

Reading Rostow in a Rhodesian Prison: Anticolonialism and the Reinvention of Modernization in British Central Africa

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In October 1960, a man named Kennedy L. Siwo wrote to *Tsopano*, a pro-nationalist monthly known for its lively letters page, to complain about white colonists who claimed that Nyasaland, as Malawi was then known, would not be economically viable as an independent nation. Nyasaland, the colonists argued, was too small, too rural, and too poor to be free. They insisted that the territory was better off as it was, hitched to the fortunes of its industrializing neighbors, Northern Rhodesia and Southern Rhodesia, as part of the Central African Federation, a settler-ruled, semi-sovereign colonial state formed by Britain in 1953. “I think that is being stupid,” Siwo wrote. “Think of England,” he argued, which was “only an island, much smaller than countries it supports” and “has not [*sic*] valuable minerals and does not produce much food to support its own peoples.” Siwo went on, “Nyasaland, I am sure, has a future more than that of islands. Once all its people get educated, set foot on geological work, on educating themselves, working hard on the rich soil for agricultural use, [and]

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gain political freedom the world at large shall realize that Malawi (so-called Nyasaland) is as big a country as the continent of Africa.”¹

An excerpt from Siwo’s letter appeared in the January 1961 edition of *Tsopano*, alongside several other letters and articles written by supporters of the Malawi Congress Party (hereafter Congress) that made a similar case for the economic potential of an independent Nyasaland.² The issue reflected the spirit of 1960, known internationally as the “year of Africa,” in celebration of the seventeen African countries that then won their independence that year. The United Nations capped off the year with a December resolution that called for immediate independence for the rest of the colonial world. Though London was prepared for the curtain to fall on the empire, they worried that the UN was moving too fast.³ British officials were anxious to avoid another Congo, where, as they saw it, a hasty exit by Belgium had precipitated a post-independence crisis, amplified by Cold War rivalries, which threatened to tear the country apart.⁴ London wanted more room for maneuver, including the freedom to experiment with ethnic federalism and other novel state forms in countries such as Uganda, which arguably contained more than one nation.⁵

Nyasaland was one of those territories where British officials believed they needed time. By 1961, they recognized that the Central African Federation was politically untenable. African nationalists had never accepted the idea of white-minority rule, or what the British called “multi-racialism,” and now the UN would not either. However, British officials remained concerned about the future of Nyasaland and other “backward” colonies in Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific.⁶ They feared that many were not suited for independence—some due to size, others to a lack of resources, and still more because of some combination of the two. Many African politicians shared those fears as well. Kwame Nkrumah, for example, made African unity his cause, arguing for a United States of Africa that would combine the wealth and resources of the continent.⁷ But African unity

¹ University of Stirling Special Collections (SSC) Peter Mackay Papers (MK) 2/3/2/6, “Nyasaland as Big as Africa,” Kennedy L. Siwo, 22 Oct. 1960.

² “Letters in brief,” *Tsopano*, Jan. 1961: 12.

³ Wm. Roger Louis, “Public Enemy Number One: The British Empire in the Dock at the United Nations,” in Martin Lynn, ed., *The British Empire in the 1950s: Retreat or Revival?* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 192–98.

⁴ Elizabeth Schmidt, *Foreign Intervention in Africa: From the Cold War to the War on Terror* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 57–78.

⁵ On decolonization in Uganda, see Phares Mutibwa, *Uganda since Independence: A Story of Unfulfilled Hopes* (London: Hurst and Company, 1992), 11–21; and for Africa more generally, Frederick Cooper, “Possibility and Constraint: African Independence in Historical Perspective,” *Journal of African History* 48 (2008): 167–96.

⁶ For a discussion of the Pacific, see Tracey Banivanua Mar, *Decolonisation and the Pacific: Indigenous Globalisation and the Ends of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

⁷ On Nkrumah’s pan-Africanism and the debates on African unity in the early independence era, see Adom Getachew, *Worldmaking after Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019), 131–46.

still seemed a long way off, and in the meantime, the British government had more practical questions. British officials wondered how marginal territories like Nyasaland would support themselves. They suspected that the answer was “London”—that Britain would have to spend the equivalent of the old imperial budget in perpetuity to support its former colonies. Partly for that reason, they continued to insist that Nyasaland remain part of a union with the Rhodesias.⁸

Federalism was unpopular in Central Africa, but Britain had the weight of expert opinion on its side. Though the flags of the newest nations flew as high as all the others at the UN, observers wondered whether former colonies would ever truly become equal members of the international community. Analysts approached the question from all angles, from politics to psyches. But the perspective that attracted the most interest was development, so much so that growth became the measure of the nation-building project.⁹ “Development” was a catch-all term that could be used to describe the construction of a hydro-electric dam or a village latrine, as well as practically any economic activity that occurred in a so-called underdeveloped country.¹⁰ However, there was wide agreement that industrialization was the mark of a developed economy. Of course, farmers would still have a role in an industrialized economy: workers had to be fed and industries depended on agricultural products for additives, fibers, and oils. Nonetheless, development planners believed that industrialization would come at the expense of the agricultural sector, both as a share of national income and as a way of life.¹¹ Countries with the essential ingredients of industrialization—mineral wealth, above all else—looked forward to the passing of rural society. Countries without those ingredients worried about what kind of progress would be possible for them.

British officials thought that Nyasaland was fortunate to be a part of the Central African Federation. The Rhodesias were two of Africa’s most

⁸ On the Central African Federation, see Andrew Cohen, *The Politics and Economics of Decolonization in Africa: The Failed Experiment of the Central African Federation* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2017).

⁹ Stephen J. Macekura, *The Mismeasure of Progress: Economic Growth and Its Critics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020).

¹⁰ Frederick Cooper, “Modernizing Bureaucrats, Backward Africans, and the Development Concept,” in Frederick Cooper and Randall Packard, eds., *International Development and the Social Sciences: Essays on the History and Politics of Knowledge* (Berkeley: University of California Press 1997), 64–92. On agricultural development in the British Empire, see Joseph Morgan Hodge, *Triumph of the Expert: Agrarian Doctrines of Development and the Legacies of British Colonialism* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2007); and, for a country study, Bekeh Utietiang Ukelina, *The Second Colonial Occupation: Development Planning, Agriculture, and the Legacies of British Rule in Nigeria* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2017).

¹¹ Many foundational figures in the field made the same observation. See Gerald M. Meier and Dudley Seers, eds., *Pioneers in Development* (Oxford: Oxford University Press for the World Bank, 1984).

industrialized economies.¹² Northern Rhodesia was the continent's leading copper producer. Southern Rhodesia had mines as well, along with planters and manufacturers who produced goods for colonial markets. Both also had large white settler populations, particularly Southern Rhodesia. Nyasaland, meanwhile, was known regionally for its tea and tobacco industries, but as one anthropologist quipped in 1942, "the chief export from Nyasaland in the past fifty years has been men."¹³ Nyasa men migrated to the Rhodesias and South Africa for wage work.¹⁴ Though most migrants came from rural northern Nyasaland, migration was a political issue for the whole territory.¹⁵ Nyasa activists complained to the colonial administration that migration was tearing at the fabric of rural society, leaving families without fathers, husbands, brothers, and sons.¹⁶ While they usually received a sympathetic hearing, colonial officials believed that the alternative—a Nyasaland left to fend for itself—was far worse. The British government offered the same reasoning after deciding to form the Central African Federation over the practically unanimous opposition of Nyasaland's African population. And London repeated it again in response to Congress's demand for independence.

Four years after Siwo's letter to *Tsopano*, in July 1964, Nyasaland celebrated its independence from Britain, becoming Malawi. This article examines how an eventuality that British officials and many colonial observers considered impractical at best came to be seen as an ordinary transfer of power. It argues that anti-colonial activists in Nyasaland helped to expand the possibilities of the development idea to include small territories stuck in political limbo as empire drew to a close. Congress leaders made an agrarian ideal into an argument for a new kind of modernization, one that flipped the framework from industry to agriculture, in making the case for Nyasaland's

¹² William J. Barber, *The Economy of British Central Africa: A Case Study of Economic Development in a Dualistic Society* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1961). On industrialization and its effects on rural life, see Henrietta Moore and Megan Vaughan, *Cutting Down Trees: Gender, Nutrition, and Agricultural Change in the Northern Province of Zambia, 1890–1990* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1993).

¹³ Margaret Read, "Migrant Labour in Africa and Its Effects on Tribal Life," *International Labour Review* 45, 6 (1942): 605–31, 606. On the colonial Nyasaland economy more generally, see Elias C. Mandala, *Work and Control in a Peasant Economy: A History of the Lower Tchiri Valley in Malawi, 1859–1960* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990).

¹⁴ Wiseman Chijere Chirwa, "Migrant Labour and the Nyasaland Rural Economy, 1936–1962," in Alan H. Jeeves and Owen J.M. Kalinga, eds., *Communities at the Margin: Studies in Rural Society and Migration in Southern Africa, 1890–1990* (Pretoria: University of South Africa Press, 2002), 163–85.

¹⁵ John McCracken, *A History of Malawi, 1859–1966* (Suffolk: James Currey, 2012), 178–88.

¹⁶ Zoë R. Groves, *Malawian Migration to Zimbabwe, 1900–1965: Tracing Machona* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020). Nyasa migrants sometimes made the opposite case, arguing for free movement in South Africa, for instance. See Henry Dee, "Central African Immigrants, Imperial Citizenship and the Politics of Free Movement in Interwar South Africa," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 46, 2 (2020): 319–337.

independence. Leading the way was Dunduzu Chisiza, Congress's chief organizer and a self-taught development economist who, before his tragic death in 1962 at the age of thirty-two, seemed poised to become one of the voices of the new Africa.¹⁷ No less a figure than C.L.R. James described Chisiza's 1961 pamphlet, *Africa—What Lies Ahead*, as “one of the finest documents in African society and politics ever written.”¹⁸ Chisiza was exceptional in other ways, too. At a time when other African thinkers were sounding the alarm on neo-colonialism, Chisiza was an enthusiast of Walt Whitman Rostow and U.S. modernization theory. Chisiza and Congress activists imagined Nyasaland as a future “Central African Denmark”—small in size, rural in character, and rich from what its people reaped from the soil.¹⁹

Chisiza and Rostow made an odd pair. Chisiza first encountered Rostow's work in 1959, while he was in detention in Southern Rhodesia, where he and other Congress leaders were being held on allegations of a conspiracy to murder Nyasaland's white colonists. His letters to Rostow had to be smuggled out of prison. Though there was never any “murder plot,” Chisiza was certainly a threat to the colonial order in British Central Africa. That was not necessarily a problem for Rostow, however. As Nick Cullather has shown, Rostow and other U.S. modernization theorists were generally supportive of decolonization and enthusiastic about agricultural development, which they saw as one part of a wider development strategy that also included industry and infrastructure.²⁰ And as Abou Bamba has argued for the Ivory Coast, modernization theory was politically pliable, capable of translation into vernacular forms that appealed

¹⁷ For example, Chisiza appeared alongside Kenneth Kaunda, Albert Luthuli, Tom Mboya, and Julius Nyerere in a popular essay collection: Albert Luthuli, et al., *Africa's Freedom* (London: Unwin Books, 1964). Chisiza was also not the only African nationalist to turn to development economics. See Mamadou Diouf, “Senegalese Development: From Mass Mobilization to Technocratic Elitism,” in Frederick Cooper and Randall Packard, eds., *International Development and the Social Sciences: Essays on the History and Politics of Knowledge* (Berkeley: University of California Press 1997), 291–319; Alden Young, *Transforming Sudan: Decolonization, Economic Development, and State Formation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

¹⁸ C.L.R. James, *Nkrumah and the Ghana Revolution* (Westport: Lawrence Hill and Co., 1977), 185. The article originally appeared in the *Trinidad Evening News* in 1964. I am grateful to Adom Getachew for the reference.

¹⁹ For other studies that show how the circulation of ideas and policies between the First, Second, and Third World, see Johanna Bockman, “Democratic Socialism in Chile and Peru: Revisiting the ‘Chicago Boys’ as the Origin of Neoliberalism,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 61, 3 (2019): 654–79; Amy C. Offner, *Sorting Out the Mixed Economy: The Rise and Fall of Welfare and Developmental States in the Americas* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019).

²⁰ Nick Cullather, *The Hungry World: America's Cold War Battle against Poverty in Asia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010). See also Nils Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future: Modernization Theory in Cold War America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003); David Ekbladh, *The Great American Mission: Modernization and the Construction of an American World Order* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010); David C. Engerman, *The Price of Aid: The Economic Cold War in India* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018).

both to populations hungry for change and to Western donors.²¹ However, as this article will show, it is equally important to understand how anti-colonial movements reshaped the modernization idea itself. U.S. modernization theorists worked within the political borders of their day, often taking nation and state to be synonyms. But as the Nyasaland example reveals, by the early 1960s, the state form was precisely the issue at stake in what remained of the colonial world. Empires were full of would-be nations, but not all of them looked destined to become states.²² It was anti-colonial movements in places like Nyasaland that transformed the modernization idea, extending the framework to open new possibilities for small, agrarian territories on the margins of empire and the international order.²³

DENMARK OR IRELAND? NYASALAND'S FUTURE WITHOUT FEDERATION

In April 1960, Hastings Kamuzu Banda, the president of the Malawi Congress Party, returned to the United States for the first time since 1937, the year he graduated from Meharry Medical College in Nashville and left to continue his studies at the University of Edinburgh.²⁴ Banda arrived from London, after several days of talks with the British colonial secretary Iain Macleod on the Nyasaland emergency, then entering its fourteenth month, and future constitutional reforms.²⁵ The visit was part of a post-release tour

²¹ Abou B. Bamba, African Miracle, *African Mirage: Transnational Politics and the Paradox of Modernization in Ivory Coast* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2016). On “vernacular” modernisms, see also David C. Engerman, Nils Gilman, Mark H. Haefele, and Michael E. Latham, eds., *Staging Growth: Modernization, Development, and the Global Cold War* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2002). For recent studies of rural development in action in colonial and postcolonial Africa, see Kara Moskowit, *Seeing Like a Citizen: Decolonization, Development, and the Making of Kenya, 1945–1980* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2019); Alice Wiemers, *Village Work: Development and Rural Statecraft in Twentieth-Century Ghana* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2021); Laura Ann Twagira, *Embodied Engineering: Gendered Labor, Food Security, and Taste in Twentieth-Century Mali* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2021).

²² Lydia Walker, “Decolonization in the 1960s: On Legitimate and Illegitimate Nationalist Claims-Making,” *Past and Present* 242, 1 (2019): 227–64.

²³ For other challenges from the South to international economic order, see Priya Lal, *African Socialism in Postcolonial Tanzania: Between the Village and the World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Christopher R. W. Dietrich, *Oil Revolution: Anticolonial Elites, Sovereign Rights, and the Economic Culture of Decolonization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Getachew, *Worldmaking*; Christy Thornton, *Revolution in Development: Mexico and the Governance of the Global Economy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2021); Margarita Fajardo, *The World that Latin America Created: The United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America in the Development Era* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2022).

²⁴ For Banda's biography, see John Lloyd Lwanda, *Kamuzu Banda of Malawi: A Study in Promise, Power, and Paralysis* (Glasgow: Dudu Nsomba Publications, 1993).

²⁵ On the Nyasaland Emergency, see Kings Phiri, John McCracken, and Wapulumuka Mulwafa, eds., *Malawi in Crisis: The 1959/60 Nyasaland State of Emergency and Its Legacy* (Zomba: Kachere Books, 2012).

for Banda, who had spent nearly all of those fourteen months in detention in Southern Rhodesia.²⁶ Though Banda was familiar with the United States, having lived there as a student for twelve years, he knew that most Americans would be unfamiliar with him and his home, Nyasaland. Banda introduced himself to American audiences in a short autobiographical article in the journal *Africa Today*. The article recounted his childhood in Nyasaland and the years he spent in college and medical school in the United States. He assured readers that those who called him “anti-white” or “the extremist of the extremists” had him wrong. And he insisted that they had his country wrong too. Nyasaland, he declared, could “become the Denmark of Central Africa.”²⁷

The Denmark comparison was a favorite of Banda’s. The country had been popular with progressive reformers in North America and Western Europe since the 1920s. They admired how Denmark—a small, agrarian country with none of the advantages of its larger, industrialized neighbors—had grown to become one of Europe’s wealthiest countries by the turn of the twentieth century.²⁸ British reformers were particularly taken with the Danish cooperative movement, which introduced scale and machinery to smallholder agriculture, and with the Danish folk schools, which offered instruction in national culture and farming techniques for rural children and adults.²⁹ Banda, who lived in Britain from 1937 to 1953, would have certainly encountered Danish enthusiasts as a member of the Labour Party and the Fabian Colonial Bureau, whose ranks included many advocates of cooperative development.³⁰ Denmark had become a bit old-fashioned by the 1950s, as rural reformers moved on to new, though not entirely unrelated, fads such as community development.³¹ But Banda remained a true believer. “We must build many co-operative societies,” he wrote to a Congress branch leader in a 1957 letter, “so that everything we produce is bought through co-operative societies and not through European settlers or Indians.” “In this way,” Banda continued, “we can develop our country, just as Danemark [*sic*].”³²

²⁶ For details on the tour, see “Dr. Banda Praises Mr. Macleod,” *East Africa and Rhodesia*, 36 1854 (21 Apr. 1960): 796.

²⁷ Hastings K. Banda, “Return to Nyasaland,” *Africa Today* 7, 4 (1960): 9.

²⁸ For an influential contemporary account, see Peter Manniche, *Denmark: A Social Laboratory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1939).

²⁹ Daniel T. Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998), 327–28, 354–58.

³⁰ See, for example, Fabian Colonial Bureau, *Co-operation in the Colonies: A Report from a Special Committee to the Fabian Colonial Bureau* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1945).

³¹ Daniel Immerwahr, *Thinking Small: The United States and the Lure of Community Development* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015).

³² Malawi National Archives (MNA) Historical Manuscripts (ACC), D. M. Mkandawire Papers (DMM) 151/DMM/1/1, Hastings K. Banda to Daniel Mc. Mkandawire, 14 Dec. 1957.

British officials, however, had their doubts about Nyasaland's future. The territory had long been one of the poorest in the empire.³³ That poverty was what convinced the British government to make Nyasaland part of the Central African Federation in 1953. Nyasaland was nonetheless an afterthought during the negotiations. The real prize for Rhodesian politicians was the union of the two Rhodesias, an idea that they had advocated for since the 1920s.³⁴ White Rhodesians were content to take or leave Nyasaland and its tiny settler population, though they never failed to include the territory in their plans for a "Greater Rhodesia." Britain officials, for their part, feared that if they did not support a union of the Rhodesias, then Southern Rhodesia, which had settler self-government since 1923, might follow through on threats to join the Union of South Africa.³⁵ Roy Welensky, a Northern Rhodesian politician and spokesman for the federalist cause, later claimed that it was British officials, not Rhodesian politicians, who insisted that Nyasaland be included in the new federation, hoping to make the territory the Rhodesias' problem.³⁶ But whether it was by choice or by force, Welensky and London echoed the same talking points about how federation would be an economic boon for Central Africa and for Nyasaland in particular.³⁷

By the time of Banda's release in 1960, the Central African Federation seemed poised for a breakup. African nationalists had opposed federation from the very start, and a decade of protests had reached a crescendo with emergency orders in all three territories in early 1959.³⁸ Rhodesian settlers, meanwhile, had grown impatient with London and threatened to throw "Boston tea parties" if the Federation did not receive independence in 1960.³⁹ A visit in early 1960 by a British advisory commission charged with deciding the Federation's fate only enflamed the situation further.⁴⁰ Amid the emergencies, which London believed to be a mistake, British officials gradually began to come around on Banda and Congress, who they believed might be more moderate than the Rhodesians after all. But the Colonial Office held out hope that the Federation could be salvaged in

³³ For colonial ideas about poverty in Nyasaland, see Megan Vaughan, *The Story of an African Famine: Gender and Famine in Twentieth-Century Malawi* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987). See also Owen J. M. Kalinga, "The Master Farmers' Scheme in Nyasaland, 1950–62: A Study of a Failed Attempt to Create a 'Yeoman' Class," *African Affairs* 92, 368 (1993): 367–87; Bryson G. Nkhoma, "'We Are What We Eat': Nutrition, African Diets and the State in Colonial Malawi, 1920s–1960," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 46, 6 (2020): 1219–35.

³⁴ Martin Chanock, *Unconsummated Union: Britain, Rhodesia, and South Africa, 1900–45* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1977).

³⁵ Cohen, *Politics and Economics*, 42–43.

³⁶ Roy Welensky, *Welensky's 4000 Days: The Life and Death of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland* (London: Collins, 1964), 21–23.

³⁷ Cohen, *Politics and Economics*, 40–41.

³⁸ Joey Power, *Political Culture and Nationalism in Malawi: Building Kwacha* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2010), 137–42.

³⁹ "So Sorry, Would You Mind Waiting?" *Central African Examiner*, 30 Jan. 1960.

⁴⁰ Power, *Political Culture*, 146–49.

some form, if only for Nyasaland's sake. Many of Congress's erstwhile supporters in Britain were inclined to agree. One sympathetic economist compared the territory to another European country. Nyasaland, he wrote, was the "Ireland of Africa ... poor, scenic, and with a ready supply of exportable labour."⁴¹

The analogy to Ireland had some truth. Nyasaland was small. The territory was only 46,000 square miles in all, 12,000 of which were water, and its 2.8 million people made it feel even smaller than that.⁴² Nyasaland was also scenic, or, in other words, overwhelmingly rural—only about 2.5 percent of the African population lived in towns—and lacking major industries or infrastructure that might spoil the view.⁴³ And Nyasaland had not seen the same economic growth as the Rhodesias in the postwar era. Rhodesian industries had powered British Central Africa to a 11.7 percent average growth rate between 1950 and 1958, making it one of the fastest growing economies in the world.⁴⁴ Investors had also poured in over £100 million since 1953, a figure that included a £28.6 million loan from the World Bank—then its largest loan to date—for a hydro-electric dam project in Southern Rhodesia.⁴⁵ Nyasaland arguably benefitted from federation. Between 1954 and 1959, the territorial government enjoyed an annual net gain of £3.3 million on its current account thanks to Federal revenue sharing.⁴⁶ But even with integration, Nyasaland only saw a fraction of that £100 million, and largely remained an exporter of men to the Rhodesias and South Africa.⁴⁷

However, the question in 1960 was what exactly these numbers meant for Nyasaland. To British officials and Central African settlers, the statistics spoke for themselves: Nyasaland was rural, poor, and would be poorer still without the Federation. They often invoked the 1959 economic survey of Nyasaland, an exhaustive study led by the economist D. T. Jack. The Jack Report concluded that Nyasaland's "economic development has been accelerated as a direct consequence of its federal association with the two Rhodesias and that the economic benefits which have been enjoyed have been substantial."⁴⁸

⁴¹ William J. Barber, "Federation and the Distribution of Economic Benefits," in Colin Leys and Cranford Pratt, eds., *A New Deal in Central Africa* (London: Heinemann, 1960), 96.

⁴² *Handbook to the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland* (London: Cassell and Company for the Federation Information Department, 1960), 783.

⁴³ J. G. Pike and G. T. Rimmington, *Malawi: A Geographical Study* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), 167–72.

⁴⁴ *Report on an Economic Survey of Nyasaland 1958–1959* (Salisbury: Government Printer, 1959), 51.

⁴⁵ *Handbook to the Federation*, 686, 352–54. On the Kariba dam, see Julia Tischler, *Light and Power for a Multiracial Nation: The Kariba Dam Scheme in the Central African Federation* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

⁴⁶ Arthur Hazlewood and P. D. Henderson, *Nyasaland: The Economics of Federation* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1960), 46.

⁴⁷ McCracken, *History of Malawi*, 278–81.

⁴⁸ *Report on an Economic Survey*, 1.

The report met with a knowing response in London—British officials had said the same about Nyasaland and Federation for years, and Jack only confirmed it.⁴⁹ The reaction in Salisbury, the Federal capital, was ecstatic. The pugnacious *Rhodesia Herald* called the Jack Report “irrefutable” and sniped that “the Nyasa leaders who clamour for power (or ‘freedom’ as they call it) without bread might ponder how they would be able to control their millions of fellow countrymen when even their elementary needs could not be satisfied.”⁵⁰ By 1960, the tone had sharpened. In mid-March, Alec Douglas-Home, the British commonwealth secretary, and Roy Welensky, who had since become the Federal prime minister, both referred to Nyasaland as a “slum” in separate speeches to audiences in London and Salisbury.⁵¹

Congress made precisely the opposite case: it was the Federation and the link with the Rhodesias that had left Nyasaland so poor. Congress activists had long drawn a straight line between prosperity in the Rhodesias and poverty in Nyasaland. In a message to the 1957 Commonwealth conference, Congress claimed that the “alleged economic development” was in fact “the perpetuation of the theory of the master race at the expense of the Africans, the owners of the land.”⁵² Any mention of “development” raised hackles among Congress supporters, who took the term to mean the theft of African land and labor.⁵³ In the villages, men like Lupere Machaya of Mchoka, in Lilongwe district, rallied his neighbors to oppose local development efforts, arguing that agricultural schemes were “only a trick of the European to get the Africans to do all the work and get the land in order before it is taken over by Europeans.”⁵⁴ Friends of Congress also advocated on their behalf during the Nyasaland emergency. The Church of Scotland and the Africa Bureau, two redoubts of liberal anti-colonialism in Britain, responded to the Jack Report by publicizing an alternative survey of Nyasaland. Their experts, the economists Arthur Hazlewood and P. D. Henderson, published a book-length reply to Jack in

⁴⁹ Henry Phillips, *From Obscurity to Bright Dawn: How Nyasaland Became Malawi; An Insider's Account* (London: Radcliffe Press, 1998), 130–31.

⁵⁰ “The Nyasaland Conundrum,” *Rhodesia Herald*, 17 Nov. 1959.

⁵¹ “Several Years before Independence in Nyasaland,” *Nyasaland Times*, 18 Mar. 1960.

⁵² British National Archives (BNA) Colonial Office (CO) 1015/1748, J.R.N. Chinyama, et. al. to Commonwealth Prime Ministers, Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference (except Roy Welensky), 15 June 1957.

⁵³ On colonial agricultural policy and rural resistance, see Wapulumuka Oliver Mulwafu, *Conservation Song: A History of Peasant-State Relations and the Environment in Malawi, 1860–2000* (Cambridge: White Horse Press, 2011), 144–63. On rural politics, see Power, *Political Culture*, 94–122; Gift Wasambo Kayira, “Petitioning the State: Group Councils and the Development of Political Consciousness in Malawi, 1940s–1950s,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 47, 6 (2021): 1045–60.

⁵⁴ MNA Agriculture (AGR) 17/4/1F 8085, Tobacco Supervisor, AP&MB to District Commissioner, Lilongwe, 22 Dec. 1958, “Mpingu Land Reorganisation Scheme.”

1960, comparing the Federation to “the emperor’s clothes” because Nyasaland would have likely experienced the same growth with or without the Rhodesias.⁵⁵

As 1960 wore on, Congress won a few fights, but not the argument. In July, Banda and Macleod reached an agreement to end the emergency and on a new constitution, which granted the African majority the right to territorial self-rule within the federal framework, a form of nested sovereignty comparable to Southern Rhodesia’s position within the Federation.⁵⁶ They later set the date for the legislative elections—the first to include Nyasaland’s African population—for August 1961. The deal was unpopular with the colonial administration in Zomba, Nyasaland’s capital. In a speech to the Nyasaland legislative council delivered while Banda was in London, the financial secretary Henry Phillips reiterated the case for continuing federation, insisting that “this territory could not possibly stand on its own feet unless it were to see its economic and social standards reduced to a point which would surely be quite unacceptable even to the unsophisticated.”⁵⁷ Official attitudes had begun to shift, however. In October, the imperial advisory commission released its report, which concluded that African opposition made the Federation untenable in its present form and recommended that the British government consider the possibility of secession. At the same time, the commission also took pains to insist that the Federation could be reformed, arguing that a breakup “would bring hardship, poverty, and distress to many, and entail sacrifices for all.”⁵⁸

After the October report, all eyes turned to the Nyasaland elections, which suddenly seemed like a referendum on secession. The Congress candidates barnstormed the country, speaking to huge crowds wherever they went.⁵⁹ Their slogan was that a Congress government would make Nyasaland a “Central African Denmark.”⁶⁰ Most Nyasas were likely unfamiliar with the details of Danish history, but they knew what Congress meant. They read or heard about stories in *Malawi News*, the Congress organ, about the “wealth in the soil” and the need for cooperatives and hard work to realize it.⁶¹ Opponents of Congress found the whole idea absurd. One Federal minister claimed that “Nyasaland would beg without federation,” as the headline in the *Nyasaland Times* put it, and that the territory would become “a pawn in power politics and economics, to be shuffled around the international chess board by the

⁵⁵ Hazlewood and Henderson, *Nyasaland*, 31.

⁵⁶ For an overview, see McCracken, *History of Malawi*, 376–78.

⁵⁷ *Record of the Proceedings of the First Meeting of the Seventy-Fifth Session of Legislative Council, Held at Zomba, Commencing on Monday 4th July 1960* (Zomba: Government Printer, 1960), 33.

⁵⁸ *Report of the Advisory Commission on the Review of the Constitution of Rhodesia and Nyasaland* (London: Her Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1960), 31–32.

⁵⁹ Lucy Mair, *The Nyasaland Elections of 1961* (London: Athlone Press, 1962).

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 38–39.

⁶¹ See, for example, Chadaine Deleza, “Co-operative Societies are Necessary for Malawi,” *Malawi News*, 29 June 1961.

Communists.”⁶² However, the Soviet boogeyman did not seem to spook anyone outside of Central Africa. Both London and Washington thought they knew how to spot a communist or a fellow-traveler, and Banda, with his taste for all things British and admiration of the Danes, was not it.

In the end, the 1961 election was never really a contest. Congress won with 98 percent of the vote.⁶³ *Malawi News* celebrated the victory, writing that Nyasaland “can and will forge ahead to Nationhood and to take its dynamic place in the New Africa.”⁶⁴ Later that August, Banda hosted U.S. Assistant Secretary of State G. Mennen Williams in Zomba. In a speech at a state dinner, Banda explained that he would seek foreign aid and investment from Britain, the United States, and Western Europe. Perhaps with the election still on his mind, Banda added that arguments against secession “could not bear scrutiny.” “Such desert countries as Libya and Somalia were independent,” he noted, “so why not Nyasaland with its maize, rice, groundnuts, sugar, tea, tobacco,” not to mention potential mineral wealth.⁶⁵ The British officials in attendance were probably not nodding along. Though Macleod and others congratulated Congress on its victory, they remained committed to federation in some form. Many in London believed that Congress’s dream of a Central African Denmark was just that—a dream, with no real plan or money behind it. They could not imagine how the United States or other donors could replace the millions of pounds that Nyasaland received each year from the Federation. London hoped that once the new nationalist government had to set its own territorial budget, Congress might finally appreciate the wisdom of federation, too.

WHAT LIES AHEAD: DUNDUZU CHISIZA ON WALT ROSTOW AND AFRICAN INDEPENDENCE

The Malawi Congress Party’s imagining of a “Central African Denmark” was an unusual vision for a nationalist party in decolonization-era Africa.⁶⁶ To its critics, the comparison to Denmark, as well as the claims about the “wealth in the soil,” seemed like a lack of imagination, as if the only reason for Nyasaland’s poverty was a simple lack of trying to be rich. But there were in fact serious ideas behind the slogans. Decolonization was a moment of comparison. Anti-colonial nationalists appealed to the example of India or Ghana to demand their freedom.⁶⁷ Empires

⁶² “Nyasaland Would Beg without Federation,” *Nyasaland Times*, 25 Nov. 1960.

⁶³ McCracken, *History of Malawi*, 378–83.

⁶⁴ “Malawi Can Now Forge Ahead to Nationhood,” *Malawi News*, 17 Aug. 1961.

⁶⁵ “Mr. Williams Gets Warm Malawi Welcome,” *Malawi News*, 31 Aug. 1961.

⁶⁶ There were some notable exceptions, however. See Ismay Milford and Gerard McCann, “African Internationalisms and the Erstwhile Trajectories of Kenyan Community Development: Joseph Murumbi’s 1950s,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 57, 1 (2022): 111–35.

⁶⁷ Christopher J. Lee, ed., *Making a World after Empire: The Bandung Moment and Its Political Afterlives* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2010).

weighed which of their colonies might be viable as independent states, and when they should set them free.⁶⁸ The UN measured how colonies and new nations stacked up against the rest of the world.⁶⁹ By 1960, development had become the *sine qua non* of freedom. Officials were not as concerned with where a territory ranked on any given table at the time, but rather where it might sit sometime in the future. That opened possibilities for novel comparisons. Congress imagined Nyasaland as Denmark as they saw it: rural, prosperous, and egalitarian. But equally important was the comparison itself, which implied that Nyasaland was a nation like any other and could therefore develop like any other nation.

The thinker behind this vision was Dunduzu Chisiza, Congress's organizer-turned-economist. Chisiza did not take a typical path into the profession. He was born in Karonga district, in the Northern Province, in 1930, the son of a village chief and the last of eleven children. A talented student, he was educated at Livingstonia, Nyasaland's top mission school. Like many young Nyasas, Chisiza left home for work and to further his education abroad—first to Tanganyika in 1949, then to Uganda in 1950, and finally Southern Rhodesia in 1953. He was active in anti-colonial politics wherever he went. He returned to Nyasaland in 1956, after Southern Rhodesian authorities deported him for his activism there. Back home, Chisiza traveled the territory as an organizer for Congress. He left briefly in 1957 on a scholarship to study at Fircroft College, an adult education institution in Birmingham, England, where he fell in love with development economics. But Kamuzu Banda asked him to come home again, and so he traveled back to Nyasaland in 1958 to become the Congress secretary-general. Chisiza only had the chance to return to his studies again after his arrest during the 1959 Emergency. He taught himself economics in Gwelo prison.⁷⁰

In all, Chisiza spent eighteen months in detention in Southern Rhodesia. He was among the last of the detainees to be released. He and the other detainees adopted a faux academic title they borrowed from the Indian and Ghanaian nationalists they admired: "PG," or prison graduate, which they took as a recognition of the months they spent studying in Gwelo. Chisiza certainly earned the distinction. In a profile by the British journalist Clyde Sanger, Chisiza estimated that he read seventy-four books just on development economics during his detention. "And each twice," Sanger added, "sometimes rationing his reading in case he should run out before the next book came." Chisiza was particularly enamored with U.S. economists, especially the

⁶⁸ Frederick Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society: The Labor Question in French and British Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 393–99.

⁶⁹ Daniel Speich, "The Use of Global Abstractions: National Income Accounting in the Period of Imperial Decline," *Journal of Global History* 6, 1 (2011): 7–28; Luke Messac, "Outside the Economy: Women's Work and Feminist Economics in the Construction and Critique of National Income Accounting," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 46, 3 (2018): 552–78.

⁷⁰ For an account of Chisiza's life, see D. D. Phiri, *Dunduzu K. Chisiza* (Blantyre: Longmans, 1974).

modernization theorist Walt Rostow, to whom he wrote from Gwelo. After corresponding with Rostow, Sanger explained, Chisiza “became convinced that Nyasaland could reach its take-off point into self-sustained growth after ten years of independence.”⁷¹

Chisiza first wrote to Rostow in late 1959, just as Rostow was about to ascend to the height of his fame. Over the next year, he would publish his landmark book, *The Stages of Economic Growth*, and leave his position at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), where he had taught since 1950, for a post as a foreign-policy advisor with the incoming Kennedy administration. He was an avowed Cold Warrior—*Stages*, for example, was subtitled “A Non-communist Manifesto.” But at the time, he was still known as an economic historian and public intellectual, and not for his role in the escalation of the Vietnam War, as he would be later.⁷² According to a 1960 editorial by George Shepperson, a Scottish historian of Nyasaland and friend of Congress, Chisiza and the other detainees encountered Rostow for the first time in the pages of the *Economist*, which published a revised version of his 1958 lectures at University of Cambridge across two issues in August 1959.⁷³ Rostow later recounted receiving Chisiza’s first letter that August, and replying promptly, enclosing a copy of the full draft of *Stages*. Rostow exchanged a number of letters with Chisiza in 1960, impressed with Chisiza’s “active and probing response to *The Stages*.”⁷⁴

Stages was a short but ambitious book that, in Rostow’s words, offered “a theory about economic growth and a more, if still highly partial, theory about modern history as a whole.”⁷⁵ Rostow argued that every society could be categorized into one of five “stages of growth”—traditional society, the preconditions for take-off, the take-off, the drive to maturity, and the age of high mass-consumption. His theory of modernization rested on the third stage, “the take-off,” when “the forces making for economic progress, which yielded limited bursts and enclaves of modern activity, expand and come to dominate the society.”⁷⁶ Rostow explained that to achieve take-off, a society needed to meet three conditions: an investment in productivity, a leading manufacturing sector, and institutions conducive to economic growth.⁷⁷ He claimed that foreign powers created many of the pre-conditions for take-off, his second stage, by

⁷¹ SSC MK 3/1/4, Clyde Sanger to Peter Mackay, 19 Mar. 1961, encl.: “Chisiza.” A decade was a conventional time horizon for development planning at the time.

⁷² Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future*, 190–202.

⁷³ George Shepperson, “Africans Studied in Prison,” *Scotsman*, 17 Nov. 1959.

⁷⁴ Rostow later reminisced about his “heartwarming correspondence” with Chisiza. See W. W. Rostow, “Some Lessons of History for Africa,” in *Essays on a Half-Century: Ideas, Policies, and Action* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1988), 65.

⁷⁵ W. W. Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960), 1.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 39.

incorporating traditional societies into the wider world of ideas, trade, and technology. But the real spark behind the take-off was “reactive nationalism,” which he described as “a most important and powerful motive force in the transition from traditional to modern societies.”⁷⁸ It took a national elite to set modernization in motion, first by forcing out both foreigners and the old order to form a modern state, and then by revolutionizing domestic industries and institutions to compete in the world economy.⁷⁹ *Stages* described how Europe, North America, and parts of East Asia had made that historic leap, and why Latin America, the Middle East, Africa, and the rest of Asia might be next.

Rostow described the take-off as “defined by an industrial revolution” and “a return to a rather old-fashioned way of looking at economic development.”⁸⁰ *Stages* could be read as a fairly traditional history. Rostow’s take-off would have sounded familiar to readers acquainted with pop histories of the English industrial revolution, or for the more critical set, of the Scottish enclosures.⁸¹ But behind those familiar stories were new ideas about economic growth. The leading economists of the time believed that growth occurred when the scales of production tipped from agriculture to industry. It was an idea present in the work of Colin Clark, whose path-breaking statistical studies of national income—a forerunner to gross domestic product—identified the shift in employment from farm to factory as the key to growth.⁸² The same idea appeared in the important development models of the era as well. Paul Rosenstein-Rodan, Rostow’s colleague at MIT, advocated for what he termed a “big push,” a strategy that rested on the premise that industrialization was what made for sustained growth. He argued that policymakers could develop the economy by concentrating investment in local industries that would provide jobs for underemployed rural men, goods for local and export markets, and a tax base for the state.⁸³ W. Arthur Lewis, the most influential development economist of the era, turned the idea of a rural-to-urban shift into his immensely influential “dual economy” model. Lewis argued that the key to growth was the transfer of surplus labor from the subsistence agricultural sector to the modern industrial sector, where entrepreneurs could use low-wage workers to accumulate capital, which the state could then tax and reinvest in development and social services.⁸⁴

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 26–35.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 57.

⁸¹ On Rostow and Britain, see Guy Ortolano, “The Typicalities of the English? Walt Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth*, and Modern British History,” *Modern Intellectual History* 12, 3 (2015): 657–84.

⁸² Colin Clark, *The Conditions of Economic Progress* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1940).

⁸³ P. N. Rosenstein-Rodan, “Problems of Industrialization of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe,” *Economic Journal* 53, 210–11 (1943): 202–11.

⁸⁴ W. Arthur Lewis, “Economic Development with Unlimited Supplies of Labour,” *Manchester School* 22, 2 (1954): 139–91.

Rostow's "industrial revolution" followed the latest development models rather than old-fashioned economic history.

Rostow was also concerned with how agriculture might create the pre-conditions for take-off. He styled himself as the voice of the peasant farmer, seeing small-scale agriculture as the embodiment of the liberal ideal of freedom and a bulwark against communism.⁸⁵ In *Stages*, he described how different agricultural products have and could contribute to new industries, and left open the possibility of a "leading sector" other than manufacturing.⁸⁶ He was not alone in his interest in agricultural development. Other economists identified the same need for linkages between the agricultural and industrial sectors.⁸⁷ However, many development economists still expected industrialization to shrink the agricultural sector, with the country giving way to the city. That transition was not necessarily something to mourn. Rostow—like Clark, Rosenstein-Rodan, and Lewis—anticipated that industrialization would create a leaner, fully commercialized agricultural sector, similar to those in the developed world. It was nonetheless never entirely clear how and when this agricultural revolution would occur. Should planners welcome the exodus of labor from the countryside? Or was migration eating away at the social fabric and productive capacity of the agricultural sector? Should governments invest in large-scale, mechanized agriculture along the lines of the U.S. Midwest? Or should they invest in small farmers, introducing simple technologies and organizing cooperatives, as in Northern Europe?

For Chisiza, Rostow was a revelation. He read *Stages* not as a theory of growth, as Rostow had intended, but a how-to guide to modernization for new nations. Chisiza laid out his interpretation in a pamphlet, *Africa—What Lies Ahead*, which he began writing in Gwelo. He opened *Africa* with a question that he and other anti-colonial activists had heard many times before: "After independence, what?"⁸⁸ The pamphlet was Chisiza's reply, and in it he offered his thoughts on what he saw as the issues facing independent Africa, which numbered more than two dozen problems in all, from one-party rule, to poverty and unemployment, to the decline of spiritual life. The one through line of *Africa* was the idea that African nationalists must be modernizers, "men of conviction who know their African as well as their European ways thoroughly and who are at once patriotic, progressive and balanced."⁸⁹ Chisiza described Africa as a continent in transition: peasants into workers, tribes into classes, the country into

⁸⁵ W. W. Rostow, "Marx Was a City Boy or, Why Communism May Fail," *Harper's Magazine*, Feb. 1955: 25–30. See also Nicole Sackley, "The Village as Cold War Site: Experts, Development, and the History of Rural Reconstruction," *Journal of Global History* 6, 3 (2011): 481–504.

⁸⁶ Rostow, *Stages*, 21–24, 57.

⁸⁷ For a contemporary critique, see Bruce F. Johnston and John W. Mellor, "The Role of Agriculture in Economic Development," *American Economic Review* 51, 4 (1961): 566–93.

⁸⁸ D. K. Chisiza, *Africa—What Lies Ahead?* 2d ed. (New Delhi: Indian Council for Africa, 1961), 1.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 20.

the city. African nationalists had not set these forces in motion, he argued, but as leaders of the new Africa, they would have to see the changes through. Working from Rostow's typology, Chisiza explained that it did not matter whether soldiers, politicians, merchants, or intellectuals took command.⁹⁰ What did was that "the dominant element should be sold on the need to concentrate on the task of economic modernisation," this being "Professor Rostow's important observation."⁹¹ Chisiza advocated what he called a "pragmatic pattern of development," a strategy that "discards the irrelevant and incorporates the best" of the East and West. He set out plans and policy objectives, all with shades of the Danish model, including folk schools, cooperatives, and rural industries, filtered through the language of participation characteristic of community development thinking.⁹²

Chisiza's Rostow was less of an anti-communist and more of anti-colonial nationalist. It was certainly an unorthodox interpretation of his work. The actual Rostow criticized what he termed "xenophobic nationalism" in the colonies and postcolonial world, and wondered whether the burdens of overpopulation, unemployment, and communist subversion would sink the fortunes of new nations.⁹³ He also had very little to say about Africa and its future. Nonetheless, Chisiza was right to read Rostow as a sort of nationalist, both in his political outlook and in his method. Though he may have been critical of certain nationalist movements, Rostow still believed that nationalism was the "motive force" of history. And not only that, Rostow made the nation the unit of historical change itself. He described modernization as a move from traditional society to the nation-state, and in explaining that transition, he pushed nations—Britain, Sweden, Japan—forward and backward through time to compare how and when they became modern. The historical comparisons were rough, and quite possibly wrong at times, too, as Rostow himself admitted.⁹⁴ But the effect was to show the many forms that modernization could take. Rostow believed that new nations would find examples of take-offs to emulate if they looked for new comparisons—not just to the United States or Germany, but to Sweden, Switzerland, and Israel as well.⁹⁵

If Chisiza was looking for a discussion of Denmark in *Stages*, he would have been disappointed. Rostow referenced the Danish dairy industry as an example of a leading manufacturing sector, alongside timber in Sweden and

⁹⁰ Rostow, *Stages*, 28–29. Rostow and other U.S. officials did sometimes favor "soldiers" taking command. See Bradley R. Simpson, *Economists with Guns: Authoritarian Development and U.S.-Indonesian Relations, 1960–1968* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008).

⁹¹ Chisiza, *Africa*, 5.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 21–24, 29–30, 51–53.

⁹³ Rostow, *Stages*, 28, 139–43.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 40.

⁹⁵ This comparison is clearest in the original lectures. See "Rostow on Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto I," *Economist*, 15 Aug. 1959: 414.

meat in Australia, but said little otherwise.⁹⁶ He explained that he had to leave out Denmark because the country lacked historical national accounts data.⁹⁷ Rostow instead looked to the Swedes, who in his telling had modernized with timber alone, and the Japanese, who showed how agricultural products could support industrialization.⁹⁸ Rostow also likely did not feel as though he needed Denmark to make his argument. By 1960, the Danish example had faded from the economics literature because it represented an older case of economic progress, an era of improvement rather than development.⁹⁹ Cooperatives looked quaint in comparison to land resettlement schemes. Folk schools seemed inadequate to the task of catching new nations up to speed with the latest technologies. And perhaps just as importantly, the Danish economy had fallen behind the rest of Western Europe in the 1950s, arguably because the Danes were stuck in their nineteenth-century ways.¹⁰⁰

Though Rostow looked elsewhere for his case studies, Chisiza could still read about Denmark in other corners of development literature. Charles Kindleberger, a respected economist and colleague of Rostow's for a time at MIT, described Denmark as a challenge to conventional theories of international trade, arguing that a Danish "personality" of cooperation had enabled mid-sized farmers to adapt to new technology and capitalize on market opportunity.¹⁰¹ As noted above, Colin Clark equated growth with industrialization, but he also argued against neo-Malthusians who condemned densely populated, rural countries like Nyasaland to perpetual poverty, pointing to Denmark as a counter-example.¹⁰² For those for whom development was more of a moral cause, such as the mission churches, the Danes were admirable for their spirit of community. The English social worker Guy Clutton-Brock, a friend of Congress and of Chisiza personally, believed that there was much to learn from the comparison of "the needs of Nyasaland and the Denmark of a hundred years ago."¹⁰³

In *Africa*, Chisiza took these comparisons in Rostow and the development literature further. For Rostow, modernization demanded politicians, entrepreneurs, capital, markets, technology, and of course, actual resources

⁹⁶ Rostow, *Stages*, 39n.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 41n.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 62–65.

⁹⁹ Markus Lampe and Paul Sharp, *A Land of Milk and Butter: How Elites Created the Modern Danish Dairy Industry* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018).

¹⁰⁰ Peder J. Pedersen, "Postwar Growth of the Danish Economy," in Nicholas Crafts and Gianni Toniolo, eds., *Economic Growth in Europe since 1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 541–75.

¹⁰¹ C. P. Kindleberger, "Group Behavior and International Trade," *Journal of Political Economy* 59, 1 (1951): 30–46.

¹⁰² Colin Clark, "Population Growth and Living Standards," in A. N. Agarwala and S. P. Singh, eds., *The Economics of Underdevelopment* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1958), 36–42.

¹⁰³ Guy Clutton-Brock, *Dawn in Nyasaland* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1959), 170.

that could be the basis for the development of national industries. Chisiza read Rostow differently, arguing instead that modernization began with a nation united by a political leadership committed to growth. For Chisiza, then, it was the nation-state—not minerals, not industries, not cities—that made development historically possible. Chisiza also expanded the meaning of the “nation” itself. Rostow and other modernization theorists wrote with countries such as India and Indonesia in mind. They, like British officials, believed that empire was giving way to new state forms in the postcolonial world. There was the Central African Federation, of course, but also the West Indies Federation and the Federation of Malaya. All three of these states would have been “nations” to Rostow, who used the term to describe states generally, as was common at the time. Chisiza, by contrast, used “nation” to refer to anti-colonial nationalist projects. Nations were won, not decided by decree in London. And so Chisiza, in pushing within Rostow’s model, extended the modernization framework to include colonial territories on the margins of empire, many of which still had uncertain political futures. The vision of a “Central African Denmark” made that idea plain to the British and to Congress supporters.

Chisiza finished writing *Africa* in early 1961, in time for the self-rule elections that August. The *Economist*, which had praised Chisiza for his “sophisticated liberalism” earlier that year, remarked on *Africa* in an April issue.¹⁰⁴ “His pamphlet shows Mr Chisiza to be a conservative politician,” the *Economist* noted approvingly, adding that “none of this sounds like the wild, ‘irresponsible’ politics so feared in Salisbury.”¹⁰⁵ The reception in Central Africa was different. In early August, a few weeks before the election, the Federal Customs House in Blantyre seized a shipment of five hundred copies of the Indian edition of *Africa*, all bound for local bookshops.¹⁰⁶ The offending article was likely the appendix, “A Message to the People of India,” from a speech Chisiza gave during a visit to India earlier that year in which he referred to the Central African Federation as “a second South Africa” and personally warned the Federal prime minister Roy Welensky that “the death-knell tolls for [the Federation] and we shall not rest until we have obtained its burial certificate.”¹⁰⁷ By 1961, then, there were two images of Chisiza in the press: the conservative acolyte of Rostow and the extremist who threatened to tear apart Central Africa. These two Chisizas were irreconcilable in part because they both misunderstood what made *Africa* so radical at the time: the idea that an African country could be free, prosperous, and rural.

Chisiza’s ideas shaped the Congress campaign for the 1961 elections. The Congress candidates all ran on a promise to do what seventy years of colonialism

¹⁰⁴ “Dr. Banda’s Men,” *Economist*, 11 Feb. 1961.

¹⁰⁵ “Calm in Malawi-land,” *Economist*, 29 Apr. 1961.

¹⁰⁶ SSC MK 3/1/4, Peter Mackay to Jane Symonds, 24 Aug. 1961.

¹⁰⁷ Chisiza, *Africa*, 62.

had not done—develop Nyasaland. The party manifesto set out a long list of objectives and priorities, many of them lifted directly from *Africa*. The real imperative, though, was small-scale agriculture, because, as the manifesto explained, “any underdeveloped country at Nyasaland’s stage of economic development must first modernize its agriculture if a break with stagnation and a move towards self-sustained economic growth is to be made.”¹⁰⁸ More concretely, Congress aimed “to make farming a source of income for the masses” and to intensify agricultural production by introducing new seeds, better methods, and cooperative marketing.¹⁰⁹ It was a bold plan, one that envisioned a take-off before the fuel was in order. But Chisiza made optimists out of many observers. “Dr. Banda himself has a favourite phrase about ‘creating a central African Denmark,’” the *Economist* wrote in an article on the eve of the election. “With good soil and better rainfall than elsewhere in Central Africa, Nyasaland might succeed in achieving the great increase in cash crop production which is necessary to prime any development.” And just as importantly, Nyasaland had Chisiza, who “at Her Majesty’s expense in Gwelo prison, read more about the economics of under-developed countries than probably anyone else on the continent.”¹¹⁰

A TYPICAL UNDERDEVELOPED COUNTRY: NYASALAND AND THE DEVELOPMENT DECADE

The optimism about Nyasaland in the *Economist* was part of a broader rethinking of development in Africa in the early independence years. In September 1961, just weeks after the Nyasaland elections, U.S. President John F. Kennedy called for the 1960s to be the “development decade” in an address to the UN. That December, the General Assembly took up Kennedy’s words, officially declaring the 1960s the United Nations Development Decade. Though states differed on doctrine, they agreed on the need for new programs and institutions that could funnel capital and technical expertise to the developing world.¹¹¹ In Nyasaland, the Congress government matched its development plans to the new internationalist ambitions in the United States and at the UN, claiming the status of an “underdeveloped country”—rather than the constitutive territory it was—to break apart the Central African Federation.

Congress looked outward to the world for aid in part because British officials made clear that only the minimum would come from London. Congress moved into Government House in Zomba with intentions to spend

¹⁰⁸ *Malawi Congress Party Manifesto: General Election 1961* (n.p., [1961]), 15.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 15–16.

¹¹⁰ “Nyasaland’s Choice,” *Economist*, 12 Aug. 1961.

¹¹¹ Sara Lorenzini, *Global Development: A Cold War History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019), 96–103.

big. During the campaign, Banda promised that in addition to ho-hum development work like agricultural extension classes, a new Congress government would find the funds for a university, a 300-mile lakeshore road, and a hydro-electric dam on the Shire River.¹¹² Some of that money would come from abroad. But most of it would have to come out of the budget, and that meant negotiating with the British and Federal governments. British officials, for their part, were concerned about appearing “to take Nyasaland on as an open pensioner,” as one senior official put it. They decided to put the funds on hold until after the August elections, hoping to use the budget as a bargaining chip with the future Congress government.¹¹³

Federal officials sensed that Congress’s problems could be their gain. After Britain asked Congress to scale back their plans, Federal Prime Minister Roy Welensky stepped in with an offer of Federal funds for a hydro-electric dam at Nkula Falls. Welensky’s gambit, as the British high commissioner reported, was to use Nkula “as the ground for the coming struggle with Banda.”¹¹⁴ Were Banda to accept Welensky’s offer, it would look like a retreat on secession. But Banda could not exactly reject the money either. The Federal government had designated Nkula a federal project in 1954, which meant Congress could not legally take over the scheme. Hoping to avoid a showdown with Welensky, British officials counseled Congress to compromise. The Colonial Office thought the situation might even be a good lesson in the cost of secession, “bringing [Banda] and his fellow Malawi Ministers up against the facts of Nyasaland’s difficult economic situation.”¹¹⁵

Chisiza, as the Congress government’s parliamentary secretary of finance, was in the thick of the negotiations. He was eager to agree on a budget so that he could turn his attention to development planning. At the urging of Henry Phillips, the colonial finance secretary who stayed on in the Congress government, Chisiza recommended to Banda that they quietly let the Federal government handle Nkula and move forward with other projects. Banda was reportedly incensed at Chisiza’s suggestion, to the extent that many observers sensed a rift between the two afterward.¹¹⁶ Banda chose to confront Federal officials instead, telling reporters at a press conference one day in November 1961 that he “would rather see the whole of this Nyasaland starve to death than have a charity from Welensky.”¹¹⁷ Chisiza fell into line, arguing forcefully

¹¹² “Great Development Schemes Planned,” *Malawi News*, 18 May 1961.

¹¹³ BNA CO 1015/2417, Minute, N. D. Watson, 18 Apr. 1961.

¹¹⁴ BNA CO 1015/2430, Lord Alport to Commonwealth Relations Office, 18 Oct. 1961.

¹¹⁵ BNA CO 1015/2430, “Note of Meeting Held at the Colonial Office 3.15 p.m. 31st October, 1961.”

¹¹⁶ BNA CO 1015/2430, “Note by the Minister of Finance on Discussions with Dr. Banda about the Nkula Falls Project” [Sept. 1961]. For Phillips’s account of his relationship with Chisiza, see *Obscurity to Bright Dawn*, 140, 148.

¹¹⁷ “Kamuzu Will Not Accept Charity from Welensky,” *Malawi News*, 30 Nov. 1961.

against cooperating with Federal authorities in talks with the British colonial secretary earlier the same day.¹¹⁸

Unable to live within Britain's means, and unwilling to accept Welensky's charity, Chisiza and Congress looked to the United States for aid. They made a show of their reverence for the United States. Chisiza, for instance, prominently displayed a framed copy of Kennedy's inaugural address in his living room for his guests to see.¹¹⁹ The local U.S. mission was eager to work with the new Congress government, doing its part for Kennedy's Development Decade.¹²⁰ U.S. officials also invited Congress leaders to Washington, D.C. Chisiza visited the United States twice, in October 1961 and January 1962, to discuss development matters. He met with U.S. officials with the Department of State and other agencies and, in October, a team from the World Bank. He also had the opportunity to see Rostow, who later said the two "met like long-lost brothers."¹²¹ The meetings in Washington were friendly, but inconclusive. "The general assessment of him here," a British diplomat wrote of Chisiza, "is that he has read a lot of books, but his exposé of Nyasaland's affairs and prospects has not been wholeheartedly accepted, nor have his assurances about the slightness of the economic effects of defederation been swallowed."¹²²

Amid his busy travel schedule, Chisiza worked on what he considered to be the fullest statement of his ideas, the Congress development plan. Chisiza's plan was a point of contention between Congress and British officials. The British thought of the plan as a budget exercise. The original plan, drafted by local officials, proposed a modest increase in spending, to about £10 million, mainly to keep pace with the recurring costs of existing projects.¹²³ Congress countered that "the objectives of the Plan should be those contained in the Malawi Congress Party election manifesto"—meaning modernization, now—and that "overseas lenders would respond to a bold and imaginative Plan."¹²⁴ A commission led by Chisiza submitted a revised plan that envisioned £22 million in spending, backed by £10 million from Britain and £3 million from local taxes and bond sales, arguing that "this was the time for faith in the future and not for caution."¹²⁵

¹¹⁸ BNA Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) 141/14244, "Note of a meeting held at Government House, Zomba on 30th November, 1961, with Non-Official Ministers and Parliamentary Secretary."

¹¹⁹ "Nyasaland's Choice," *Economist*, 12 Aug. 1961.

¹²⁰ "Emphasis Will Be Laid on Agriculture," *Malawi News*, 30 Nov. 1961. For the view from the Colonial Office of the political issues in play, see BNA FCO 141/14243, N. D. Watson to Glyn Jones, 6 Oct. 1961.

¹²¹ Rostow, "Some Lessons of History," 65.

¹²² BNA DO 158/43, J. D. Hennings to K. J. Neale, 20 Oct. 1961.

¹²³ BNA CO 1015/2462, "Executive Council Paper: Development Plan 1962/65," [Dec. 1961].

¹²⁴ BNA CO 1015/2462, "Extract from the Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Council held on Wednesday, 20th December, 1961."

¹²⁵ BNA CO 1015/2462, "The Development Plan 1962/65," 18 Jan. 1965.

Chisiza understood that the fight over the development plan was about more than the costs involved, even if that was the form it often took. Part of the issue was that development planners had very little experience with truly agrarian economies like Nyasaland. Chisiza used his U.S. contacts to secure a \$50,000 grant from the Ford Foundation to host a symposium on economic development in Blantyre, Nyasaland's commercial capital, in mid-July 1962.¹²⁶ The aim of the Blantyre symposium was "to stimulate thought on some of the more fundamental development problems confronting underdeveloped countries, such as Nyasaland, in the expectation that a valuable pool of knowledge and expert opinion will thereby be established for the benefit of those responsible for economic development."¹²⁷ Invitations went out to distinguished economists from around the world—Eugene Staley in the United States, Nicholas Kaldor in Britain, V.K.R.V. Rao in India.¹²⁸ Chisiza, an organizer at heart, wanted ordinary people to participate in the symposium, too. In the weeks and months before the event, the local press featured stories about the attendees and development economics. *Malawi News*, for example, carried a syndicated article on Rostow and U.S. support for African independence.¹²⁹

The Blantyre symposium was one part of a larger drama around the break-up of the Central African Federation. The invitations went out as Banda and Welensky continued their war of words in the press over the Nkula scheme. R. A. Butler, the head of the new Central Africa Office, tried to appease both sides by publicly hinting at secession, while also affirming the British government's support for some form of association in Central Africa.¹³⁰ Butler also kept the Congress government waiting on a study of the economic consequences of secession, slated for completion in late 1962.¹³¹ The timeline meant that Chisiza had to move ahead with his development plan without the final figures, all the while dealing with a steady drip of bad news from London. Congress understandably feared "a repetition of the Jack Report," as Chisiza complained to Butler in a May meeting.¹³²

¹²⁶ On the role of U.S. foundations in promoting modernization thinking, see Corinna R. Unger, "Towards Global Equilibrium: American Foundations and Indian Modernization, 1950s to 1970s," *Journal of Global History* 6, 1 (2011): 121–42.

¹²⁷ BNA CO 1015/2498, H. S. Norman-Walker to the Director, The Ford Foundation, 16 Jan. 1962.

¹²⁸ For an early list of invitees, see BNA CO 1015/2498, A. McM. Webster to Mr. Fairclough, 19 Jan. 1962, "List of Proposed Invitees to a Symposium on Economic Development in Africa to be held in Nyasaland commencing on 18th July, 1962."

¹²⁹ "The United States and Africa: A Policy Planner's View," *Malawi News*, 10 May 1962.

¹³⁰ Cohen, *Politics and Economics*, 164–65.

¹³¹ BNA DO 183/127, "The Second Meeting between Mr. Butler and Dr. Banda ... 16th May, 1962."

¹³² BNA DO 183/127, "Record of a Meeting with the Secretary of State at Government House on the 16th May, 1962."

In July, the Congress government was even more preoccupied with development matters than usual—the release of the development plan, the Blantyre symposium, and a visit by a British advisory team were all scheduled for that month. Chisiza kicked off events with his presentation of the development plan to the legislative council. He described the plan to the council as “an attempt to translate the desires as well as the needs of our people into Development projects.” “This is what we went to prison for,” he continued, “this is what we suffered for, this is what some of our fellow countrymen died for.”¹³³ He went on to explain that they wrote the plan for three audiences: international lenders, country donors, and ordinary Nyasas.¹³⁴ In his speech, however, Chisiza seemed to be speaking directly to the U.S. government. In making the case for foreign aid, he quoted from Kennedy’s inaugural address and sprinkled in additional quotations from George Washington, John Hancock, and Abraham Lincoln.¹³⁵

U.S. officials would have found a lot to like in the Congress plan. Chisiza wanted the kind of mixed economy that the West preferred, where the withering away of the state meant planners had ceded projects to private investors. The Congress government proposed £19.25 million in spending over the next three years: £13 million on a list of 284 projects and the potential for an additional £6.25 million on twelve commercial projects geared toward private investors. He asked for £11 million from abroad, though that figure fell to £4.7 million without the commercial projects.¹³⁶ Chisiza’s plan concentrated spending in infrastructure, education, and of course, agriculture. Agriculture-related schemes and rural infrastructure claimed the largest number of total projects (ninety-three) and of new projects costing more than £10,000 (thirty-five), as well as the greatest shares of the main project budget (23 percent) and the commercial project budget (74 percent).¹³⁷ Because of the number of projects and the need for funds, officials joked that plan resembled a “shopping list.”¹³⁸

Chisiza, though, had a vision for how the projects came together. In the plan’s final chapter, he returned to *Stages*, asking: “What is the Government trying to make of the Nyasa economy? What state of economic affairs does it want to bring about ultimately: Is it Rostow’s ‘State of High Mass Consumption?’”¹³⁹ Chisiza imagined a future Nyasaland that was more economically diverse but still firmly agrarian. The new Nyasaland would have manufacturers producing goods for local consumers, financial institutions that

¹³³ *Proceedings of the Fifth Meeting of the Seventy-Sixth Session of Legislative Council, First Day, 11th July, 1962* (Zomba: Government Printer, 1962), 336.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 339, 342.

¹³⁶ *Development Plan 1962–65* (Zomba: Government Printer, 1962), 7–8, 99–100.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 101–4, 111–43.

¹³⁸ Phillips, *Obscurity to Bright Dawn*, 148.

¹³⁹ *Development Plan 1962–65*, 105.

served families and investors, and a service sector that employed the majority of the country's workers.¹⁴⁰ He hoped that Nyasaland would have added a mining industry, since he, like other Congress leaders, believed the country had economical mineral deposits.¹⁴¹ However, agriculture would remain the country's economic engine. Chisiza anticipated that 40 percent of Nyasaland would "live off the land" in agricultural employment.¹⁴² His description of development over the next fifteen years also focused largely on cash crop agriculture and agriculture-related industries, such as textile factories spinning local cotton.¹⁴³ Chisiza's new Nyasaland had then come to look more like the Denmark of his day—which still counted pork and dairy products as primary exports, even as it became more industrial (30 percent of the national income) and less agricultural (18 percent of total employment)—than the quaint cooperative economy that Kamuzu Banda wrote about in the late 1950s.¹⁴⁴

Later in July, Chisiza hosted the Blantyre symposium, which went on for ten days and drew packed audiences for the papers and a stadium of spectators for the closing dance festival.¹⁴⁵ Most of the papers were rather technical, but the audience seemed to enjoy the discussions.¹⁴⁶ There were some sour notes, like when A. J. Brown, a member of the British advisory team and one of the presenters, delivered a paper defending economic unions, which met with an angry rebuke from Banda. "Even if we have to eat roots, as our ancestors did in times of famine, we will do that rather than not secede," Banda declared in his closing speech for the symposium.¹⁴⁷

Chisiza, however, was the real story in Blantyre. In his characteristic style, Chisiza listed off the reasons why Africa was in revolt and what African nationalists hoped to make of a postcolonial world. His focus was the problems of nation-building.¹⁴⁸ Chisiza was critical of the record of his fellow nationalists, and though he was careful not to include names, it was obvious who he had in mind. He criticized Pan-Africanists like Kwame Nkrumah whose dreams of African unity amounted to "a federation of political intellectuals."¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 105.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 105, 107–8.

¹⁴² Ibid., 105.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 106–8.

¹⁴⁴ Anders Ølgaard, *The Danish Economy* (Brussels: Commission of the European Communities, 1979), 178, 20, 15.

¹⁴⁵ "Economic Symposium, A Great Success," *Malawi News*, 27 July 1962.

¹⁴⁶ "Nyasaland Economic Symposium," *Malawi News*, 27 July 1962.

¹⁴⁷ "Speech by the Prime Minister of Nyasaland, Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda, at the close of the Symposium," in E. F. Jackson, *Economic Development in Africa: Papers Presented to the Nyasaland Economic Symposium* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1965), 67.

¹⁴⁸ See D. K. Chisiza, "The Temper, Aspirations and Outlook of Contemporary Africa," in E. F. Jackson, *Economic Development in Africa: Papers Presented to the Nyasaland Economic Symposium* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1965), 1–4.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 4.

He accused self-professed African socialists such as Léopold Senghor and Julius Nyerere of “muddled thinking,” joking that they “got hold of the wrong end of the stick of either communism or capitalism.”¹⁵⁰ Chisiza also included what some Congress leaders took to be a veiled attack on Banda’s creeping authoritarianism. Chisiza lamented the rise of “strong man governments” and insisted that “no effort should be spared to prevent the establishment of a dictatorship.”¹⁵¹ But he ended on an ecumenical note, one that captured the idea behind the conference, urging new nationalist governments to listen to “the good advice of foreign experts” and his visitors to “take time off to gain insights into our aspiration, outlook and problems.”¹⁵²

After the Blantyre symposium, *Malawi News* bragged that the visitors would “carry to their homes good impressions of this country and its people and we can be sure that more and more people will want to learn more about this little country which has had the courage and daring to be host to eminent economists of world reputation.”¹⁵³ And it was true—the symposium received wide coverage in the press, and praise from some unexpected quarters as well, including the *Times* of London, the voice of the British establishment, which commended Chisiza for encouraging “frank speaking” about the “political barriers that African governments are setting up in the way of their own progress.”¹⁵⁴ There had been a subtle but critical shift in how the outside world understood Nyasaland. For decades, Nyasaland had been the exception, the labor reserve to the Rhodesias, the territory stuck on the wrong side of the dual economy in Central Africa. Chisiza helped to make Nyasaland into “a typical underdeveloped country,” as he described it whenever he promoted the Blantyre symposium.¹⁵⁵ Nyasaland’s challenges, he argued, were the same as Africa’s challenges, and not peculiar to multi-racial Central Africa, as federalists and their allies had long argued.

In making Nyasaland “typical,” Chisiza and Congress capitalized on a broader trend in development thinking at the time. They pushed through the door opened by fellow anti-colonial nationalists—leaders like Nkrumah, Senghor, and Nyerere—in arguing that independent Africa would create new forms of development. But they also benefited from a sense of disenchantment with industry-first development strategies after the disappointments of the 1950s. State-led efforts to build domestic industries, popular in Latin America in particular, drained the public coffers without growing the economy.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 8–9. For an account of Chisiza as a conflicted democrat, see McCracken, *History of Malawi*, 409–12.

¹⁵² Chisiza, “Contemporary Africa,” 17–18.

¹⁵³ “Economic Symposium, A Great Success,” *Malawi News*, 27 July 1962.

¹⁵⁴ “Africans as Their Own Worst Enemies,” *Times* (London), 30 July 1962.

¹⁵⁵ “Symposium Will Last 10 Days,” *Malawi News*, 29 Mar. 1962.

Export-oriented primary producers, including the Central African Federation, mostly avoided that fate, but still suffered from a global slump in the late 1950s.¹⁵⁶

Development economists were not about to give up on industrialization—economic growth was generally on the upswing for most new industrializers, and, in any event, the less industrialized countries had not performed any better. But they were beginning to rethink some core ideas. For instance, the British economist Dudley Seers, who worked on industry-first strategies during his tenure with the UN in the late 1950s, argued in an influential 1963 article that the real “special case” was in fact the industrialized countries, and that economic thinking needed to match the diversity of actual economies.¹⁵⁷ Though Seers’s main target was his former self, the criticism also applied to thinkers like Rostow who imagined every new nation passing through their own industrial revolution. Seers, then, switched the nature of the comparison, urging development planners to seek answers in comparisons between underdeveloped countries rather than comparisons to the developed world.

The economists who traveled to Blantyre were then prepared to see Nyasaland as the Congress government wanted: “a typical underdeveloped country.” It was not because Chisiza had persuaded them to fight for Congress’s cause. Instead, it had to do with how Congress planned for the future as if they had already left the British Empire behind. That idea came through clearest in Chisiza’s development plan, which laid out a vision of a distinctly national, agrarian economy, something that Nyasaland had arguably never had. And more than that, Chisiza had U.S. dollars to back some of his projects. The money involved was modest—£370,000 in all for the moment—but it allowed Congress to shop projects to other investors and, more importantly, set a legal precedent for aid outside the Federal framework.¹⁵⁸

The prospect of international aid helped change the political calculus for the British government. In October, the economic advisory group concluded that while secession would have “grave” consequences for Nyasaland, the Congress government’s plans for local revenue and foreign investment were “not unrealistic,” which amounted to high praise in London.¹⁵⁹ That was good enough for Butler, who was by then eager for an exit, knowing that the UN would not stand for white-minority rule, and that white Rhodesians had abandoned the “liberal” Welensky, a laughable epithet were it not for the hard-right politics behind it.¹⁶⁰ In December 1962, Butler announced that secession

¹⁵⁶ This crisis of faith began in the early 1960s, but only truly came to dominate the development debate by the end of the decade. See Macekura, *The Mismeasure of Growth*, 75–102.

¹⁵⁷ Dudley Seers, “The Limitations of the Special Case,” *Institute of Economics and Statistics* 25, 2 (1963): 77–98.

¹⁵⁸ For the details on U.S. funds, see *Development Plan 1962–65*, 99–100.

¹⁵⁹ BNA DO 183/42, “Report by the Advisers to the First Secretary of State,” [Oct. 1962].

¹⁶⁰ Cohen, *Politics and Economics*, 172–76, 179–82.

for Nyasaland was on the table.¹⁶¹ A few months later, in March 1963, the British government dealt a final, symbolic blow to the Central African Federation, agreeing to put up the £3 million for the Nkula Falls scheme.¹⁶² Congress supporters, though, mainly looked ahead to independence, set for July 1964. The Rambler, a columnist for *Malawi News*, marveled at the new spirit in the villages, finding it “so impressive and touching to see the oneness of this Nation to develop this Denmark of Africa.”¹⁶³

CONCLUSION

Chisiza did not live to see the changes that he helped bring about in the country that became known as Malawi after independence in 1964. He died in a late-night car accident in September 1962, likely after having fallen asleep at the wheel, though there were rumors then and since that Banda, seeing Chisiza as a political rival, had him killed.¹⁶⁴ At the time of his death, Chisiza’s vision for Malawi was still in the planning stages. Had he lived to celebrate independence, he would have seen some of the fruits of his labor—a new university in Blantyre, the construction of the Nkula Falls dam, and the beginning of a mammoth irrigated agriculture project in the Southern Region. He would have also seen Banda further tighten his grip over Congress and the country, leading to the Cabinet Crisis of October 1964, which ended with Congress ministers fleeing into exile, and a failed guerrilla campaign by his brother, Yatuta, to overthrow Banda in October 1967.¹⁶⁵ Banda went on to rule Malawi until 1994, when a pro-democracy movement forced him from power.¹⁶⁶

Banda’s Malawi was no Denmark, but the country did enjoy steady economic growth from the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s, and, for a time, seemed like a model for the kind of market-friendly, agriculture-oriented development strategy that came into vogue in international development circles in the latter half of the 1970s.¹⁶⁷ After independence, Banda threw open the doors of the country to foreign donors and investors. Experts came from all over, but they tended to share a background in the British colonial service and an enthusiasm for the agricultural development experience in Kenya and India, then seen as the two most innovative countries by international

¹⁶¹ McCracken, *History of Malawi*, 383–90.

¹⁶² “A Brighter Future for Investors,” *Malawi News*, 31 May 1963.

¹⁶³ The Rambler, “Commentary,” *Malawi News*, 11 Jan. 1963.

¹⁶⁴ Joey Power, “Remembering Du: An Episode in the Development of Malawian Political Culture,” *African Affairs* 97, 388 (1998): 369–96.

¹⁶⁵ McCracken, *History of Malawi*, 429–45.

¹⁶⁶ On opposition to Banda, see Kapote Mwakasungura and Douglas Miller, *Malawi’s Lost Years (1964–1994): and Her Foresaken Heroes* (Mzuzu, Malawi: Mzuni Press, 2016).

¹⁶⁷ Thandika Mkandawire, “The Spread of Economic Doctrines and Policymaking in Postcolonial Africa,” *African Studies Review* 57 (2014): 171–98.

specialists.¹⁶⁸ Malawi depended on agriculture alone, and so demanded a development strategy that started with small farmers. The World Bank responded by financing four integrated rural development schemes in different corners of the country.¹⁶⁹

In 1971, a World Bank journal dubbed Lilongwe, the first and largest of Malawi's integrated schemes, the home of a "Quiet Revolution."¹⁷⁰ The revolution was "quiet," the article explained, because only those familiar with the country could appreciate how far farmers had come in their care for the land, use of hybrid seeds and fertilizers, and market mentality in such a short time. It was also a nod to India's Green Revolution of a few years earlier. Though perhaps a bit derivative, the comparison illustrated how Malawi fit within the broader world of international development. The country was unspectacular—it was "no El Dorado," as the author put it.¹⁷¹ But those ordinary, day-to-day changes were precisely what made the country intriguing to agricultural specialists. Malawi, along with Kenya and the Ivory Coast, came to represent a capitalist counterpoint to experiments with collectivization in socialist Tanzania, though the two countries shared a common agrarianist ideology.¹⁷² By the late 1970s, ideas that had once been an undercurrent in development thinking—namely, about the damaging effects of policies that favored industry and urbanites in developing countries—moved to center-stage as part of a new, poverty-fighting agenda led by the World Bank that focused on the rural poor.¹⁷³

In a way, the World Bank's global war on poverty harkened back to the Danish example, albeit not the one that Chisiza and Congress had in mind. That transition had already occurred in Malawi—without Chisiza, and under pressure to prioritize growth, the Congress government had abandoned its social-democratic vision by independence. Though Malawi styled itself as "a nation of farmers," post-independence growth largely passed ordinary rural Malawians by, as cash-crop production gradually shifted from small producers to commercial estates, an inheritance from the colonial planter class, which had since passed into the hands of Banda and his clique. The World Bank's integrated schemes fared somewhat better, but it was a low bar.¹⁷⁴ However, even as

¹⁶⁸ Joseph M. Hodge, "British Colonial Expertise, Post-Colonial Careerism and the Early History of International Development," *Journal of Modern European Studies* 8, 1 (2010): 24–46.

¹⁶⁹ For a study of one project, see Elias C. Mandala, *The End of Chidyerano: A History of Food and Everyday Life in Malawi, 1860–2004* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2005), 165–202.

¹⁷⁰ Thomas A. Blinkhorn, "Lilongwe: A Quiet Revolution," *Finance and Development* 8, 2 (1971): 26–31.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 31.

¹⁷² Shankar N. Acharya, "Perspectives and Problems of Development in Sub-Saharan Africa," *World Development* 9, 2 (1981): 109–47.

¹⁷³ Patrick Allan Sharma, *Robert McNamara's Other War: The World Bank and International Development* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017).

¹⁷⁴ For an overview, see Guy C. Z. Mhone, ed., *Malawi at the Crossroads: The Post-Colonial Political Economy* (Harare: SAPES Books, 1992).

Malawi followed the rest of the African continent into crisis by the 1980s, no one in Washington, D.C. questioned whether agriculture had been the right path in the end. That agricultural development had become the obvious strategy is a testament to the hold of Chisiza and Congress's arguments, even if the original, anti-colonial vision had long since passed.

Abstract: This article examines how and why anti-colonial activists in Nyasaland, now Malawi, seized on modernization theory to make their case for national independence in the early 1960s. As far as British officials were concerned, Nyasaland's small size, large population, and agrarian character meant that it stood little chance of joining the modern, industrialized world. The Malawi Congress Party, however, saw their country differently, as a future "Central African Denmark." This article argues that Congress's Danish vision was part of an anti-colonial challenge to the industry-first development strategies that dominated early international development thinking. Congress thinkers, far from rejecting the modernization idea, flipped the framework from industry to agriculture, helping to open new possibilities for small, agrarian territories on the empire's margins. The article concludes by showing how this agrarian counter-current in development thinking subsequently shaped the international community's turn to market-friendly, agriculture-centered policies in the 1970s, though in ways that eclipsed the original anti-colonial vision.

Key words: development, decolonization, modernization, agriculture, Dunduzu Chisiza, Walt Whitman Rostow, Hastings Kamuzu Banda, Malawi, Africa