious sacrifices in terms of the perspectives, methodologies and contextual relevance of their publications and scholarship (Prah, 1998: 27- 31 cited in Nyamnjoh, 2004: 176).

Focusing specifically on the theory of political development Ake (1979: 342 cited in Arowosegbe) maintains that in studying Africa after images of the North, Western theory studies

shows persistent gaps and lacuna that the continent must overcome to finally reach the promised land of economic growth, democracy and development. This way, it constructs the history of the continent in terms of 'a lack' by underlining what more is needed to make the continent more like those in the global North. In the rare situations there are engagements with distinctly African issues by African scholars, such engagements are often portrayed as findings from studies as products emanating from an alien other, based on an area study approach (Arowosegbe, 2008: 24). Added to this is the relative neglect and awareness of debates and scholars from the continent, with the result that while scholarly engagement with the continent remains superficial, and when it does exist, it does so in the negative form.

Hountondji (1990) and Ake (1979) trace the origin of extraversion to the developments following the European conquest of Africa, arguing that in spite of the independence of the continent extraversion is still immanent in Africa's relations to the West, especially given its complicated positioning in the global system of knowledge production (Arowosegbe, 2008: 14). Hountondji (1995: 9) further maintains that this dependence is the result of the fact that pre-colonial knowledge has been marginalised and deprived of its internal dynamism and power of self-generation.

These long established North-South relations prevent Africans from disentangling themselves from the North in an attempt to produce knowledge independently. African scholars therefore found it comfortable to echo what others have already produced with the assumption that knowledge is universal. Zeleza (2002: 21) reminds us that this is not a sign of African academics' confident universalism but rather a sign of their insecure provincialism and reflects a desperate search for intellectual legitimation from Northern academic systems and epistemological traditions that have historically dismissed them.

Due to their extroverted nature the social sciences in Africa also suffer from what Arowosegbe (2008: 23) terms 'intellectual dislocation' as they lack the context-sensitivity with which they should be pursued. According to Adesina (2006) this failure of context-sensitive scholarship is epistemic and analytic. Debates regarding African issues are often filtered through epistemic approaches that are products of other (largely Western) contexts. From Economics to Sociology,

from Philosophy to History, it was the depth of endogeneity that gave the canonical Western works their vibrancy. As much as many may think of Economics as a science, for instance, we cannot understand the distinction between David Ricardo and Friedrich List, outside of the specificity of their locales; neither can we understand the profundity of the scholarship of Marx Weber or Emile Durkheim, in Sociology, outside of the depth of their endogeneity.

As a result of the limited relevance of the social sciences on the continent students are educated on alienating material that is of little or no use to their countries. From independence to date, 'African universities have been successful in Africanising their personnel but not their curricula or pedagogical structures to any real extent' (Crossman and Devisch, 1999: 11 cited in Nyamnjoh, 2004). The type of tertiary level education developed in many African universities has only allowed scholars on the continent to develop a dependent scholarship which does not encourage independent thinking and theory building resulting in the current peripheral position (Bekele, 2007:107). The acceptance of a foreign curriculum incorporates accepting the philosophy of the education from which it is has been copied. Africans in turn copy and incorporate into their education the prejudices that the erstwhile colonial powers had against their former colonies.

The education on the continent has mostly been a journey fuelled by an exogenously induced and internalised sense of inadequacy in Africans, and endowed with the mission of devaluation or annihilation of African creativity, agency and value systems. Such 'cultural estrangement' has served to reinforce in Africans self- devaluation and self- hatred and a profound sense of inferiority that in turn compels them to 'lighten their darkness' both physically and metaphysically for Western gratification (Fanon, 1967: 169 cited in Nyamnjoh, 2004: 160). This predicament has been captured by Nyang (1994:434 cited Nyamnjoh, 2004: 166- 8) as 'a pathological case of xenophilia', whereby Africans are brought to value things Western 'not for their efficacy but simply because of their foreignness, and persuaded to consume to death their creativity and dignity, their very own humanity.

Instead of the identified extraversion Zeleza (2002: 22) suggests that social science scholarship on the continent should be inspired by a desire to address the pressing issues of the times and

understand African economies, politics, and societies in order to bring about progressive change. Fundamental to the future of African scholarship, is the revitalisation of scholarly communities and universities on the continent which for more than two decades have been devastated by structural adjustment policies. The production on knowledge about and on Africa can only be as strong as scholarship on the continent is strong (Zezeza, 2006: 216- 217).

Hountondji (1990: 15) maintains that the issue of dependence as it exists in Africa is ultimately a political one and in his view will never be accurately perceived as long as those in power lack a clear vision of the challenges facing the continent. However by drawing attention to the issues of dependence and analysing its impact on society, African intellectuals can raise the level of awareness and contribute to raising the level of awareness. Africa must be its own interpreter through generating its own knowledge discourses and narratives. Western social science's interpretation of the world was its own and therefore produced its own interpretations, narratives and mythologies. Although these narratives contained similarities of experiences and lessons for Africa, are particular and specific discourses that were universalised because of the dominant nature of Western modernity (Aina, 2004:97).

Hountondji further (2009: 9) argues that African scholars should not be satisfied with just contributing to the accumulation of knowledge about Africa, a kind of knowledge that is capitalised and managed by the global North. The aim should be to develop an African based tradition of knowledge in all disciplines, a tradition where research agendas and research questions are initiated and set out directly or indirectly by African societies themselves. Things ought to happen in Africa, and not always exclusively outside the continent. Fairness to the continent requires that all the knowledge accumulated throughout centuries on different aspects of life be shared with its people.

The alternative to irrelevant and outdated Western social science scholarship on Africa is not a social science with no ideological bias, as such a kind is neither possible nor desirable. The alternative as he sees it is a social science whose thrust and values are more conducive to the eradication of underdevelopment, exploitation and dependence (Ake, 1979- iv)

2.4 Centre-Periphery Relations in the Realm of Sociological Knowledge

As a social science Sociology has not been immune to the challenges of dependency and extroversion facing the social sciences in the global South. The sociological discipline in the global South is ridden with tremendous ambivalence in terms of identity and also an intense sense of vocational and professional insecurity both within and outside the academy. As a result there have been a number of assertions by sociologists that the discipline is approaching crisis, under strain and the recognition of the need to defend it (Aina, 2004: 94). Applying the centre-periphery model to Sociology Keim (2008: 23) argues that one of the biggest challenges facing Southern sociologies is that despite calls for the internationalisation and globalisation of the discipline (Archer, 1991), they continue to occupy a rather peripheral position while those in the global North constitute the centre of the discipline.

Keim (2008) links the divide between the centre and the periphery to the emergence of Sociology noting that as a scholarly discipline it was first institutionalised in Europe. The roots of the discipline can be traced to its engagement with issues around the Western Enlightenment and modernity. It sought to constitute the basis of Western interpretation of the process of capitalist industrialisation and the making of Western bourgeois society (Aina, 2004: 98). Based on its origins and the key concerns and intellectual projects of its founders, Sociology carries a great deal of historical baggage. Having been formed within the culture of imperialism the Sociology that emerged from the West was in most cases embedded in western thought, beliefs, and values often leading to ethnocentric, teleological and almost unilateral conception of the world (Connell, 2007).

While the Sociology that emerged in the global North was autonomous and developed, the Sociology that emerged in the global South was a subordinated and dependent Sociology. A developed Sociology is defined as one that shows a high degree of institutionalisation, incorporating specialised research and teaching, journals and associations (Keim, 2008: 25). It is characterised by an internal division of labour that covers and continuously develops a variety of sociological activity ranging from the collection of empirical data as well as the realisation of case studies at a low level of abstraction to conceptualisation and theory building. It therefore requires a scholarly community that is in constant communication and critically discusses results

in a thematic manner. It is thus an autonomous system of production, diffusion and accumulation of knowledge and discourses.

A dependent Sociology on the other hand lacks a number of the characteristics that constitute a developed Sociology. The development of social scientific knowledge is largely determined by external factors such as the availability of adequate funding and higher education infrastructures. The result is that the hierarchies and inequalities in the production, diffusion and reception of knowledge remain intact even in countries with strong local social science communities, like Japan. While autonomous Sociology has the ability to self-reproduce at the level of staff and institutions the dependent Sociology in the global South requires a steady import of theories and concepts from the centre. There is a strong reliance on a methodological, theoretical as well as personal basis, which it rarely contributes to produce. Autonomous Sociology therefore benefits from international exchange and communication, while these are an essential requirement for dependent Sociology (Keim, 2008:25- 26).

It is important to note that in making a distinction between a developed and dependent Sociology Keim (2008) makes use of the same criteria used by social scientists in the global North to measure themselves and to define others. If one applies the criteria proposed by Keim (2008) then South African Sociology can easily be classified as a developed Sociology as it has university departments, professional organisations, journals and other clear research areas. The same can be said of Sociology in other parts of Africa like Algeria, Nigeria and Angola. It can be argued that the criteria she uses are simple props which can and do exist with profound academic dependence.

Keim (2011) also argues that as a result of the centre-periphery divide peripheral sociologies not only depend on those in the centre but they also occupy a marginal position within the international community. They lack international recognition in the rest of the world and this ignorance is not even considered a problem. This lack of visibility in international databases goes on to manifest itself in forms and dimensions of the unequal division of social scientific labour, extraversion, locality and exoticism inherent in social thinking. While the social sciences in the

centre study the societies in the periphery, whereas marginal ones do not deal with the societies in the centre as an object of study.

According to Keim (2011) scientific development requires appropriate material, institutionally and personally which is often lacking in parts of the global South. The suppression of academic freedom particularly in a number of African countries due to structural adjustment programs that make university education a low priority and interfere with autonomous curricula, also contribute to the peripheral status of their sociologies (Diouf and Mamdani, 1993 cited in Keim, 2008). While the dependency on overseas funding and resources for social scientific research is not always easy to determine it also contributes to the state of Sociology in the global South.

While the arguments made by Keim may be relevant for South African Sociology, which she used as her case study, they can hardly be said to be true for the rest of the African continent let alone the entire sociological community in the global South. Another problem is her conception of the international community she argues peripheral sociologies occupy a marginal position in. By international community Keim appears to be referring to the global North, a segment of the world that is less than 25% of the global population.

This persisting dependency within Sociology should be taken seriously in any debate about the internationalisation of the discipline. Any assumption of an integrated community of equals is premature and lacking reflection. Recent developments in science and research policy are not adequate for overcoming centre-periphery structures in the social sciences. They have however contributed to opening up spaces for a critical discussion of the established Northern dominated theories. The centre-periphery structures affect the very epistemological foundations of the social science vocation. The marginality within Sociology poses a fundamental problem to the constitution of a nomothetic discipline that aims at making universally valid assumptions on social realities. The observed marginalisation tendencies lead to an exclusion of the majority of humankind from sociological theory formulation (Keim, 2008: 41).

While he acknowledging the hegemonic relations within world Sociology Burawoy (2010: 8) argues that there are number of reasons these relations cannot be reduced to a simple North-

South, developed/underdeveloped, metropolis/periphery dichotomy. Firstly one would also need to consider the gradations within the world system that would lead one to invoke the notion of semi-periphery in order to capture societies that combine features of both the periphery and the core. As a result countries like India, Brazil, and South Africa contain within them conditions approximating to the North as well as the South. Secondly there exists a centre and a periphery in the production of knowledge within countries in the so-called global North that can be as stark as the difference between rich and poor countries.

Burawoy's (2010) argument therefore suggests that the model of academic dependency proposed by Alatas (2008) should not lead us to overlook the patterns of inequality and domination within countries. Adding the semi-periphery to the debate not only draws attention to internal divisions within countries but also between countries within regions. For instance within Latin America Brazilian Sociology is the best resourced Sociology, South African Sociology within Africa, in the same manner that core countries of the global North have richer traditions of Sociology than those in the periphery. It is important to note that in formulating this argument Burawoy (2010) produces a false parallel because regardless of the resource endowment of South African and Brazilian sociologies they suffer from academic dependence and do not export theory or retrieve data from their respective continents.

Whether one subscribes to the notion of a centre-periphery divide or not there is no denying academic dependence in the social sciences or the unequal relationship between sociologies in the metropole and those in the periphery. And while there have been a number of calls for alternative discourses none have been successful in displacing academic dependence. The critiques of academic dependence have remained at an abstract and reflexive level and as a result these calls have yet to manifest themselves at the level of teaching in the social sciences and there remains a great gulf between undergraduate teaching and the realm of research (Alatas and Sinha, 2001: 316).

Sociologists have critically addressed the problems in teaching Sociology but due to the structures of academic dependency in operation they do so within a specifically American or British context and are not necessarily concerned with reorganizing courses on sociological

theory. Eurocentrism is one of the biggest biases in the existing sociological canon. Critiquing Eurocentrism has not meaningfully reshaped the manner in which the emergence of Sociology has been theorised (Alatas and Sinha, 2001: 316- 317). In most universities an essential part of teaching Sociology is teaching what has been referred to as classical sociological theory. And at some point all students of Sociology have encountered the Marx, Weber and Durkheim trinity as the forefathers fathers of the discipline and what has become regarded as sociological theory is generally defined as the particular writings of a set of white male European scholars.

Connell (2007) challenges the myth of the founding fathers Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim and Max Weber noting that during the institutionalisation of the discipline very little attention was given to the Marx-Durkheim-Weber trinity, which was the later construction of the sociological canon as Classical Sociology by Talcott Parson's generation. The historical development of Sociology in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century had less to do with these so-called founding fathers and more to do with the emergence of modern industrial society (Arjomand, 2008: 542).

Sociological theory in the global South is often taught without due recognition of the historical context and cultural practices of the students enrolling in such courses. The emphasis is usually on the context of the rise of sociological theory in Europe, dealing with issues that bear little historical relevance or cultural meaning to students. The claim that sociological theory arose as a result of great thinkers like Marx, Weber, and Durkheim reflecting on social problems such as the industrial revolution (George Ritzer, 1983, Haralambos & Holborn, 2004) has two fundamental problems for the curriculum. The first being that non-Western founders of social thought such as Ibn Khaldum are generally left out of course outlines. Secondly sociological theory is established in a manner that lacks a relevant reference point for students (Alatas and Sinha, 2001: 318).

Since in mainstream discourse, the social sciences are defined and accepted as being of Western origin not only in Western academic circles but also in the non- West. It is possible to identify examples of sociological theorising that does not emerge from the West. The most popular example of such theory is the 14th century work of Arab scholar, Ibn Khaldum whose work has been available in English since 1967 and has been available to European scholars more than a

century before then (Adesina, 2006: 136). Recognising Khaldun's work would imply changes to the sociological curriculum. Alatas and Sinha (2001: 317) argue that there needs to be a new approach to teaching sociological theory that attunes students to the works of Marx, Weber and, Durkheim. Such an approach would constitute a new form of teaching sociological theory from the global north by revealing not only their timeless qualities but also their various conceptual and methodological limitations. However the recognition of contextuality does not require that Western sociological theory be deleted from sociological theory in non-Western universities. However given the limitations of the received theoretical canon, and encounters with Sociology students who constantly question the meaningfulness and relevance there is a need rather to rethink the teaching of classical sociological theory (Alatas and Sinha 2001, 316).

With the numerous challenges being faced by sociologists Adesina (2005: 1) argues the claims of the demise of the discipline have been overdone and there remains rather a need to “do Sociology beyond despair”. In the South African context this would involve giving local scholarship and local resources the same degree of scholarly attention given to scholarship from the global North. Given the fact that very few Sociology students have ever heard of or read the works of South African sociologists Bernard Magubane, Archie Mafeje, Fatima Meer or Ruth First this would involve valorising such works.

Intellectual communities are constructed around ideas and they become canonical because we spend time dissecting them (Adesina, 2005: 23). Marx was never self-consciously a sociologist, sociologists made Sociology out of his works. The same can be said of Weber who was never took a degree in Sociology; his training was in law and economics. His works which sociologists have come to claim for themselves, *Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism* was conceived as an exercise in economic history, not as a sociological inquiry. The point therefore is that an author does not have to be self-referentially sociologist for their work to be incorporated into the canons of Sociology. Marx and Weber have relevance for Sociology however the sociological Marx and Weber, the exemplar sociologist are constructions of sociologists (Adesina, 2006).

2.5 Alternative Discourses

Social science from the global North is a going enterprise whose conditions for dominance will only change in the very long term. The way in which it operates however can be changed immediately to fit it for the global learning process. This requires a retooling that will be arduous as professional self- images, personal stocks of knowledge, affiliations, publication strategies, and practical applications of social science are all at stake. This retooling will also affect social science teaching as the dominant perspectives from the global South has become embedded in the graduate programs that produce the academic workforce for the next generation (Connell, 2007: 227).

Challenging the predominance of metropolitan social science by discovering alternative founding fathers of the same social science, by claiming for instance that Ibn Khaldun invented Sociology in the Fourteenth Century CE Connell (2007: 260) points out is futile. This does nothing to change the terms of intellectual production in the present. According to Connell (*ibid*) “such moves may even be counterproductive, placing the glories of Arab or African thought firmly in the past”. The alternative to the dominance of Northern theory is therefore not a unified doctrine from the global South as no such body exists nor could it exist because the one of the biggest problems in Northern theory is the very idea that theory must be monological.

By looking beyond the metropole it is possible to have social theory that does not claim universality from a metropolitan point of view, does not read from the centre and does not exclude the experience and social thought of most of humanity (Connell 2007: 262). Although absent from the reading lists of courses in social theory including sociological theory such theory already exists. Elements of inclusive social thought can be found in a number of well-established bodies of thought such as the Islamic debate on modernity, the African discussion on indigenous knowledges and the possibility of the African renaissance. A third is the theory on autonomy and dependence that arose in Latin America and a fourth is the international feminist critique of metropolitan hegemony and the development of global dialogue among different feminisms (*ibid*). This list is of course not an exhaustive one but it does serve as an indication of the wealth of resources for theorising that can be seen when theorists look beyond the global North.

Engagement, critique, respect and recognition are bases of mutual learning. The development of social science involves an educational process, which social scientists need to think about on a world scale (Connell, 2007: 224). The social sciences like other forms of knowledge are social and historical in nature and the social sciences in the various societies must be made relevant to historical and social realities. This can be done by drawing on the philosophical traditions and discourses in these societies for relevant social scientific concepts and theories. This forms part of creating a social science free of cultural dependency and ethnocentrism (Kim, 1996 cited in Alatas, 2009: 152).

Equally possible and equally arduous is ending the extraversion of social science in the periphery, to fit that too for global dialogue. While acknowledging that this extraversion is a structural problem Hountondji (1995: 3) maintains that it should not be perceived as natural or inevitable.

On the contrary it should be traced back to the history of the integration and subordination of our traditional knowledge to the world system of knowledge, just as underdevelopment as a whole results primarily, not from any original backwardness but from the integration of our subsistence economies into the world capitalist market.

While the practice of scholarship as extroversion involves the articulation of knowledge according to Western academic standards, its re- articulation, redefinition and re- formulation should be based on the re- construction of existing disciplinary fields and vocations following uniquely African critiques and interpretations, through an appreciation of endogeneity as the objective bases of epistemology and philosophy rooted in understanding of the disciplinary and institutional histories of existing knowledge producing frontiers (Arowosegbe, 2008).

Ake (cited in Arowosegbe, 2008: 11) suggests that in the African context a commitment to endogeneity in knowledge production would be a starting point in the reversal or transcendence of academic dependence. Endogeneity in the sense that it is used in this context, refers to an intellectual standpoint derived from a rootedness in the African conditions; a centring of African ontological discourses and experiences as the basis of one's intellectual work (Adesina, 2008:

135). This commitment to endogeneity involves not only deriving distinct epistemological insights from the locale but also “taking the locale and its ontological locations seriously as the bases of knowledge production” (Adesina, 2005).

Adesina (2006: 243) notes that the call for endogeneity is often met with 'the charge of nativism' or 'cultural nationalism' and its advocates are invited instead to embrace Western ideals; to become cosmopolitan. He argues that taking into context the contents of our education and public discourse this is rather peculiar because endogeneity of an epistemic kind may help to address the growing crisis within the classroom, where educators continue to make aliens of their students- who sit through courses and with teachers “whose epistemic gazes are firmly planted on the global North” (ibid). Ake (1979 cited Arowosegbe: 342) notes that the call for endogeneity is not a question of parochialism or nationalism because even though the principles of science are universal, its growth points, applications and the particular problems which it solves are contingent on the historical circumstances.

The discipline of history Adesina (2006) observes, offers an important example of the value of endogeneity driven by an important commitment to the locale. For empirical evidence of endogenous scholarship he turns to the discipline of history and gives as an example three schools of history, which offer important examples of the value of endogeneity driven by an important commitment to the locale: the Ibadan School, the Dakar School and the Dar- es- Salaam School. The challenge of the first, the Ibadan School of thought and its founder Onwuka Dike was about the content of scholarship and relevance to national instead of imperial aspirations. The result of this was the *Ibadan School of History*. The school was to give second generation, post- colonial students a sense of connection: the 'stories' they read were their stories, told by their people for their people. They did not encounter history as something alienating and disconnecting from the pre-school self and self-worth (Adesina, 2006: 253).

The Dar-es-Salaam School of History on the other hand was not a search for history as the stories of only great men and women but also that of ordinary people as well. The aim here was to write history in a counter-hegemonic manner; to do history with an attitude, but a class rooted in Africanity. The Dakar School of History was defined by the scholarship Professor Cheikh Anta

Diop (1923- 1986) which was shaped by what he considered to be the falsification of Egyptian history. His concern was to utilise the tools of science to valorise African-centred historiography. The three clusters, three methodological and epistemic foci; were all driven by a shared commitment to their locale; and for each Africa is the locale, demonstrating that local relevance is never at odds with global and rigorous scholarship and being internationally reputable. The epistemological impact of doing African History, from the point of view of Africans—regardless of the location among these three schools of historiography produced not only a foundational impact but they changed the way in which historians approached their subject matter globally(Adesina, 2006: 253- 4).

Alatas (2009: 143) refers to the calls to transcend the Eurocentric and Orientalist elements that inform the social sciences as alternative discourses because they set themselves in contrast what those who promote them would define as mainstream social science. They can be understood as a collective term describing the set of discourses that has emerged in opposition to mainstream social science. Rather than being viewed as attempts to delink from metropolitan control these should be viewed as a contribution of non-Western systems of thought to theories and ideas. These discourses are informed by indigenous historical experiences and cultural practices in the same way as western social science.

The very idea of alternative discourses is identical to the idea of universalising and internationalisation of the social sciences. These alternative discourses make good social science because they are more conscious of the relevance of their surroundings and the problems stemming from the discursive wielding of power by the social sciences and they should be advocated for by Western social science itself. These discourses are alternative because they present themselves as alternatives to the social sciences from the North that are regarded as Orientalist or Eurocentric and on which the Southern social sciences are dependent (Alatas, 2009: 139).

The literature on the state of the social sciences and calls for endogeneity, indigenisation are according to Jalil (2011: 3) neither an advocacy to be anti-West, nor is it discouragement to learn from the West. They are rather an encouragement to learn from the West, but rather in a selective

and constructive manner. The problems facing the social sciences in the periphery are structural and dismantling them requires concerted effort on the part of social sciences all over the world and there needs to be serious theoretical and empirical research on the problems of academic dependency and colonialism which in turn needs to be communicated to students and academicians through teaching, publications and international conferences (Alatas, 2003: 611).

2. 6 Conclusion

Several authors have addressed the current issues in the social sciences in the global North these debates however are situated at the level of meta- theory, ontology, and philosophy. The discussion in this chapter would suggest that there is a need for an insightful scrutiny of current curricula- their origin, form, content, assumptions and practicability; and then to decide whether to accept, reject or modify accordingly. A curriculum that privileges one spatial zone in the globe as the source of knowledge production fails not only in the task of adequately educating students; it creates in most learners schizophrenia- particularly those whose progenitors do not derive from Europe or those who find no value in imperial legacy. It reproduces a form of erasure, in which the non-Western collective memories that such students bring to the university are declared as non- knowledge. In South African the task of a curriculum that is fit for post-1994 is to open the space for what he terms “diverse ontological narratives”, not to insist on “erasure or a Euro- ethnic mono- discourse”(Adesina, 2006: 144).

The future for of higher education in Africa can only be hopeful through a meticulous and creative process of cultural restitution and endogeneity even as African scholars continue to cooperate and converse with intellectual bedfellows in the global South. For African universities and researchers to contribute towards a genuine, multifaceted liberation of the continent and its peoples, they ought to start not by joining the bandwagon as has been their history, but with a careful rethinking of African concerns and priorities, and coming up with educational policies sympathetic to the needs of ordinary Africans. Mamdani (1994: 15) refers to rooting African universities in African soil, and Archie Mafeje calls for a move away from 'received theory or contrived universalism' , to an 'intimate knowledge of the dynamics of African culture [s] in a contemporary setting' (Mafeje, 1988: 8).

Chapter 3

Research Methods

3. 1 Introduction

This chapter provides a detailed account of the research methods employed during the different stages of the research process and the logic behind choosing these methods. In the chapter I provide details of the preliminary research process and outline the initial objectives of the study. This is followed by a description of the qualitative research methods and the techniques used in the collection and analysis of the data. I conclude by reflecting on the fieldwork and highlighting the limitations of the study.

3. 2 Preliminary Research: Finding the Focus

In the preliminary research stage, I began the process of finalising the topic and documenting the sources which will be used for guidance and support. This stage serves as an important connection between pre writing and formulating a thesis (Bell, 1999). This study was carried out between February 2010 and July 2011. During the early stages of the preliminary research stage it was not clear what the research focus would be as the research topic was too broad. What was clear from the beginning however is that I wanted to determine Ruth First's contribution to knowledge and I also sought use the thesis as a platform celebrate and valorise the life's work that Ruth First left behind. In an effort to focus the study I began with desktop research. Desktop research involves seeking facts, general information on a topic, historical background and any other materials that have been published or exist in public documents. This information is available in libraries, newspaper archives or the internet.

The desktop research revealed that before her untimely death in 1982 Ruth First wrote and published eight books which are discussed briefly in Chapter 4. These books are on a varying subject matter such as her time in solitary confinement, a biography on Olive Schreiner which she co- authored with Anne Scott, and migrant labour to South Africa's gold mines. First also edited a number of books including ANC stalwart Govan Mbeki's *The Peasants' Revolt* in 1964 and *No Easy Walk to Freedom*, a collection of articles, speeches, and trial addresses of Nelson Mandela. There was also the work First published as a journalist before making the leap from the

article to the book which can be found in the numerous struggle publications some of which she edited such *Fighting Talk* and *New Age*. Several of her works can also be found in a number of journals some of which she served as editor. Any research on Ruth First therefore warranted a look at these works and this was done between February and May 2010.

The preliminary research also involved familiarising myself with the materials written about Ruth First. What became evident during this stage of the research process is that what has been written about Ruth First could be divided into two groups. Firstly there appeared to be an abundance of short tribute pieces written by friends, family members, colleagues and comrades such as Gavin Williams, Shula Marks, Anne Scott and daughter Gillian Slovo to name a few. These tribute pieces were written after First's assassination in 1982.

The second group is made up of the works written by journalist Donald Pinnock. The first of these works is his 1992 PhD thesis, which as discussed in Chapter 1 focuses on the work conducted by Ruth First as an investigative journalist in South Africa prior to her exile in 1964. The second is a book titled *Ruth First* published by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) in 1997. The book was published under the 2nd volume of the *Voices of Liberation* series to mark the 15th anniversary of Ruth First's death. The book is a collection of some of Ruth First's writings and in the book the story of her life and untimely death is told primarily through her writings, which were banned in South Africa during the apartheid era. In the year 2000 another book titled *Ruth First* was published as part of the Maskew Miller Longman series *They Fought for Freedom*. About the book Pinnock (2000: 1) writes “in this book we get to know the surprisingly shy Ruth as a student and a teacher, a writer and an underground fighter, a socialist and an activist, a feminist and a mother. Ruth helped change the course of South African history and inspired many to join the struggle against apartheid”. In 2009 *Writing left: The radical journalism of Ruth First* was published under the Unisa Press hidden histories series. As discussed in Chapter 1 this book is a re-worked version of Pinnock's 1992 PhD thesis.

What struck me about all these works is the minimal attention paid to the work Ruth First conducted as a scholar. The tribute pieces written by Shula Marks, Ronald Segal and others note that she engaged in lecturing activities while at Durham University in England, the University of

Dar es Salaam in Tanzania and Eduardo Mondlane University in Mozambique, and some might go on to list a few of the numerous books she wrote while in exile. These tributes are rather short ranging between two to three pages and it might be understandable as to why they do not go into detail about Ruth First's scholastic contributions. The works by Pinnock on the other hand focus solely on First's contribution as a journalist in South Africa and dedicate a few pages on the work she conducted as an academic.

What also stands out in all these works is the lack of attention devoted to the work Ruth First did in Mozambique. For instance in Don Pinnock's PhD thesis her four year stay in Mozambique is documented in less than six sentences in the postscript. During the preliminary research stage I had at my disposal some of the materials from the 2007 Rhodes University Ruth First commemoration week discussed in Chapter 1. Among these materials was a recording of daughter Gillian Slovo's seminar presented on the 17th of August 2007. During the seminar titled "Portrait of an Activist: Ruth First and the South African Struggle", Slovo described how her mother loved Mozambique and had "truly come into herself" while working at the Centre of African Studies.

According to Slovo (2007: 22) Ruth First had made a good life in England, but the alacrity with which she jumped at the opportunity to go first to Tanzania and later Mozambique reveals how strongly she preferred to be in Africa. Slovo further writes "she loved Mozambique and there she seemed to truly come into herself... having been in opposition all her life, she relished the opportunity to help the Frelimo government turn a country away from the dead yoke of colonialism". Having lived as both an academic and activist, "she was in her element combining theory and practice: she loved the reality of training her students not in the dry arts of isolated theory, but how to use that theory to benefit their country and hers as well". It therefore seems appropriate that a research project which seeks to valorise and celebrate the life's work that Ruth First left behind would focus on the period which she spent in Mozambique.

3. 3 Research Aims

Following the preliminary research and having determined a gap to be filled in the existing works on Ruth first the research was focused into a period study exploring the scholarship of the

activist, investigative journalist and sociologist. As indicated in Chapter 1 the study was motivated by the lack of engagement with the works of African scholars in the Sociology curriculum I have been exposed to in my years of undergraduate study, due to what Farid Alatas (2003) characterises as academic dependency resulting in what Adesina (2006) terms the “absence of self-knowledge” and “failure of the intellectual nerve”, which is discussed at length in Chapter 2.

Research can be classified into three categories: exploratory, descriptive and explanatory. Exploratory research is aimed at gathering as much information as possible on a specific problem on which knowledge is inconclusive or not well known. Descriptive research is intended to describe various phenomena from which empirical generalisations are developed. Explanatory research on the other hand focuses on cause- effect relationships (Yin, 1994).

Seeking to move beyond mere problem identification this study, which was a venture in self-knowing was largely exploratory and focused on Ruth First the scholar, an aspect of First's career which is not well known nor documented within South Africa. The initial aims of the study were as follows:

1. Assemble the scholarly outputs of Ruth First during her time at the Centre of Africa Studies, in Maputo;
2. Examine the contribution she made to knowledge while locating her discourse within the wider political and social contexts which shaped her ideas;
3. Examine her methodological approach to knowledge production; and
4. Identify the themes running through her work, and draw lessons from her scholarship, and assess her works as texts to learn *from*, not just *about*.

3. 4 Qualitative Research

Determining Ruth First's contribution to knowledge during her time as research director at the Centre of African Studies at Eduardo Mondlane University in Maputo called for an exploratory and open research design. Since the research was not about testing a hypothesis the research process was not linear nor did it follow a standard inductive or deductive method. Ruth First's work as a scholar was analysed in a specific context and setting, the Centre of African Studies in

Maputo between 1977 and 1982. The research design was intended rather to situate the researcher in the empirical world and to connect the research questions to the data (Punch, 1998: 66). Included in the design were details on the research subjects, research site, the methods and procedures to be used in the collection and analysis of data.

This study made use of qualitative research methods. This decision was based on the understanding that research methods associated with qualitative research provide a better understanding of social phenomenon and are relatively flexible (Flick, 1998 and Babbie & Mouton, 2001). Qualitative research begins with a topic, a few ideas and a research question and endeavours to study “human action from the insiders' perspective” (Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 53). Making use of qualitative methods which celebrate richness, depth, nuance, context, multi-dimensionality and complexity, the researcher can explore a wide array of dimensions of the social world under investigation and the understanding research participants attribute to that world (Mason, 2002:1).

Based on a unit of analysis, explanation and argument building, qualitative research is sensitive to the social context in which data are produced, which involve understandings of complexity, detail and context. The emphasis on 'holistic' forms of analysis and explanation allows the researcher to change direction during the course of the investigation (Mason, 2002: 4).

Qualitative research follows a nonlinear, cyclical research path. Rather than moving in a straight line, a nonlinear approach makes successive passes through steps, sometimes moving backward and sideways before moving on. It is more of a spiral, moving slowly upward but not directly. With each cycle of repetition, a researcher collects new data and gains new insights. This approach is not disorganized, undefined chaos; rather it can be highly effective for creating a feeling of the whole, for grasping subtle shades of meaning, for pulling together divergent information, and for switching perspectives (Neuman, 2003: 140).

Two methods of data collection for the primary data were used in this study, semi-structured interviews and content analysis of documentary sources. The semi-structured interview technique was chosen as it offers sufficient flexibility to approach respondents differently while still covering the same areas of data collection. The second method, contents analysis which makes

inferences by systematically identifying specified characteristics of written texts was chosen as it allows for the vast accumulation of data and is useful for examining patterns in documents (Neuendorf, 1969: 34

3. 5 Research Methods: Semi-Structured Interviews and Content Analysis of Documents

The qualitative researcher begins data collection with a general topic and notions of what will be relevant. The methods are the means to answering the research question and not a logical transformation of the latter. The selection of data collection methods in this study depended not only on the research question, but also on the actual research situation and what would work most effectively in that situation to provide the required data. The data collection process involved the desktop research conducted during the preliminary research stage, archival research and semi structured interviews with friends and colleagues of Ruth First.

3. 5.1 Semi-Structured Interviews

While, First was assassinated in 1982, denying the researcher the opportunity to engage with her regarding her scholarship, it is important to note that a lot of the work she conducted during the period under study was done as a collective with other members of the Centre of African Studies. The data collection process involved the use of semi structured interviews with former colleagues, students and friends of First's. As a data collection method interviews were appropriate as they are flexible in nature allowing interviewees to open up new dimensions of a problem or to discover clues that connect its different elements (Whipp cited in Whitfield, 1998: 54). Two sets of interviews were conducted; the first was a number of face-to-face interviews with some of Ruth First's former colleagues in Maputo, Mozambique. For others, with whom the face-to-face interviews were not possible I conducted such interviews by telephone and email.

3. 5. 1. 1 Interview Sample

While I had informal conversations with 12 individuals who were colleagues and students of Ruth First and Barbara Harlow who has conducted extensive research on Ruth First, a total of eight actual interviews were conducted. These interviews were conducted between April and August 2011. Qualitative researchers often rely on a minimum number of informants that are

purposefully selected and the data appears to be valid there is no guarantee that the views presented by these informants will be typical (Maxwell, 2005: 91). In selecting participants for this study I relied on purposive and snowball sampling. Purposive sampling “is a strategy in which particular settings, persons, or activities are selected deliberately in order to provide information that can't be gotten as well from other choices” (Maxwell, 2005: 88). Cresswell (2002) lists four goals for purposive sampling.

1. achieve representativeness of the context, which includes the setting, the individual, and the activities
1. adequately capture heterogeneity in the population
2. deliberately examine cases that are critical for the theories you begin the study with
3. establish comparisons to illuminate the reasons for differences between settings or individuals

Snowball sampling is a non-probability sampling technique where existing study subjects recruit future subjects from among their acquaintances. Thus the sampling group appears to grow like a growing snowball (Maxwell, 2005). Since qualitative interviewing allows for a flexible research design where neither the number nor the type of informants needs to be specified beforehand I started out only with a general idea of suitable interview candidates. Candidates selected through purposive sampling consisted of individuals who First had written about or who had given talks at events about their relationship with First. This initial list was made up of Justice Albie Sachs, Rob Davies, Gillian Slovo, Gavin Williams and Pallo Jordan.

An important part of the research was visiting the Centre of African Studies in Mozambique. The trip to Mozambique was necessary not only for conducting the interviews but also gaining insight into the site of the study. Prior to making the trip I got in touch with First Professor Teresa Cruz e Silva through my supervisor who worked with Professor Cruz e Silva at the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA). Professor Cruz e Silva worked with Ruth First at the Centre of African Studies and as a young History graduate she participated in the Development Course which is discussed at length in Chapter 6. Professor Cruz e Silva is also a former director of the Centre of African Studies. Having obtained Professor

Cruz e Silva's details from my supervisor I contacted her regarding a list of individuals whom I could interview once I had arrived in Maputo.

This list comprised of Professor Isabel Casimiro and Professor Yussuf Adam who like Professor Cruz e Silva worked at the Centre of African Studies as researchers and participated in the Development Course. Dr Luis de Brito and Professor David Hedges who at the time of Ruth First's arrival were full time staff members of Centre of African Studies recruited from Eduardo Mondlane University's History department. There was also Professor Carlos Nuno Castello Branco who during the interviews Professor Cruz e Silva and Professor Casimiro described as being more like a son to Ruth First. The two struck a friendship in 1980 when as a member of the Mozambican army Professor Castello Branco participated in the Development Course.

Through snowball sampling I also obtained a list of individuals who were based in South Africa and abroad. The list of those in South Africa was made up of Rob Davies, Siphon Dlamini, Professor Judith Head and Dr Alpheus Manghezi. Those abroad were Professor Bridget O'Laughlin (Hague), Professor Marc Wuyts (Hague), Professor Anna Maria Gentili (Italy) and Professor Jacques Depelchin (Brazil). Also included in the list are Gary Littlejohn and Jose Forjaz who were friends of Ruth First. Professor Depelchin suggested I contact Alexandrino Jose who worked at the centre and is now based in Brazil but did not have an email address. Professor Cruz e Silva also suggested that I get in touch with Amelia Souto to assist with the collection of documents at the Centre relating to Ruth First.

3. 5. 1. 2 Interview Guide

Possible topics to be covered were contained in the interview guide. The interview guide was important to ensure some degree of structure during the interview process and also to ensure that key areas were covered. The guide therefore facilitated focus on issues that were predetermined, while still leaving room for spontaneous conversation and further exploration (Patton, 1990: 283). In formulating the guide I acknowledged what Kennedy (2006) describes as the four important facts of human social interactions that influence what people say to you. These four facts are:

- a) Research questions are not the same as interview questions

- b) People's espoused theories differ from their theories- in- use
- c) Interviews are social occasions and
- d) Testimony by itself is relatively weak form of evidence

Lofland and Lofland (1995: 78) suggest that in preparing for qualitative interviews the researcher should ask 'Just what about this thing is puzzling me?' This method can be applied to each of the research questions or as a mechanism for generating new research questions. My puzzlement was stimulated by various activities: random thoughts in different contexts which were written down as quickly as possible, discussions with my supervisor and other individuals who took an interest in the work I was doing and the existing literature on Ruth First.

The interview guide was initially divided into four main areas. The first part was designed to get to know the interviewees and covered among other things each respondent's relationship and interaction with Ruth First, their current work activities and activities at the Centre during First's tenure as director of research. Interviewees were asked when and how they joined the Centre and how they had come to know Ruth First. In the next section I turned to work Ruth First was conducting at the Centre. Interviewees were requested to describe her day to day activities as the director of research, her work ethic and approach to knowledge production. The third section focused on the Development Course which was formulated by Ruth First and is discussed at length in Chapter 6. The last section focused on Ruth First's last book which was written while she was in Maputo and was a cooperative undertaking by Ruth First and other members of the Centre. The formulation of research questions was not so specific that alternative avenues of enquiry that might arise during the collection of fieldwork data were closed off as such a premature closure of the research focus would be inconsistent with the process of qualitative research.

In formulating the guide I also had to take into consideration that each respondent's relationship and encounter with Ruth First was different and the interview questions would therefore differ. For instance some of the interview subjects like Professor Cruz e Silva and Professor Isabel Casimiro had the opportunity to interact with Ruth First both as students in the Development Course and colleagues at the Centre of African Studies, while others like Dr Alpheus Manghezi

Professor Bridget O'Laughlin were only ever colleagues and Professor Carlos Nuno Castello Branco was a student but never worked at the Centre. The guide also changed as I began to conduct the actual interviews because often each interview revealed a new topic of discussion that had not been covered in the last interview. For instance the interview with Professor Yussuf Adam raised issues about how Ruth First had come to join the Centre and her capabilities as the director of research. These topics were not included in the initial guide and the guide was amended to focus on these issues.

3. 5. 1. 3 Conducting the Actual Interviews

The interviews were not highly structured, as is the case of an interview that consists of all closed-ended questions, nor were they unstructured, such that the interviewee is simply given licence to talk freely about whatever comes up. The interviewees were offered topics and questions that were designed to elicit their ideas and opinions on the work Ruth First was conducting at the Centre, as opposed to leading the interviewee towards preconceived choices. On the day of my arrival in Maputo I conducted an informal preliminary interview with Professor Cruz e Silva. I used this interview as an opportunity to obtain information about my prospective interviewees. This would later be important in determining the kinds of questions I could focus on once I had begun to conduct the formal interviews.

This was followed by a formal interview with Professor Cruz e Silva and Professor Isabel Casimiro. This interview lasted for an hour and forty minutes and covered the four sections stated in the interview guide. After this interview Professor Cruz e Silva gave me a tour of the Centre of African Studies where I had the opportunity to see the office in which Ruth First was tragically killed by the letter bomb and the memorial stone that stands at the yard of the Centre as a tribute to Ruth First and the Centre's director Aquino de Braganca.

Following the recorded interviews with Professors Teresa Cruz e Silva and Isabel Casimiro I conducted an interview with Professor Yussuf Adam. This interview lasted for 48 minutes and at his request only parts of it were recorded and with his permission I mostly made interview notes. I also obtained from Professor Adam a paper he presented at a conference organised by Professors Cruz e Silva and Casimiro in 2007 to mark the 25th anniversary of Ruth First's death.

According to him a number of answers to the questions I posed to him could be found in the paper. Professor Adam suggested that I speak to Professor David Hedges who was part of the initial list provided by Professor Cruz e Silva but did not respond to any of the emails I sent requesting an interview. He was at the time not available and has not responded to any of my requests. While I was at the centre I came across Professor João Paulo Borges Coelho who worked at the History department at Eduardo Mondlane University when Ruth First was at the Centre and offered to speak to me about the work she was conducting at the Centre.

After the interview with Professor Adam I headed to the Institute for Social and Economic Studies (ISES). My first interview at the ISES was with Dr Luis de Brito who serves as one of the research directors and is a former colleague of Ruth First. My recorded interview with Dr de Brito lasted for 83 minutes. I also used the opportunity to obtain contact details for prospective interview subjects that I could not obtain from previous interviews. I returned to the ISES for my last interview in Maputo with the institute's director Professor Carlos Nuno Castello Branco. Also recorded this interview lasted for 96 minutes.

The last set of interviews was conducted via telephone and email after my return from Maputo. The first was a telephonic interview with Dr Alpheus Manghezi. Dr Manghezi requested that I first send him the interview questions via email and he would answer telephonically. The two-hour telephonic interview was with his permission recorded. I conducted a telephonic interview with Dr Colin Darch which lasted for just over 40 minutes. I also sent questions via email to Professors Anna Maria Gentili, Jacques Depelchin, Bridget O'Laughlin and Marc Wyuts.

3. 5. 2 Content Analysis of Documents

Taking into consideration that not all of Ruth First's work was published, the archival work focused on perusing her personal papers which are held at the library of the University of London. The collection includes manuscripts, research notes and materials accumulated by First and her private (personal and family) papers, which give us a fascinating insight into the process of research production and output (methodological and analytical) that she employed. As indicated in Chapter 1, this research project forms part of a larger NRF funded study on 'Endogeneity and Modern Sociology in South Africa', led by my supervisor Professor Jimi

Adesina. Although I gained full access to the Ruth First Papers in August 2010, they were pursued by my supervisor as part of the larger study.

The National English Literary Museum (NELM) located in Grahamstown also holds a number of Ruth First's publications as well as articles and newspaper clippings on the critical reception of her work. These publications were collected in February 2010 as part of the preliminary research phase and again in June 2010. Documents were also collected at the Centre of African Studies library during the fieldwork stage in Maputo between May and April 2010. A lot of the documents held at the library were in Portuguese. In Maputo I collected papers from the Multinational Programming and Operational Centre for Eastern and Southern Africa (MULPOC) Conference on Migratory Labour in Southern Africa held in Lusaka from 4-8 April 1978. This conference was largely inspired and organised by Ruth First. I also collected documents from a publication that was produced daily by the Centre and edited by Ruth First titled Southern African Dossier.

A number of the interviewees provided me with documents from their personal collections relating to Ruth First and the work she was doing at the Centre. Professor Cruz e Silva who served as my gate keeper during the interviews in Maputo provided me with documents relating to the Development Course, which is discussed at length in Chapter 6 and a copy of the journal Mozambican Studies produced by the Centre and edited by Ruth First and Aquino de Braganca. Professor Cruz e Silva participated in the Development Course in 1980 and the documents she provided me included the course outline, reading lists and essay questions for that year. While in Maputo I also obtained documents from the conference held at the centre to mark the 25th anniversary of Ruth First's death in 2007. Organised by Professor Cruz e Silva and Professor Isabel Casimiro, papers from the conference were never published. I obtained the papers presented by Professor Yussuf Adam and Professor Joao Paulo Borges Coelho. Dr Alpheus Manghezi provided me with documents relating to some of the work-songs used in the production of the book *Black Gold, Mozambican Miner: Proletarian and Peasant*, which is discussed at length in Chapter 7. Gavin Williams also provided me with a collection of his personal papers relating to Ruth First. Professor Anna Maria Gentili and Professor Bridget

O'Laughlin also provided with a number of documents relating to Ruth First and the work she was conducting at the Centre.

3. 6 Data Analysis

As with all data, analysis and interpretation were required to organise and understand the collected data. Content analysis involves analysing textual material, regardless of the data, ranging from books, journal articles and interview data. The content refers to words, meanings, pictures, symbols, ideas, themes or any message that can be communicated. The text is anything written, visual or spoken that has a medium for communication (Neuman, 2003: 310). Content analysis is about studying recorded human communications such as books, recorded interview transcripts and research papers in the contexts of their uses thus distinguishing it from other methods of inquiry.

Working with documentary sources as one does in content analysis is not without its limitations. “Documentary reality does not consist of descriptions of the social world that can be used directly as evidence about it. One cannot assume that documentary sources are accurate portrayals; rather they construct their own reality” (Atkinson and Coffey, 2004: 73). One would need to discount whether the accounts are precise depictions and rather question the form and function of the texts. While like any other social research method content analysis has its limitations the method was a perfect fit for the study as it allows for the description of the attributes of a message as well as making inferences about the sender of the message and to make inferences about the effects of the message on recipients (Frankfort- Nachimas and Nachimas, 2000: 298).

The data analysis began during the data collection process where I began to make notes on what I read, heard, saw and began to develop tentative ideas about categories and relationships. The intention with the data analysis was not just to describe the findings and even though formal methods were utilized I also relied on informal methods. During the data analysis stage there was regular writing of memos as these not only capture analytical thinking about data but also facilitate such thinking, stimulating analytical insights (Maxwell, 2005: 96). The publications and verbal interviews which were transcribed were broken down, into manageable categories on a

variety of themes and then examined using one of content analysis' basic methods: conceptual or thematic analysis (Krippendorff, 2004: 56). The following steps describe in detail how thematic or conceptual analysis of data collected was carried out.

3.6. 1 Getting to Know the Data and Focusing the Analysis

Good analysis depends on understanding the data (Powell & Renner, 2003: 2). Having transcribed the seven recorded interviews I began by considering the quality of the data I had collected. What became clear during this process is that not all the data I collected was useful nor relevant and some of it did not add any value or meaning to the study. For conducting the analysis this meant reading and re-reading texts and listening to tape recordings several times. While going through the data I wrote down any impressions that I came across as they might be useful at a later stage.

Having familiarised myself with the data I had collected I decided to revisit the aims of the research in order to determine the questions I sought to answer with the analysis. I then began to focus the analysis by question. This meant organising the data by questions to look across all respondents and their answers in order to identify consistencies and differences. The data from each question was then put together. This approach was also applied to particular topics and events. Having done this I began to explore the connections and relationships between questions, topics and events.

3. 6. 2 Coding and Interpreting the Data

Coding the data involved identifying themes and patterns, this involves ideas, concepts, behaviours and terminology that was used and organising them into coherent categories that summarise and bring meaning to the text. The process began with a list of themes or categories in advance. I began with concepts I really wanted to know for instance the methods Ruth First used in method production. Having these pre-set categories provided direction for what to look for in the data. Themes were identified before categorising the data began and data was searched for text that matched these themes. While I had these pre-set categories going through the data also provided me with emergent categories that I had not thought about. These categories

emerged as a result of working with the data. I began with pre-set categories and adding others as they became apparent.

Qualitative data analysis is an iterative process and it is important to note that the list of initial categories changed as I began to work with the data. This required an adjustment of the definition of my initial categories to accommodate data that do not fit the existing labels. The main categories were also broken down into subcategories. The data was then resorted into smaller, more defined categories allowing for greater discrimination and differentiation. Reading and re-reading the data helped to ensure that the data was correctly categorised.

As I began to organise the data into categories patterns began to emerge within and between the categories. Assessing the relative importance of different themes and highlighting subtle variations was an important part of the analysis. I was interested in summarising the information pertaining to particular themes as well as capturing the differences and similarities between people's responses within a particular theme. This was done by assembling the data pertaining to the particular theme and then searching for

- a) the key issues being expressed in each category,
- b) similarities and differences in the way interviewees responded to questions, and
- c) the subtle variations in these responses.

The themes and connections were used to interpret and synthesize the data. I began this process by developing a list of key findings that I discovered as a result of categorising and sorting the data. In doing this I took into consideration the following

- a) the major lessons learned, and
- b) new lessons learned.

3.7 Conclusion: Limitations to the Study and Reflections on Fieldwork

A number of limitations were attached to this study which in turn affected the quality of the data. The biggest limitation is the fact that the research subject is deceased therefore denying the researcher the opportunity to engage with her one on one. As discussed throughout this chapter, this

research project took the form of a qualitative case study meaning that the research findings could not be generalised beyond the scholarship of Ruth First. The one on one interviews and documents collected in Maputo were affected by the language barrier. A large number of the documents collected at the CEA were in Portuguese. Portuguese is the official language of Mozambique and although my interview subjects understood English it was clear during the interviews that they would have been more comfortable communicating in their mother tongue.

Access to interviewee subjects was not a constraints and I found most people were willing to talk about their interactions with Ruth First. There were a number of times when interviewees opted to not answer questions but provided documents they felt would enable me to better understand the events or phenomenon under question. The interviews were affected by the fact that all my subjects were well established academics in their fields and had an understanding and opinions about the interview process. One of the interviewees even went on to declare that the questions I was asking would not help me determine Ruth First's contribution to knowledge.

While attempts were made to develop rapport and establish a relaxed, comfortable climate it was clear that none of the interviewees wanted to speak ill of or criticise Ruth First. For instance when I raised the question of whether First's position at the Centre was the result of negotiations between the ANC and Frelimo a number of the interviewees responded that they were not interested in answering this question.

Chapter 4

Ruth First: A Biography

4.1 Introduction

This research project is about Ruth First's intellectual contributions during the last few years of her life at the Centre of African Studies. The gem of First's later concerns such as her clear understanding of the exploitative axis of the apartheid state on the farms and mines of South Africa, her identification with the struggles of workers, and the wider knowledge she gained on the problems of development and the transition to socialism can be traced back to her earlier work. This section attempts to relate elements of her work to her politics, her politics to her personal life, and her personality to her career as an academic. While capturing her vivacity, her laughter, her style might be impossible as Shula Marks (1983: 123) noted, it is however appropriate and necessary to valorise her work and acknowledge her profound contribution to scholarship.

First was an academic, an activist, friend and, comrade to many, a mother to her three daughters and a wife to Joe Slovo. Beneath it all, however, "she was only flesh and blood; a woman who experienced many of the same joys, and the same frustrations as other women of her time" (Slovo, 2007: 1). But she was also amongst that small group of her generation in South Africa who chose to swap the privilege of her white skin for the far greater privilege of belonging to the struggle for human dignity and justice in this country (Slovo, 2007).

Born Heliose Ruth First in Johannesburg on the 4th of May 1925 into a family of Russian Jewish immigrants, Matilda and Julius First, who brought their communist background with them to share in what Harlow (2002: 231) describes as "the complicated contributions of like-minded refugees to their new country a whole-hearted engagement with the historical processes of the twentieth century". Matilda and Julius First carried in their memories the poverty, squalor and violence from the area of Russia known as the Pale of Settlement¹ and the hope of one of the greatest migrations in human history (Pinnock, 1997:13). They brought with them, to South Africa, a strong tradition of political involvement. Julius First was a founder member of the

¹ Term given to a region of Imperial Russia, in which permanent residency by Jews was allowed, and beyond which Jewish permanent residency was generally prohibited.

Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) and both parents were members of the International Socialist League. Daughter Gillian Slovo (2007) maintains that First's parents were responsible for most of her political orientation as she was early initiated into the circles of left-wing politics.

In the First home children were never excluded from the political domain. According to Matilda First (cited in Pinnock, 1997: 7), when she and her husband Julius went to the Town Hall steps (to hear communist speakers) they took their children with them.

“We made them conscious. We wanted them to have an understanding of what was going on. The only people who came to our house were people interested in politics, nobody else. We didn't have ordinary friends. I didn't ever want anyone around us who did not understand what we were talking about” (ibid).

It is therefore of little surprise that when Ruth First was 17, she climbed the steps of the Johannesburg City Hall steps to give her first public speech at a Communist Party rally.

Slovo (2007: 6) observes that if one takes a look at the white political activists of Ruth First's generation, like Harold Wolpe, Arthur Goldreich, and Hilda and Rusty Bernstein one finds that they were disproportionately Jewish. The explanation she further states can be traced back to the political background of the immigrants. This is not to say that all white Jewish immigrants at the time were politically conscious; as there were some who closed their eyes to what was going on and reaped the benefits of apartheid. However there was a small group, who having experienced oppression, refused to be complicit in the oppression of others. Both Ruth First's parents were interested not only in the world situation but also the situation of their newly adopted country (Slovo, 2007).

Having matriculated with a second class pass in 1941, First attended the University of Witwatersrand from 1942 to 1946, where she decided on a social science degree, later attempting to complete a degree in librarianship (Pinnock, 1997). Most of her years at university were filled with student societies, debates, mock trials, meetings with student societies and the issues of war and post – war time. As a social science student she soon discovered that on a South African

campus the issues that mattered most were national issues (First, 1965: 116). She joined the Communist Party, and helped found the Progressive Students League. Although she did not write a great deal about her university life, her university records indicate that she was a dedicated and intelligent student with a variety of interests (Pinnock, 1997:16).

While she applied herself to her studies, campus offered her direct emotional involvement in wider political struggles. Here she was to find her own measure and at the same time came into contact with people of her own age such as Ismael Meer, Eduardo Mondlane, and Nelson Mandela who “did not regard her views as outlandish” (Slovo, 1997: 24). While at Wits University Nelson Mandela (1992) remembers that Ruth First, who uncompromisingly broke with the privilege of her wealthy background, readily crossed the racial barriers few white people were able to, was always engaged in debate. She became increasingly politically aware and involved as university provided her with more than friends and commitments; it also provided her with a deeper insight into the nature of political societies in general, and the political system in South Africa in particular (thepresidency.gov.za). It was at Wits University that she discovered the comradeship which was to set her course for the rest of her life. According to friend Harold Wolpe (cited in Pinnock, 1997: 8), “First, wasn't a campus political person... she was more involved in, so to speak, adult politics”.

4. 2 “A Fighting Talk”, Ruth First the Radical Journalist and Political Activist

Although First began to play an active role in the liberation struggle during her years at the University of Witwatersrand, the decisive moment came in 1946 during the miners' strike. The top leadership of the Communist Party and the Mineworkers Union were arrested for activities relating to the strike action and First was among those who took over the functioning of the party office (Pinnock, 1997). The miners were on strike for a week in the face of the most savage police terror. The official figures gave the number of workers wounded as, 1248 and the number of those killed as nine. The strike had profound repercussions which are felt until this day; the most profound being the effect it had on the political thinking within the national liberation movement. Almost immediately, the thinking shifted from a policy of concession to more dynamic and militant forms of struggle (Naicker, 1976). First (1965: 57), who was at the time working at the Johannesburg City Council, states that,

When the African miner's strike of 1946 broke out and was dealt with by the Smuts government as though it was a red insurrection and not a claim by poverty-stricken migrant workers for a minimum wage of ten shillings a day, I asked for an interview with the council director and told him that I wanted to leave the department... Then he asked; Have you another job? ... 'A political job;' I said.

As a young graduate this was an exciting time for First and it was an early indication of the direction her activism would take as she later declared “... When the mine strike was over I became a journalist” (*ibid*).

Her career as a journalist took off with the reporting of the 1946 mine workers strike and as an investigative journalist she contributed reports and columns to a series of continually banned movement publications. An outspoken editorialist and advocate through the exuberant party politics of the 1950s she soon became the Johannesburg editor of the radical newspaper, *The Guardian*, which was to undergo a number of name changes over the next few years (Marks, 1983). In 1955 she became the Johannesburg editor of *Fighting Talk*, which was a radical political and literary journal. Her expose on forced labour practices in the Bethal district is well known and her article in *Africa South in Exile* published in 1961 titled “The Gold of Migrant Labour” was according to Marks (1983, 123) more far reaching in its analysis. It foreshadowed much of the historical and academic debate of the 1970s on the role of the mining industry in the construction of the apartheid state.

Although her career as a journalist began at a time when journalism was censored, First managed to cover stories reflecting the miserable working conditions of the black working class, the woman's anti pass campaigns, migrant labour and bus boycotts. Her writing was always marked by a critical independence and engagement with critical issues. She was a remarkable journalist: wholly concerned with identifying and exposing the various horrors of racial rule; with reporting and encouraging the course of struggle against it (Pinnock, 1997). She was not indifferent to the risks and the costs that were involved and recognised them as the necessary consequences of the choices she made (Segal, 1982). Her investigations and reports into forced labour and working conditions on the farms, the workings of the pass laws, conditions in the gold

mines; her works on demonstrations, boycotts, campaigns are classic examples of committed journalism. “They do not peddle abstract phrases and depict the real suffering of the individual victim; the real complex mood of collective defiance” (Segal, 1982: 52).

First’s writings were not of closure where ideas and facts were given with the intention of consumption by the reader. Her writings as a journalist are full of questions thus inducing those who read it to take an active part in the formulation of ideas. Gavin Williams (cited in Pinnock, 2007:42) who worked with First on the *Review of African Political Economy* and at Durham University maintains that “she always had more questions than answers and the answers raised more questions. There was always more to be known and done and consequently the form of the argument was always open ended”. Her writings are remarkable for their conceptual and political consistency as much as for their diversity. Almost all of her work shared a focused and often sarcastic criticism of apartheid and the institutions as well as the ideas which held it together (Pinnock, 1997).

While working as a journalist First was also at the heart of the liberation movement, participating in some key moments of the anti-apartheid struggle. When the SACP was banned, she was along with her husband Joe Slovo, one of the founding members of the Congress of Democrats, which was formed to collaborate with the African National Congress in resisting the apartheid state (Marks, 1983: 124). The formal acceptance of the SACP into the ANC led Congress Alliance propelled First into the role of key liberation publicist, for the mass movement (Pinnock, 1997:14). She was now a high-profile activist, a working journalist, an underground revolutionary, and a mother.

Despite her loyalties to the ANC and SACP First never swallowed a “party line”. She was remarkable in that she always asked questions and drew her own conclusions. She expected those around her to practice this as well, and despised those who did not (Gillian Slovo, 2007: 8). Her outspokenness often frustrated her husband and on one occasion where she had been particularly critical he declared in exasperation to daughter Gillian Slovo: “your mother is so impossible... if not for my position in the party, she would have been expelled years ago” (ibid). First according to her daughter never let blind belief dull her intelligence. This quality sometimes

made her difficult because when she had strong opinions on a subject she rarely held back. Her impatience and barbed tongue were witnessed by all who ever met her including her children. Slovo (2007: 10) maintains that “she was quick and she was deep: if she impatiently interrupted people in mid-stream it was only because she had guessed what they were going to say and she was already debating it. What most people never knew however is that she was more critical of herself than anyone else” (ibid).

In 1960 she turned her attentions to the mandated territory of South West Africa, and in so doing she was to reach an audience beyond the barbed-wire borders of her increasingly isolated country. She headed to Windhoek to do research for the book. While the archives suddenly denied her access to documents written after 1946, Africans in the country were bursting with talk. First conducted interviews on street corners, in motor cars, under trees, and in crowded shops. Some were cancelled following police intimidation (Pinnock, 1997: 20). The leap from the article into the longer narrative was not easy for her. The quality, volume and effortless flow of her later books concealed a nagging anxiety she had about abilities as a writer (Pinnock, 2007: 21). Ronald Segal (1982: 53) notes that “many remarkable journalists cannot make the leap from the article to the book. They are at home in the sentence and the paragraph, but they lose their way in the longer landscape. Ruth was all too aware of this”. Although some people might have seen her self-assurance as arrogance, very few knew the turmoil of nervousness of suspected inadequacies that she brought to the writing of her books (ibid).

The resulting book *South West Africa*, which was her first, was a pioneering historical and political account based on a field that was notoriously neglected by scholars at the time remains one of her best and most readable books (Shula Marks, 1983: 126). In the book First is critical of the policies of apartheid South Africa commenting that apartheid was a policy to force whites and non-whites apart. “It drives Africans into the wilderness; creates not one South West Africa, but two, one privileged and the other deprived and both in never-ending conflict; and it dubs as treasonable any attempt to bring the two together” (Ruth First, 1963: 34). The manuscript was smuggled out of South Africa and published by Penguin books in 1963. The decision to go ahead with the book was an act of considerable bravery by Ruth First. She was breaking her banning order and was through the book airing the dirty laundry of a government already ill-disposed

towards her. When the book appeared on newsstands in South Africa it was banned and any person possessing it was liable to a fine of R2 000 or 5 years in jail.

She also began assisting ANC organizer, technician, policy maker and intellectual Govan Mbeki in the preparation of his book *Peasant's Revolt*. This was his account of the Transkei in the 1950s. It was Ruth's vision and identification with popular struggles that she immediately understood its significance (Marks, 1983: 124). In the foreword Ruth First (1964: II) writes:

As the book went to press Govan Mbeki sat at the dock of the Rivonia trial, side by side with his fellow Transkeians Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, and Raymond Mhlaba. They and their five other co-accused stood trial for their lives. Govan's book on the Transkei helps to explain his deep involvement in the political struggle of his people.

On Friday the 9th of August 1963, Ruth First was arrested at the University of Witwatersrand under the 90 Day Detention Act. When she was arrested she knew, on her own admission, “a helluva lot, really an awful lot” about the underground movement. As a result the first months of her detention were filled with questions from the Security Branch. And although in the beginning she was “a lot of bother to them” and “really had the whip hand all the way through” in the end the pressure was too much. Her parents and her children were being watched and her brother Ronnie was detained. First began to worry and at one stage was unable to disentangle her fears from facts. “Hardest of all, I would struggle not to think about the children... I needed all my concentration to handle my own situation... but of course I could not stop thinking about them” (First, 1965: 120).

When asked by SB detective Nel if she would make a statement, she agreed. This was not a question and answer session as she had expected however. 'Start from the beginning they said'. 'Omit nothing.' She attempted to tell the story of her life without giving too much detail however, in her emotional state this became an impossible task. There was, she states, “no time to wriggle, to fabricate, to gauge reaction, to probe, to find out anything for myself. I was breaking down my own resistance... I had no idea what they knew, what contradictory information they had

wrenched from someone else. They were giving nothing away; they were already becoming too experienced for that (Ruth First, 1965: 121).

Ruth First later wrote a memoir about her time in solitary confinement, titled *117 Days* and published first 1965 and reprinted in 1989. In the foreword to the 1989 reprint of *117 Days* friend and comrade Justice Albie Sachs writes “... she made us feel proud to belong to a movement that had personalities like her in its ranks. We always wondered what she would think of this or that, whether a major new political initiative or a new film or novel or a painting or even a dress or jacket”. In the book First reveals that she too cared about what her comrades thought of her. Having made the statement her greatest fear was that her willingness to talk would be communicated to her comrades. 'I was in a state of collapse not for fear of what would happen to me physically... but for the gnawing ugly fear that they could destroy me among the people whose understanding and succour I most needed, and that once they had done that I would have nothing to live for (First, 1965: 128). Persecuted by a sense of dishonour and the feeling that it would be impossible to explain such an act to her friends, she swallowed sleeping pills that her doctor had left with her because of her insomnia. The dose was however, not enough to kill her (Pinnock, 2007).

When one of the prison officials came with her release orders she refused to believe him and when she finally arrived at home her mother and three children were horrified at her condition. Daughter Robyn (cited in Pinnock, 2007: 147) remembers that her mother looked 'absolutely terrible' and that she was 'horrified at the state of her and the fact that she seemed to have lost power and was... unsubstantial.' Her time in South Africa had clearly run out and, even though she had admonished her husband Joe Slovo when he appealed to her to get herself and the children to London. On March 14, 1964, she left South Africa for what was to be the last time (Pinnock, 2007).

4. 3 Exile

Ruth First's reputation in South Africa as an investigative journalist, an anti-apartheid campaigner, and former political prisoner preceded her arrival in London in March 1964. It was a reputation she would maintain, and elaborate, during the years she spent in exile – contributing

to the struggle, to be sure, but also perhaps eventually to her death warrant, as a “legitimate” target of apartheid assassins in August 1982. In any case, two decades earlier, she attended her first meeting of London's flourishing Anti-Apartheid Movement (AAM). The AAM began in 1959 as a boycott campaign and by the time of Ruth First's arrival in 1964 it had waged a full-scale international sanctions appeal as well as activities around the release of political activists, public demonstrations and political lobbying. Ruth First's journey from South Africa took her--within days of her London Heathrow disembarkation--to the several forums and platforms of the AAM (Harlow, 2002: 238).

She remained involved in with the AAM over the course of her decade and a half sojourn in London. In October 1965, she joined the briefing on South West Africa, and contributed regularly to the columns and features of the *Anti-Apartheid News*; on topics that ranged from prisoners to the political economy of Southern Africa and its prospects for liberation and independent development. She was elected and re-elected to the AAM's National committee, based on her credentials as a “regular speaker for AAM”, the “author of many books and pamphlets on Southern Africa”, and, in 1974, as a delegate who “represents and speaks for AAM nationally and internationally” (Harlow, 2002: 239). In addition to her work with the AAM she carried on the complicated task of fetching and fending for the South Africa- based liberation organisations such as the ANC and the SACP (ibid).

In London she was in demand as a public speaker, a skill she never took for granted. Even after years of making public appearances First never gave a speech off by heart and was always thoroughly prepared (Slovo, 2007). Since it was during the pre-personal computer era, First had her own unique technique of sticking her paragraphs together, making use of sewing pins to stick them one to the next. Because she was a woman with three children and a household to run: she did most of her writing at night (Harlow, 2002).

Although her itinerary was a peripatetic one, home away from home remained 11 Lyme Street, in London's Camden Town, the several-story flat that the Slovo's maintained throughout those years. There were other ideas such as the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, where she had research privileges, and the Institute of Race Relations, where she had gone and was denied a

readers card shortly after her arrival in London. She had been “blackballed” by the then-directorship, a decision which was subsequently reversed (Harlow, 2002: 239). The means to the end of economic survival, of making ends meet in London, became once again for Ruth First, those activities that formerly had been denied to her in South Africa: her research and her writing, and these means were inextricably connected to that larger end: liberation. The end thus directed the means, but the need to earn the means in turn determined the imperatives for that research. These “conflicted agendas underwrite Ruth First's intellectual biography and her critical bibliography, as she nickled and dimed her way toward economic survival- and the political survival of the struggle which she lived, and would die for” (Harlow, 2002: 241).

The first years of First's exile not only saw a continuation of her political activism but also the publication of several works, some of which she had started working on while in South Africa. The first of these was *117 Days*, a chilling account of the time she spent in solitary confinement in 1963, which was later made into a film with First playing herself. In the book she describes the detention with self-knowledge, perception and wit. In Ruth First's account of her time in prison the guilt of so much middle class liberalism is absent (Marks, 1983: 125).

While exposing the nature of the South African state, the book also gives us a glimpse of the effects of solitary confinement. In the first weeks of solitary confinement Ruth First displays bravado, in the following weeks we witness as she slowly gets broken down by the security police and slips to the edge, and then hangs grimly on. Her only direct human contact was the security branch man who had been assigned to break her down and her doctor who when asked by First whether she was headed for a mental break down replied, 'You've already had one' (First, 1965: 132). In the minute by minute personal account, First gives an incisive analysis of the dramatic escalation of the liberation struggle in South Africa during the 1960s.

Apart from the moment when she thought she had given away more than she had intended to, the outer control is total: revealingly the loss of control is signalled by the loss of her mask (Marks, 1983: 125). On the verge of collapse after constant interrogation she is taken unexpectedly from her cell, plagued by self-doubt to see her mother and one of the interrogators begins to ask her why she had put on no lipstick, no make-up that morning? “This was the first time even in my

detention, apart from the first day when I had no makeup because my case was locked away that I had permitted anyone to see me without any make up. I had simply forgotten that morning (First, 1965: 112).”

One's immediate thought is perhaps one of incongruity. However there was nothing incongruous

about this visible manifestation of First's presentation of an outer self, stylish confident, vivacious behind which armoury sheltered the imagination and sensibilities which enabled her to write with such sensitivity and to identify so intensely with people in such wholly different circumstances to her own (Marks, 1983: 126).

She herself saw her need for a mask quite clearly “My air of confidence had always been useful in keeping others from knowing how easily assailed and self- consciously vulnerable I really was” (Ruth First, 1965: 78), a vulnerability husband Joe Slovo had always told her arose from her 'extreme susceptibility to acceptance and fear of rejection and criticism' (First, 1965).

It is no belittlement of her other books, Segal (1982: 53) argues, to state that *117 Days* demands a special place. It is, he believes one of the best prison books to have come, not only out of South Africa, but out of anywhere during the 1960s. It is totally free of that fault, so common to its kind, of self- indulgence. But then, in its courage, its humour, its vitality, its compassion, and its commitment to the truth, however painful, it is the closest Ruth ever let the reader come to herself. So much of her is there, for others, who will never know her now, to know something of the person that she was (Segal, 1982).

In 1966, First went to Nairobi, Kenya to assist then vice president Oginga Odinga write a book about his political career. Due to her reputation, she was deported from Kenya with only a 24 hour notice (Pinnock, 1997: 25). She co-sponsored with Ronald Segal in 1966 an international conference on South West Africa advocating economic sanctions against South Africa which resulted in the publication of a collection of essays titled *South West Africa: Travesty of Trust*. The volume is divided into three sections ('Genesis: from Conquest to Mandate;' 'Inside South West Africa'; and 'The Abuse of Responsibility'), ranging from Dr. Helmuth Bley's paper

extracted from his Hamburg thesis, tracing South West Africa's history from German conquest, to the South African of the mandate, and the contributions of J. Rogaly and Richard Gott, who analyse South Africa's defence arrangements in the territory. Although the collection of papers vary in quality Marks (1968: 371) argues that the volume is repetitious and the papers by no means all deserve to be labelled as 'expert papers and findings'.

The year 1970 saw the publication of one of her more substantial works, *The Barrel of a Gun*, which was highly critical of Africa's leadership. The book makes an important contribution to a more complete understanding of African politics. She provides a detailed account of coups in places like Nigeria, Sudan and Ghana as well as the events that preceded and followed them. In doing so First locates the military and their political activity within the wider context of political, economic, and social forces in African society. A large portion of the book is made up of descriptive accounts of coups, their origins and aftermath. She concludes by arguing that the real sources of power in Africa do not lie inside but outside the continent in the capitals of the Western coloniser's and multinational corporations. This dependence she maintains can only be broken through a social revolution and soldiers themselves are incapable to offer a permanent solution as they either block radical options or lack the ability to mobilise popular support. Written during a time when criticism of Africa's ruling elite was still muted, writing the book took the independence of mind which characterised First's approach to scholarship both within southern Africa and more widely.

Libya: the Elusive Revolution was published in 1975. In the preface First informs us that the book 'is based on four visits to Libya in the years since 1969 when the Revolutionary Command Council under Colonel Mu'ammar Gadafi came to power. The book offers a detailed analysis of the history of Libya before and after the 1969 coup. Her experience as a journalist and editor focusing on issues relating to southern and South West Africa is evident in the book. First adopts a broad approach that includes a great deal of information that clarifies the historical and wider international setting in which the philosophy of Libya's political revolution emerged. In her analysis of Libya's pre-coup environment she concentrates on abortive stirrings that may have represented attempts to bridge the gap between the superstructure of the monarchy and the basic reality of Libya's underdevelopment.

The 1970s also saw a return to more southern African concerns: a book with Jonathan Steele and Christabel Gurney on Western investment in apartheid South Africa – a work which took a look at the nature of South African capitalism and the low wages paid by British firms to Africans in South Africa. Titled *The South African Connection: Western Investment in Apartheid*, the book offers a lengthy, detailed, and well documented study of British investors in South Africa. First argues (1972: 25) that not only did foreign corporations provide the capital without which the economy could not have grown, but they made available to the most advanced sectors of the South African economy their international resource, their technical skills, and their over-all experience.

Ruth First was an author who took the whole of Africa, and its peoples, for their province (Williams, 1996: 200). In the introduction to her book *Barrel of a Gun* she states “I count myself an African, and there is no cause I hold dearer.” This preoccupation with Africa puzzled many including husband Joe Slovo who could not understand her continued interest with countries like Nigeria, Sudan and Libya rather than focusing her attention on the liberation of South Africa (Williams, 1996). Her continued preoccupation with the African continent is one of her defining characteristics, because as Adebajo (2010: 16) argues “even when they were in exile, many South African activists could not properly see the links between the liberation of Africa and that of their own country”. First was in this regard ahead of time.

From 1973, First lectured at Durham University on the Sociology of Underdevelopment. First was an effective teacher, respected and appreciated. During her time at Durham University when the Sociology Department was alive with conflicting theories she could bring her colleagues down to earth. She responded for instance, sharply to a fine theoretical defence of empirical research by colleague Derek Sayer by observing that he should therefore do it himself. At the requests of her students, First agreed to take responsibility for a course on the Sociology of Gender. At the end of the year, students published 'What is to be done?' a guide to final year courses, and thus to their teachers. The entry for the Sociology department simply read, 'Ruth rules. OK'. It was she pointed to Gavin Williams “an ambiguous comment” (Williams, 2010: 4).

Chris Gerry (1983), a former student of First's describes her as a teacher who always saw straight to the heart of the matter whether it was her field or not, especially if she felt that the work was serious and progressive. Her special skill was to help people argue cogently against views they intuitively disagreed with and to defend their own views with confidence. Sometimes to develop this skill she would act as the devil's advocate. "She was tough in her arguments and wanted students to become similarly tough.... She did not allow people to get away with ungrounded or sloppily argued assertions even if she agreed with them. This sometimes involved a process of challenging students and seeming sharply critical, giving way to encouraging them as they became more rigorous and perspective" (Hilary Wainwright cited in Anne Scott, 1983: 216).

Anne Scott (1983: 214), who co-authored with First the biography on Olive Schreiner, remembers about her particular way of working, "her briskness and above all her resolve". "Getting stuck in" was a phrase she used about the struggle to get going on a day's work, or a new bit of the research, or a stretch of writing. She knew how difficult it was and loathed interruptions. She was efficient about correspondence and swift to return a call. Frequently, she seemed to work half way through the night if the situation called for it. She was very serious about preparing for talks, stating 'you have to assume some intelligence in your audience', and she was very critical of speakers who seemed not to. While working on the biography of Olive Schreiner, Scott (1983) describes how her toughness was both inspiring and intimidating both in making you give your best and as a terrific example of professionalism. She set very high standards for herself and for others, and gave praise and criticism in equal measure. She would always urge one to write, "for without writing you never had a real grasp of your own material" (Scott, 1983: 215). At the same time, she knew how difficult it was to get time to write, but she did not indulge those states of mind and could seem (and be) impatient with all the usual obstacles to productivity.

Anne Scott (1983: 216) notes that two things stand out from working with Ruth First: her attitude to history and within it, to the nature of biography; and her attitude to work as such. Her fundamental commitment was to the theorization of historical process, with biography as a branch of social history and the insistence on context informed all of her work. History was essentially about conflict, she believed, and the interpretation of history should portray that

conflict; in particular, what understanding did the *subject* have of the social transformation through which he/she lived? (ibid).

Speaking about the biography which was published in 1980 First stated “for once I feel something I have written is quite good” (Pinnock, 2006: 26). In the book First and Scott (1980) note that the South African novelist perhaps needed to be rescued from a way of thinking which was constrained in a conservative Victorian age. Adebajo (2010: 18) who maintains that First's life and work should be assessed within a broader Pan- African context suggests that First “herself perhaps also needs to be 'rescued' from the stifling parochialism of South Africa”. He further argues that the similarities between the lives of the two women are interesting to say the least and it was as though First unconsciously sought to fulfil some of the ambitions Schreiner had been unable to fulfil during her lifetime, due to the limitations imposed by society.

These two accomplished writers and avid pamphleteers were both daughters of European immigrants and they were both not only plagued by personal insecurities but also a private shyness. In her 1997 memoir *Every Secret Thing, My family, My Country* Gillian Slovo writes about her mother, “she was a woman whose insecurity made her seem arrogant. Perhaps somewhere, deep down she knew how much she was worth and this fuelled her anger at the way she had to struggle to be heard” (Slovo, 1997: 32). During her lifetime “Schreiner had identified the predatory nature of capitalism and was particularly critical of mining capitalism, arguing that the 'native question' was really the labour question” (Williams, 1996: 219). This Adebajo (2010: 12- 14) notes is similar to the manner in which Ruth First regarded the structure of mining capitalism as the defining issue in South Africa's political economy. While Schreiner was unconventional in rejecting Victorian high-mindedness and religion, Ruth First unconventionally rejected dogmatic Marxism and the narrow confines of South Africa to embrace a thoughtful and often radical Pan-Africanism.

First and Anne Scott argue that Olive Schreiner's white middle-class background placed certain limitations on her stance on feminism and imperialism. Adebajo (2010: 10) suggests that given her own middle-class background the same charge could be levelled at Ruth First in relation to her stance on the apartheid regime. Friend and political activist Ben Turok (cited in Adebajo,

2010: 10) noted that First and her husband Joe Slovo “moved in a select circle and were somewhat insensitive to the effect this had on their relationship with rank-and-file members. Their dinner parties at their well-appointed home were exclusive”. Being white still conferred privileges and First and her family lived a middle-class life both in South Africa and in exile.

In the 1989 edition of Ruth First's prison memoir *117 Days*, Albie Sachs touches on the tensions experienced by Ruth First as a white woman in an overwhelmingly black environment, a middle-class intellectual in a struggle for the working class; and a ferocious critic in a liberation movement that required discipline from its members. Slovo (2007) notes that First not only had to deal with being white in a predominantly black liberation movement, but she also had to deal with being a woman in a male-dominated environment. But just like First never let the whiteness of her skin hold her back from participating in the liberation struggle, she never let her gender dictate her interests and involvement. And even though she never let her gender get in the way, like many women she was full of learned difference.

Like her curriculum vitae, her day-to day- books and “to-do” lists while she was in London reveal according to Barbra Harlow (2002: 234), the concatenation not just of publishing commitments, but also of appointments and both public and private, and scheduling conflicts that can seem to loom no less importunately than global conflict. The list is undated- as such self-reminders often are-- but probably from the early to mid- 1970s, when Ruth First was busy with teenage daughters, anti-apartheid work, South West Africa, Libya and the book on Olive Schreiner, and contemplating her teaching position at Durham University (ibid). It is partly typed because she was always at the keyboard, as her daughter Gillian Slovo (1997: 176) remembers. Such notes- from checklists, weekly agenda entries, and doodles- describe in fractured frames the commitments and critical perspectives of an engaged participant in political processes and personal involvements and private concerns. Ruth First's “story, its history, is written in her own hand as well as through her printed words and public addressees, suggesting that her personal history is a more than complex amalgam of biography and bibliography” (Harlow, 2008: 234).

It is rare to speak to anyone who knew Ruth First whether as a friend, comrade, colleague without hearing about her sense of style and love for Italian shoes; and her well- coiffured hair.

Daughter Gillian Slovo (1997:3) for instance describes her mother as a “stylish, handsome woman who never lost her taste for expensive clothes”. Being stylish was so important to her that husband Joe Slovo once said that she would have never have enjoyed getting old because she was always worried about her appearance. Considering the kind of company First kept, this preoccupation with her appearance was somewhat unusual. Amongst her comrades worrying about one's appearance was considered frivolous, the revolution being the only thing worth worrying about. She wanted the revolution but she also wanted her tailored suits, French perfume and Italian shoes. In her account of being picked up by the security police during the 1960s Helen Joseph (Slovo, 2007: 13) mentions Ruth First stating “you had to admire a woman who, roused out of bed by the police in the middle of the night, still managed to find the time to pack her lingerie”.

4. 4 From Dar es Salaam to Maputo

On leave from Durham University, Ruth First spent the fall semester of 1975 teaching in the Department of Economics at the University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania. This was during intensely energetic years throughout recently decolonised Africa, and not least so in the universities (Harlow, 2010: 47). The semester in Tanzania coincided with the presentations, seminars, debates, and colloquia across the social science faculty of intellectuals—now luminaries, even posthumously such as Terence Ranger, Walter Rodney, Mahmood Mamdani, John Saul, Jacques Depelchin and Archie Mafeje. 1975 was an active year in post-colonial African intellectual history, it was also a turning point in First's own itinerary. Her visiting semester at the University of Dar es Salaam is according to Harlow (2010: 48) crucial both to her own intellectual biography as well as the early efforts toward post- colonial academic exchanges that “sought, however haphazardly, as well as hazardously, to redress even then the distortions of divisions of intellectual labour that have vexed programmes in international studies ever since”.

The letters written to her family and friends while in Tanzania provide a provocative, dramatically punctuated and scrupulously scriptural, account of her academic activities and an analysis of the general challenges of academic exchange (Harlow, 2002). In a letter to her husband Joe Slovo she wrote 'after 24 hours of searching for him, Professor Guruli (the chair of the Economics Department) who got me out here, dropped his entire course in my lap, and I start

Monday.' In the same letter she also describes an occasion when Terrence Ranger- who has been dubbed the founder of the so-called Dar es Salaam school of history- was put on the chopping block. 'I must say he deserved it, for a woolly ambiguous treatment of so-called peasant consciousness though the attack was ferocious. Apparently the calculated murder- in- public of liberal ideology is part of class struggle, but even my stony heart was moved by Ranger's plight' (Ruth First, 15/08/1975).

In another letter to her husband after a month in First expressed her frustrations with the general working conditions in the Economics Department. 'Had been running out of paper till today (the econs dept has nought: I ordered 2 lead pencils, 2 file covers and some paper and gem clips and the list came back with crosses against all items) when a friend showed me round the White elephant of a fishery institute next door this hotel. Its Dutch money and expertise all down the drain. The huge freezers are empty; the building deserted; rather like an Antonioni film. But the cupboards are full of stationery so I'm in stock again' (Ruth First, 18/ 09/ 1975).

The letters also suggest that First enjoyed her semester in Tanzania where she contributed to what was then the emerging curriculum in political economy such as the second- year course, Economics 202: 'Political Economy of Underdevelopment and Planning'. She described her students at the University of Dar es Salaam as 'demanding' and expressed that she would be sorry to be back among her English students in Durham, which she described as 'lumps'. The semester also gave her an opportunity to learn and according to her the course she taught hit a few good high spots- and some low- but her students were hipped on the analysis of under-development, and she found their reactions intriguing when they had to apply the methods they had learned to Tanzania. In the same letter she also wrote about her collegial interactions stating 'My relations with people that matter remain very good. I've not quarrelled, only argued! Of course I've been blackballed by that silly crowd at the university which clusters like a cabal round the GDR staff and trainees' (Ruth First, 01/ 11/ 1975).

On her return route to Durham from her semester in Dar es Salaam in December in 1975/January 1976 Ruth First visited newly independent Mozambique. The final half decade of Ruth First's life was similarly critical to her own intellectual itinerary and no less crucial in the

early years of Mozambique's independence. This independence was won from Portugal following a protracted and bloody liberation struggle, led by Eduardo Mondlane, the founder of Frelimo, and after whom Mozambique's main university is named (Harlow, 2002: 241). First was invited to join the research team at the institutions' newly established Centre of African Studies by its Director, Aquino de Braganca, who himself fell victim to a violent death in the suspicious plane crash in 1986 that also killed Mozambique's president Samora Machel.

Braganca's invitation was extended to First while she was still in Tanzania and she altered her return ticket to England in order to visit de Braganca and the Centre. Within a year she had assumed her position as Academic and Research Director there. Colleague Dr. Alpheus Manghezi² maintains that beyond her qualifications as a lecturer Durham University and University of Dar es Salaam First's interest in topics which fitted in with Mozambican history made her the ideal person to occupy the position when she did. Like de Braganca Ruth First believed that Mozambique and South Africa shared “common and interdependent destinies”, and they both subscribed to the notion that one of the effects of colonialism was a distorted sense of history, which displaced and romanticised the location of both countries' experience within southern Africa (Bridget O'Laughlin, 2011).

During her tenure as research director of the Centre it managed to produce solid, theoretically informed research on pressing issues. As an academic First was according to Joao Paulo Borges Coelho (2008: 504), “interested in far more than her own career, taking pleasure in the way she worked and often felt uneasy about the world, feeling she could contribute something to change that world”. Coelho (2008: 506) maintains that through the Centre Ruth First and Aquino de Braganca gave a voice to academia, ensuring that it was not a subordinate partner but rather a critical interlocutor in a productive dialogue. As a militant, teacher, researcher and politician Ruth First played a central role in building a social science teaching and research centre which served the interests of authentic Mozambican development, where only white, privileged, colonial institutions existed before. The Centre had First written all over it, but in a way that gave people the confidence and strengths to carry out independent yet collective work. The legacy she left at the University is bigger than the sum of all its parts- bigger than Ruth First herself,

² Interview June 2011

because she caused so much to develop in others and demanded much from those around her as she did from herself (Slovo, 1989).

The posthumously published book *Black Gold: The Mozambican Miner, Proletarian and Peasant* (1983) combined her own long-standing interest in miners and migrant labour patterns throughout Southern Africa with the work of her fellow researchers and students at the Centre. Equally relevant to Ruth First's work at the Centre were her contributions to curriculum development and the design of research agendas and assignments that would facilitate the “nation-building” project that liberated Mozambique had so recently embarked upon under Frelimo. Harlow (2010: 61) argues that had Ruth First lived even one more decade, she might have gone on to contribute to similar projects in her native South Africa, but “her experiences at that critical juncture nonetheless offer both constructive admonitions and critical aspirations for contemporary projections concerning academic exchanges”.

The tragedy is not that Ruth First was assassinated because she and her colleagues lived with that possibility on a day-to-day-basis. The tragedy was that she died when she has succeeded in assisting to build a formidable institution which could successfully blend theoretical analysis, practical empirical research and positive policy recommendations. Under Aquino de Braganca and Ruth First, the Centre managed to assist with the long and arduous tasks, in collaboration with many other institutions, of constructing a social history of Mozambique for its own people and with their help of training young Mozambicans in the techniques of social analysis and policy making, of popularizing the new Mozambican reality (with both positive and its negative aspects) through reports, articles, books and conferences, and finally, of experimenting with new socialist techniques of research and education drawn from practical experience of political struggle rather than from manuals or sterile theorizing. Ruth First had found in Mozambique a country, an institution and a role which satisfied the different parts of her character and ambitions, perhaps the nearest thing to actually participating in the socialist South Africa she had worked so untiringly to achieve (Gerry, 1983: 43). According to Slovo (2007: 18) in Mozambique First found a “vibrant kind of peace”. The period she spent in Mozambique is explored in depth in Chapters 5 and 6.

4. 5 Life after Death

4. 5. 1 The Truth and Reconciliation Commission Hearings

When those who were involved in Ruth First's murder in 1982 applied for amnesty to South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), a large aspect of the Commission's deliberations were based on whether or not First was a legitimate target and whether her assassins had acted out of political motivation. The question of whether Ruth First was a legitimate target for assassination by the combined South African security police and the Defence forces matters not only for bringing her killers to justice but also counts towards determining the example that she set: by her life, in her life's work and also through her death (Harlow, 2002). Barbra Harlow (2007) argues Ruth First's academic affiliation as research director at the Centre of African Studies should have been decisive in determining that she was not a legitimate target.

Bridget O'Laughlin (cited in Harlow, 2002: 247), who worked with Ruth First at the CEA and was in First's office when the lethal bomb went off, described her work in Mozambique at the time of her death, during amnesty hearings, in a response to a question from Mr Levine, who was representing Craig Williamson at the hearings. Mr Levine was concerned to find reasons and a period in Ruth First's life to warrant scheduling her as a "legitimate target". After all, "what was she doing there"? Levine asked: "You see it is quite possible is it not that Ruth may have had a private life and private avenues along which she was working, which you were never privy to?" And O'Laughlin responded, with not just a summary biography, but with an analysis of what a woman, Ruth First for example, just might have had to be doing in Maputo at that particular time (ibid).

"It's a possibility, but listen, Ruth, in Mozambique we started work at seven thirty, Ruth was religious, she got into that car at seven thirty she was at the Centre. She left you know, at six or seven. We generally had lunch together and we often went to the cinema or went to have a meal together or whatever. She didn't have much time. Occasionally we went to the beach. She wrote the Olive Schreiner book, she wrote most of Black Gold, she learnt Portuguese and did lectures in Portuguese, prepared teaching texts. You know she was a super human person, a really special person, but she didn't have any other time. What you can't admit is that she considered that work so important. Maybe that's hard to accept but she did" (O'Laughlin, 22/02/ 1999).

When the bomb that killed Ruth First O'Laughlin was in Ruth First's office, standing diagonally from the corner of First's desk when she opened the packet. Describing the day First died O'Laughlin (1999) stated in her TRC testimony that she thought the office had come under fire from either outside or inside the building. "I heard what sounded like three blasts and my first thought was that I am going to die." Following the blast O'Laughlin then saw Ruth First straddled on the floor, face down and motionless. "She was wearing her red blazer, white skirt and her favourite Italian shoes. She was not moving and lying totally still." O'Laughlin then ran outside and shouted for an ambulance, an act which she says was childish because there were no ambulances in Maputo at the time. In Maputo Ruth First lived a normal life, going to the beach and the cinema. According to her friend she naively believed that South African security forces would make a distinction between the role she played and that of her husband Joe Slovo (ibid).

In her testimony Bridget O'Laughlin (1999) admitted that she like many of First's colleagues was not able to say with certainty to whom the parcel that contained the bomb had been sent to but she believed it must have been addressed to Ruth First and found it inconceivable that she would have opened a letter addressed to her husband. For security reasons Slovo never opened his own mail and First was aware of this. In his testimony in support of his amnesty application Craig Williamson (1999) stated that the bomb was inserted into a letter that had been intercepted and he did not recall whether this letter was addressed to First or her husband Joe Slovo.

According to Jerry Raven, who manufactured the bomb that killed Ruth First, the end as he presented it on the twelfth day of the TRC's September 1998 amnesty hearings, went as follows: "Well I believed in the powers that be that a legitimate target had been identified. This target was a high ranking official in the ANC/SACP alliance and that whoever may open the packet, would at the worst be seriously injured but most likely, be killed" (22/09/1998). Craig Williamson who had passed the orders to Raven to produce the bomb, responded to questions put to him by advocate George Bizos,

She was seen.... as a very high ranking member of the SACP/ANC alliance and one who had engaged in two levels of activity which related to the ANC/Communist Party struggle against South Africa. One is as a high level functionary of the Communist

Party and the other as a member of the ANC structures- so she played a political role as well as a practical role (14/09/ 1998).

When the TRC hearing resumed in November 1998 Mike Maharaj was called as a witness on behalf of the victims. When asked about Ruth First, Maharaj replied to the question from Mr. du Plessis, who was representing one of the applicants, as to Ruth First:

“I said number one, that Ruth First was not involved with the internal struggle of South Africa, that is from the internal structures, military or political. I said that she was a member of the ANC like any other member. I said that she was of high standing in the international community. I said she did work with the students who were in exile in Mozambique and I said that she was doing major research work assisting the development process in Mozambique. But I did not say that she was not involved in the anti- apartheid struggle. I did not say that she did nothing for the struggle. A major distinction in my mind because the ANC maintained two separate structures, external and internal (6/11/ 1998).

The TRC, which Ruth First's husband helped to create, let her assassins go free. Daughter Gillian Slovo maintains that the most important fact about understanding the TRC is that it was a dynamic and uncontrollable process and this is why it made such an impact. According to Slovo (2002: 2) it contained within it “both those qualities it has been rightfully admired for- the healing of a new society, the unveiling of varied truths- but also many disturbing paradoxes and contradictions”. For Gillian Slovo the TRC hearings increased her feelings of hatred as she came to the realisation that Ruth First's death was not purely political, it was she claims also personal. She further states however that although the amnesty applicants did not tell the truth, and she did not experience reconciliation with the perpetrators she did however experience reconciliation with what had happened to her mother. The TRC was in Gillian Slovo's (2002: 1) words “a commission that was passionately contradictory, mixing shortcomings with its own, not inconsiderable, triumphs”.

As a member of the SACP and ANC Ruth First had an insider's view into the extraordinary social, political and labour struggles that took place in South Africa until her exile in 1963. The story of her untimely death is according to Harlow (2002: 165) the story of her life. At the Truth and Reconciliation Commission amnesty hearing her assassins invoked details of her biography and items from her bibliography to warrant her identification as a legitimate target of the South African regime. Her death it was determined had been politically motivated, after all she was a member of the SACP and the ANC. While she was in South Africa she had been active in the resistance campaign; in London, she had spoken publicly against the South African regime and written numerous books and articles that engaged questions of social justice and in Mozambique she was assisting the newly independent state in preparing cadres of educated and involved contributors to the country's development. Her death in other words was critically implicated in the struggle for the liberation of South Africa (Harlow, 2002).

4. 5. 2 The Ruth First Memorial Lectures and Unfinished Projects

A number of institutions in South Africa and abroad have since 1983 held annual lectures and named buildings in Ruth First's honour. Speaking at the 10th anniversary of his friend and comrades death in 1992 former South African president Nelson Mandela recalled how he had received the news of First's death.

While I was in Pollsmoor Prison, I felt shattered and terribly alone when I received the news that Ruth First had been assassinated. My grief was all more poignant because I knew both the men injured in the same blast. In my mind's eye I saw Pallo Jordan as I had last seen him when, during 1948, I spent a few days in his home. Similarly, I could see comrade Braganza (Braganca) talking intensely to me when we met during my stay in Morocco in 1962. But most clearly I could see Ruth.

For her comrades her memory lives beyond the grave, her freedom of spirit infuses those who are committed to an open society, rigorous intellectual thought, courage and principled action. She spent her life serving the people of southern Africa, went to prison because of her political beliefs and eventually died because of her acute political acumen and her resolute refusal to abandon her principles (Mandela, 1992).

Her alma mater, the University of Witwatersrand under its Journalism Programme in conjunction with the Ruth First Trust and the African Studies Journal holds an annual Ruth First memorial lecture each year and they have also established The Ruth First Fellowship, which aims to recognise and support the work of South African journalists and researchers that follows in a tradition of critical, progressive, independent- minded writing. Each year the committee awards one or two fellowships offering Fellows the opportunity to devote time to in- depth research. Following this they produce a paper which they deliver at the Ruth First Memorial Lecture held around 17 August each year. The event has over the years become an intellectual platform, which draws large crowds intent on hearing social issues being debated.

In 2004 the fellowship was awarded to former ANC Member of Parliament, author and activist Pregs Govender. Freelance writer Henk Rossouw was awarded the fellowship in 2005 and in his paper entitled: “The Tin Drum: treating Aids without treatment” he spoke about a rural private HIV/Aids clinic. The 2006 fellowship was shared between former Mail & Guardian photo editor Nadine Hutton and Associate Professor of Literary, Cultural and Media Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand, Pumla Dineo Gqola. Hutton presented a pictorial essay under the title “Written on her Face” and Gqola's paper on gender- based violence was titled “After Zuma: Gender violence and our Constitution”.

The year 2007 marked the 25th anniversary of Ruth First's death and the fellowship was awarded to journalists Santu Mofokeng and Leonie Joubert. The two produced a series of articles on climate change. The 2008 fellows, senior associate editor of Business Day Hilary Joffe and photographer Alon Skuy, explored the effects of South Africa's energy crisis on ordinary citizens and illustrated the impact of energy- related policy decisions on South Africans. In 2009 the fellowship was awarded to Yale University PhD student Jacob Dlamini and publisher Maggie Davey. Author Christa Kuljian and senior SABC journalist Crystal Ordeson were awarded the 2010 fellowships.

Notable key note speakers to deliver the Ruth First Memorial Lecture include, former National Assembly of South Africa Speaker Frene Ginwala; former Supreme Court Judge, Justice Albie Sachs; Gillian Slovo; Pallo Jordan who was with Ruth First in Maputo when the bomb that took

her life exploded, Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) Secretary General Zwelinzima Vavi, and Deputy President Kgalema Motlanthe. In his Ruth First memorial lecture delivered on the 28th of August 2000, Pallo Jordan acknowledged that the day did not mark a happy occasion as it marked the death of a comrade whose death was the result of a vile deed and a link in a long chain of repression that dated back to the 1950s.

Ruth First, according to Jordan (2000), was outstanding and because of her involvement in the liberation struggles of other African countries, such as Mozambique, Angola and Guinea-Bissau she became a formidable opponent of the apartheid regime. She was among the generation of liberation movement militants who occupied the frontline trenches in the fight for South Africa's liberation. As a Marxist, she initiated virtually all the major decisions that shaped the destiny of the liberation movement and consequently South Africa. Hers was as Jordan (2000: 4) recalls “a revolutionary commitment in that her solidarity with the socialist countries was always critical. Like Karl Marx, from whom she drew her inspiration, she firmly adhered to his favourite adage: 'Doubt and question everything'(ibid).

For the 2009 Ruth First Memorial Lecture Dr Frene Ginwala was asked to speak on the topic: “The ANC Then & Now”. In her speech she argued that the party Ruth First belonged to most of her adult life had no definitive moment apart from April 27th 1994 when for the first time all South Africans could choose, in a democratic process, a government for their country. Dr Ginwala traced the history of the ANC since the decade of the 1980s, in which Ruth First was killed, highlighting some of the strengths and weaknesses of the party such as the failure to understand the distinction between a liberation movement and a political party, which in turn affects the parties' policies.

Presenting the 2010 Ruth First Memorial lecture themed “How Policy is affecting the Marginalised and its impact on Poverty”, COSATU Secretary General Zwelinzima Vavi acknowledged the immense contribution Ruth First made to the struggle for liberation. He also noted her passion against exploitation, oppression and her disdain for capitalism as some of the lessons to be drawn from her legacy following her brutal murder by the apartheid regime. Vavi also stated that her journalistic and scholastic commitments were inseparable from her activism

in the national liberation movements and her continued dedication to the defence and advancement of the working class were admirable.

In May 2007 three months before the 25th anniversary of Ruth First's death the University of the Western Cape launched its first Ruth First annual lecture with 2006 Ruth First Fellow Professor Pumla Dineo Gqola as the keynote speaker. Gqola maintained that Ruth First's life served as an inspiration for South Africans to continue the struggle against its current challenges such as poverty, HIV/Aids as well as the scourge of drugs and gangsterism. Her research and scholarship was, despite the numerous detentions, bannings and persecution aimed at breaking down and destroying the ideology of the apartheid government. Pallo Jordan (2000: 2) who was present at the event described First as an “incisive, analytical mind who would have greatly enriched the national debate”. The university has also named one its women's residences after the struggle icon.

In 2003 Rhodes University named one of its female residences after Ruth First and in 2007 the women of the residence commemorated the 25th anniversary of Ruth First's assassination. The week-long event involved talks by Justice Albie Sachs, Gillian Slovo and lecturers from various departments in the university. In August 2010 the university in conjunction with the Ruth First trust launched the Ruth First Scholarship for Masters and Doctoral candidates. The scholarship is intended to support candidates whose researches are in the spirit of Ruth First's life and work, poses difficult social questions, and links knowledge and politics and politics and scholarship and action (<http://www.ru.ac.za>). In 2010 Rhodes University hosted Gavin Williams who delivered a memorial seminar in honour of his friend and colleague. Titled Portrait of a woman: Ruth First: Academic, scholar and teacher, Williams spoke about his relationship with Ruth First and the clarity and power of her academic work.

On the 25th anniversary of their colleague's death, teaching and research staff at the CEA organised a conference to commemorate the event: 'The challenges of the present: rethinking the Social Sciences', a conference held 'in memory of Ruth First, on the passage of 25 years since her assassination' at the CEA, 17 August 2007. At the lawns of the CEA there stands a plaque in memory of Ruth First and Aquino de Braganca. Gillian Slovo (2007:1) maintains that Ruth First,

“in the scholarships in her name, in the roads and buildings named after her, still stands in South Africa, her legacy given its place in the society she fought so hard to achieve.”

Among her papers from her years in London in the mid- 1970s are notes relating to three unfinished projects. One of these projects was cautiously titled *Messiah, Mob and Guerrilla* and proposed to examine “the sources of popular disturbances in Africa”. A second draft outlined “a scheme for a book on “*Power over Africa*”, which was intended to complement her 1970 study, *Barrel of a Gun*, and according to her notes, “focuses on political power and its frailties in Africa as revealed by the coup d’état. A companion volume would take up the related theme of the relation of power inside Africa and power exercised from outside. There were also notes towards a “*Profile of the Corporation*”, in which she proposed to “reach out in a literary way to capture the personality of the corporation”. As she put it, “firms have a personality... are unique in some ways.” A corporate profile would, according to Ruth First, have to “consider the kind of people who work in the corporations as well as those who invest in it.” There would be questions of the differences between investment in mining and industry since risk capital is highly profitable making big investment mining much more profitable. It was, she noted a “vicious cycle”: “more politics goes into mining,” that is, and “mining also lives on its fat.” She identified Anglo American Corporation and the Suez Canal Company Cape to Cairo for profiling in the study (Harlow, 2002: 242- 243).

She was particularly interested in the strange convulsions of pressure during the 7 years 1958-1965, her corporate oversight reaching back to the late 19th century, back to the very beginnings of South Africa's mining industry, with a query into the “Milner kindergarten type recruit” or “the young officers of some background, manner and objective... I looked ahead as well to the post World War 2 ultraconservative, right wing and anti-immigration Monday Club and the “real generation split in “Brit Politics”, finance and industry.” In selecting Anglo- American Corporation and the Suez Canal company for profiling, First gave her project not only a historical narrative that reached from the apogees of imperialism through the era of decolonisation, and on to an anticipation of neoliberal globalisation, but a geographical- intercontinental- articulation as well, “from the Cape to Cairo,” as Cecil Rhodes had once designed the trajectory of his own British imperial ambitions (Harlow, 2002: 243).

4.6 Conclusion

She may have been known for having a preference for fine leather and Italian shoes, but she was not known to wear gold or diamonds, and she had a “sharp”- “barbed,” tongue. Her story, an exemplary one in other words, at once biography and bibliography, is one of a woman with personal standards and political ideals, who as Barbra Harlow (2008: 249) puts it, both “looked class” and 'talked red”. A communist, born into white power and privilege First managed to turn that privilege against itself to serve the interests of the poor and oppressed.

Among her peers she had a special place, she was white and could have taken her place among the comfortable and colonial elite, but she did not. She was well educated and based in Johannesburg before her exile, in what was at a particularly volatile period in South African history. She had access to media outlets and being white she was less easily ignored by either a complacent white population or an increasingly white authoritarian regime. All these factors made her not only effective and controversial but also the focus of official disapproval. After the bomb that killed her exploded the security police celebrated but what they failed to realize was that First's writings would continue to hold relevance and her contribution to the cause of the liberation would remain strong.

Ruth First has become an icon; a revolutionary hero. But this is to make too much of her, it is also to make too little of her. There is a danger that her real achievements, her bravery, and her integrity, will be hidden behind the mirror (Williams, 2010). During her life she combined the practical politics of the movement for liberation with commitments to investigating, researching, and explaining. As Joe Slovo (cited Barbara Harlow, 2008: 56), however, wrote in the somewhat more becalmed aftermath of his wife’s demise: “In our orations we often try to try to mitigate the impact of such death-blows by emphasizing that the fallen will, through their very sacrifice, inspire an even greater advance of the cause for which they died. There is something in this long-term view, even though it can neither assuage personal anguish nor replenish political gaps. But there is a real sense in which our loss is not always the enemy’s gain”.

Chapter 5

“The Search for an Emancipatory Epistemology”: Ruth First at the Centre of African Studies

5.1 Introduction

Mozambique’s independence on June 25 1975 gave rise to a scholarship of engagement which was focused on Frelimo’s socialist project. The Centre of African Studies was established within Eduardo Mondlane University in 1976 and provided intellectual support to the Mozambican revolution (Cross, 2011). Ruth First joined the Centre in 1977 until her assassination in August 1982 and the work she was conducting at the Centre was a culmination of her lifelong interest in the liberation of the people of southern Africa. In an attempt to situate Ruth First's work within the wider social and political contexts that influenced her discourse the first section in this chapter provides a brief background of “The Mozambican Struggle”. This background is important also for understanding the impact First's work had in Mozambique, which at the time of her arrival had no tradition of research or historical scholarship to speak of. This is followed by an account of the critical role played by First in the building of the Centre. I also take a look at the direction of research at the Centre under First’s leadership as the director of research.

5.2 The Mozambican Struggle

Whereas at the beginning of the pre- colonial period most societies were organised into relatively small chieftaincies, by the nineteenth century the Mozambican landscape was dominated by large states. With these states came increased specialization and social inequality. At the same time, the maritime revolution³ increased Mozambique’s links to the wider world (Isaacman & Isaacman, 1983: 11). The influx of successive groups of Swahili, Portuguese, and Indian merchants in search of ivory and slaves marked the commencement of the regions integration into the world economy- a progression that intensely distorted the country’s economic base and eventually gave rise to a number of predatory slave-raiding states (ibid).

When the Portuguese settled in Mozambique at the end of the 15th century they engaged in trade, and by the early 17th century Lisbon had begun to grant land and accompanying feudal rights to

³ The maritime revolution is named after the time when humans first started sailing.

Portuguese settlers (Mondlane, 1963: 3). While profits were made through exporting ivory and gold, slave trade grew in importance and by 1820 slaves made up 85% of the value of “exports” passing through the port of Quelimane⁴. It is estimated that by the 19th century the country had lost 2,000,000 people to slavery (Huffman, 1992: 11). By the beginning of the twentieth century Portuguese rule had been consolidated throughout the strategic southern half of Mozambique, and within a decade Lisbon could claim at least nominal control over the entire colony (Isaacman & Isaacman, 1983).

Colonial rule transformed the basic fabric of Mozambican society. The imposition of arbitrary and impulsive policies informed by the prevailing racial and cultural arrogance of the coloniser’s and by new labour demands and tax requirements adversely affected all Mozambicans (Isaacman & Isaacman, 1983: 11). This is not to say that the impact was uniform. Variations, caused by such disparate factors as the local political economy and the personality of particular administrators, profoundly affected the daily lives of Mozambicans. But these were merely differences in a relative scale of merchant, of whom there were relatively few.

The central feature of Mozambique’s colonial experience was the extraction of cheap African labour through state intervention. As a result of the imposition of contract labour, the system of *chibalo* (forced labour), the use of penal labour, and a number of treaties with South Africa and Zimbabwe, Mozambique lost hundreds of thousands of the most productive members of rural society. Their departure, in turn, created serious demographic imbalances, profoundly altered the structure of rural society and resulted in a sharp decline in agricultural productivity. The extraction of African labour on such an unprecedented scale profoundly changed the human and natural environment of Mozambique (Isaacman & Isaacman, 1983: 53).

In 1926 Antonio Salazar came into power in Portugal. Salazar viewed the colonies as a solution to a number of the problems that were being faced by Portugal. Under Salazar’s rule Portugal began to increase the flow of settlers to Mozambique and it is estimated that by 1940 there were over 27, 000 Portuguese settlers in Mozambique and by 1960 that number had risen to 97, 000 (Huffman, 1992: 12). Beginning in 1938, Mozambicans were forced to grow cotton for

⁴ A seaport in Mozambique and the administrative capital of the Zambezia Province.

Portugal's growing textile industry and textile production in Mozambique was banned so there would be no competition with the products from the metropole. Cotton production was completely controlled by the colonial administration down to the daily work schedules of peasant workers (Huffman, 1992).

While Portugal was exploiting Mozambique for its benefit it did almost nothing for the Mozambicans. A limited number of children had an opportunity to attend primary school, and secondary education was restricted through stiff entry requirements, high fees and the simple lack of schools in the country. The few schools that existed were run by the Catholic Church which in turn used them to serve Portuguese hegemony (Huffman, 1992). According to Mondlane (1963: 5) the Portuguese colonial government argued that "for the continuation of white man's authority over the African it was not safe to gear education towards training the black man in all phases of the modern science". Stating that the "black man needed spiritual growth and not material". The colonial government according to Mondlane (1963: 5) "insisted that all phases of native education should be placed in the hands of the religious institutions, whose main purpose was to convert and not to educate".

Peasant opposition posed a recurring challenge to the colonial- capitalist system. Resistance was not a knee-jerk reaction. It was a decision, carefully considered, with very serious consequences. In such a repressive environment it is hardly surprising that a lot of people were intimidated (Isaacman & Isaacman: 1983). Divided from each other by space, ethnicity, religion, primordial kinship affiliations, the tyranny of their work schedule, and a host of other factors, individual peasants were relatively powerless (ibid).

The actions of the peasants tended to be isolated, diffused, and sporadic, their limited and systematic importance hard to measure and easy to ignore. Yet, acting within the serious constraints imposed by the colonial capitalist system, Mozambican peasants and conscripted rural workers did, to varying degrees, minimize the disruptive effects of Portuguese domination by struggling against the appropriation of their labour as well as the ravaging of both their culture and the basic social fabric of their communities (Isaacman & Isaacman, 1983: 62). In so

doing they were also helping to build a powerful cultural legacy of resistance that would inspire later generations.

By the end of 1960 there were three nationalist movements in Mozambique each with its own geographic, ethnic or class base: the Mozambique African National Union (MANU), the Uniao Africana de Mocambique Independente (UNAM); and Nacional Democratica de Mocambique (UDENAMO). These movements sprang up after the Mueda massacre in northern Mozambique on 16 June 1960. At the urging of Julius Nyerere, Kwame Nkrumah and other prominent figures from African liberation movements, representatives of the three groups met in Dar es Salaam on June 25, 1962 and formed the Liberation Front of Mozambique (Frelimo) (Mondlane, 1963: 13). Eduardo Mondlane who was living at the United States at the time and not associated with any of these movements was elected as Frelimo's first president.

The establishment of Frelimo marked the beginning of a new phase in the struggle against Portuguese colonial rule, a phase characterised both by creative experimentation and demoralizing setbacks. During the struggle Frelimo's leaders had to grapple with complex political, economic and social issues whose resolution radicalized the movement. This process shaped the socialist path of development the country pursued until independence on June 25, 1975 (Isaacman & Isaacman, 1983: 79).

According to Henriksen (1983) the ideology of Frelimo gradually developed throughout the war for independence. In the beginning, Marxist- Leninism and socialism were not propounded by the movement. The First Congress called for national liberation while the Second Congress spoke of goals which were rooted in socialist theory but did not mention socialism specifically (Mondlane, 1963). In its formative years, the primary goal of the organisation was to free the country from the colonial rule. There was no mention of a broader ideology or a vision of a liberated Mozambique. This ideology was created during the war for independence as the methods of guerrilla warfare, together with the security and sustenance needs of Frelimo's "liberated zones," called for the political mobilization and the collectivization of the population (Huffman, 1992: 13- 14).

After serious internal dissent, the leadership of Frelimo committed itself to the armed struggle and in September 1964, Frelimo guerrilla forces which had been trained and armed by African and Eastern- bloc supporters launched the war for independence. Frelimo's first insurgencies took place in September 1964 in Cabo Delgado and Nissa⁵. Frelimo took control of these remote areas and proclaimed them "liberated zones" (Henriksen, 1983). The colonial government and Frelimo each experienced a number of victories and setbacks during the ensuing decade of struggle and despite Frelimo's small- scale guerrilla engagements the Portuguese remained frustrated and offensively ineffective against Frelimo. While most of southern Mozambique and the coastal areas remained in Portuguese hands by 1974 Frelimo forces had infiltrated into northern and central centres (Huffman, 1992).

During the struggle for independence Frelimo set up a rudimentary school system where Mozambicans were taught their own history and culture. According to Mondlane (1969: 178)

The education given in these schools is thus necessarily of a rather rudimentary nature. But it is at least geared to the needs of children in the context of their own culture and national struggle. They learn... the history and geography of Mozambique... in civics they learn about our country and its background, about the war and the aims of Frelimo, and something about the rest of Africa and the world.

Following a decade of guerrilla warfare, on 7 September 1974 Portugal's leaders signed the Lusaka Accord by which they recognised Frelimo as the sole legitimate representative of the Mozambican people. The agreement established that independence would be proclaimed after a transition period during which administration of the country was shared between the two parties. Within a year the People's Republic of Mozambique, led by President Samora Machel, was born (Penvenne, 1985: 109).

During the struggle for liberation Frelimo had already begun to confront the legacy of over 400 years of Portuguese colonialism and systematic exploitation and underdevelopment of the country's human and natural resources. When the Caetano regime was overthrown by the

⁵ The two northern provinces of Mozambique bordering Tanzania.

Portuguese Armed Forces Movement, Frelimo had liberated one quarter of Mozambique's territory and one eighth of the population (Collins, 1978: 12). Through a series of struggles conducted during the war for liberation and continuously during the independence period, Frelimo rejected nationalism to emerge with a class line, applying it organisationally and allowing it to not only take power but also define a strategy of socialist development for newly independent Mozambique.

At independence the University of Lourenco Marques⁶, which was established in 1962 was Mozambique's only university and when the Portuguese colonial government was overthrown almost all of the lecturers who were not in favour of the country's newly adopted socialist system went back to Portugal⁷. There was also a shortage of students to come to university because under the racist Portuguese system very few people had access to secondary school and therefore only five percent of the population could read and write. When the Centre of African Studies was established not only was there no tradition of research to talk about but there was a shortage of suitably qualified academic staff, leading to a reliance on foreign qualified staff such as Ruth First⁸.

5.3 Engaged Scholarship: The Centre of African Studies.

Among the many things which did not figure as part of Mozambique's colonial heritage was a vigorous tradition of historical scholarship. The Portuguese colonial conception of African history- or better, the warped sense of historical experience afforded to Africans by the Portuguese- had been largely relegated to anthropology and a kind of pseudo socio-biology (Penvenne, 1985: 110). When Mozambique gained independence in 1975, a clear and encouraging realignment of attitudes toward Mozambican history in Portugal and Mozambique emerged.

⁶ The University of Lourenco Marques was renamed Eduardo Mondlane University in 1976 in honor of Frelimo's first president Eduardo Mondlane.

⁷ Interview with Teresa Cruz e Silva April, 2011.

⁸ Interview with Alpheus Manghezi June, 2011.

The Centre of African Studies for instance was established in January 1976 in cooperation with Mozambique's national university, Eduardo Mondlane University, to develop and oversee social science research on southern Africa. According to Isabel Casimiro⁹,

The centre was guided by the need to understand Mozambique in the context of southern Africa, in the context of a country that was completely dependent on South Africa. How could we change the Mozambique? But we needed to understand how to change from this capitalist production to socialist production because this was the idea of Frelimo of a socialist Mozambique.

The development of the Centre can be traced back to 1974 when a 50 year old Aquino de Braganca who had been living in North Africa, working as a journalist and working on a number of special projects for the liberation movements for African Portuguese colonies decided to return to Mozambique (de Braganca & O'Laughlin, 1984). Born in northern Goa in India de Braganca had moved to Mozambique in 1948 at the age of 20 and later relocating to Portugal, then France (Darch, 2010). Remembering the importance of the Centre of African Studies in Lisbon as a hearth for the development of nationalist thought in Portuguese colonies during the 1940s and 1950s, the leadership within Frelimo wanted the CEA to exist again, this time within newly independent Mozambique and with a specific focus on the liberation of the rest of southern Africa (de Braganca & O'Laughlin, 1984).

This took place in January 1976 when the CEA was formally established within Eduardo Mondlane University and the first rector of the university Fernando Ganhao named Aquino de Braganca as its first director (de Braganca & O'Laughlin, 1984). Besides Aquino de Braganca, the local staff was mainly drawn from BA graduates from Eduardo Mondlane's history department¹⁰. Local staff included Alexandrino Jose, Yussuf Adam, Luis de Brito, and Teresa Cruz e Silva. Each of these graduates was undertaking research on Mozambican history. Although some of the staff were initially recruited to work on a social science course – a project that did not materialise at that time. They were then reassigned to the CEA, which was initially a

⁹ Interview April, 2011.

¹⁰ Interview with Alpheus Manghezi June, 2011.

research centre on history, divided up into sections; each representing a different historical period¹¹.

Ruth First and Aquino de Braganca had become acquaintances through their work as militant writers, both deeply involved in the struggle for liberation in southern Africa. In 1975 de Braganca invited Ruth First to Mozambique for a short visit. On 15 October 1975, while in Tanzania Ruth First wrote to husband Joe Slovo “Mozambique. I've heard that they (the University people planning a Centre of African? Southern African? Studies (I'm not sure which) want me to come to LM [Lourenco Marques] for a short visit. I may say that I'm thrilled to bits. Tanzania is one thing, but Mozambique! Wow” (15/10/1975).

In March 1976, First, who had returned to Durham University, wrote to de Braganca in Maputo: “beside a revolution, doing a teaching job is mediocre stuff” (de Braganca & O'Laughlin, 1984: 159). This statement she made after thinking to the prior visit she had made to Mozambique during the time of its independence in 1975. The two had a number of common friends in the revolution, the likes of Marcelino dos Santos, Pio Pinto, Ben Barka and as journalists they were both engaged in getting the undistorted story of the liberation movements in Africa into the media (ibid).

Responding the letter that Ruth First had written to him in March 1976, de Braganca mentioned the work he was doing with a group of 12 young history graduates to organise the CEA (de Braganca & O'Laughlin, 1984). The group according Yussuf Adam¹² who was one of the graduates was called the History Workshop. The main aim of the History Workshop was at the time of its establishment, to conduct research on the southern African subsystem, with particular emphasis on the history and economy of Mozambique. Aware that First wanted to get back into the front line of revolution, de Braganca suggested that she might be convinced to return to southern Africa to work and live in Mozambique. First's earlier work as an investigative journalist in South Africa and books she wrote while in exile, according to de Braganca (de

¹¹ Interview with Luis de Brito May 2011

¹² Interview April, 2011.

Braganca & O’Laughlin, 1984: 160), made her the ideal person to conduct research on the southern Africa subsystem.

First was also an ideal candidate for the position due to her teaching and research experience at Durham University and her commitment to understanding the relationship between South Africa and Mozambique¹³. She took up the position of research director in 1977. She continued her work at the Centre until; at last, she opened that fatal letter sent from South Africa in her Maputo office late in the afternoon of 17 August 1982, just before a celebratory toast to a successfully completed UNESCO academic conference that she helped to organize.

Speaking about Ruth First’s arrival at the Centre former CEA documentalist Colin Darch¹⁴ states,

I think she brought two things. One is that she was intellectually a very rigorous academic. But the other part is that because of her background in journalism she understood clearly the need to produce rather than spending too much time thinking about subtleties and so on. And so that is not saying she dismissed that but she would rather bring out something that is useful now than something that is perfect later on.

By 1979 Ruth First was leading a strong team of international researchers which included Belgian macro-economist Marc Wuyts, American political scientist Bridget O’Laughlin, South African sociologist Alpheus Manghezi, documentalist and analyst Colin Darch, Italian historian Ana Maria Gentili and Congolese historian Jacques Depelchin. This team of researchers was assembled on the basis of their analytical unity as Marxists capable of making their work relevant to the process of socialist transformation and applying a scientific material analysis to the problems of socialist revolution (CEA, 1982a). According to Cross (2011: 15) their biographies shared some common features:

1. a history of political activism;
2. first-hand experience in Mozambique that enhanced their scholarship;
3. written for an audience beyond the narrow boundaries of the academy;

¹³ Interview with Teresa Cruz e Silva April, 2011.

¹⁴ Interview July, 2011.

4. helping to transform the terms of scholarship and intellectual debates in Mozambique;
5. challenging the dogmatic euphoria and the orthodoxies.

The Centre of African Studies brought in what could be labelled “an activist conception of research” or what Isaacman (2003: 4) describes as “engaged scholarship”. Isaacman defines engaged scholars as intellectuals who challenge existing social hierarchies and oppressive institutions as well as the truth regimes and structures of power that produced and supported them. Not content simply to critique the status quo, these scholars seek to change it. “Their insurgent work is thus organically and inexorably intertwined with their scholarship (ibid).”

In this context political engagement can take many forms, including promoting human rights, global justice, and peace, involvement in anticolonial and anti-imperialist campaigns grass roots organising, or speaking out as public intellectuals. They are driven by a mutually reinforcing intellectual and political agenda and according to Isaacman (2003) at the core of this agenda are two major initiatives. One, to render audible the voices and concerns of the powerless and simultaneously to recover the experiences of the disadvantaged and underrepresented which are routinely ignored, forgotten, or cast into shadows of history. And two, to support their struggles aimed at ending exploitive practices and dismantling institutions of oppression.

In the context of the Centre of African Studies during First’s tenure as research director there were several dimensions to such a conception. First, it was research that was not aimed to produce “definitive research studies but rather to make social research an acceptable step in the formulation and implementation of policy”. Second, it was research that was “conducted from the perspective of social transformation and had to confront the actual problems of that transformation, or more specifically, research that was a tool of the Mozambican revolution”. Third, it “placed emphasis on the link between theory and practice, particularly in the application of Marxist theory and method” (Cross, 2011: 16).

The CEA not only took on the task of re- writing the history of Mozambique, it also focused on the problems of transforming production. Colin Darch¹⁵ recalls,

Most of the research we did in the Centre were interventions in issues which had a direct bearing on economic policy or development policy in Mozambique at the time. For example we did studies on cotton which was a very important economic factor. We did a study on containerisation in the ports. We did two studies on unemployment and these were real issues. And the reports that we produced went to the first instance to the government and the party.

Although a large number of the Centre's research outputs have been in Portuguese, the Centre has had an admirable record of converting the results of research into policy recommendations or into teaching materials for the country's programme of educational expansion. A number of the literature on Mozambique such John Saul's introduction to a re-issue of Eduardo Mondlane's *The Struggle for Mozambique*, built on work done under the auspices of the Centre and provides the English reader with an opportunity to access something of what has been accomplished (Jeanne Penvenne, 1985).

The Centre established a journal, *Mozambican Studies*, which was aimed at publishing open academic enquiry and commentary by researchers working on Mozambique. Ruth First and Aquino de Braganca were concerned with bringing basic academic research to the people of Mozambique. This is why Ruth First put a lot of her time and energy into the establishment of the journal. The journal contains not only work done by the CEA but also articles by scholars who were writing on Mozambican issues such as Jeanne Penvenne and Kurt Habermeir. Drawing on both her academic training and experience as a journalist First organised the translation of the journal articles from Portuguese to English and vice versa, editing and reading proofs (Manghezi, 2009).

The CEA published the first issue of the journal in 1980 and the individual and collective research conducted both privately and in affiliation with other organisations has added important

¹⁵ Interview July, 2011

dimensions to our understanding of Mozambican history. In the introduction to the first issue of *Mozambican Studies* Aquino de Braganca and Ruth First describe the CEA as a “research and research-training institute”. Both editors died within four year of each other. Ruth First was assassinated at her office. Aquino de Braganca, who was a trusted confidante of Samora Machel, was killed on board the Tupolev Tu- 134 with Samora Machel when it crashed at Mbuzini on 19 October 1986 (Colin Darch, 2010).

In their editorial introduction to the inaugural issue entitled “Underdevelopment and Migrant Labour” Ruth First and Aquino de Braganca elaborated further on the Centre's mission, “The independence of Mozambique they wrote, “made necessary and inevitable the total reconstruction of Mozambique's history,” believing, they argued, that “the making of a revolutionary history requires more than the mere presentation of a contrary version of events, and more than a descriptive account of anti-colonial resistance and rebellions mounted by Mozambicans against the colonial power” (de Braganca and First: 1980).

The “work of a young new school of Mozambican historians,” wrote Ruth First and Aquino de Braganca (1980) in the issue of *Mozambican Studies*, was charged with nothing short of the “total reconstruction of Mozambique's history,” in other words, the “making of a revolutionary history,” a narrative in which “periodisation” must be radically distinguished from mere “chronology.” Although the research emphasis would be on developments after 1885,” the year of the Berlin Conference (or, if you will, the “Scramble for Africa:”), the CEA's revolutionary history was, that is, of necessity, “more than the mere presentation of a country version of the events, and more than a descriptive account of anti- colonial resistance and rebellions mounted by Mozambicans against the colonial power” (de Braganca and First, 1980: 5).

While the Centre existed to serve Mozambique this overlapped with the work that was being done on South Africa.¹⁶ Ruth First's own activities were shaped by a view that the construction of socialism in Mozambique and the liberation struggle in South Africa were inextricably related. Her own personal focus was definitely on building socialism in Mozambique, and on the issues

¹⁶ Rob Davies, Interviewed by Nadja Manghezi, 2009.

of rural economy and industrial development. Initially that was also the entire work of the Centre (Manghezi, 2009: 89).

The focus on South Africa was the result of a demand from Mozambican structures who wanted to know how to read developments that were taking place in the region¹⁷. The group which worked directly under Ruth First worked particularly on the analysis of trends and developments in South Africa which could impact Mozambique. The group developed a number of projects including a book published as *The Struggle of South Africa*. The group of researchers which included Rob Davies and Siphon Dlamini also ran a series of analytical dossiers titled 'The Southern African Dossier', which was intended to analyse developments in the region, and at times issued warnings about how events in South Africa might have a negative impact on Mozambique. This group was driven by the desire to understand the activities of the apartheid regime, its dynamics and what it was all about. This group later became the southern African nucleus within the CEA, analysing the region and apartheid's role in it.

5.3.1 The Centre of African Studies and Frelimo: “A Teleological Problematic”

Marc Wuyts¹⁸ recalls that the choice of research topic for the CEA was often more a question of contingency than of logic. The sequence that resulted, however, did nevertheless entail an interesting process of learning from past experiences to construct novel ways of doing research and teaching about it. “There was, therefore, a strong element of path dependency in the CEA trajectory of research, which would ultimately influence the scope, nature and approach of the Development Course”¹⁹.

According to members of the CEA (1982a) the choice of research problems was based not only on particular problems of socialist development but also on issues drawn up by organised structures within the government and Frelimo, who had the ability to not only respond to information but also utilise it. While a number of the studies were commissioned by the government the choice of research problem was not determined simply by examining what

¹⁷ Interview Colin Darch.

¹⁸ Interviewed by Carlos Fernandes, 2010.

¹⁹ Marc Wuyts, interviewed by Carlos Fernandes, 2010.

Frelimo's strategy of socialist transformation meant in a particular sector of production (CEA, 1982a).

The researchers at the Centre felt the need to respond directly in its choice of research problems to the tactical questions which Frelimo should have confronted in the implementation of its strategy of transition (CEA, 1982: 8). This in turn invoked the issue of the presentation of these research findings and the audience to which it was directed. This also raised questions of who was interested in social research and how they would be able to apply this research in practice. It was therefore necessary that there existed organised structures that would respond at some level to the research being conducted by First and her team. Research concerns were therefore aligned to those issues which were on the country's development strategy agenda, and within the general plan of action²⁰.

While recognising the importance of specialised training First also thought that as a revolutionary university Eduardo Mondlane should remain constantly preoccupied with its openness, with service to Frelimo and to the state, with its flexibility in contributing to the training of cadres without pulling them out of their workplaces (de Braganca & O'Laughlin, 1984:165). She thought it normal that there would be very rapid development during this phase of the Mozambican Revolution, and she wanted the CEA to be able to respond by organising new ways to make its work more useful to Frelimo (ibid).

This open support for Frelimo's cause, and Ruth First and Aquino de Braganca's close relationship with then president Samora Machel has often led to the CEA being labelled as support structure for the government. Isabel Casimiro states that the relationship between the party and the Centre was “not always very good and very specific because of the result of our work. Some people think you know people who did not know think the Centre was some kind of branch of Frelimo. We were all members of Frelimo but we were critical because we learned”. According to another CEA colleague Rob Davies²¹ “Ruth First saw no contradiction between being supportive and being critical” and was often a vociferous critic of certain aspects of Frelimo's policy towards among other things state farms.

²⁰ Marc Wuyts, Interview with Carlos Fernandes, 2010.

²¹ Interview with Nadja Manghezi, 2009.

Reflecting on the relationship between the CEA and Frelimo de Braganca and Depelchin (1986 cited in Harlow, 2010: 60) noted that there was, a “teleological problematic”, a problematic raised earlier in 1985 by yet another CEA colleague, Harold Wolpe (1985 cited in Harlow, 2010: 60), in his debates section of the London-based *Review of African Political Economy* (on whose editorial board Ruth First had served). What, Wolpe had asked, should be the “critical role of researchers who are not opposed to a regime (such as Mozambique's Frelimo- led government), but, are organically connected to its goal of social transformation?” The very choice of “research issues” was itself over-determined, as Wolpe argues, given the “relationship of the centre to Frelimo and the party and between them”.

Colin Darch²² admits that the Centre’s relationship with Frelimo had “*a big impact*” on the work that was being conducted at the Centre,

I mean we, I am not quite sure what the process was but quite certainly certain projects were negotiated in a way with the government and Frelimo and certain structures. We would then carry out research which was relevant to party and government concerns. It was independent in the sense that we were not required to follow a party line in the research process but we saw ourselves as being part of a process of developing policy and making input into the policy process.

Responding to Christian Geffray’s (1990) statement that the Centre was an organ of the state that denied the importance of history and local context in favour of an abstract developmental conception of change Marc Wuyts²³ states,

A sweeping and generalizing statement that does not depict what the CEA was about. In my opinion, this was not the view held by researchers of the CEA, foreign or local, nor does it reflect its practices of the analysis of the peasantry. It is true that most of us were committed to a socialist development perspective, but this did not mean that such

²² Interview July 2011.

²³ Interviewed by Carlos Fernandes, 2010.

went hand in hand with a slavish adherence to or indeed simple justification of the strategies and policies pursued by Frelimo.

According to Isaacman (2003) scholars like Ruth First who supported the liberation movement depicted accurately the broad outlines of the armed struggle and analysed Frelimo's commitments to health reform, expanded educational opportunities, better housing, and the improvement of women's lives. On reflection Isaacman (2003) notes that many of these scholars were caught up initially in the euphoria of the day. As a result they often failed to problematize and critique Frelimo's long-term agenda and short-term practices. He notes for instance that he did not ask sufficiently critical questions about Frelimo's capacity to implement a planned economy and whether there was sufficient space for effective democratic practices within a "vanguard party". Isaacman therefore agrees with activist John Saul (1993: 58) who argues that scholars like Ruth First and her colleagues at the Centre "overestimated the scope of Frelimo's achievement and underestimated the seriousness of the weaknesses attendant upon its efforts"

5.4 "The Iron Lady": Research under the Leadership of Ruth First

As the director of research, Ruth First was mainly concerned with choice of research areas, conceptualisation and monitoring of research and the editing of research reports. According to O'Laughlin²⁴ this was always a process of consultation with Aquino de Braganca and other key members of the research team, with the whole research collective only occasionally involved. First also made field visits to the rural research projects, visiting each of the research groups and discussing progress with group leaders. She would sometimes stay on to participate in the field work²⁵.

According to de Braganca and O'Laughlin (1984: 163) there were those within the CEA who felt that in her direction of research Ruth First was "too critical, tough and even defeatist". This is confirmed by a number of her former colleagues. Teresa Cruz e Silva²⁶ for instance recalls that working with Ruth First "was not so easy" and goes on to say "I cried once. I was pregnant and

²⁴ Interview August, 2011.

²⁵ *ibid*

²⁶ Interview April, 2011.

she was insisting with me to do something, and I said I am not going to do that. And she was so tough with her staff members even interfering in their personal relationships. She thought she was interfering because she thought it was the best thing to do.” Isabel Casimiro²⁷ states “another thing about Ruth, she was very tough, very strong sometimes we called her the Iron Lady, Margaret Thatcher. And she thought that everybody was supposed to be like that”.

Colin Darch²⁸ remembers about Ruth First’s particular way of working,

She pushed and pushed everybody as hard as she could. I mean she was very impatient. She always wanted things done in a particular way, she wanted things done right. I remember she said to me (this is to do with migrant labour) she said to me I want you to write a chapter on the health and safety conditions in the South African mines. And I said to her, but I do not know anything about health and safety on the South African mines, and she said to me well now is your chance to learn... and I went and wrote what I was asked to write.

Luis de Brito²⁹ describes Ruth First as “the engine of the Centre. She was the only person that could put everybody working on the same thing, the cement for that team”. De Brito’s view was supported by Carlos Castel Branco,³⁰ who maintained that,

There is no institution which is the product and reflection of only one person but Ruth was I would say in in positive and negative manner was the engine of the Centre. Ruth was a tyrant she moved and removed the obstacles in front of her but she had an extraordinary intellectual capacity as well as an extraordinary organizational capacity and a very very big capacity to work.

Yussuf Adam³¹ compares the work environment at the CEA under First's leadership to Fordism, which is a system of mass production and consumption characteristic of highly developed

²⁷ Interview April, 2011.

²⁸ Interview July, 2011.

²⁹ Interview May, 2011.

³⁰ *ibid*

societies during the 1940s- 1960s. Another colleague Dr Alpheus Manghezi³² maintains that this comparison is both accurate and inaccurate. In the positive sense the statement reveals that the Centre of African Studies was productive and during the period in question it was, according to Dr Manghezi³³, the most productive department at Eduardo Mondlane University. In this sense, the CEA would seem like the production system introduced by Henry Ford. Viewed from the angle of the repetitive work, which involved no thinking, comparing the CEA to Fordism would be inaccurate because the work done at the involved a lot of thinking and nothing compared to the conveyer belt.

Two other CEA colleagues who were described by my interviewees as Ruth First's "trusted confidants" present a different view of the work environment under the leadership of Ruth First. Marc Wuyts³⁴ who also worked at UEM's Economics department describes the CEA during Ruth First's leadership as "more vibrant and more open to debate and discussion". According Bridget O'Laughlin³⁵ Ruth First's toughness and strong opinions were in fact, a reflection of her great confidence in Marxism, which she had gained through long years of revolutionary practice. "She thought that a revolution must, and can, look directly at its problems in order to resolve them³⁶". It was for these reasons that in Ruth First's view the revolutionary cadre needed to be extremely rigorous in its methods of analysis.

The manner in which the CEA worked was according to O'Laughlin³⁷ proof that collective research could be conducted and could make the whole much more than the sum of what each researcher could achieve individually. First placed a lot of emphasis on finishing projects, insisting that perfection could not be achieved, and what did exist was doing the best you could do under the circumstances you found yourself in. The reports were published not under the names of individual authors but collectively under the name of the CEA. This according to

³¹ Interview April, 2011.

³² Interview June, 2011.

³³ *ibid*

³⁴ Interview with Carlos Fernandes, 2010.

³⁵ Interview August, 2011.

³⁶ *ibid*

³⁷ *ibid*

O'Laughlin³⁸ was a reflection of the way the CEA worked and the collective accountability for the research outcomes.

One of the issues that came up during the interviews is Ruth First's lack of postgraduate qualification and the impact that this had on her capabilities as a researcher and teacher. Colin Darch³⁹ maintains that Ruth First "had a really sharp analytical mind" and went on to say "I don't think doing another degree would have made her any sharper than she was already". According to friend and former student Carlos Castel Branco⁴⁰ "she was a person with a very very strong intellectual capacity so she never stopped studying" and while there were weaknesses in some of the works produced at the Centre these cannot be attributed to Ruth First not having a postgraduate qualification. It is worth noting that while First herself did not possess a postgraduate qualification she served as Judith Head's PhD supervisor.

5.4.1 Creative Tensions

The CEA was at times in turmoil, in part, because of broader university politics, but also, in part internally, because of diverging opinions about what direction to take, what type of research to do, who to include, and so on. The work environment was complicated by Ruth First and Aquino de Braganca's work relationship, which a number of colleagues have described as complex and conflictual. When the two directors clashed it was difficult to work⁴¹. Speaking on the differences between First and de Braganca Dan O'Meara⁴² who joined the Centre in 1981 states,

He (Aquino de Braganca) had a problematic relationship with her (Ruth First). He deeply respected her work and the analysis being done by the Centre, but he felt that she had taken too much power from him and resented, her often brusque treatment of both himself and his suggestions. Yet, he did not seem to do much about it.

³⁸ *ibid*

³⁹ Interview July, 2011.

⁴⁰ Interview May, 2011.

⁴¹ Interview with Alpheus Manghezi June, 2011.

⁴² Interviewed by Carlos Fernandes, 2007

Carlos Castelo Branco⁴³ attributes the clashes between First and de Braganca to a difference in character. Branco maintains that Aquino de Braganca was “a free thinking individual who did not know his whereabouts” and without Ruth First the Centre would never have done what it did. She created the capacities and resources for what needed to be done. She thought about what had to be done and how to do it. According to Branco⁴⁴

Without Ruth Aquino was not a hands-on director of the centre. I mean I admire Aquino, I admired Aquino a lot but his qualities were not of an administrative somebody who could actually run things in a hand- on way. And I think Ruth provided exactly that. She knew how to get people to work together, she knew how to get people to push things through, she knew how to make things happen in a way that Aquino didn't. So I think that she was essential to the Centre.

Colleagues Dr Manghezi⁴⁵ and Dr Depelchin⁴⁶ maintain however that the conflict between Ruth First and Aquino de Braganca was to be expected when two people with different personalities work together. In accounting for this conflict it is also important to separate what was personal and what was based on ideological differences. Ideological differences were rife in a place like Mozambique at the time, because all the intellectuals at the CEA at the time were there because they sympathised with the country, which was trying to build a socialist state and like Ruth First they labelled themselves Marxists. Marxism however, has different schools of thought and conflict between these intellectuals was inevitable.

According to Dan O'Meara⁴⁷ who was part of the southern African nucleus of the Centre,

Everybody in the Centre, including Aquino, clearly understood that it was Ruth who ran the place, who made almost all the decisions, and who raised most of the money to finance it. Aquino did not spend much time at the Centre, and played almost no role in

⁴³ Interview May, 2011.

⁴⁴ *ibid*

⁴⁵ Interview with Alpheus Manghezi June, 2011

⁴⁶ Email communication May, 2011.

⁴⁷ Interviewed by Carlos Fernandes, 2009.

the research projects, in planning, administering or teaching the M.A. programme, nor even in the raising of funds.

According Dr Jacques Depelchin⁴⁸ who worked with Ruth First both at the University of Tanzania and the CEA, the relationship between the two directors might have appeared complex to those on the outside but between the two of them there was no real problem. At the deepest level Ruth First and Aquino de Braganca were comrades engaged in the same struggle and beyond their shared experiences as journalists and political activists they complemented each other. For instance while de Braganca was a visionary and a diplomat he was not much of an administrator. By contrast, First was a visionary and a good administrator who lacked diplomacy and would often address people in a manner that left them feeling they were being attacked.

In describing the relationship between First and de Braganca Luis de Brito⁴⁹ maintains that what might have appeared as conflict to some was merely the result of different research interests. The Centre was eventually divided into different groups because of these interests. The History Workshop functioned closely with Aquino de Braganca and was concerned with basic research on Mozambican History, including the history of the armed struggle. Researchers in this group included Yussuf Adam, Anna Maria Gentili, Alexandrino Jose and Colin Darch. The southern African section discussed in section 5. 3 worked closely with Ruth First and included Rob Davies, Siphon Dlamini, Alpheus Manghezi and Dan O'Meara.

Speaking at Ruth First's memorial in London in August 1982 John Saul who also worked at the Centre touched on the creative tensions that arose at the CEA stating,

When one looked back at moments of inter- personal tension one had had with her it was also with the realisation that such tensions were not arbitrary ones, that almost invariably something important, intellectually and politically, was at stake. The seriousness of her engagement, the engagement, the intensity of her concern, could never be doubted. Nor, if you were struggling to be serious yourself, could such

⁴⁸ Email communication May, 2011.

⁴⁹ Interview May ,2011

moments cast any doubt upon her personal concerns, her compassion, her continuing solidarity in the next round of whatever struggle, public or personal, was in train.

More than a quarter century now has passed since Ruth First was killed by a letter bomb which she opened in her office at the Centre of African Studies. Her murderers were amnestied a decade ago as part of South Africa's all-too fabled "transition to democracy." On the twenty-fifth anniversary of their colleague's death, however a conference was organized by current teaching and research staff at the CEA: "Mozambique in Southern Africa: The challenges of the present: rethinking the Social Sciences," a conference held "in memory of Ruth First, on the passage of 25 years since her assassination" at the CEA, 17 August 2007.

According to de Braganca and O'Laughlin (1984: 171)

Her energy was invested into areas where it was possible to forge ahead by forcing a contradiction; she worked to maintain alliances in areas where unity was more important than difference... This is what she brought into the organisation and work of the CEA. When our ways of working began to stagnate, when we were no longer consistently coming into contradiction with our own practice, she forced us to react, to criticise, to move ahead.

5.5 Conclusion

In the Mozambican context, social research had an important and immediate active role in the process of socialist transformation. The CEA under the leadership of First and de Braganca aimed therefore to not only produce a series of definitive research studies but rather to make social research an acceptable step in the formulation and implementation of policy. Here the country confronted barriers that had been erected by a Portuguese colonial educational system and a formerly fascist university actively engaged in ensuring that social research did not serve as a base for forces of opposition. In the colonial university the only social science represented was Economics and its programme as the CEA (1982a: 8) notes was one with a strong emphasis on "rote and dogma rather than active analysis".

According to the 1984 reflections of Aquino de Braganca and Bridget O'Laughlin (1984: 162),

“Ruth First, herself, considered the period she spent at the Centre to have been one of the most productive and militant in her life, precisely because political struggle was directly integrated into her everyday work of teaching, research, and writing. She considered her contribution to the consolidation of the Mozambican Revolution to be a direct involvement in the liberation of South Africa. This was possible due to her clear political vision of her objectives and a sharp analysis of the political context within which she conducted her work”.

The success of the CEA had as much to do with Ruth First's intellectual and organizational capabilities as it did with the creative tensions which developed as a result of the meeting of diverse individuals with different ways of putting reality in perspective. Coelho (2008: 507) maintains that Ruth First and others at the CEA were creating something. “They endeavoured to define themselves through debates rather than wait to be told which path needed to be followed.” The five years Ruth First spent at the CEA were its most productive years. This prosperity was in good part due to the work of Ruth First and organising spirit forged in the fight against apartheid combined with her intellectual sharpness.

Chapter 6

The Development Course: “Producing People who could Produce Knowledge.”

6.1 Introduction

Outside Mozambique Ruth First was known principally as a socialist militant in the struggle for South African liberation. However her colleagues, Aquino de Braganca and Bridget O’Laughlin (1984), maintain that while in Mozambique South Africa was never the focus of her work. She put most of her time, intellectual and emotional energy instead into an experimental course for Mozambican cadres known as: The Development Course. According to Marc Wuyts⁵⁰ method and approach are the bread and butter of what knowledge production is all about, particularly in a context where, as was the case in Mozambique, the space for research was highly constrained, both in terms of scope and its initial conditions. The path that led to the CEA Development Course was therefore as much about method and approach as it was about content. The research activity at the Centre was combined with the Development Course in an effort to ensure that research and practice could be undertaken together. This section takes a look at the objectives and structure of the course, its content and methods as well some of the field studies conducted by the CEA.

6.2 Objectives and Structure

O’Laughlin⁵¹ describes the Development Course as,

A perhaps utopian attempt envisioned by Ruth First, the research director of the CEA, to provide tertiary level training in research to workers/students. The idea was that policies and the ways they are applied should be based in knowledge of the reality one is proposing to affect, not in assumptions about what that reality is.

The course, which was taught by lecturers of varied Marxist orientation such Marc Wuyts, Rob Davies, Jacques Depelchin and Ruth First was helping civil servants understand the problems

⁵⁰ Interviewed by Carlos Fernandes, 2010.

⁵¹ Interview August, 2011.

being faced by Mozambique. These students were not being trained to become specialised academic researchers and it was expected that they would continue to work in the various departments they came from⁵².

Colin Darch's⁵³ recollection of the course is that it,

Was not about imparting information to people but about teaching them to solve problems. So a lot of the time it would be obvious to the more experienced people what the appropriate reaction to a particular circumstance. But the way it was done was to let people make their own mistakes and learn from them. They had to apply method in this case they had to apply Marxist method to particular concrete situations.

Innovative in its objectives- teaching research by doing it- and in method and content, the course was directed at students from the national headquarters of Frelimo, from the army, from ministries like Agriculture, Education and Information as well as staff from national banks who remained within their individual workplaces while they underwent research training. This was done to ensure that these students would in turn be able to integrate the tools of investigation into their work, and thus train others as well through common practice (de Braganca & O'Laughlin, 1984). The students recruited to participate in the course were of extremely varied educational backgrounds; some had only attended only primary school but had a good deal of work experience⁵⁴.

According to Teresa Cruz e Silva⁵⁵ Ruth First believed that one need not have attended university to become a good researcher. The course was also open to CEA staff members who did not possess a postgraduate qualification⁵⁶. The course aimed not to turn them into professional researchers, but instead to train revolutionary cadres, viewing social investigation as a necessary part of their work (de Braganca and O' Laughlin, 1984: 164).

⁵² Interview with Carlos Castel Branco May, 2011.

⁵³ Interview July, 2011.

⁵⁴ Interview with Carlos Castel Branco May, 2011.

⁵⁵ Interview April, 2011.

⁵⁶ Interview with Isabel Casimiro April, 2011.

First was teaching non-academics how to think more academically and not only how to conduct social research but also how to make use of it⁵⁷. The Development Course was initially conceived as a Masters level course in 1979 intended for BA graduates from Eduardo Mondlane University's history department. The proposal was rejected on the basis that the course was too economic for history students. At First's insistence the course was offered at postgraduate level even though it was later accredited with diploma status⁵⁸.

As “an interdisciplinary” course with “own” students, the course was structured each year around a collective problem-oriented, policy-inspired and highly focused research project, based upon fieldwork preceded by research design. This was followed by analysis and write up; and supported throughout by wider-ranging course work that paid attention both to substance and to method (de Braganca & O’Laughlin, 1984). The course did not seek to confront the professional preoccupations of each of the students, which would be clearly impossible in an interdisciplinary training of this character, but rather to identify those issues of production to which specialists could ultimately bring to bear their particular training, given an initially acute analysis of the problems and processes of transformation⁵⁹. The linkages between teaching and research, and between research and practice was the product of several years of work and were not necessarily easy to conceive, and they were even more difficult to maintain (de Braganca and O’ Laughlin, 1984).

Teresa Cruz e Silva⁶⁰ who participated in the course in 1980 elaborates further on its objectives

The idea was to train people to learn how to do a critical analysis and how to do good research. Isn't it? As we was in social science the main objectives of the course was concerned with the methodologies of work and to teach people how it is important crisscrossing methodologies qualitative and quantitative research.

⁵⁷ Interview with Carlos Castel Branco May, 2011.

⁵⁸ Interview with Luis de Brito May, 2011.

⁵⁹ *ibid*

⁶⁰ Interview April, 2011.

For First constructing a socialist Mozambique and in turn creating an alternative to the system of racial capitalism in organising production was the most important form of support that could be given to revolutionaries working within apartheid South Africa. The struggle for national liberation in South Africa was in her view, a struggle against capitalism and it was therefore to be expected that South Africa would strike with particular force against socialist Mozambique. The regional context was therefore a central part of the Development Course (CEA, 1982a). Exploring the character of South Africa's racial capitalism and analysing the various class positions advanced in the struggle against it became a necessary part of the course.

First, according to de Braganca and O'Laughlin (1984), believed that if students were to analyse the concrete situations they met in their jobs they needed to think strategically, know and understand what it is they were fighting for- the radical transformation of the organisation of production through socialist development- as well as what they were fighting against- a structure of underdevelopment moulded by colonial capitalism. It was therefore important that they understood the difference between socialists holding state power and those utilising that power to socialise the economic basis of society.

The Development Course was important to First not only because of what it was in itself, but also for when and where it was located: in revolutionary Mozambique and at a revolutionary conjuncture in southern Africa. According to one of the participants of the course, Carlos Castel ⁶¹Branco who was also a close friend of First's, "this was clear because she never hid the fact that she was a South African militant". The course was also significant due to the importance that First attributed to scientific analysis in revolutionary work which also defined the objectives of the course. Implementing scientific analysis in this context meant using Marxist method to investigate as well as analyse the concrete and constantly changing situations which the Mozambican revolution needed to be confronted and directed (de Braganca and O'Laughlin, 1984).

Ruth First and Aquino de Braganca both believed that Marxism was a living tradition of analysis, rather than a fixed dogmatic system and above all they were both strongly committed to the

⁶¹ Interview May, 2011.

success of the Mozambican revolution. This success required among other things clear information and analysis of the Mozambican situation, particularly its economic and political position⁶². First thought that Marxist literature was essential in teaching because it showed students how to analyse and how to apply this analysis politically. She also thought that students would only really master Marxist scientific analysis when they knew how to use it creatively in investigating their own realities. In the Mozambican context this meant students should be able to use the concept of class in an analysis of Mozambican class structure before they could really grasp the meaning of the concept (de Braganca and O’Laughlin, 1984).

One of the biggest challenges faced by the CEA was the language barrier which was also a reflection of the staffing issues that faced the Centre. The CEA could not make use of trained staff from other departments within UEM. Although the staff at the CEA learned how to speak Portuguese and managed to teach in Portuguese, few could write it well. Ruth First herself remained uncomfortable in Portuguese. When she first arrived in Mozambique, First made it her mission to learn the language but apparently this process took too long so she gave it up and gave lectures in English when she did lecture⁶³. The working language of the CEA was therefore English and this in itself was problematic because Mozambique's official language is Portuguese.

The first half of the course paid special attention on research design- the definition of research questions, hypothesis formulation and discussion of methods. According to Isabel Casimiro⁶⁴ “we were supposed to have theoretical classes and we would have one month of fieldwork. And we would analyse the data collected from the fieldwork. The fieldwork took place all over the country. Students participated in different research projects”.

6.3 Content and Method

The process of socialising production became the main focus of the Development Course. The starting point in this process was a class structure dominated by semi-proletarianization and small peasant farming, the course attended particularly to the problems of constructing new

⁶² Interview with Bridget O’Laughlin, August 2011.

⁶³ Interview with Alpheus Manghezi June, 2011.

⁶⁴ Interview May, 2011.

forms of socialist agricultural production, state farms, and cooperatives. The students also studied the development of liberation struggles and the strategy of apartheid South Africa because it was believed that socialising production would involve breaking with a regional structure of dependency on South African capital. The course was taught collectively, without any set disciplinary boundaries, and with all teachers participating in all classes.

The Development Course was, and would remain, itself a work-in-progress, developed and debated over the years by the staff and students of the Centre (Harlow, 2002). Its main themes, as identified in the notes for the years 1979 to 1983, specify, in general terms, world economy, with a sub-topic on colonial capitalism; class and state in Africa; empirical methods; and theories of capital. The course would address questions of the international division of labour together with the issue of economic and financial dependency, along with assigned readings from Eduardo Galeano, Samir Amin, Walter Rodney, Ernest Mandel and Harry Magdoff (ibid).

There was particular emphasis too on the problems of periodization, as in the section on “some considerations of pre-colonial Africa,” which narrated a process from the slave trade through informal colonisation to formal colonialism. Geopolitical comparisons were drawn with neighbouring Tanganyika (Tanzania), Kenya, and Ghana (Harlow, 2002: 234). In the concluding section, the emphasis was on the situation of Mozambique itself, as exemplified in one of the “methods empiricos” sections that focused on the processes of economic growth and restructuring,” demanding, first, a statistical analysis of the industrialization process in Mozambique, and second, a discussion of the restructuring of the country's cotton sector in the period 1960-1973 (ibid). Supplementary readings ranged from Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg to contemporary essays and analyses by the Centre's affiliates and position papers from Mozambique's ruling party Frelimo (Harlow, 2002).

Teresa Cruz e Silva⁶⁵ states,

The themes of the course were related with the situation of the country. The point was if you are a social scientist you have an obligation. You have a role to see what is going

⁶⁵ Interview April, 2011

on in your country, in Africa, in the world because Mozambique was not isolated from the world and to bring some solutions to some problems and to work not apart from government but to try to work with them and to try to show what was wrong and what is possible and so on. It was maybe we can say to teach how to work for society, always in a critical way.

There were four principal aspects contained in the curriculum that reflected the elements considered central in the training of social researchers in Mozambique. Firstly the course was aimed at giving a solid introduction to Mozambican political economy: the colonial economy, the development of Frelimo, the strategy of development and practical problems of implementation. Here the Centre relied to a great extent on work it had done in previous courses. Through various investigations the course produced texts that could be used by the Centre and other educational programmes. Secondly, locating the Mozambican experience within its regional context, the course concentrated particularly on the principal contradictions within neighbouring South Africa and how these weighed on regional development (de Braganca & O’Laughlin, 1984).

Thirdly the Development Course was orientated by a particular research project linked to with a specific problem in Mozambique's strategy of socialist development. The fourth element of the course was the real basis of the course as it was the stress on analytical unity which permitted the Centre to join together the other three elements of the course. First and de Braganca worked together in the recruitment of teacher-researchers capable of sustaining both the unity of perspective and the tension of the contradiction that such a collectively organised course required (de Braganca & O’Laughlin, 1984).

Chosen research projects included fieldwork so that students could experience themselves how data is collected and organised for analysis. The fieldwork was also intended to put students and staff directly in touch with problems of transition at the base level (CEA, 1982). The fieldwork which took place midway through the course was a crucial step in the training of the students. Done collectively by teachers and brigades, the fieldwork was always preceded by sharp debate on the “theoretical problematic of the investigation--its political line--and followed by an equally

tense discussion of the results and implications of the research” (de Braganca and O’Laughlin, 1984).

The collective research project that students were required to participate in applied Marxist methods of analysis that had been introduced during course work. Because the Marxist method of analysis is scientific, it had to be aggressive, critical and teaching it should oblige the students to think. This core research project was intended to pose not only an important and real problem in socialist transition but also to lead the students to analyse in a similar way the problems they met in their everyday work.

Classes and distribution of texts for the course were scheduled so that students participating in the course were able to do so without retreating from real responsibilities in their jobs. Speaking at the conference on Social Sciences in Southern Africa which, was held in Maputo in July 1982 First stated that,

The students get the text ahead of the lecture- at the end they have what you might call a book; it's a set of notes. It is not a textbook, because we're trying to say there is never one text, you have to confront theory in such a way that you must learn how to read a text, you must learn how to do a textual analysis, but that doesn't mean that one text is going to give you all the answers. We're very interested in provoking. If students don't ask questions then we are failing.

Ruth First (1982) noted that the course faced a number of challenges in its attempt to break with conventional university recruitment. The kinds of questions First was referring to were the problems of “how we teach students who have different histories of education, come from a widely different range of structures, the university, ministries, mass organisations and so on”. She went on to say “I think that whereas we should probably admit that we started off rather romantically about this, saying it's so important to crash educational barriers and break this elitist monopoly, we shall do it with sheer willpower, in the course of teaching we have come to acknowledge that there are problems”.

Still reflecting on these problems First went on to say,

“We do record, as I think Aquino said that some of our best students are not the students who've had the most education, that that's not the criterion, that involvement in work is very important and political formation and political experience is extremely important, because understanding the relevance of questions, knowing that you've got to resolve a problem and you must find out how to do that. That in turn arms the students to learn. Now I don't say we've resolved it. We struggle with it.”

Another problem faced by Ruth First and her colleagues was how to have genuine student participation in research? Elaborating on this issue First stated,

How do you organise research in such a way that you do not use students as cheap labour? In other words, we prepare the questionnaires and we prepare the conceptualisation of the course, and then we have these 26 people, and they're all ready and they pack their suitcases and they go into the country, and they've just got to fill so many questionnaires every day. Well, of course, it's a great temptation to do the thinking for somebody who hasn't done it before, because you can think and work faster, and we are better at now more total involvement of students in the actual conceptualisation of the project than we were in the beginning. But we are struggling.

First pushed staff to think about new ways to organise the teaching and research of the course in an effort to overcome some of the apparent problems. The course was for starters reduced from two years to one year, and classes were structured more closely around the problematic of the research project. This experimentation was guided by First's conviction that scientific intellectual work was an indispensable part of any revolutionary struggle (CEA, 1982a).

De Braganca and O'Laughlin (1984: 162) admit that outside of the Centre there was not always clarity as to what the Development Course was all about, and particularly why Ruth First was putting so much of her energy into it. There were those for instance who thought that fieldwork in the countryside was “simply an outlet for romantic infatuation with the peasantry, a

sentimental and populist attachment to backwardness”. Her intentions in Mozambique were also questioned by her comrades in the liberation struggle who considered her intense interest and opinions about questions such as the policy of agricultural mechanization in Mozambique strange. There were also feelings that she was withdrawing from the South African struggle which had been her preoccupation for most of her adult life (ibid).

Although South Africa was never the focus of her work while she was in Mozambique, her work on the Development Course did not deviate from her life's work as a South African revolutionary. She viewed the transformation of Mozambican production along socialist lines to be a necessary step in the struggle for national liberation in South Africa (de Braganca & O’Laughlin, 1984). This view was in part derived from the manner in which racial South African capitalism dominated the regional economy in a system of uneven development. Although there was considerable divergence in political orientations and development strategies, the countries within the southern African region had a common material interest in the struggle against apartheid South Africa.

During her time in Mozambique Ruth First “revelled in intellectual life, adored a sharp critical discussion of a novel or film, enjoyed talking about ideas, but was increasingly impatient with and bored by the existential self-torture of many intellectuals” (Slovo, 2007: 14). She never shied away from a debate and had strong opinions, definite perspectives. This might have made her rigid and narrow; but it did not. She remained an intensely questioning person, with a great appetite for learning, with a free mind, an open ear, and a great sense of the ridiculous. Bridget O’Laughlin⁶⁶ describes Ruth First as “a visionary” who knew how to be an academic and organise rigorous academic research. O’Laughlin⁶⁷ recalls how Aquino de Braganca would sometimes introduce Ruth First as being from Oxford because she was a Wits graduate and later a lecturer at Durham University and it was his way of suggesting that she was a “real academic”.

⁶⁶ Interview August, 2011.

⁶⁷ ibid

Teresa Cruz e Silva⁶⁸ who was both a CEA staff member and participant in the Development Course states that having come from a colonial university (UEM) where it was forbidden to study the history of Africa the CEA played a role in changing the role of social science, the conception of methodologies of learning and teaching. As a student of Ruth First's one of the most important lessons learnt from First's creative teaching is the tradition of critical analysis and the importance of combining qualitative and quantitative research methods. As a teacher she instilled in her students their obligation to understand what was going on in their country and the world because Mozambique is not isolated from the rest of the world. As Isabel Casimiro⁶⁹ states “she taught us how to work for society”.

6.4 CEA Field Studies

The series of field studies conducted by members of the CEA (1982a) on the transformation of production within a strategy of social development were of importance for two reasons. Firstly the transformation of production and secondly the manner in which they assisted in the building of a stronger historical understanding of colonial patterns of exploitation from which transformation should have begun. The CEA (1982) therefore focused on providing information that would enable the development of concrete measures be devised for the implementation of general strategy. The studies were based on the premise that the process of transition must be studied as a whole. These studies it was believed would help build a stronger historical understanding of the patterns of colonial exploitation from which transformation should begin.

As part of the Development Course students were expected to participate in fieldwork in what was known as the July activities⁷⁰. In all the research studies First and her team were concerned with showing that the problem of transition must be studied as a whole.

According to Teresa Cruz e Silva⁷¹,

⁶⁸ Interview April, 2011.

⁶⁹ Interview April, 2011.

⁷⁰ Interview with Isabel Casimiro April, 2011.

⁷¹ Interview April, 2011.

Most of the projects were related with social and economic situation of the country, the relationship between Mozambique South Africa and southern Africa. For instance the Maputo Port was analysed to see what is the importance of the Maputo Port between South African and the region? The tea plantations and cotton was related with how to transform production from a capitalist production to socialist production. And cotton was a very special thing because cotton was during colonisation peasants were obliged to produce cotton instead of food. After independence we had state plantations of tea, state plantations of cotton. We studied the importance of state plantations, of communal villages. Are they going to contribute to the development of the country? What is the importance of socialisation?

One of the first research studies to be conducted by the CEA a small project on The Rhodesian Question, initiated in the run up to the Geneva Conference on Zimbabwe. The research was initiated by Aquino de Braganca who was deeply involved with the process of decolonisation in Zimbabwe as advisor of the Frelimo leadership, which involved him also in a multitude of discussions with Zimbabwe African National Union- Patriotic Front (ZANU- PF), then based in Mozambique. The Frelimo leadership further asked de Braganca to prepare a background paper on the socioeconomic situation in Zimbabwe since they wanted to have a better understanding of what kind of socioeconomic issues, tensions and contradictions were likely to emerge in the process of decolonisation.

This project changed the dynamics of the CEA by introducing three novelties

1. a focus on the 'actual' (while taking account of its historical roots) rather than on history
2. a switch from individual- based towards predominantly team based research,
3. the introduction of a sense of urgency in research- finding out fast- to respond to immediate concerns. This latter aspect also meant that the time horizon for doing research was restricted and that research output had to be subjected to clear deadlines.

When this research was conducted none of the CEA team members was an expert on Zimbabwe and the materials on Rhodesia/ Zimbabwe were rather thin on the ground, the report itself was not a major piece of research. In terms of content it was therefore a modest undertaking.

However in terms of experience- an intense process of searching and researching, writing and editing, intermittent with fascinating discussions chaired by Aquino de Braganca, all within a very contracted period of about 5 weeks- was highly significant since it had the effect akin to giving the CEA an electric jolt. It was a valuable lesson: not just about content (learning about Zimbabwe), but also about method and approach.

The field studies also focused on analysing the conditions which would be necessary in the ending of labour export to the South African mining industry and in the process breaking the dependence of the Mozambican economy to South African capitalism. Breaking Mozambique's dependence on South Africa was considered a pre requisite if Frelimo was to succeed in the construction of a socialist state. The miners study as it came to be known focused on ways in which the Mozambican workforce and whatever skills it possessed could be re- integrated within the domestic economy. One of the most significant conclusions by First and the team was “that the dependence of family agriculture on the supplementary wages from mine labour was so strong that only a major transformation of agriculture will allow for a radical break in the system (CEA, 1980a: 31).”

This research was an initiative previously agreed upon by Aquino de Braganca and Ruth First when Ruth First visited Mozambique in December 1975 on her way from Dar es Salaam. Research was to be carried out by Ruth during her first planned (one- year) stay in Maputo in 1977. Initially First had in mind to do this project with David Wield and Marc Wuyts, but she was open to suggestions about involving other researchers. Based on their experience on the Rhodesian Question, David Wield and Marc Wuyts suggested the project be done as a collective endeavour, involving most researchers at the CEA. Although sceptical at first because of the organizational work this would involve First eventually agreed. The decisive point for her was that this approach would benefit Mozambican researchers through a process of learning by doing research collectively⁷². This is how *The Miner* became a collective CEA project led by Ruth First.

⁷² Marc Wuyts, Interviewed by Carlos Fernandes, 2010.

In conducting the research First and her team faced a number of challenges. The first obstacle was to bargain for space to conduct this research which at the time was not a minor issue. When Ruth First went to the Rector of the UEM, Fernando Ganhao, with the request to do this research over a seven months period (including one month of fieldwork), his immediate reply was: “Why seven months? Can it not be done quicker?” This reply did not just concern a matter of a disagreement about the time involved, but instead also related to conflicting conceptions about what this type of research was supposed to be all about⁷³. It was common at this time—and Rector Ganhao was a major exponent of this view—first to make a rigid distinction between “pure” and “applied” research; then, second, to argue that the former required deep (theoretical) reflection and lots of time. The latter mainly consisted of gathering and interpreting data, the mere application/ implementation of knowledge rather than its production, a task that could be done quite quickly and routinely⁷⁴.

The dominant view was that applied research is about filling in the details of an otherwise “known” problem (firmly grounded in pre-established premises, assumptions and ideas). The opposite view, which Ruth First and Aquino de Braganca propounded, was that applied research inevitably involves an act of discovery leading to inferences and conclusions that might challenge established assumptions and ideas and, hence, may not always be expected nor welcome, was a space to be fought for. This latter view implied that applied research inevitably must enter into the domain of contested views about how to define a problem or look for its solution, an area that the former interpretation kept well away from. The fight over space, therefore, was not just about time involved but also the about the role of research in a process of transition- whether it involved passive execution/ implementation of policy making or instead critical analysis of it⁷⁵.

It took Ruth First all her powers of persuasion and to stake her reputation to overcome this first hurdle and to get the Rector to agree to this project in terms of its proposed scope and time period. The proposed time schedule was, in fact short for this kind of endeavour, although, Ganhao clearly viewed it as a bit of a luxury undertaking. For First, to complete this project in

⁷³ Marc Wuyts interviewed by Carlos Fernandes, 2010.

⁷⁴ *ibid*

⁷⁵ *ibid*

time was a necessity, not just in its own right (for the project as such), but also to make a point (by way of a concrete example) of what research should be on about if it had any meaningful role to play in a process of transition⁷⁶.

The project was completed in time. The core team involved 14 researchers, based at or affiliated with the CEA. The work started with a couple of months of research design and seminars, which also included archival and statistical work on mine labour. Besides this, the one month rural fieldwork involved drawing in 35 students of various faculties who after a very brief preparation of a couple of days, went straight into the field in brigades led by CEA researchers. A mobile brigade (which consisted of Ruth First and Marc Wuyts as research coordinators) frantically moved between the different brigade locations too try to coordinate the research efforts and pass suggestions on from one brigade to another⁷⁷.

The end phase combined data analysis, write up, and strong editing in a rather mad rush towards the finish line⁷⁸. Although all those involved experienced this as something novel, but, undoubtedly, it also left a few bruises on the way, none the least because of disaffection with the editing process. Ruth First, with her considerable experience in this field, was an excellent but also ruthless editor. The task of bringing together the disparate contributions of some 14 different authors with different traditions and very varied levels of expertise and experience into a coherent and quality piece of work would at best have been an enormous challenge, even under more favourable time constraints⁷⁹. Some argued that the actual project had been too output-driven at the expense of process (including, democratic procedure, particularly in editing). Others, like Ruth First, argued, also validly, that meeting the deadline with quality output (which requires strong editing) was essential to open up and protect the space for this type of policy-inspired/ oriented critical applied research⁸⁰.

Following the miner's study of 1976, First and her team turned their attention directly to problems of the socialisation of the southern Mozambique rural economy. This study which was

⁷⁶ *ibid*

⁷⁷ Interview with Luis de Brito

⁷⁸ Marc Wuyts interviewed by Carlos Fernandes, 2010..

⁷⁹ *ibid*

⁸⁰ *ibid*

in many ways an extension of the miner's study, focused on ways in which state farms and agricultural producer co-operatives, working together, could be the basis for transforming family agriculture which could in turn lead to a break with the system of migrant labour. The cooperativisation of the rural economy of southern Mozambique was according to the CEA (1982: 4) an imperative for the advance of the socialist revolution. This is because 'the peasant' families needed for survival an income that would at least equal that which they got from labour migration. Failing this, phasing out migrant labour would be an impossible task. Socialising the rural economy therefore meant not only enlarging the economic productive base but also the re-ordering of class relations, the process of transformation from old production forms to new ones (ibid).

During the colonial period Mozambique was a major cotton producer, relying on obligatory cultivation by peasant families and colonial farms using cheap seasonal labour. For two years the CEA focused on the question of how to produce cotton in new collective forms. The export of cotton was necessary to finance the importation of inputs and equipment, and it was needed for the textile factories that would provide cheap clothing to peasants and workers. With this research problem the focus was again on the problems and processes of transition. The studies helped to build a stronger historical understanding of the patterns of colonial exploitation from which transformation begins (CEA, 1982a: 32).

The research project on cotton was thus a study of the problems of development in a particularly crucial sector of the Mozambican economy. By cutting vertically through the economic, social and political aspects of cotton production, the research managed to examine policy for industry as well as agriculture and state services (CEA, 1982a). Through this study it became clear that the transformation of production could not be studied only by looking at various forms of production themselves. Capitalist exploitation in the colonial period depended on the role of the state in production itself; thus the task of transformation included transformation of the fundamental relation between the state and workers and peasants (CEA: 1982a).

The CEA also began to look at the labour force on the tea plantations of Zambezi where the newly formed state sector faced the task of maintaining production while transforming the basis

of production of the colonial period: a cheap seasonal labour recruited by the state. The study was concerned not only with understanding how the tea plantations could be transformed but also understanding the role that the state could play in dynamizing the process of socialisation of family agriculture. The CEA (1982a) concluded that the solution was not only the transformation of the labour force but also the organisation of family agriculture which remained backward due to its role as the source of cheap seasonal labour.

The study on the port of Maputo was concerned with the transformation of a labour force based in the colonial period on unstable casual labour and which necessarily needed to consider problems of how to raise efficiency and productivity within the port. The CEA (1982b: 35) discovered that the basic problem of transformation lay in a contradiction of class structure: the colonial capitalist organisation of labour pitted administrative workers against a large pool of poorly paid casual Black manual workers. Gradual reform after colonialism made no fundamental assault on the system which constituted a major block in the transformation of the port. Investigating the problems of the labour force led into a much narrower technical area of port management (ibid).

6. 5 Conclusion

First considered good training in theory to be an indispensable element of political practice, because in her view analysis was the basis for formulating and applying political line (de Braganca & O’Laughlin, 1984). She thought too that revolutionary practice could give cadres the ability to make great leaps in their theoretical development, using their everyday work experience as the basis for analytical training.

Reflecting on his experience at the Centre and the experience of teaching in the Development Course in particular Marc Wuyts⁸¹ states that,

The CEA experience was special. The challenge of gathering together within one course people with different levels of educational achievements, who came to the CEA to learn

⁸¹ Interviewed by Carlos Fernandes, 2010.

about research by doing it, was undoubtedly one of the most rewarding and challenging teaching experiences I have ever been involved with. I still find it quite fascinating how the Development Course progressively managed to attract more applicants, notwithstanding the fact that students knew beforehand that the diploma it awarded had no formal status within the Mozambican educational system.

The years Ruth First spent in Mozambique were not only crucial in her own itinerary but also the history of the region and the country. Those years were a period of profound transformations within Mozambique. Though still stuck in what Coelho (2008: 502) describes as an elitist era, Eduardo Mondlane University- the CEA included- simmered with ideas. The CEA was attentive to what was then the recent history of Mozambique's liberation, attentive to geopolitics, attentive to the regional political economy, and the larger question of the Cold War (Coelho 2008: 503).

Writing six years after her death, and in the introduction to the second edition of her prison memoir *117 Days*, Ruth First's husband, Joe Slovo (1989) says, "Ruth had brought to her post at the Centre a rare combination of gifts: a razor sharp intellect, a flow of language which enabled her to communicate complex ideas simply, a deft organizational talent, an ethic of meticulous preparation, and an approach to teaching which firmly situated the student in society"(Slovo, 1989: 4 cited in Harlow, 2010: 58).

Her murder by the South African regime was not only a blow against the liberation movement in South Africa but also against Mozambique. For her colleagues at the CEA she left a mandate to rethink and critique their own works: the organisation of the Centre, the principal lines of research and forms of teaching. In her absence the CEA was never what it was but she left a secure material base from which to begin an innovative organisation of collective work based on unity of political line; methods of research; training based on doing research on immediate and important questions of socialist transition; written materials on Mozambique and southern Africa that were both the product of past courses and the teaching materials for new courses; and Mozambican cadres trained by First to analyse and act strategically in the struggle for socialist liberation in southern Africa.

Chapter 7

Black Gold: A Historical, Economic and Sociological Analysis of Labour Migration

7.1 Introduction

Ruth First's final book, *Black Gold: The Mozambican Miner, Proletarian and Peasant*, was published posthumously in 1983. Although the book was published under Ruth First's name, at the publisher's insistence, like most of her work in Mozambique it was a collective effort with other members of the CEA. This collective effort resulted in a textual argument threaded between some powerful photographs, work songs and case studies of Mozambican miners and their families. This chapter traces the path that led to the production of *Black Gold* from her early engagement with the subject of migrant labour in 1977 report *The Mozambican Miner: A Study in the Export of Labour* and the publication of the book in 1983. Included in this chapter is a description, critical analysis and an evaluation of the quality, meaning, and significance of the book *Black Gold: The Mozambican Miner, Proletarian and Peasant*.

7.2 The Mozambican Miner

Although Ruth First wrote numerous books and articles following the publication in 1961 of her "The Gold of Migrant Labour" it was only in 1977 that she fully returned to the subject of labour migration with a research report that was published by Harvester Press. According First's CEA colleagues this research report titled "The Mozambican Miner: A Study in the Export of Labour" is the result of an initiative agreed upon between Aquino de Braganca and Ruth First when she first visited Mozambique in 1975. Between 1976 and 1977, while still working at Durham University, Ruth First spent some time in Mozambique directing a group of young Mozambican researchers on a research programme which resulted in this somewhat unfinished profile of Mozambican miners. Based on more than 1000 interviews the report is not merely a descriptive account of the work experiences of second and third generation miners but also the meaning of the migrant labour system to the men and their families. The report which was based on three of Mozambique's major labour supplying districts resulted in a careful set of policy

recommendations for the Frelimo government, in relation to both poor and middle class workers (Shula Marks, 1983).

“The Miner” (as the study is commonly known) was a study on the export of labour from Mozambique to South Africa and the impact of the system on the miners and their families. According to Ruth First (1977: 8) the study was important for two principal reasons. Firstly migrant labour was a fundamental aspect of the colonial economic history of oppression and exploitation. First (1977: 9) argues that “there is no process which generated more exploitation of Mozambican labour or more distortion and underdevelopment of the economy than the export of migrant labour”.

Secondly the system which had been entrenched over many decades posed important and immediate questions for the destruction of the colonial economy and the formation of a socialist society, which made it a central problem for the transition period. First (1977: 10) noted the historical roots and impact of the migrant labour system on the people of Mozambique, stating that the study of the system, which is part of the history of the working class of Mozambique, its formation and growth needed to form part of a long term project. This long term study would involve historical aspects of the system which were not included in “The Miner” because First (ibid) and her team considered it urgent to concentrate on aspects of the export of male labour which had the most immediate policy implications for the people and government of Mozambique.

“The Miner” is divided into four sections. The first section, The Export of Labour deals with the organisation and flow of migrant labour as well as the changes that occurred in South Africa's mining industry in the 1970s. Section two, on The Mine Labour Force, is an account of some of the social characteristics of Mozambican mine labour and includes details on the frequency and length of contracts, wages and skills. The third section, The Peasant Base: Inhambane Province deals with the different effects of migrant labour on Mozambique's Inhambane Province and the concluding section Conclusions and Comments is a summary of First's findings and a list of policy recommendations for the government.

The study was conducted during Mozambique's transition period discussed in Chapter 5, when Frelimo was engaged in the reconstruction of the Mozambican economy and society in an effort to lay the basis for the social organisation of production. Essential in organising production was the ending of the migrant labour system. And even though the ruling party Frelimo had repeatedly committed itself to the ending of migrant labour First argued that “an economic process as old, deeply laid and as wide- spread as mine labour export can only be dismantled when it is analysed in all its implications”. The system could not be combated by an appeal to the political commitment of the migrant alone because in First's words “this is to dismiss the system of migrant labour as an act of will by a host of migrant workers. It is to miss the essence of a deep-seated economic system that has permeated the political economy of the countryside of southern Mozambique”.

The extent and impact of the system should be measured not in the individual work choice of individual migrants; rather it must be seen in the impact on the peasant economy. First and her team therefore traced the extent of mine labour export from various regions, the pressures behind it and questioned the correlations between the extent of mine labour and the condition of agricultural production. The study of the mine labour force investigated several aspects including contracts worked, industrial work experience, the role of miners in the work process, the skills they acquired and how these skills could be mobilised in the transformation of the Mozambican economy.

7. 2.1 Methods

Initial perspectives of the six month project were established during a weekly seminar at the CEA which studied the impact of South African capitalism on Mozambique. The seminar began with a periodisation of the South African and Mozambican economies, proceeding with a discussion on the character of capital and labour within the mining industry, and the making of a Mozambican southern African labour supply. Subsequent sessions of the seminar focused on evaluating the literature on migrant labour and the literature on peasant economies in labour reserve areas (First, 1977: 15).

Concurrently with the seminar, members of the research team searched archives and Ministry records, especially those in the Ministry of Labour (Instituto de Trabalho). Interviews were conducted with representatives of labour recruiting organisations in an effort to build as comprehensive a background picture as possible (First, 1977). The majority of the material on mine labour and the analysis of the labour flow to the mines is based on the official statistics of WENELA, which were deposited with the Ministry of Labour, and on additional material supplied to the CEA by WENELA. To prepare for the study on the peasant base the team acquired original questionnaires completed during the 1965 and 1973 agricultural census from the Ministry of Agriculture. According to First (1977) these questionnaires were extensively re-analysed.

The fieldwork for the study was carried out in Mozambique's Inhambane Province, and involved administering two types of questionnaires to an initial sample of 358 miners. The first questionnaire was for interviews with the miners and the second was part of the investigation of the peasant households. According to First (1977: 15), the preparation of the questionnaires was done through collective working group discussion. An additional shorter version of the miners' questionnaire was used in interviews with a larger sample of 717 miners. These interviews were carried out over a four month period during successive visits to WENELA compounds, recruiting stations and also in the Inhambane countryside with former miners or miners at home in the intervals between contracts. The fieldwork concentrated on "the frequency and length of contracts, and thus on material for the construction of employment histories, on the acquisition of work skills, as well as miners' family commitments and their earning capacities, and the uses to which mine wages were put after successive contracts" (Ruth First, 1977: 15- 16).

The field research, which was conducted by students organised in brigades, could only be carried out in mid- July when Eduardo Mondlane University students, teachers and administrative staff were organised in brigades to carry out tasks of national reconstruction. The brigade work lasted five weeks from 10 July to 14 August 1976 and except for periodical visits to mine recruiting and repatriation centres no further work was conducted. The scope of the field investigation was also heavily restricted by the size of the brigades allocated to the project, which was made up of

twenty seven members who were all teaching staff and students at Eduardo Mondlane University except for Ruth First who was still a full time employee at Durham University.

The quality of the research report was affected by a number of factors. These include the limited size of the twenty seven member research team and short duration of time spent in the field, which made it impossible to construct conventional statistical sampling procedures. First (1977: 18) notes, however, that such sampling procedures were judged inappropriate to the study. Under the leadership of Ruth First the team developed its own guidelines for field investigation. The limitations of the questionnaire method—that the pre-ordered form of the questions prevents the interviewer from questioning his assumptions—were acknowledged and discussed from the start, and other ways of investigating that were recognised to be complex social issues were devised. These methods consisted of a preliminary period in the field being devoted to open discussions with as many different representatives of the community as possible. When possible local archives and administrative records were searched and visits made to agricultural stations and training schools.

When the research teams left the field in mid- August 1976, First and her team began to analyse over 800 questionnaires of both the miners' and the peasant household. Following the analysis of the questionnaires the team discussed the reports written by the brigades; organised the statistical material; prepared a scheme for the production of the report; and wrote the actual report. These tasks were performed over a six week period. According to First (1977: 19) the deficiencies in the report could be attributed to the conditions under which it was produced such as the fact that besides Ruth First all the members of her team had fulltime teaching commitments

Speaking about working on the project, Marc Wuyts⁸² who was part of the research team says “I think it is fair to say that all involved experienced it as something quite novel, but, undoubtedly, it also left a few bruises on the way, none the least because of disaffection with the editing process”. Ruth First as the director of the study was responsible for most of the editing of the final report and she had considerable experience in this field. According to Marc Wuyts⁸³ “she

⁸² Interviewed by Carlos Fernandes, 2010.

⁸³ *ibid*

was a ruthless editor”. The task of bringing together the disparate contributions of authors who had different traditions, different levels of expertise and experience into a coherent piece of work was an enormous challenge. There were those within the CEA research team who felt that the project was too output driven at the expense of process (including, democratic procedure, particularly in editing). While others, like Ruth First argued that meeting the deadline with quality output was essential to open up and protect the space for this kind of policy-inspired/orientated critical research. The team also felt that since students were not involved in the analysis and write up they were marginally involved in the project. This concern is one of the reasons that led to the formulation of the Development Course discussed in Chapter 5.

Luis de Brito⁸⁴ who was also a staff member at the Centre of African Studies recalls that working with First on the project had its challenges. First was her usual organised self and de Brito recalls an incident where First had sent him to the Ministry of Labour to gather data for the study but when he arrived he was informed that another staff member from the CEA had already been at the Ministry with the same request.

7. 2. 2 Recommendations

The investigation emphasised the extent of migrant labour in Mozambique's three southern provinces and according to the report

Our Brigades working in the field found hardly anyone who had never worked a mine contract. The only men who had never been were the sick and the disabled; or teachers or self-employed craftsmen like carpenter. Furthermore the men do not work the occasional contract, say at the beginning of their working lives when they are young men needing to find money to marry. On the contrary, men work large numbers of contracts; they work long contract; and they spend a large proportion of their working lives as workers on the mines.

Noting that the long-standing system of migrant labour created great distortions in the peasant economy, by interfering with the pre- colonial patterns of production and distribution First

⁸⁴ Interview May, 2011.

(1977) and her team identified five consequences of the system on Mozambique's peasant economy:

1. the dependence of poor peasants on mine wages for their very reproduction;
2. the dependence on mine wages instead of agricultural proceeds for the purchase of instruments of production;
3. due to the disintegration of pre-colonial patterns of production and distribution which led to the creation of a labour surplus the peasant base could not sustain the population;
4. petty commodity production was reliant on money earned from outside peasant economy; and
5. without access to wage work young families could not establish their own households.

The report warned that the effects of the system on agriculture were likely to be serious and further suggested that in the long-term an incipient crisis could develop. The report also summarises the crisis created by the colonial period in an effort to show that the crop patterns instituted by the colonial state could not solve the problem of surplus labour. First (1977) argued that unless there was a break from colonial patterns of agriculture, including crop patterns, Mozambique's countryside would not be able to absorb the extra labour that did not migrate. She further argues that the necessary transformation of agriculture would only take place through the construction of communal villages.

One of the principal objectives of the study was to show how the peasant societies of southern Mozambique were subordinated to the requirements of capitalist accumulation. The report concluded that far from being a traditional sector existing side by side with a modern sector with no interrelations, - as “conventional bourgeois theory” asserted- capitalist accumulation took place on the base of surplus labour extracted from the peasant economy. As a result of the system the principal function of peasant societies became to serve as a reserve army of cheap labour for the accumulation of capital. “Under the domination of the capitalist mode of production, the traditional cycle of production, distribution and consumption of the peasant economy was partially destroyed so as to generate a continuously reproduced labour surplus, which out of economic necessity was transformed into a source of cheap labour (Ruth First, 1977: 72).

The report also identified the in-built reproduction of a labour surplus, and the consequent dependence on wage income from such labour surplus to assure the reproduction of the peasant economy itself, as the two distinct features of the subordination of Mozambique's peasantry to the capitalist mode of production in southern Mozambique. The report suggests the need for a number of further studies. These would include a study on 1) the historical roots of migrant labour 2) a study of the history of Mozambique's working class and 3) a separate study on the effects of mine labour.

7. 3 From the Miner to Black Gold

When Ruth First formally joined the Centre of African Studies as the director of research one of her tasks was converting *The Mozambican Miner* into a book. Like the research report, the book was a cooperative undertaking organised by the Centre of African Studies for the express purpose of informing state policy formation. Additional material for the book was collected by the CEA faculty, staff, and students, led by Ruth First as director of research as part of the Development Course, which was designed to train people in research, problem solving techniques, as well as to generate primary, usable data on specific problems which could be incorporated to provide better state planning. Penvenne (1983) notes at the time Mozambique faced the prospect of South Africa drastically reducing the number of Mozambican work seekers allowed to contract themselves, particularly in the mining industry. Such a cutback had many important implications for the fledgling Mozambican Republic, from sharply raising the level of unemployment among young males to reducing the amount of foreign exchange flowing directly and indirectly into Mozambique in the form of fees and repatriated wages.

The CEA research group defined a three-pronged study of the overall topic and mapped out these aspects best designed for field research as part of the University's annual outreach programme: the July activities. Some teams focused on origins and history of labour flows, others on the changing structure of the mining industry and the related changes in labour use, and the field work focused on the migrants, their work experience and the nature of their home situation. Black Gold is a spiffed up, fleshed out version of the original project report, "The Miner", which

was submitted as a background and policy planning paper to the Ministry of Labour in September 1977 (Penvenne, 1983).

Documents from First's personal papers reveal that in September 1980 she drew up a work programme in order to produce additional material for the published version of the research report *The Mozambican Miner*. The aim, she writes, was to gather new material through a number of open ended interviews with miners in WENELA compounds but also in their homes in order to flesh out the portrait of the worker-peasant (one of the chapters in *Black Gold*). First intended for these interviews to be as personal as possible, using the miners own words, to illustrate the family, economic, cultural consequences of the system. She planned to interview at least one young miner, a veteran miner, middle peasant and a worker with numerous contracts but not much of an agricultural base.

Converting *The Miner* into a book was a project of major importance. The study carries significant theoretical as well as policy implications, and undoubtedly had the potential to make an important contribution to the literature on the political economy of southern Africa. The question of migrant labour which it addressed dominated the political economy of Southern Mozambique, and at the time the literature on the subject remained very sketchy and impressionistic. The book therefore had the potential to fill a major gap in the existing body of knowledge in this critical area.

7. 3.1 Publication and Reviewers' Reports

While the production of the report was no easy accomplishment publishing the book proved to be an even bigger challenge. The manuscript received mixed reviews with different publishers. Allen Isaacman (1981) who was approached by Heinemann Educational Books to evaluate the outline of the manuscript noted that the study fits into the broader debate around peasantization and incorporation of the rural population into a system based on a capitalist mode of production. It also raises fundamental questions about the effect of labour migrators on society and as such, it deals with a number of issues of underdevelopment. The study examines the critical issues of the interrelationship between peasantization and proletarianization which several scholars had touched upon but only in the most preliminary way. He further states that this project, rooted in

rigorous theory and based on substantial empirical data, would add a great deal to our understanding of this relationship. It also poses interesting questions about the reversibility of the process of labour migration e.g., can and should mine workers be reintegrated into the rural economy?

While Isaacman gave the manuscript a favourable review an anonymous reader who was approached by the University of California Press did not recommend it for publication. The reviewer noted that while *The Mozambican Miner* reported some original field research investigating the impact of the migrant labour system on southern Mozambique the *Mozambican Miner* did not add much if anything to our general understanding of the migrant labour system and its relation to peasant economies in southern Africa. Asked to make comments about the scholarship that went into the manuscript the reviewer responded that it is somewhere between adequate and inadequate and the considerable haste that went into the preparation of the study is evident in the final report. According to reader the selection of subjects was not according to accepted procedures of surveys; and the brigades distillations of raw data appeared to be highly subjective. Except for some fairly loose case of Marxian analysis, most evident at the beginning and end, much of the economics and social science analysis is of extremely low level. The family and individual case studies were presented on several occasions but did not reflect good anthropological technique and were not synthesized with comparative methods.

While stating that there was nothing directly parallel to the study presented by First the reviewer argues that the study overlapped with the work done by Francis Wilson on South Africa in 1972. While stating that almost anything on Mozambique must claim one's attention, nonetheless the reviewer maintained that the work done by First and the youth brigades could not be called an important work as its most valuable aspects were the anecdotal materials that come through the rather simple, ad hoc methodology and compilation. The anonymous reader stated that while one could visualize a reworking of the materials for publication in two or so journal articles there did not appear to be sufficient analytical content to justify a book.

The reviewer was also critical of the organisation of the report labelling it sub-standard and observing that tables, for example, are presented in profusion without much regard to their

relationship to the points under discussion in the text. There is also a good deal of overlap at places between one section and the next. Arguing that the methodology was weak and the report lacked theoretical structure, which substantially reduces the value of the data. The reviewer did not recommend that the manuscript be published in the form presented by First. In the reviewer's view while there were some fairly interesting passages on the money economy and on the potentially damaging consequences of the cessation of migrancy the report failed to ask the hard question: what can and should the government do to get agriculture in the region moving ahead so that income and employment can rise?

The reviewer further observes that except for some vague comments about state farms and collective work, there was little appreciation of the input, infrastructure, institutional, and other components of a viable agricultural program. The reader blames this on Ruth First's lack of courage to raise these issues and try to induce the government to formulate a workable strategy, on either capitalist, mixed, or collective-cooperative lines. It is suggested that the report can perhaps best be reworked and got out in some shorter papers especially since most of what was in the text was old news by the time First approached publishers (e.g. statistics on mining employment in South Africa and general economic history of the region).

The reviewer notes as a strength of the book, the documentation of the poignant position of these workers and their families. Also, the threat of the loss of work and its implications for the possible collapse of the economy of the region should alert and push the government to do something. The reviewer suggests that First and her team could perhaps use the information gathered through the study to help the government formulate a policy of agricultural development consistent with the governments' ideological predispositions. And while the dehumanizing nature of the whole process is most evident the reviewer argued that the real issue was how to reconstruct the local economy and society and this is never really faced in the study. There is a general lack of tie-in to the literature on the region and to works on rural African development. The latter could be useful in helping the analysis and policy-making. It should be noted that when Ruth First was looking for publishers she sent the original report and emphasised that a lot work still needed to be done which seems to have not been conveyed to this reader.

Gavin Williams (1981) who worked with Ruth First at Durham University and was instrumental in the publication of the book presents a much different view of the study which focuses on the workers on the South African mines who migrate from Mozambique. According to Williams the study was carried out in Mozambique because it was not possible to study workers both in Mozambique and on the South African mines. Mozambique has since the nineteenth century provided a critical share of the labour force on the South African gold mines and during the twentieth century the country provided the largest contingent of miners, contracted for the longest period, of any of the countries in southern Africa from which mine labour was drawn. The study conducted by First was at the time the most extensive single study ever undertaken of migrant mine workers, and the rural areas from which they migrate.

According to Williams (1981) the study raised important questions for the comparative analysis of labour migration in general and migration to the South African mines in particular. The study also managed to show up the shortcomings of general theories of the relations between the mining industry and the labour reservoirs the industry drew on, such as the Marxist writing on southern Africa stimulated by Harold Wolpe's influential article *Economy and Society* (1972).

What was different about the study is above all else, is the way in which Ruth First has presented it. In the words of Gavin Williams (1981) “historical and sociological description and statistical analyses are intercut with carefully selected and revealing interviews with miners, and with carefully selected and revealing interviews with miners, and with their wives, which illustrates the points developed in a more general way in each chapter”. These are supported by work songs, translated from Tsonga by Dr Alpheus Manghezi who collected them and carried out many of the interviews. The collaboration between Ruth First and her research team provides a unique blend of historical, economic and sociological analysis of labour migration. The study also gives an account of the ways in which the miners themselves experience migrant labour, using photographs and work songs to illustrate this experience to the general reader.

Documents from Ruth First's personal papers reveal that in spite of the mixed reviews, First signed a memorandum of agreement with The Harvester Press Ltd., granting the “the Publisher

the exclusive right to Publish in the English Language in book form in the United Kingdom” and a number of territories including South Africa and Mozambique. The final work entitled *Black Gold: The Mozambican Miner, Proletarian and Peasant* was published in 1983 by Harvester Press following Ruth First's assassination in 1982.

7. 4 Black Gold: No Ordinary Piece of Academic Enquiry

While the book appears under Ruth First's name the introductory note on authorship tells us “this book has many authors (p. ix)”. The many authors range from a large team of Mozambican researchers to scores of African miners who related their experiences of being migrants in South Africa's mines to First and her research team with both generosity and enthusiasm (Peter Gutkind, 1983). These authors were pushed, prodded, cajoled and encouraged by Ruth First to produce a quality work. That, according to Jeanne Penvenne (1985), is what successful directing is all about.

According to First's friend Robin Cohen (1983) what emerges throughout the book is Ruth First's ability to pose key questions, to bring out what really matters in detail and to puzzle out how to go about getting answers to tough questions. Her intellect combined with indefatigable energy, courage and irrepressible humour enabled her to bring people into their best from- a rare combination. Therefore, despite the collaborative spirit underlying these divergent contributions, Ruth First's firm impress is everywhere, as it was in much of the research emanating from the Centre of African Studies.

It may not be an overstatement to claim that without the force of First's personality and organisational capabilities, which are discussed at length in chapter five, the book, would not have been written. In his bibliographic note, for example, Colin Darch acknowledges that “the single most important source of information was WENELA itself (Ruth First, 1983: 205), which was the principal and at times the only recruiting agency handling the flow of migrants to South Africa. Ruth First's combination of sheer charm and determination were in no small way responsible for the cooperation of local WENELA offices in availing documentation for research (Penvenne, 1985: 133).

Black Gold is based on the work of a brigade headed by First when she first came to Mozambique in 1977. Following the publication of the report *The Mozambican Miner, A Study in the Study of Labour*, songs and further interviews recorded by Alpheus Manghezi together with photographs taken by Moira Forjaz were added to a revised text and the book published in 1983. Ruth First's appalling assassination in August 1982, the book becomes worth visiting as it stands as a fitting memorial to Ruth First and her life-long commitment to understanding the life and labour of the African people (Gutkind, 1983).

The posthumous book returns to a theme that preoccupied Ruth First as an investigative journalist and political activist in South Africa: the manner in which cheap, politically subordinated labour provided the engine for capital accumulation and constituted the material kernel of the shell of apartheid. One of her most important analyses of the supply of “*Black Gold*” and its exploitation by the miners was first published in *Africa South in Exile in 1961* and was reprinted in a 1982 special tribute issue of *The Review of African Political Economy*. According to Robin Cohen (1983) the book updates the data on labour supply and introduces some vital discussion of the changing demand for foreign labour in the post- 1973 period and Ruth First continues her 1961 discussion of the workings of the migrant labour system.

Jeanne Penvenne (1985: 134) describes *Black Gold* as a report and a handbook with no pretence to be either definitive or comprehensive in scope. First and her team concentrated on what was then “the contemporary impact of labour export”, asking “how does the system operate today as an extension of the past? How has it changed and for what reasons? What have been the consequences of the repeated labour exodus for these peasant economies?” (First, 1983: 3). By considering patterns of labour migration in the past, as well as what was then the present context of labour movements, Ruth First and her colleagues illuminate the contradictions of a migrant labour economy, and offer practical ideas as to how it might be transformed. With Mozambique's independence in 1975, and Frelimo's consequent commitment to socialism and to ending Mozambique's economic domination by South Africa, First examines the potential effects of a cessation or reduction in the flow of labour migrants to South Africa's mines would have on Mozambique's shaky new economy (White, 1983: 323).

Like the original report it is based on the book is organised into four sections: The Export of Labour, The Mine Labour Force, The Peasant Base: Inhambane Province, and the concluding section Workers or Peasants? There is also a brief bibliographic essay by former Centre of African Studies librarian Colin Darch, as well as a glossary and index. The questionnaires used to gather the data for the study are appended with several other relevant documents. Also included in appendix 5 are the provisions of a Charter of Rights for Migrant Workers in southern Africa agreed at a conference of supplier nations held in Lusaka in April 1978, which was largely inspired and organised by Ruth First.

Each of the four sections provides both new material and fresh analysis. Part three on Inhambane Province is particularly illuminating for its contribution to very basic information on the economy of twentieth-century southern Mozambique. The book is a rigorous examination of a key historical process. It represents an unprecedented quantity of new material on the modern Mozambican miner, his life and his livelihood, and on life in the shadow of mine migration in the sample home province of Inhambane. Furthermore it conveys the familiar material correctly—the complex history of international agreements governing the legal flow of migrants, for example, is set forth in complete and convenient form (Penvenne, 1985: 212- 222).

Peter Gutkind (1983: 346) suggests that the book can be read from four different perspectives. We can read it as “an important contribution to our understanding of the legacy of a colonial economy struggling since independence to achieve a transformation toward a socialist society”. The book can also be read as “African labour history with its discursive and dialectical characteristics”; or as an “informative and very detailed exposition of the effects of migration on the peasant economy, on subsistence and export production”. One can also read it as “a remarkable, evocative, and rousing narrative, a parable, and epic chronicle of the life and labour of Mozambican miners who have sweated and toiled in the cavernous mines of South Africa, and who gave their health and life to a most brutal form of capitalism”.

The history of the miners recruited to work on the mines of racist and capitalist South Africa , provides a perfect example of a colonial economy which exported its creative labour for the

benefit of others. The book documents, in painful details, the history and consequences of this migration. In the Introduction First (1983: 2) makes it clear that,

The purpose of documenting and analysing this system of using the labour- power of migrants is to contribute to the process of breaking out of colonialism and capitalism; of restructuring the Mozambican economy; of transforming production , and especially labour's part in it.

First (1983: 2) further states that she hopes to draw from the research “the most immediate policy implications for the government and the people of Mozambique”. This implies a complete break with “an historical... pattern itself”. To understand how this might be achieved, all the consequences of the system needed to be analysed. According to Ruth First this cannot “be combated on an ideological level alone, by an appeal to the political commitment to the migrant”.

7. 4. 1 Work Songs and Interviews

The textual arguments made in the book are threaded between some powerful photographs, transcripts of work songs, extended work histories of half a dozen miners, case studies of peasant families, a chronology paralleling economic and social history with labour history and a number of appendices. The oral material was recorded, transcribed and translated from Xitsonga to English in 1979 by Alpheus Manghezi. The presentation of this oral material conveys a strong sense of the day to day challenges faced in hard times and of the strength of the Mozambican people. Reading them draws ones attention to the work and life of the worker peasant.

In African societies (as in other cultures), songs are used for many different purposes on different occasions. Jo Metcalf (et al, 1979: 3 cited in Manghezi, 2001) suggests that a song is a heightened form of speech...; it tells a story... (and) it can help us explore the past and our present and even speculate about the future. Expanding on the notion of the varied uses of songs Hugh Tracey (1970: 3 cited in Manghezi, 1996) tells us that “songs are vehicles of social criticism against authority, including chiefs, against social injustice, against the cruel, pompous. (They are

used)... also to praise rulers and good leaders. (And)... Poems reflect the attitude of common people towards the conditions of their society.

Using the work songs as a form of data collection was introduced by Dr Manghezi when he first joined the Centre of African Studies. Following the publication of the research report *The Mozambican Miner* he was sent back to the field alone by Ruth First to collect additional interviews. Initially Ruth First was sceptical about making use of the songs and Dr Manghezi⁸⁵ recalls her saying “you can record work songs but you know I have real doubt about real value of work songs in data collection, but go ahead, go ahead.” Dr Manghezi returned from the field with a number of recordings which he played for Ruth First and according to him when she heard the songs “she lifted her dress, she lifted her dress and ended up in tears”⁸⁶.

The songs sung by the miners on the mines and those which women sing back home were “communal” songs in the sense that both sets of songs are known by everyone in the community. This is so because when the miners return home they join in the singing and learn to sing the women's songs. In turn the men introduce their own songs and the women learn to sing these in the actual process of communal labour for mutual support (Manghezi, 1979). The work songs reveal a great deal about the general economic situation of the migrant. They also revealed that this situation has not changed much since the CEA brigade conducted the first round of interviews conducted by the brigade in 1977 for *The Mozambican Miner*.

One of the work songs recorded by Dr Manghezi;

Chorus: Come on, keep quiet!

Leader: Keep quiet about things they are going to tell you!

Chorus: Come on, keep quiet!

Leader: Keep quiet you who is returning from Joni!

Chorus: Come on, keep quiet!

Leader: Some will tell you she is a prostitute!

⁸⁵ Interview June, 2011.

⁸⁶ *ibid*

Chorus: Come on, keep quiet!

Leader: Some will say I don't work

Chorus: Come on, keep quiet!

Leader: Some will tell you I am a loafer

Chorus: Come on, keep quiet!

Leader: Some will say I am a fool

Chorus: Come on, keep quiet!

Leader: You father, you!

Chorus: Come on, keep quiet!

Leader: Some will tell you I don't stay at home

Chorus: Come on, keep quiet!

Leader: Keep quite my daughter (says her farther)

Chorus: Come on; keep quite you who is returning from Joni!

This song reveals some of the problems that arose within the family unit as a result of the men being away from their families. People in the village apparently gossip about the women whose husbands are away telling their husbands lies upon his return from the mines.

They will say to my husband, look here, this wife of yours—she is lazy, stupid, ignorant and she is always on the footpaths—she is a lose woman/ she is a prostitute. Some people will appeal to him to ignore all this malicious gossip, and my father will say to me” “keep quiet my daughter I know you are not like that (Manghezi, 1979).

Another work song recorded in 1979 titled 'I waste my energy'

Leader: I tell you (fellow women), my energy is wasted.

Chorus: My energy is wasted; it is wasted.

Leader: When I build a home

Chorus: My energy is wasted; it is wasted.

Leader: When I plaster the hut

Chorus: My energy is wasted; it is wasted.

Leader: Won't you keep from me?
Chorus: My energy is wasted; it is wasted.
Leader: When I cultivate the fields
Chorus: My energy is wasted; it is wasted.
Leader: When I cultivate the fields
Chorus: My energy is wasted; it is wasted.
Leader: When I cultivate peanuts
Chorus: My energy is wasted; it is wasted.
Leader: When I plant mandioca
Chorus: My energy is wasted; it is wasted.
Leader: They have thrown me out
Chorus: My energy is wasted; it is wasted.
Leader: He has deserted/ left me
My energy is wasted; it is wasted.

This work song tells of a woman who has been left alone, but not deserted by her husband.

“I remain alone here and waste my energy tilling the fields and taking care of the family, and when he comes back he tells me that he does not love me anymore. Today he comes back with another woman from there, and all my energy has been wasted! The same thing applies to men. They work and send money to build houses but when they come home they find that the woman has gone off to another man (Manghezi, 1979).

One of the songs discussed in the book, entitled 'On the Flat Bare Surface':

Leader: Oh! On the flat bare place
Chorus: Stay there/ remain there!
Leader: Even if they leave me there
Chorus: Remain there
Leader: With the rain falling on me

Chorus: Remain there!

Leader: Even if they hit/beat me up

Chorus: Remain there!

Leader: Even if they throw you out

Chorus: Remain there?

Leader: Oh! On the flat bare surface

Chorus: Remain there?

When questioned by Dr Manghezi on the meaning of this song the leader, Filomen Mathayi, reveals that it means that after

“I got married my husband left and went to Joni after building a small hut for me on an open space with no trees. This hut is badly constructed and it leaks when it rains. My in-laws are not nice to me: they insult me, they swear at me and they even kick me or beat me up. But in spite of all these problems, I do not pack up my things and return to my own family-no! I stay here, remain here on this bare place and wait until my husband returns from the mines. He must find me here when he comes home” (Ruth First, 1983).

The words, laughter and faces of ordinary people captured in the recordings by Alpheus Manghezi and the sensitive photographs by Moira Forjaz are not bonuses but rather documentation of the rich texture of popular experience in its complexity and ugly details. The interviews with retired and working miners allowed them to reminisce thus bringing our attention in graphic and vivid detail life in the mines. These interviews revealed that by the age of 30 a Mozambican miner is likely to have completed approximately 60 months of contract labour (four contracts averaging 15 months); by the age of 40 some 105 months, and at age sixty some 210. Thus the most productive period of these workers is lost to the internal development of the Mozambican economy—a conclusion reached as a result of interviewing and studying the contracts of 716 current and ex-miners. For some regions of Mozambique this has had devastating effects on the rural communities.

The quality of the book is also enhanced by how it has been presented. Long-term patterns are set forth in well digested graphs or charts, while the single songs or interview transcripts are left to speak for themselves. Also included are maps which are both helpful and were up to date (pp. Xviii, 12, 120). The juxtaposition of succinct graphic and textual overviews with individual statements and vivid photographs uses the material to best effect and the result is a book which is startlingly alive.

7. 4.2 Workers or Peasants?

“Colonial profitability” according to First (1983: 183) “depended on cheap migrant labour—it was cheap because it was labour furnished by the peasantry not definitively separated from the land and which did not have to rely completely on migrant wages—and on colonial cropping patterns, chiefly mono-cropping of tea, sugar, rice and cotton which used seasonal labour guaranteed by the labour- recruiting mechanisms of the state”. First argues that the ending of internal and international labour migration, creating alternative employment opportunities will depend “on the transformation of the conditions of production in the rural areas from which the migrant labour has been drawn”.

Ruth First was well aware of some of the policy alternatives but only the boldest outline of possibilities appears in *Black Gold*. In the concluding section *Workers or Peasants* she suggests two possible scenarios. The first being an increased turn towards cash-cropping for exports with the need for government aid for credit, fertilizers and seeds. Cohen (1983: 273- 4) argues this option would increase the already high level of social differentiation between poor and middle peasants and would trigger a process that has been described in Tanzania as kulakisation. The other alternative which First clearly prefers is the possibility of fostering cooperative farming or industrial employment which is more orientated to an autarkic model of development. In Cohen's (1983) view this is easier to state than to implement especially since Ruth First clearly understands that the symbiosis with mining capital produced a social category which was neither peasant nor proletarian.

In the concluding section, 'Workers or Peasants?', First (1983: 184) also writes, 'We have tried to show how these peasant societies, far from constituting some 'traditional' sector distinct from the

so-called 'modern' sector, as dualist theory would have it, were deeply penetrated: accumulation by mining capital in the highly industrialised South African economy was based on labour extracted from these and other peasant societies in the region,

Over time peasants became dependent on wages earned on mines for their own reproduction and for the purchase of basic necessities. 'Mine wages were needed to ensure the reproduction of the peasant economy; and that peasant economy in turn reproduced successive generation of miners' (First, 1983: 185).

First (ibid) concludes that “there is a continuous process of both concentration and dispersion of the labour force,” from mining labour to peasant labour creating the “worker peasant”. These workers “exchange their labour power for wages, but peasant production is subordinated to and shaped by the dominant capitalist mode of production”. The coercion has rotated around “forced labour and forced cropping, and never succeeded in resolving the tension between these two contradictory compulsions on the same peasantry”.

Munslow (1984: 242) who was part of the team of researchers who worked on the research report *The Mozambican Miner* notes that the most important conclusion of the book is that even though men may spend much a part of their lives in a subterranean proletarian existence, they still maintain their peasant base. The goal of the system was after all, to cheapen the labour by removing the burden of the cost of reproducing that labour to the peasant economy.

7. 4. 3 A Few Shortcomings

While *Black Gold* does at times attain sheer eloquence it has its shortcomings. The book is a reworked version of the 1977 report *The Mozambican Miner* discussed in section 7.2 When the Ruth First was looking for a publisher Harvester Press suggested that if the report was to be converted into a book it might benefit from additional interviews with the miners. Ruth First then sent Alpheus Manghezi back into the field in 1979 to collect these interviews. When he returned he brought back not only oral interviews but recordings of work songs sung by workers on the mines and the women back home. While these work songs are magnificently graphic it becomes

clear that they have been added to the main text after it was written and have not been allowed to affect its argument.

Missing from the discussion, and surely oddly given Ruth First's concerns, is a specific focus on female peasants. Barry Munslow (1984: 274), one of the researchers who worked on the original report the book is based on, argues that this categorisation of the 'worker peasants' is the weakest argument in the book as it leaves out the female peasants. The female peasant is only included in the late addition of two of Manghezi's interviews together with just one of the sixteen pages of photographs. In the work songs discussed in section 7.4.3 the women reveal some of the effects of their husbands being away on the mines. The women reveal the problems that arise in the family home as a result of their husbands being away on the mines and how people in the village gossip about them once their husbands return. Another song tells of women who are left at home to work on the fields and take care of the family but the husband returns with another women from South Africa and leaves his family.

The book contains informative chapters on the changes in the mining industry and on mine labour since 1974, including analyses of wages, frequency and length of contracts and work experience. These discussions are focused very sharply on the gains and losses to Mozambique—skills lost some cash gained—and they clarify Frelimo's options (White, 1985: 324). By contrast the chapter offering the six miners' 'work histories' each crammed into less than a page of quantifiable information leaves all the bigger questions unanswered.

For instance in the section on the mine workers' work histories some of the miners state that they invested capital in buying a *machamba* (plot of land for farming) and paying lobola (bride wealth) for a wife to work the plot. However there is no mention of the sizes of these farms and the possible income from agriculture are not specified. Curiously though these six miners were selected as representatives none of them ever seems to have received lobola for a daughter.

The chapter is rescued by Alpheus Manghezi's interviews and songs in which received-wisdom is questioned. One ex-miner describes how dormitories are subdivided into ethnic units with no more than twenty people from one ethnic group being allowed to live together: the authorities

'were afraid that if they allowed too big a group from the same "tribe" to live as very close neighbours, then this group is likely to cause trouble'. Another miner explains that the floodlights in the compounds at night are not there to discourage runways. He likes the lights because they make it easier to find his way around, and praises Frelimo for getting the lights switched on. Comments like these which bring to the fore the vexed question of 'consciousness' illustrate how much better this book would have been if, instead of being published as a materials kit on migrant labour, the songs and interviews had been absorbed before the text was written.

Part III on 'The Peasant Base' makes much fuller use of interview material (though again the songs were added later) and are much more detailed and revealing as a consequence (White, 1983: 233). The sixteen case studies of peasant households have all the richness absent from the mine-workers section of the book. They represent the only moment when the reader is brought face to face with the contingencies of actual peasant experience. The question of 'consciousness', though central to class analysis and though proposed at the beginning as a key question, is not discussed at all.

In describing the organisation and flow of Mozambican labour Ruth First turns to South Africa's labour needs and WENELA's recruiting methods. In a section on the Money Economy, First sets out some of the economic pressures which propelled the Mozambican miners into the labour market. She acknowledges that among other things that one of the reasons for joining the labour market was the lack of employment within Mozambique. First argues as she did in her article "The Gold of Migrant Labour" that WENELA which was striking in strength and effectiveness created a sub- continental supply of cheap labour. In this discussion taxation is not mentioned, nor are the Portuguese labour codes, though in one of the interviews one of the miners makes it clear that there were miners who migrated to avoid *chibalo* (forced labour) in Mozambique.

The focus on South Africa leads First to neglect events within Mozambique that contributed to large scale migration. When Portugal took control of Mozambique's economy they instituted a system of forced labour called *chibalo*. Under the system Mozambicans were charged with the responsibility of producing cotton which was exported to Portugal. Local policemen were enlisted in these efforts. While the labourer's never revolted they did employ non- violent forms

of resistance. As indicated in the interviews one of these forms of resistance was joining the South African gold mines.

While *Black Gold* has its merits subtlety of analysis is not one of them. For instance the theoretical framework, that Mozambique was under the political domination of Portugal but the economic domination of South Africa, clearly reflects an agreed position at the CEA seminars. This theoretical framework is problematic as it under-estimates Portugal's own degree of industrialization in the late- nineteenth century, fuelled by profits from the slave trade. It also under-estimates the importance of the internal economic control. *Chibalo* (forced labour), for instance, reached its peak the 1940s after Portugal's corporatist authoritarian regime Estado Novo was fully entrenched (White, 1985: 323). The focus on South Africa's capital hold over Mozambique leads to a lack of focus on Portuguese capital influence which should not be ignored.

7. 5 Conclusion

Ruth First's engagement with the subject of migrant labour can be traced back to her 1961 article “The Gold of Migrant Labour” in which she identifies among other things the ways in which the Portuguese authorities turned the tap regulating the flow of migrant labour off and on to adjust supply to demand (Williams, 2010). She returned to the subject in 1977 with the publication of the research report *The Mozambican Miner: A Study in the Export of Labour* which documents the results of a study she directed in Mozambique's Inhambane Province between 1976 and 1977. Following the publication of the report First turned her efforts into converting the report into a book, which was published posthumously in 1983.

The collaborative efforts that went into the production of *Black Gold* resulted in a book that is both methodologically innovative as well as theoretically challenging. Analysis is combined with verbatim interviews, work songs, case studies and life histories placed alongside clear and chronological summary accounts of Mozambican labour history to produce a remarkable account of the lives of migrants on the mines, and back home in Inhambane Province. Drawing on literature by historians, anthropologists, economists and sociologists Ruth First shows how the

labour of peasant societies of southern Mozambique was utilised over prolonged periods to fuel the accumulation of mining capital.

First and her team explore migration to Southern African industry as a key aspect of capitalist penetration into southern Africa and for its specific role in the historical experience of labour migration as a usual and necessary pattern of adult male activity and as a profitable and strategic aspect of extractive Portuguese colonialism. *Black Gold* emphasises the profound consequences of providing migrant labour to the South African gold mines for nearly a century. It helps to underline the consequences of the lack of crystallization of the working class, and further clarifies that capitalism could not develop a working class in Africa which was free to sell their labour power in the market while divested from the means of production (Campbell, 1984).

Chapter 8

Black Gold and the Literature on Migrant Labour in Southern Africa

8.1 Introduction

Migrant labour can be examined from many points of view: from that of the migrant, community, place of work or the nation as a whole as well as of foreign relations. The focus of interest may not be related directly to individual welfare but to the advancement of knowledge, attempting to learn more about individual and group behaviour and many aspects of social change (Freund, 1984). This chapter attempts to evaluate some of the significant studies on migratory labour in Africa before the publication of Ruth First's *Black Gold; Mozambican Labour: Proletarian and Peasant*. According to Ruth First and her CEA colleagues (1981) much of the work done on migrant labour before the publication of the book was for political and academic reasons unsatisfactory. Due to the nature of the discussion it is impossible to consider a broad enough range of themes or authors and I have chosen instead to explore the issue of migrant labour as part of the history of ideas. The chapter draws heavily on an article written by Ruth First members of the CEA in 1981 titled *Migrant Labour: A Review of the Literature*.

8.2 The Origins and Causes of the System

A classic debate in late colonial thought developed over the vices and virtues of migrant labour which in turn attracted a range of contributions from social scientists. What emerged during this period was quite a sophisticated academic understanding of migrant labour. There existed in the literature a basic divide between authors who viewed labour migration essentially as the result of coercion, state policies, or the tyranny of the city over the countryside and those who viewed it as fundamentally voluntary, the best possible way in which cultivators on the African continent could solve their problems in covering both cash and subsistence needs.

The early literature on migrant labour in southern Africa paid attention to the origins of the system. Isaac Schapera's 'Migrant Labour and Tribal Life' (1947) is regarded as one of the classics in the field of migrant labour. In discussing the impact of migrant labour in Bechuanaland (Botswana) Schapera (1947) focused on cultural aspects, the search by the

migrants for adventure, and tests of manhood. Accounting for the causes of migrant labour Schapera (1947: 248) notes: 'Going out for the first time is regarded by many youths as a form of adventure.'

Writing about Tanganyika (Tanzania) Gulliver (1965) attacked what he regarded to be the “bright lights” theory of migration establishing instead the rationale for why workers travelled to the sisal plantations in economic terms of rural collapse. In his work on Northern Nigeria, Prothero (1957) noted the relationship between labour migration and ecological pattern. Writing in 1961 Clyde Mitchell effectively articulated the major economic mechanisms that brought about the creation of a wage labour in Africa.

In an attempt to show that labour migration was by no means voluntary, Breytenbach (1972) notes that the recruitment of African labour within South Africa was in most instances supported by the state through the enforcement of criminal sanctions against breach of contract. The South African state was particularly unique as there were pass laws and institutionalized migrancy through denying Africans any permanent citizenship in the urban or industrial areas. The confiscation of productive assets from the rural areas was also a major factor in the creation of a cheap labour force. Land and cattle were appropriated through conquest and other state action. The main impact of confiscation was to reduce the productive capacity of the labour reserve economies by reducing the amount of land, labour, and other means of production forcing men into migration.

During the 1970s studies on labour migration were stimulated by the new historiography in southern African studies, in which under-development in the labour reserves of the rural periphery was analysed as a corollary of development in the South African industrial core. According to this perspective migrant labour was no longer viewed as an extraneous phenomenon whose effects could be analysed with respect to the integrity or otherwise of a traditional social system. Instead it was regarded as a particular manifestation of a process of fundamental transformation which has been taking place in southern Africa for more than a hundred years, due to the penetration of capitalist relations of production.

Until the early 1970s there existed virtually no literature of real analytical power on or in South Africa, despite the political ferment of the time on the rest of the continent. Studies on migrant labour to South African were dominated ideologically by what the CEA (1981) labels the “Cape Liberalism” of scholars like Monica Wilson and Leonard Thompson. Under such studies the issue of labour migration was never located within the larger problem of the forms of South African capitalism. One of the first real works to attempt to provide a framework in which such a project could be realised and a book of “some” importance and influence in the study of the situation in South Africa was the 1972 Oxford doctoral dissertation of F.A Johnstone (1976) which was later turned into a book titled *Class, Race and Gold: A study of Class Relations and Racial Discrimination in South Africa*.

Davies (1976) argues that “bourgeois liberal ideology” has traditionally presented the struggles within the mining industry as the result of racial conflicts between black and white workers. The common view often being that racism on the part of the white workers leads them to demand the exclusion of African workers from skilled labour, hence the creation of the colour bar. These struggles came to a climax during the armed confrontation of 1922 which was presented as the struggles between the influence of ideology and the influence of the economy. The source of hardship experienced by black workers was held to be their exclusion from skilled work. “Racial prejudice is thus treated not as a phenomenon which itself required explanation and analysis; rather it is treated as an exogenous and determining variable in South African social development- in effect as the motor of South African history” (Davies, 1976: 127).

While not specifically concerned with migrant labour Johnstone (1972) develops a Marxist-structuralist account of racial discrimination in the gold mining industry before and after the first world war and offers an analysis of the system of racial discrimination on the mines in terms of class showing that apartheid was by no means a dysfunctional part of South African capitalism but an integral part of it. The thesis made an important contribution to the struggle against the previously dominant position which bourgeois liberal ideology held over conceptualization of the South African social formation (CEA, 1981).

In his book *Migrant Labour in South Africa* (1972) Wilson aimed to change the policy responsible for oscillating migration. The book was one of the first works to thoroughly present the origins and features of labour migration in the form it existed in South Africa. The book shows how the system had its origins in the economic circumstances of the development of mining and agriculture. This response to particular economic circumstances became entrenched by misguided policy pursued in the interest of objectives which appeared to be a myth. Through a meticulous examination of every facet of, and argument in favour of, the status quo Wilson shows not only what a pipe dream migrant labour policy was, but also the terrible strains it imposed on those it affected (Elkan, 1977: 331).

According to Ruth First and her colleagues at the CEA (1981) Wilson was caught up in the same liberal problematic as many authors who wrote on South Africa at the time. This liberal problematic leads Wilson to formulate the question of the economics of gold-mining in South Africa in terms of whether the earnings of unskilled mine labour could have been significantly higher without unduly reducing the profitability of the so-called marginal payable rates. This reduces one of the central questions of southern African political economy to the terms of a supply- and- demand problem of bourgeois micro-economics (CEA, 1981).

In 1972 Harold Wolpe published an influential article on the importance of cheap labour power to South African capitalism in the journal *Economy and Society* titled “Capitalism and Cheap Labour-power in South Africa: From Segregation to Apartheid”. His argument -hinged on the idea that, pre-capitalist modes of production subsidised capital accumulation in South Africa, an idea that a number of scholars would no longer accept in quite the linear and overly economic form that Wolpe originally presented it (CEA, 1981). However, the work of Wolpe and Johnstone together with Martin Legassick's (1974) paper on the intimate connection between accumulation and oppression in South Africa marked a new starting point for South African studies.

The CEA (1981) argues that work on southern Mozambique by Sherilynn J. Young (1977, 1979) and by Patrick Harries (1976) began to show the relationship between the loss of autonomy by African societies on one hand, and the need of mining capital for cheap labour on the other.

Similar work on the making and destruction of the South African peasantry by Bundy (1979) shows that as early as 1913 African agriculture was showing signs of serious degeneration (CEA, 1981). Bundy (1979) sought to refute the view that the dreadful condition of African cultivators in South Africa was largely the fault of their poor husbandry and unresponsiveness to the demands of a modern economy. He showed instead that Africans had in fact responded with alacrity to the growth of a market in foodstuffs in the nineteenth century, a response that included technical innovation- adaptation of household production to the use of the plough- and crop diversification as well as expansion of output. This was reversed after the development of the gold mining industry developed its voracious appetite for poorly paid labour and the produce market finally made capitalist forms of production on white owned farmed economically viable, and its reversal required not only the grabbing of immense quantities of land, but the determined intervention of the state to keep land from the hands of the most successful African farmers and to drive smaller- scale tenant farmers into wage labour. This rise and fall thesis has been extended to other parts of southern and central Africa.

According to the CEA (1981), following the analytical rigour introduced by the likes of Wolpe, Legassick and Johnstone a small number of South African and South Africanist scholars attempted for the first time to construct a rigorous political analysis, not just for the for the apartheid republic, but also for the southern sub-continent. This project did not focus exclusively on the question of migrant labour, but the CEA (1981) argues that it is only through attempting to locate the migrant labour situation within a Marxist problematic context that it can be properly understood.

Locating the issue of labour migration within a Marxist problematic context is one of tasks First undertook in *Black Gold*. Drawing on Marx's analysis of capital, First (1983: 32) states that the development of capitalism consisted in the historical process the creation of the proletariat. Thus, a class of people was created which is totally divorced from the means of production and left with no option but to turn their labour power into a commodity. The value of labour power is determined by the value of the basic necessities which the worker and his family needed to furnish present and future labour power to ensure the continued reproduction of the working class.

Black Gold concentrates on the history of labour migration from Mozambique to South Africa between 1902 and 1977, and attempts to determine its effects on the peasant economy of southern Mozambique which was severely eroded. The central argument made Ruth First is that,

Capital is able to pay migrant labour below the cost of its reproduction precisely because part of this cost is born by the domestic agricultural production of the household production unit, and the surplus value appropriated by capital is therefore greater under conditions where labour is wholly dependent on wages for its reproduction... The access of the migrant labourer and his family to the domestic production provides part of the means of subsistence from which the capitalist sector benefits, and the means, thus, by which capitalism derives cheap power.

First and her team (1983) argue that the only way to understand the consequences of capitalist penetration, and the structure of accumulation, is to analyse this penetration which draws the migrant away from the rural anchorage. In making this analysis First and her team focus on the organisation of the natural economy, the imposed burden of taxation, methods of recruitment, the amount of labour that was drained away, and the relationship between the extent of mine labour and the condition of agricultural production.

The development of the cornerstone of South Africa's capitalism, the mining industry, consisted of a rapid concentration and centralisation of capital, which was accumulated on the basis of a system of migrant labour recruited from the wider southern African region. The mining industry created the conditions for setting up a carefully planned and institutionalised monopoly control of the recruitment of migrant labour, which was strengthened by state to-state agreements with supplier states in an effort to guarantee the stability and continued reproduction of this labour force. The system of migrant labour therefore constituted the foundation of the accumulation of capital in the mining industry. The particularity of South African capitalism could only be understood by analysing the system of migrant labour because this was the specific nature of exploitation of labour-power under this system.

First (1983: 33) notes that South Africa's mining industry required the formation of a working class of a specific character. It required a class of workers that were never completely divorced of its ownership of means of production. The migrant continued to own land and instruments of production, and hence continued to be able to produce part of his subsistence requirements as derived from those means of production. This allowed the capitalist producer to buy the labour power of this worker peasant below its value, since part of the subsistence requirements of the worker and his family continued to be produced out of his peasant base which remained outside the sphere of production. Pre-capitalist forms of production were made to subsidise the accumulation of capital by allowing the extraction of additional surplus value resulting from buying labour power below its value.

8.3 Effects of the System

One of the first authors to examine the effects of labour migration on African societies was Margaret Read (1942) in "Migrant Labour in Africa and its Effects on Tribal Life". In the article Read noted that the cheap labour system underlying the whole migrant pattern and stressed the decay of rural life that resulted from it. The implication of Read's work was that migration undermined traditional cultural values and hierarchical authority in the village. This view was supported by anthropologists Monica and Godfrey Wilson (1947) who argued that the migration cycle was profoundly destabilising as it militated against community and family life, blocking the necessary intensification of labour productivity.

The notion of "detrribalisation" introduced by Read and the Wilson's was increasingly challenged by researchers during the 1950s and 1960s (Watson, 1958 and Van Veslson, 1960), who maintained that virtually opposite was the case and argued instead that migration appeared to buttress conservative values of rural life and to stave off the drastic social challenge that a deeper urban or industrial commitment might entail. In *Tribal Cohesion in a Money Economy* (1958) William Watson considers the impact of labour migration as largely building a rural cohesion among the Mambwe people of Northern Rhodesia. Watson completely rejected the notion of "detrribalisation" and maintained that during migration "tribal" ties are maintained and fellow-tribesmen cling together in their new surroundings. Watson claimed that during migration not only are "tribal" ties maintained as tribesmen cling together in their new surroundings he further

states that the migrant even though living as an industrial worker in town, will resume his tribal ways once he returns home (Panofsky, 1963: 523).

Watson's view was supported by a number of writers (van Velsen, 1960; Elkan, 1960; Skinner, 1960) on other parts of Africa. In 'Labour Migration as a Positive Factor in the Continuity of Tongo Tribal Society', Van Velson (1960) in an attempt to explain the apparent contradiction between the exodus and return of large numbers of men who acquired new ideas on the one hand, and the continued predominance of traditional values on the other hand reaches a similar argument to Watson. Van Velson (1960) argued that Thonga migrants do not fall back upon the security of a "tribal" system which continued during their absence, the migrants themselves, during their absence, were actively and consciously contributing to its continuance because they knew they have to rely on it when employment on the mines comes to an end (Murray, 1980).

The studies by Watson and van Velsen are often invoked to discredit the idea that migration initiates or exacerbates the process of "detrribalization". These studies have also provided a rationale for complacency. Murray (1980) lists as an example of such complacency the work of Banghart (1970) during a conference on migrant labour in KwaZulu-Natal. On the basis of a review of migrant labour studies in southern Africa Banghart (1970) states:

"I would like to reiterate that the effect migrant labour has on the homelands is not as great as most people like to think. I believe that this can be attributed to the generally conservative nature of the Bantu rural structure. In my research, both library and fieldwork, I found little or no evidence that labour migration is detrimental or disruptive, in any particular group's viewpoint. In most cases, I think, it can be shown that the opposite is the case, that labour migration has a stabilising influence and in particular on its social structure" (Banghart, 1970 cited in Murray, 1980).

Although there is evidence of persistence of custom in southern Africa the question of whether custom persists in spite of or as a result of the transformations that have taken place in social relations, Murray (1980) argues that authors like Watson and Van Velson who make judgements about the relative integrity of a traditional social system misconceive the problem within a

functionalist paradigm. Within this paradigm evidence of pathological breakdown is counter-posed to evidence of continuity in or persistence of social relations, leading to conclusions which would appear to be mutually incompatible.

The literature on the persistence of “tribalism” and “detrribalization came under intense criticism. Apthorpe (1968: 22) argued that the label “tribe” oversimplifies and mystifies, conceals rather than reveals the complexities of events. Mafeje (1971: 254) argues that unlike terms such as “clan,” “nation,” or “lineage,” the term “tribe” has no equivalent translation in indigenous African languages and is only used by Africans when they speak foreign languages. He notes, “In many instances the colonial authorities helped to create the things called tribes, in the sense of political communities; this process coincided with and was helped by the anthropologists’ preoccupation with ‘tribes.’ This provided the material as well as the ideological base for what is now called tribalism.” In 1973 Zolberg argued that when applied to Africa, the concept of “tribalism” hides more than it reveals. “If it explains the Congo in 1960- 1965⁸⁷, and Nigeria in 1967- 1970⁸⁸, then how do we account for the peacefulness of the Congo after 1965 and Nigeria after 1970? If this dreaded force looms so large thought Africa, then why is there no permanent war of all against all?” (Zolberg, 1973: 731).

Black Gold is a study on the export of labour export from southern Mozambique to the South African mines, and the impact of the system on the communities the migrants have been drawn from. First (1983: 24) state that an investigation into the peasant economy from which mine labour has been recruited is important because behind every miner is a family household in the peasant economy. She further notes that “primitive” accumulation in southern Africa did not rely on the separation of labour from the means of production, leaving it with no other means of subsistence than the sale of its labour-power. Rather the system depended on the maintenance, and on the maintenance, and the re-structuring to varying degrees, of pre-capitalist relations. Thus individuals are not proletarianized for permanent wage labour but the communities from which they come are under pressure to send the men of working age out to labour. The extent

⁸⁷ The Congo Crisis was a period of turmoil in the First Republic of the Congo that began with national independence from Belgium and ended with the seizing of power by Joseph Mobutu.

⁸⁸ The Nigerian Civil War also known as the Nigerian-Biafra War was a political conflict caused by the attempted secession of the southeastern provinces of Nigeria as the self-proclaimed Republic of Biafra.

and impact of mine labour export must therefore be measured not in the individual work choices of individual migrants nor in statistical totals. Rather it must be seen in the impact on the peasant economy.

Black Gold provides us with an enormous amount of detail about conditions of work and the rise and fall of agricultural production. The majority of Mozambican miners hail from Inhambane province--one of the more (at least potentially so) fertile and productive regions in Mozambique--but also one which contained (since 1910) a large number of Portuguese settlers, most of whom left after independence (Peter Gutkind, 1983). Their productivity rested heavily on African labour tribute and African tenants who paid rent in kind thus exposing them to both a reduction of their able bodied labour and the demands of the settlers. That being not enough the peasants “had to meet cash cropping compulsions imposed by the state” (Ruth First; 1983: 275).

First goes on to note that large-scale migration may occasion a variety of effects in the labour-exporting area. The research revealed that peasants often fell from the middle to lower levels. When this occurs many were forced to “return to the mines... over and over again”. Most of the interviews reveal how peasant families move back and forth between wage labour and efforts at agricultural production although a miner who has worked several contracts is lost to agricultural work. The researchers suggest that there are two types of peasant miner: those who take up a few contracts and buy a few essential commodities but do not return to South Africa, and others who repeatedly take up new contracts. The mine wages are essential, a sheer economic necessity, and that it is difficult to develop a viable agricultural base with sufficient diversification (Gutkind, 1983).

One consequence for the peasantry, of this combination of mine labour, subsistence work and export production, was a “certain limited differentiation” among them, particularly between the middle and poor peasantry. Distinctions also revealed themselves when “the impact of mine wages” was assessed although this “was not a sole but often the most important determining factor.” The middle peasantry has managed to elevate itself by producing enough for an external market as well as for local consumption, while the poor peasants have struggled along coping with an “unreliable and unstable agricultural base”. The poor peasantry was forced into a

struggle more akin to that of Corinth King, Sisyphus who was condemned eternally to repeatedly roll a heavy rock up a hill only to have it roll down again as it nears the top. For them, an expanding agricultural surplus was impossible. Instead members of the household were caught up in a succession of mining contracts which never produced enough to sustain an even quasi-independent agriculture (Cohen, 1983: 273).

The appearance of these two broad outcomes was observed by Ruth First and her colleagues in Inhambane Province, an area that was firmly under the hegemony of South African capital. Indeed, so firmly had the region become integrated into the regional mining economy that the only way the leaseholders and Portuguese settlers could restrict the recruitment of WENELA was to force it to remain below the 22nd parallel north so that they could obtain some access to labour for their estates.

One of the lasting messages in the book is the quite extraordinary complementarity of Mozambique's peasant economy with the extraction of gold and coal by mining capital. Any residual notions of dualism are according to Robin Cohen (1983: 273) firmly abolished and there is evidence of one or two side-swipes at the Left orthodoxy on the articulation of modes production, insofar as that too contains an implicit dualism. Whilst situating the study within Marxist debates regarding the nature of capitalist transformation in the Third World, Ruth First manages to “avoid impenetrable abstraction whilst still contributing theoretical insights. She questions the Marxist-functionalist conception of migrant labour being merely a reflex response to the 'needs of capital' (Bujra, 1983).

8.4 Migrant Labour from Mozambique to South Africa

The recruitment in Mozambique was based on a number of agreements made from time to time with the Portuguese colonial government known as the Mozambique conventions. The first of these was signed in 1901, amended in 1904 and again 1909. In 1928 a new Convention was signed replacing all previous agreements and permitted an increase in the number of labourers that could be recruited and continued to limit areas on which recruiting could take place. Although these agreements existed and there were strict regulations governing the employment and movement of Africans within South Africa, workers continued to enter from neighbouring

countries and obtain work illegally and in turn benefiting certain employers who benefit from paying low wages (Breytenbach, 1972).

There was according to the Centre of African Studies (1979) two reasons for its preoccupation with migrant labour from Mozambique to South Africa. Firstly, for nearly a century migration to South Africa was the life for the majority of Mozambicans in southern Mozambique, men and women. Second, that there was an enormous effort on the part of those who benefited from the system to justify how the system worked in a way that justified its continued existence (CEA, 1981). Here the methods of falsification and simplification were deliberately and systematically used to prevent those who attempted to analyse the reality of the southern African political economy in terms of class struggle, the organic unity of capitalism and apartheid in South Africa, and of revolutionary political practice.

The liberal counter-factualisations, which criticised the migrant labour system while accepting the system's false problematic, asserted that Mozambicans sought work in South Africa because pay and work conditions were better than at home. In *Black Gold* Ruth First (1983) and her colleagues disagreed with this notion arguing instead that,

- a) the migrant labour system is central to capitalism,
- b) migrant labour cannot be understood without understanding the nature of South African capitalism and
- c) the relationship between “the peasant” base and migratory labour is of a more complex and contradictory nature than early studies were able to show.

When the CEA began work on *The Mozambican Miner* (later reworked and published as *Black Gold*) there was a considerable body of literature which approached the question of migrant labour by asking essentially why Mozambican peasants left the land and went to South Africa, and examined the effects of their absence on rural life and production. At the time, the flow of labour southwards was not explained in terms of a southern African sub- system dominated by South African capital. Writers looked instead to ecological or social factors within Mozambique itself, arguing that in Inhambane for example, the poor soil could not support an autonomous

agriculture, or that “internal dynamics” of Chope or Thonga society provided an impetus for migration (CEA, 1981).

Serious attempts at theorising the role of migration in the Mozambican economy can be traced back to the debate between Marvin Harris and Antonio Rita- Ferreira in the pages of *Africa, Journal of the International African Institute* (1959: 50- 65, 1960: 141- 152, 1960: 243- 245 and 1961: 75- 77). Harris (1960) had argued in his original article that one of the factors responsible for migrant labour among the Thonga was the traditional subordinate position of the young men within the socio- economic hierarchy. The traditional Thonga social structure predisposed men to take the opportunity of migrating in order to improve their position in the social hierarchy. The traditional Thonga homestead, wrote Harris (1960), contained within itself tensions arising from the system of different houses for each of the wives, the sons of these houses were allocated unequal shares of cattle on the death of their father, and this created a class of the dispossessed. In a much later paper David Webster (1977) argued similarly that the system of adelphic succession left younger brothers and sons in a dispossessed state. According to Webster (1977), the complex interaction of Portuguese colonial policy, the domestic requirements of South African capitalism, and this pre-existing local social structure resulted in the labour migration.

In 1963 Rita-Ferreira presented a full-length statement of his position and of his disagreement with Harris, essentially based on a rejection of the idea that the Thonga were a special case, and asserting that there was no link between migration and forced labour. Rita-Ferreira who later conducted field-work in Mozambique, and effectively documented the agreements between the Mozambican authorities and South Africa's Witwatersrand Native Labour Association, and their effects on the Thonga maintained that Harris was ill-informed. In his analysis of the political and cultural factors of the migratory labour of the Thonga, Harris, in Rita-Ferreira's view, presents incomplete data making his inferences incorrect. Rita-Ferreira (1963) further noted that Harris had chosen a complex social process which needed additional research on its correlations and implications, and to be observed in broader perspective, taking the geographical, historical, ecological and economic peculiarities of the whole African region into account.

According to Ferreira, not only did Harris make claims that lacked clarity and lacked evidence from reliable sources, the literature from authors who have studied African societies was against him. The CEA maintained that in his disagreement with Harris Ferreira remained, nonetheless, within what the CEA (1981) describes as “a functionalist problematic by arguing, after a detailed examination of colonial labour laws and forms of administrative recruiting, that the Portuguese had not encouraged but merely regulated an already existing situation”.

The peasant agriculture in Mozambique had been severely restricted as the Portuguese colonial government did not permit the peasants to freely engage in commercial activity. The Portuguese settlers confiscated most of the fertile and monopolised the commercial sector of agriculture. This ensured that the peasant economy remained at the service of the colonial economy with little or no possibilities of independent production forcing the peasant to engage in work outside of agriculture (CEA, 1981). Although Mozambique was less distinctly within the sphere of South African political influence the Portuguese authorities there shared similar attitudes to those of South African authorities (Prothero, 1974: 393).

The Mozambican situation was complicated virtually up to Independence in 1975 by the peasants' keenness to avoid *chibalo* (forced labour). But disruption is simply a descriptive term, a symptom and cannot be used as a single explanatory cause of the development of the area south of the Save⁸⁹ as a labour reserve for the mining industry. This is especially clear when the Mozambican peasant society is compared to that of the other supplier states. In Swaziland, for instance, migration levels did not appear to affect agricultural production directly, because most migrants return for the cropping season, and only a minority of households cultivate labour-intensive crops like cotton or tobacco (CEA, 1981).

Black Gold deals more widely than any preceding study with labour migration from southern Mozambique to the South African mines. The book is an analysis of the labour flow to the mines in the period 1902 to 1977, and an investigation into the character of mine labour force. The study also focused on the peasant economy from which the migrant has been drawn. The study is based on interviews with more than 1000 miners and ex-miners, which were conducted during

⁸⁹ A 400km river of southern Africa, flowing through Zimbabwe and Mozambique.

visits to WENELA compounds and recruiting stations in 1977. Additional interviews and workers were collected in 1979. While in the book we are only presented with case studies of 16 peasant households, by the end of the fieldwork 372 peasant households and innumerable group discussions held by brigades.

Through *Black Gold* First exposes the relations of exploitation and transformation which underlay the migrant system of labour transfer. She further argues that the Mozambican economy's lack of development during the 1960s and 1970s illuminated two fundamental characteristics of the Mozambican economy which persisted throughout the different phases of Portuguese colonialism:

1. A continued dependence on foreign capital
2. Mozambique's role as a service economy within the southern African region.
3. The study reveals that the barter of labour for the provision of railway and harbour facilities for exports and imports from South Africa and Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) was not incidental to, but was the axis of Portuguese-South African collaboration in, the exploitation of Mozambique.

First argues that the structure of Mozambique's colonial economy was the result of a double dependence; the first being a dependence on a relatively backward economy constituted by the Portuguese colonial power. Secondly it was subordinated to the needs of the southern African economic complex. This integration became the predominant aspect of the structure of the colonial Mozambican economy. First (1983) argues that while Portugal played the part of rentier, deriving major income from the sale of labour-power, Mozambique's productive forces were shaped not according to Portugal's needs of capitalist development, but according to the needs of capitalist accumulation in South Africa.

According to Peter Gutkind (1983), miners—particularly those who work under capitalism—are a classic example of direct producers who are essential to modern industry. They are rapidly drawn into an industrial ethos and the discipline imposed by heavy and dangerous work. The consequence of this on their political and social consciousness is fully demonstrated. They have been proletarianized (which is revealed in the interviews and work songs) and have been among

the first to be attracted to unionisation. Miners constitute a true working class, and the Mozambican miners were no exception. One consequence of this is their heavy dependence on wages which in turn “divorced them from agriculture” making the rural household dependent on remittances as a supplement to subsistence and cash crop production.

While the mines demand for Mozambican labour was always high, peaking in 1975 when Malawian president, Hastings Banda, cut off the Malawian supply due to a WENELA plane crash that resulted in the death of 72 Malawian miners, two major changes later affected this demand. First, the mines attempted to move to a more capital-intensive operation. This tendency was led by Anglo-American whose former head Harry Oppenheimer was often seen as having more liberal views because of a number of disapprovals of the virtue of migrant labour (Cohen, 1983: 274). It is typical of Ruth First's contempt for such personalist arguments that she points out in a few lines that Anglo-American's major investments were in the more technologically advanced mines of the Orange Free State where a smaller more stabilised work force was more efficient (First, 1983: 51). Second the South African government was propelling a shift towards internal sources of supply, a shift First argues was accelerated by the implementation of the Bantustan policy and the rural impoverishment caused by drought conditions. Industrial and political developments in South Africa therefore coincided with Frelimo's attempt to create a more autonomous socialist economy in Mozambique.

8.5 Conclusion

The early literature on migrant labour on southern Africa tended to generalise from the experience of one country, or the part of the continent best known to the scholar. A number of authors have described in broad sweeps the migratory labour situation. While attempting to analyse what was required to further advance knowledge on labour migration Panofsky (1963) noted that the migrant labour situation was complicated especially since at the time it was not known for sure whether increased agricultural productivity would stimulate or hamper migration. What was needed he argues, is intensive studies of land use and ways to increase land productivity. Also necessary were studies of the existing and the potential labour force in given areas, and of the labour force of individual productive units in urban and rural environments.

In portraying the world of the worker a lot of the scholars largely left out the constraints of the labourer's situation which the state did not dream of reforming: the impact of racism, the constraints of capitalism, and the less savoury aspects of colonial regimes (Magubane, 1971 cited in Freund, 1984: 5). Very little attention was paid to the social relations embodied in the migrant's work situation. Moreover, in general, during the 1950s the question of class was not brought up systematically. Historian Eric Hobsbawm (1974: 371) notes that the history of labour is a highly political subject. The literature on migrant labour deserves considerable attention because it continues to have critical social and political importance as well because of the scientific value of its contents.

Black Gold deals more comprehensively than any previous study with labour migration from southern Mozambique and it contains much fresh information (White, 1983). The book is distinct in that it changes the focus to one of the major labour supplying areas, Mozambique, which is intrinsically significant as it historically supplied anything from one quarter to two-thirds of the black labour on the South African mines. It also provides a study site where the comparative impact of a powerful regional capitalism and a weaker metropolitan capitalism can be assessed (Cohen, 1983).

Chapter 9

Conclusion

9.1 Introduction

The introduction to this thesis outlined the objectives of this study, which were to document the contribution Ruth First made to knowledge during her time in Mozambique, from 1977 until her death in 1982. In Mozambique she was helping the newly independent state- South Africa's neighbour and enemy- in preparing cadres of educated and involved contributors to the country's development. The research revealed that during her time in Mozambique First's contribution knowledge was threefold. First, as research director of the Centre of African studies she played a critical role in the day to running of one of the most productive social research institutions in post-independent Mozambique. Secondly, through the formulation and teaching of the Development Course through which she inspired her students to become engaged academics. Lastly in the writing of what was to be her final book *Black Gold, Mozambican Miner: Proletarian and Peasant*, which altered our understanding of the migrant labour system in southern Africa.

9.2 Academic Dependency and the Social Sciences in the Global South

In accounting for the problems encountered in the curriculum I was exposed to as a social science undergraduate student I draw on the work of academic dependency theorists. Academic dependency is based on the social studies of science, critical epistemology and comparative studies of higher education. It incorporates the unequal structure of production and circulation of knowledge that has arisen historically along with the international scientific system. This structure is made up of institutional, material and symbolic processes, mutually related, which have produced different paths of academia building. In the periphery it is argued that these combinations are the historical result of national and regional responses to internationalisation (Beigel, 2011).

As discussed in Chapter Two there is no shortage of studies about the uneven distribution of academic prestige between the global North and global South, or between dissimilar research capacities and heteronomous academic mobility within these regions. Within this research field

can be found the analysis of intellectual dependence, Euro-centrism and colonialism within knowledge production. These studies critically converge with dependency analysis and Latin American structuralism. It is important to note that a core weakness of the dependency analysis is that it forecloses the possibility of autonomous development- without autarky. The overall argument made by dependency theorists may explain the moment, but it does so by negating the agency of those in the periphery. The possibility of a reversal of flow of knowledge, in which the South produces works/ knowledge that leads to epistemic rupture in the knowledge sensibilities of the North is not simply aspirational it has happened over and over in fields from History to Sociology. The work of Gunder Frank is an example of how works produced at the periphery came to influence Northern discourses.

The World Social Science Report (UNESCO, 2010) indicated that inequality in institutional settings; translation capacities and material resources are powerful determinants in academic life. Beigel (2011) notes that there is minimum consensus on the possibilities and paths to overcome academic dependence. From the standpoint of the individual intellectual, career-building through international graduate education and publishing in English undoubtedly have provided successful passages to academic recognition. However, this individual path of accumulating scientific capital does not necessarily lead to broader scientific development in peripheral societies (ibid).

While there have been calls for alternative discourses such as endogeneity, the literature on academic dependency has mostly remained at an abstract level and has failed to provide practical solutions on how to transcend the current situation. One of the most vocal voices in critiquing academic dependency, Alatas (2003) suggests that scholars cannot do much at the structural level of academic dependency because they are not in charge of academic institutions. They can however do much more at the theoretical or intellectual level. Scholars have presented the concept of alternative discourses as a possible source for a creative and autonomous social science. This research project therefore sought to move beyond problem identification by valorising the scholarly works of South African sociologist Ruth First.

9.3 Ruth First: Portrait of a Sociologist

Killed on the 17th of August 1982 by a letter bomb sent to her at the Centre of African Studies, Ruth First was a teacher, researcher, and scholar who had a profound effect on her colleagues, comrades and students. Often celebrated as a journalist and activist this research project was an attempt at celebrating her work as an intellectual, an area of her life which has often gone unnoticed. According to Edward Said (1994: 33) “the intellectual always has a choice either to side with the weak, the less represented, the forgotten or ignored or to side with the more powerful”. Ruth First chose the former path, at a harsh personal cost.

As a student at the University of the Witwatersrand First became an active participant in the liberation struggle. After university she became a journalist and later became the editor of a series of left wing newspapers which were successively banned by the apartheid government. She and husband Joe Slovo were among the defendants in the treason trial in 1956 in which all the accused were acquitted. First was arrested in 1963 she was arrested under the 90 Day Act⁹⁰. The time she spent in solitary confinement was the subject of her book *117 Days*. In the book she gives an account of how she was interrogated by the Security Branch in the hope that she would reveal useful information for the Rivonia trial (Gaitskell, 1991: 152).

Following her release in 1964 she settled in London with her husband and three daughters. When she arrived in England the activist and journalist became a writer, teacher and scholar. During her time in England she wrote several books and lectured at Durham University. Ruth First valued intellectual work but found academic life in Britain lacking in engagement and seriousness. This would explain her eventual move to Eduardo Mondlane University in 1977 where she assumed the position of research director. During the interviews her friends, colleagues and students describe her as a vigorous, precise and unsentimental intellectual who was a member of a rare breed of South African intellectuals and writers.

9.3.1 The Centre of African Studies

Ruth First was invited to join the Centre of African Studies by the Centre’s director Aquino de Braganca. The Centre of African Studies was a major intellectual and politically attuned

⁹⁰ Under this Act the security police, were given the authority to arrest anyone they suspected of being engaged or involved in any act against the State and to hold them incommunicado for 90 days at a time.

academic innovation of Mozambique's post-independence experiments in higher education (Harlow, 2011: 59). Following independence Frelimo inherited a distorted and underdeveloped social and economic structure from Portugal. The Portuguese did little to promote the economic and educational development of its colonies and Mozambique was no different. Professor Teresa Cruz e Silva⁹¹ who was a student at the University of Lourenco Marques during the 1970s recalls that "during the colonial period teaching social sciences was forbidden".

First joined the Centre in 1977 and while she brought with her a "razor sharp intellect" and intense organizational skills, her colleagues reveal that when Ruth First came to the Centre tensions began to emerge. At the centre of these tensions is First's relationship with the director of Centre Aquino de Braganca which colleagues have described as complex. Tensions also arose as a result of the work that First was conducting on South Africa. Joao Paulo Borges Coelho maintains that "she enters as a researcher to build a project, but she also brought her own agenda, being a core member of the ANC. It was a kind of counter-intelligence activity or an investigation of the situation in South Africa".

About working at the Centre Teresa Cruz e Silva⁹² states,

In my case I came from a colonial university where it was more or less forbidden as historians to study Africa. So after independence two places in this country played an important role in the shift of what can be considered as the social sciences in Africa. And it was the CEA and the faculty of arts. The Centre of African studies under Ruth and Aquino, played a very very very important role in changing the conception of what is social science and the importance of the social science to develop the country and what is a researcher, conception of methodologies of learning and of teaching which were quite different from the colonial university.

Regardless of the weaknesses in her methods and her complex relationship with De Braganca the Centre managed to produce work that that was profound and analytically interesting. A lot of the

⁹¹ Interview April, 2011.

⁹² *ibid*

literate discussing the issues of transition that were produced at the Centre under the leadership of First and De Braganca are still relevant in understanding Mozambique even today because some of the key structural issues are still shaped by the same dynamics.

First's colleagues and students maintain that First's untimely death had a huge impact on the Centre. The four years First spent at the Centre were arguably its most productive years in terms of research output. This productivity had as much to do with First's intellectual capabilities as it had to do with her organizational capabilities. While First was the director of research she also served as Aquino de Braganca's second in command. According to Carlos Castel Branco "you needed someone who would think about what to do, how to do it and create the capabilities and resources to do it. And without Ruth that wouldn't have happened. We would have stayed at the level of how thinking about how fantastic thinking about thinking is".

9. 3. 2 The Development Course

The interviews revealed that while in Mozambique Ruth First was also involved in teaching through the Development Course. When First joined the Centre of African Studies there were no postgraduate courses being offered in any of the faculties at Eduardo Mondlane University. What became known as the Development Course was initially conceived as an Honours level course for students who had graduated with a Bachelor's degree. The proposal for this Honours course was developed by First and other members of the Centre but it was rejected by the Faculty of Arts and History department. According to Luis de Brito⁹³ they considered it economic and this was not interesting to historians. And they wanted something in history and were not interested in the contemporary problems of development". The course was then offered at the Centre and open to both graduates and civil servants without any undergraduate qualification.

In her work through the Development Course First relied mostly on Marc Wuyts and Bridget O'Laughlin who had a huge influence in deciding how research and teaching would be carried out. Marc Wuyts⁹⁴ recalls,

⁹³ Interview May, 2011.

⁹⁴ Interviewed by Carlos Fernandes, 2010.

The most satisfying aspect of it all, was to see how most students got something out of the course, but, in particular, how some students (not all, not even a majority, but a significant number), often with little prior sense of research, suddenly developed an appetite for research. That- for me- was, besides its research output, the real value of the Development Course.

While in Maputo I had the opportunity to interview five individuals who participated in the Development Course. While the course was eventually accredited with diploma status it seems to have made a lasting impression on some of the participants. Except for Yussuf Adam, four of my interviewees maintain that the early years at the CEA and Ruth First's teachings particular have had a profound influence on the scholars they have become. Colleague and student Luis de Brito⁹⁵ maintains that through the course First and her colleagues "permitted a research experience that would have been different in another context with other people". De Brito goes on to state that through the course he learned methods of organising and conducting research which he still makes use of today.

Speaking about her experience of the course Teresa Cruz e Silva⁹⁶ states,

I always say that in what I am I have to thank three people. First of all Fernando Ganhao because he brought me to the university, and second Ruth First and Aquino de Braganca. They changed our way of thinking and even today the methodologies we use, the way we see and analyse the country are so influenced by what we learn in African Studies Centre with Ruth First and Aquino de Braganca.

Isabel Casimiro⁹⁷ says,

It was important for us and I feel today that this was a very good course. And all the other things we did were very important for me. Everything was scrutinized everything was criticised and I think that this was very important. We were always questioning the

⁹⁵ Interview May, 2011.

⁹⁶ Interview April, 2011.

⁹⁷ Interview April, 2011.

methods, the theories... we were always very critical of these methods that were created in certain circumstances that do not allow us to analyse our realities.

Carlos Castel Branco who participated in the Development Course in 1980 and was sent to the Centre from the Mozambican army states that the education he acquired at the Centre always affected what he did after he left. This education Branco⁹⁸ maintains “provided a systematic framework for thinking, analysing and working in the understanding of issues of transition and transformation from a Marxist stand point of view. So my education after that at university when I did my Masters degrees and my PhD were influenced by that that process.”

9.3.3 Black Gold

First’s intellectual work at the CEA was not limited to teaching and directing research. Her research activities culminated in the book *Black Gold: Mozambican Miner, Proletarian or Peasant*. The book returns to a theme that preoccupied her as a journalist in South Africa and one she described in a letter to Gillian Slovo as the “pivot” of her “waking/ working life”: the way in which cheap labour constituted the material kernel of the shell of apartheid. *Black Gold* is the product of team work with other members of the Centre advances the arguments Ruth First made in an earlier article entitled “The Gold of Migrant Labour” and published in 1961 in *Africa South in Exile*.

The book is distinct in that it changes the focus to one of the major labour- exporting states, Mozambique. One of the central arguments made in the book is that the construction of socialism was predicated on the ending of the system and reintegrating the ‘worker peasants’ into the peasant economy. She also goes on to question the social and economic consequences of such a process. First and her team make their arguments through not only text but also powerful photographs taken by Moira Forjaz and transcripts of work songs recorded by Alpheus Manghezi and a number of appendices.

⁹⁸ Interview May, 2011.

Some of First's best writing has been on the subject of migrant labour to South Africa's gold mines. *Black Gold* reveals her characteristic strengths, meticulous attention to detail and a controlled passion on behalf of the subjects of her study. The book is a substantial monument to Ruth First's contribution to knowledge and remains a fitting tribute to the talents and commitment of Ruth First, so tragically killed by a letter bomb in 1982 whilst she was the director of research at the Centre of African Studies at Eduardo Mondlane University, Mozambique. Whilst her life was cut short by South African assassins, her work lives on to spur others to scholarship served by critical analysis.

9.4 Recommendations for Further Research

Ruth First's work as a scholar and sociologist began long before her time in Mozambique. It can be traced back to her engagement with the country of Namibia in her first book *South West Africa* in 1961. Following the publication of the book she wrote seven more books. Her formal teaching experiences began at Durham University in 1973 following her exile in 1964. She later taught for a semester at the University of Tanzania in 1975 and at Eduardo Mondlane University from 1979 until her death in 1982. This research project has been limited by both time and space constraints making it difficult to explore all of her intellectual work in detail. There is a need to collate and assemble all of Ruth First's scholarly works prior to 1977. This would include the several book length studies and articles written. There is also room to explore in detail the contributions she made while teaching at Durham University and University of Tanzania.

When Ruth First joined the Centre of African studies she became involved in the larger nation building project through her teaching and research activities. The study has been limited to documenting First's contribution to knowledge during her time at the Centre and I only touch briefly on the impact that this work has had both on her students and the country as a whole. Interviewing former students who relayed how working with First inspired them to become engaged academics would suggest there is room to explore this subject in detail.

9.5 Conclusion

The 17th of August 2012 will mark the 30th anniversary of Ruth First's death, and many will remember her as an activist and journalist because her work as an intellectual is often forgotten when First's work is celebrated. In this research project I have tried to show that First was more than a journalist and activist, she was an academic who conceived of her work as advocating for a more just world. Ruth First's insurgent politics informed, energized, and sharpened her scholarly works. By allying herself with particular political projects in South Africa and Mozambique, she developed a kind of rationale for her intellectual labour. Ruth First is of course not unique. Her political and intellectual work is representative of the different ways in which different African scholars combined advocacy and scholarship in the quest for new approaches to study the continent (Isaacman, 2003).

Speaking at an event held on the 17th of August 2007 at Rhodes University to commemorate the 25th anniversary her mother's death Gillian Slovo states,

I remember her alive, in Mozambique, standing on the beach at Ponta do Ouro⁹⁹ looking across the sands to the place where South Africa began, and where, one day, she was convinced of it, she would go. She never got there. They killed her. For what reason? Because they saw her as a traitor to her race? Because they wanted to kill or demoralise her husband? Because they feared the sharpness of her intellect? Because she was a living reproach to who they were? Some combination of all these, I suspect. They killed her because they were killers and because she was Ruth.

⁹⁹ Town situated in southern Mozambique, 10 km of the South African border.

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