

What is largely missing, though, is the personal dimension. James does provide glimpses of Padmore's personality, of his "witty honesty combined with conscientious manners and determined privacy" (146), but the intimate measure of Padmore's life, especially the gender politics of his anticolonial circles and of his and Dorothy Pizer's relationship within them, is only roughly sketched out. Which brings us back to James Hooker's earlier study, with its similar concentration on Padmore's public politics and comparable reticence about the personal. But in fairness, James makes crystal clear her intentions about this being a primarily political and intellectual biographical study, meaning that there's still room to further explore Padmore's transnational life. For now, though, Leslie James should be commended for bringing us back up to date on George Padmore and the myriad issues and debates to which his biography speaks.

doi:10.1017/S0165115316000139

John Munro, *St. Mary's University (Halifax)*

Jeremy Ball. *Angola's Colossal Lie: Forced Labor on a Sugar Plantation, 1913-1977*. Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2015. 200 pp. ISBN: 9789004301740. \$63.00.

Jeremy Ball's *Angola's Colossal Lie* deploys the prism of labour to explore the history of twentieth century Angola. The focus lies on the Cassequel sugar plantation, a major commercial enterprise which provides a nice optic for the evolution of different forms of labour relations in Angola from the late New Imperialism era to the early post-independence period. This evolution in turn provides Ball with a vehicle for illuminating the changing character of political regimes over the same time span. The "single project" approach reflects that of recent works like Allan and Barbara Isaacman's *Dams, Displacement, and the Delusion of Development* and Julia Tischler's *Light and Power for a Multiracial Nation*, and to similar effect. The result is a stimulating profile of modern Angolan history, dealing with themes ranging from racial capitalism, to evolving ideologies of colonial rule and "reform colonialism", to the disappointments of post-colonial independence.

As Ball explains, concern with labour conditions in Angola is, in fact, not new at all. Reports by University of Wisconsin-Madison academic Edward Alsworth Ross, working on behalf of the League of Nations (1925), and Henrique Galvão, working for the Portuguese Government (1947), painted similar pictures of abuse and coercion. Both were shelved by the Portuguese, only to be recovered and effectively marshalled by the author here; the lurid "Angola's colossal lie" of the title comes directly from Galvão's description. Indeed, the major strength of this project is its research base. Extensive work in state archives in Portugal is nicely complemented by interviews with former Cassequel workers conducted on the ground in rural Angola. Research in the remnants of the company's own archives illuminates the other side of the story, rendering this a business as well as labour history. By any measure, Ball's legwork and persistence are impressive. The transnational scope perhaps explains why the book took so long to appear, with the Ph.D. dissertation on which it was based having been completed at UCLA in 2003.

The crux of Ball's thesis here is the notion of fluidity itself. In Ball's telling, labour regimes in Angola were anything but monolithic, but instead underwent numerous changes in line with changing global norms on what constituted legitimate colonial rule. Equally, the book's

timeline greatly complicates the usual markers of the different stages of Portuguese rule, usually based on the emergence of new political forces in Lisbon or Angola, in favour of new ones attached to changes in the labour patterns which supported the viability of the entire colonial enterprise. For this reviewer, both points are well taken.

Chapter One describes the establishment of the Cassequel project in the late nineteenth century, outlining its labour practices in the context of the norms of late-New Imperialism colonialism. Somewhat counterintuitively, Ball is at pains to point out how Portugal's republican system of government created space for real debate between various stakeholders over the legality and morality of existing colonial labour systems.

Chapter Two explores the inter-war period. Ball shows how the overthrow of the First Republic by an *Estado Novo* regime committed to a concept of Portugal's past and present inextricably connected to colonialism quashed dissent over the use of forced labour in Angola. Cassequel promptly boomed, with high profit margins flourishing on the backs of *contratados* (forced labourers).

Chapters Three and Four look at the post-World War Two period. In line with the reform colonialism of the British and French empires, Ball illuminates the consequences in Angola of Portugal's similar efforts to reframe its African rule. The introduction of a multi-racial Portuguese nationalism and an explicitly developmental colonial ideology of *lusu-tropicalismo* spurred important changes in the labour experiences of important Angolans. Forced labour was abolished in 1961—not coincidentally the crest of the wave of African decolonisation—with the creation of vastly improved working conditions and benefits for Cassequel employees. As Ball's numerous oral histories reflect, many workers remember this era with a certain fondness.

Chapter Five depicts the transition to Angolan independence as one that destroyed the economic viability of Cassequel and its labour force. The nationalisation of the plantation complex led to worse conditions for those workers who were kept on and economic precariousness for those laid off. Ball treats his oral histories with admirable rigour and caution, being particularly attentive to the context of politically-sponsored, post-independence public memories, as well as to the fact that many of his interviews were conducted in a group setting. In much the same vein, he is careful to point out that his female interviewees likely understate any sexual exploitation in conversations with two unfamiliar male interlocutors. These are perhaps obvious points, but they need to be made in order for the reader to take Ball's oral work on trust.

This story is a lot to fit into a book of just 200 pages and (by my estimate) around 55,000 words, exclusive of notes. The overall feel is of a tight and lean text. The result is that the author never really extends his interventions beyond the fairly narrow field of labour and business history in colonial Angola. The Conclusion runs to just five pages. Perhaps the brevity was a publisher's demand, but this reviewer felt that the story was certainly capable of being embedded more directly in the literatures on both Portuguese rule and colonialism in Africa for a much more substantial scholarly pay-off. To put it differently, the story here actually does a lot more and informs bigger questions than the book addresses (much less answers) directly. Nevertheless, this is a creatively conceptualised and rigorously researched story that will be of great interest to scholars of the Portuguese empire, Angola, and the changing face of labour regimes in colonial Africa.