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AFRICA  
EMERGENT

W. M. MACMILLAN

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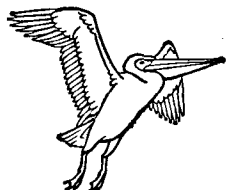


## ABOUT THIS BOOK

British Africa today assumes a vital importance for citizens of the United Kingdom, and African affairs are very much in the news. Our food supplies ten years from now may well depend on the outcome of the immense Ground Nuts Scheme which is being developed in Tanganyika, and in West Africa and East Africa events are stirring which bear closely upon the fortunes of the Empire. To many of us this great continent is still as remote as a Rider Haggard romance, and *Africa Emergent* is the authoritative book which will at last put it in the picture. Professor Macmillan first examines the complicated basis of African tribal society, and then summarizes the impact upon the African of the various historical phases of white 'settlement'. He devotes a long and revealing section of the book to British policies of Colonial government, and puts into perspective the exacting problems of building up adequate services of health, agriculture and education. In later chapters he analyses dispassionately the awakening political consciousness of the African, and surveys the difficult road

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PELICAN BOOKS  
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AFRICA EMERGENT  
BY W. M. MACMILLAN



# AFRICA EMERGENT

A SURVEY OF SOCIAL, POLITICAL  
AND ECONOMIC TRENDS IN BRITISH AFRICA

BY

W. M. MACMILLAN

★

REVISED AND EXPANDED  
EDITION  
WITH NEW APPENDIX

★

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### *Introduction to 1938 Edition*

VERY broadly the plan of this book is as it were an 'ecological' study of African development; a treatment emphasizing the influence on the actors in the drama of those forces of physical nature which the fashionable stress on racial contacts rather avoids or neglects. The aim has been to picture essentials rather than to photograph the shifting African scene.

The criticisms passed are perhaps sufficiently widely distributed to secure my acquittal on any charge of partisanship; it is part of my theme that positive doings in Africa have at almost every point been determined largely by force of difficult, imperfectly understood conditions and circumstances, and that mere denunciation is usually out of place. My hope is that the experience of many different parts thus brought together may throw new light on what Africans themselves are capable of and win more understanding of and sympathy for the 'emergent' African who must be the architect of the future.

•

My acknowledgments are due in the first place to Sir P. E. Mitchell who as Mr Mitchell, Secretary for Native Affairs in Tanganyika, originally set me on a wider African quest, and spared no pains to make my East African travels profitable. Next, on a full but hurried visit to Nyasaland my kind host Sir T. Shenton Thomas made it clear to me that without some knowledge of the West Coast any African education is defective. A year later Sir Shenton himself, as Governor of the Gold Coast, and Sir Donald Cameron in Nigeria, did their best to remedy this omission. Then and later the Rhodes Trustees generously, and quite unconditionally, helped me to avail myself of these opportunities, and to complete this book.

Only those who know the hospitality of the tropics can have any conception of my further debt to hosts and instructors innumerable. This book owes everything to individuals, many of whom have forgotten my existence, others



whom I might fail to recognize if I met them. To these I would say that if they will give me the opportunity I think I shall be able to convince them that my recollection of their kindness and of what they taught me is fresh and green.

PENN, BUCKS  
*March 1938*

W. M. MACMILLAN

*Preface to Penguin Edition 1949*

THE ten years that have passed since this book was originally drafted have seen one great, fundamental, change. In those days it was often necessary for outsiders to fight on African behalf. Today, beyond question, almost all depends on the African peoples themselves.

For the rest, the essentials of the African picture stand as then drawn. This Penguin edition embodies some further experience, particularly of West Africa before and during the war; it is also an opportunity to try to make smoother reading of some rough places. Condensation has often been easier for the satisfactory reason that many points once calling for laboured argument admit now of blunt statement; also because some heresies formerly rampant can now be ignored altogether. The first-hand account of the debates that raged in South Africa for twenty years after the 1913 Land Act Chapter VII in the first edition) is embodied in a new appendix. 1939 is in most respects the terminal date. A new last chapter outlines the main features of the post-war situation.

My thanks are due to Mr K. Howard Drake, late of the Royal Empire Society's Information Department, for bringing the statistics of population and trade up-to-date: also to the B.B.C. for permission to reproduce some pages of a war-time memorandum prepared for them, descriptive of life and opinion in South Africa.

THE UNIVERSITY, ST ANDREWS  
*April 1947*

W. M. M.

# PART I



## Chapter 1

### THE MISSION OF CIVILIZATION IN BACKWARD AFRICA

IF in any sense there is a single 'African problem' it is nothing less than to bring civilization to Africa – life more abundant for all its inhabitants, some two million odd Europeans, a few thousand Arabs and Indians, as well as the enormous Negro majority. The present chaos of the Western World confuses the clear issue. Not long ago Europe was at least sure of herself, if little regardful of Africans. In the nineteenth century civilization was thought of as a higher synthesis of the best experience of all the human race. No leader in those days questioned the theoretical right of Africans to equality and our duty to help their 'progress'; nor was there any doubt felt about the will or the capacity of Africans to follow and attain. In this faith Great Britain undoubtedly succeeded in winning the gratitude and loyalty of her African subjects – not only of the unthinking masses whose cheerful fatalism seldom fails them, but also of the more discriminating, who today grow suspicious and resentful of our failure to understand even the true source of that old-time loyalty. Our really considerable achievements were moral; the greatest, outside the mission-field, were inspired by the ideas of Liberalism. It was the fashion to compare the mission of the British in Africa to that of the Romans in ancient Europe: though not without vainglory, the stress was on the justice brought by the *Pax Britannica*. That great Whig, Lord Cromer, who in old age wrote an essay on this theme, was himself no mean

practitioner of the Roman art of ordering chaos. Lesser men have done and still do similar work on a smaller scale in scores of outposts. Since black men could then easily acquire guns enough to make themselves troublesome, the armed force behind these men was the least part of their strength. The secret of their success was an unquestioning self-assurance, which no African in those days challenged.

'British subject' then meant something equivalent to 'Roman citizen'. The courts dispensed one equal law. The spontaneous grant of self-government to the more advanced colonies built up the great Dominions and laid the foundations of the modern Commonwealth. It was an axiom that, when and as they qualified, all races alike shared an equal parliamentary franchise. In the Cape Colony, and in some of the West Indies, many of African blood attained this privilege, and with it a great access of self-respect as responsible citizens. For the sake of this largely theoretical but unquestioning recognition of African rights and dignity, our sins of omission, and some of commission, were forgotten. The name of Queen Victoria is still one to conjure with in any corner of the dependent Empire, standing out as the great representative of those who first saw the vision of Africa free.

This great past is the justification for modern imperialist faith in the Empire. But Queen Victoria is now the symbol of a golden age that never fully matured. Before its principles were seriously put to the test, before the spread of education had produced any considerable body of Africans ready to claim full citizenship, liberal doctrine fell out of fashion. The First World War, which, by the horror and waste fully displayed to Africans, cost Europeans some of their old prestige in native Africa, also caused widespread disillusion in Europe about the bases of our own civilization and gravely weakened faith in the universal efficacy of democratic institutions. Free 'White' South Africa, itself the latest achievement of the old Liberalism, headed the breakaway from the Roman tradition; its Africans can no longer boast, as it were, *civis Roma-*

*nus sum.* In 1936, by an all but unanimous vote, the Union Parliament made the possession of a black skin a final disqualification for the privileges of citizenship. White minorities in other parts of Africa betrayed the same nervous leaning to discriminatory legislation. Experience of the hard struggle to survive in Africa bred in the white man on the spot a spirit very different from the sublime self-confidence of the nineteenth century. 'Civilization' came to be not a gospel but a white monopoly. '*Defend white civilization*' was a slogan in South Africa.

Such doctrine sponsored by H.M. Government of a co-equal Dominion was formidable enough to influence policy even where Great Britain still had sole responsibility. The dependent colonies, little better fitted for self-government than ever they were, had now to look forward not to citizenship in the Empire to which they were once proud to belong, but to an indefinite experience of 'trusteeship'. To justify the break away from the ideal of common citizenship, the scientists of the new age protested against European influence as perverting pure African culture. Many fell into the error of drawing a comparison between the disintegration manifest in the diabolical slums of such towns as Johannesburg or Nairobi, and a highly idealized African rusticity, rather than between the actuality of primitive life and the best we know. To men of Lord Acton's generation civilization was not many, but one — its record marked by the slow and painful emergence of freedom. Freedom depends on security of life and the means to support it, on regard had for the rights of the weak and of minorities and for the sanctity of personality, without which there can be neither independent thought nor disinterested emotion. We are learning now that even we hold these things only precariously, that a plunge back into the dark chaos of barbarism is very possible. We dare not on that account deny our inherited standards of truth and justice, ideals of civic conduct and social good of which Africans have rarely had even a vision.

The facts of Africa as we begin to know them make nonsense of the dream that tribal life is a state of idyllic peace and contentment marred only when civilization interferes. The genius of human beings to make the best of any conditions to which they are obliged to grow accustomed makes it dangerous to judge of any other people's happiness. It is natural to wish Africans to enjoy life in their own way, in the relative spaciousness of the Transkei, for instance, rather than in mine compounds. It is easy also to contrast with the life of Africans anywhere in the Union the prosperous activity of native Kano or Kampala – even the quiet of the neighbouring Protectorates where Africans, though poverty-stricken, do at least feel that their country is their own. This is again to contrast an idealized Africa with the very worst that poverty can do under Western conditions. Anthropological studies give more evidence than one had feared of native African ignorance and incapacity, of the cruelty and sometimes the essential injustice of tribal institutions, of a hard and unsuccessful struggle with nature. In primitive Africa famine and disease are common terrors, witchcraft may take possession of one's nearest kin, and for help tradition offers only superstitions that aggravate misery and fear. From my own observation I would deny that there is evidence that any African people wants to be left as it is. It is no flattery to the intelligence of Africans to suppose them lacking in ambition to acquire not only our mechanical and material efficiency, but that spiritual freedom, unknown to tribal society, which comes of respect for the dignity of personality and for the rights of the individual, and is nourished by the free play of critical opinion. Against the fear and insecurity of primitive life unaided Africans have shown themselves powerless. For the first time science and the arts give them real hope.

It was an old African who told me that in his youth, near Kuruman, the famous mission station whence Livingstone set out, there was 'nothing but lions and Bushmen'. European

writers more serious than Edgar Wallace or Rider Haggard have helped to foster a romantic illusion of Africa as a country of wild beasts and savage if rather amusing people. Much of the appeal of colonial life lies in the chance of escape from a too rigid and complex society. Africa is still a land full of surprises, and it has made some truly great men. With few rivals in those small communities the second-rate also find exceptional opportunities of shining as superior persons, especially if they can claim to 'know the native'. Settlers and others trying to live off a difficult country saw Africans as typical savages; cured of natural 'laziness' and compelled to work for others, they might at best be useful; they were apparently not much troubled by the fever that played havoc. But like the animal in the French proverb they wickedly defended themselves when attacked, or even stole cattle in retaliation when robbed of their land. In the European settlements of the south contempt for Africans was blended thus with fear of their numerical strength. Indispensable, yet undependable and unprofitable servants, they were also an imminent menace to the safety of homes, flocks and herds, and an obstacle to expansion by frontier farmers who were themselves struggling precariously. The old-fashioned South African backvelder's policy amounted to little more than to maintain order and the labour supply, and to keep the 'Kaffir' in his place.

It was the emancipation of the slaves that brought to birth the so-called 'native problem': by definition the slave has no rights, and so long as Africans were actual or potential slaves no inconvenient question of their status in society could arise. The Evangelical leaders of the crusade against slavery may have started with the common estimate of African capacity; the helplessness of 'poor Africa' was its chief appeal. The emancipators' struggle on behalf of an oppressed people led them on to see not only souls to be saved but men to be made. Consciously or unconsciously the framers of the League Covenant were echoing a phrase of Thomas Fowell Buxton's

when they contemplated the need to help Africa to 'stand alone'. It may be that the 'philanthropists' over-simplified the problem and thought in terms of a quick, clean break with the past, but nothing short of simple faith in human equality could have won the struggle against the slave-owning interests. The ardour and driving force of the crusaders' faith cooled almost immediately after emancipation, as if spent in that effort. There is no more significant illustration of the decline of zeal even among Evangelicals than the pitiful eclipse of the reputation of the greatest of their South African stalwarts, Dr John Philip. The contemporary colonial account of him long ruled unchallenged, and the missionary fight for native rights was often paralysed by fear of emulating the notoriety he achieved as a 'meddler in politics'.

What little constructive work was attempted in Africa was left almost entirely to missionaries, who to this day carry far the larger share of the burden of African education. Responsibility for the failure of reconstruction in Africa is sometimes laid on the missionary societies. Thus, conventional criticism will have it, on the one hand that, putting evangelization first, missions are poor educators; on the other, that the products of South African Lovedale and other of the more efficient schools up and down the continent are 'over-educated', and unfit for their station in African life. Clearly both charges conceal at least half the truth. The religious and philanthropic people of Europe and America have made themselves responsible for what in civilized countries ranks as a costly national service. Inevitably their schools must be too few for the work, their standards of efficiency as unequal as the ideas and resources of the societies sponsoring them. There are many well-educated mission Africans, and some of them may be misfits; but in spite of inadequate resources the missions have far outstripped the rate of progress attained by the civil governments in that general economic development without which the educated class is thrown back on tribal society, where it could not hope to fit in.

In other fields, governments again left it to missionaries to take the lead. Livingstone laid the foundations of the scientific study of Africa. Under his influence also 'business' was brought to join hands with humanitarianism for the rehabilitation of Africa. Some famous trading concerns were founded in a conscious and deliberate effort to introduce the blessings of civilization. More than once in the struggle to stamp out the slave trade the flag followed the missionary, which is evidence, not of the dishonest intentions of missionaries, but of their confidence that H.M. Government alone could check not only slave traders, but uncontrolled exploitation by European individuals and companies. This trust was natural. The emancipators had apparently done their work and those still concerned for Africa could have confidence that governments would be ruled by the spirit of the age, which was steadily 'liberal'.

The blame for stagnation rests in truth on the dominant economics of this golden age of private enterprise. It was the bounden duty of the State to hold back. The *laissez-faire* doctrine made the pioneers of African development typical heroes of its triumphant individualism. The nineteenth century opened and partitioned Africa. It laid foundations without which building would have remained impossible. Livingstone's faith was so far justified that the organized slave trade, which continued in some parts at least into the 'nineties, came to an end. Vast areas were for the first time given settled government and an unprecedented measure of security. The far interior, also, began to be made accessible, though it is only in our own day that facilities of travel by road and river, rail and air, have at last come near annihilating African distances. Yet even the champions of African rights hardly stopped to consider the need to build from the foundations. They had an eye for abuses, and found willing ears at home to listen to tales of grievances. They were also men of their age. Few or none showed any conception of the immense work needed to make education and



political rights effective as a protection for people suddenly uprooted and hurled, as is sometimes said, from the Dark Ages straight into the modern world of machinery and capitalism. For too many Africans John Philip's warning, uttered in the very moment he received the news of the Emancipation Act of 1833, has become prophecy: 'If the Abolitionists fail to follow up the advances lately gained ... those that come after us will have to fight all our battles over again ... and destroy a species of colonial bondage which will arise out of the ashes of the monster which has now been destroyed'. In fact the advance stopped short. European rulers continued to look to European enterprise as the only effective means of developing Africa; on the Africans themselves as tools to serve this end. The nineteenth century failed to repeat its relative success in the moral sphere in the field of economics. The 'positive' side of the emancipators' faith has yet to be fairly tested.

In Africa there is still confusion of counsel – the mining engineer, the planter, the trader, the missionary, the colonist, even the big game hunter, and increasingly all over the continent individual Africans, proclaim their own ideas. I have been in British colonies that hardly knew how their neighbours next door were wrestling with the same problems that perplexed them. The Colonial Office is not always effective in keeping them together. Very human problems become the happy hunting-ground of 'experts', each with his own specific to try out in a field free of the criticism cut-and-dried schemes would have to weather at home.

The British public, with which the responsibility for so much of Africa ultimately rests, has not been guiltless of the belief that empire, as the birthright of a great people, should come to it naturally. It is partly that many long failed to distinguish between the lot of the peoples who are entirely dependent on imperial control and those others – well able even then to manage their own affairs – who were described sixty years ago by Sir John Seeley as in a sufficient sense an ex-

pansion of England. A few years later the Radical leader, Sir Charles Dilke, devoted far the larger part of a massive volume on 'Greater Britain' to these 'Colonial Democracies', with only incidental though revealing references to the presence of 'natives'; in South Africa, for example, 'the British' settlers are accustomed to assert that the blacks are the wealth of the country because they provide cheap labour'.<sup>1</sup> Even a recent British Prime Minister, in a speech on the subject of Empire unity, could make the population of the Dominions in the early days of the campaign for Tariff Reform (1904) about ten millions *in all*.<sup>2</sup> Canada alone being near seven millions and Australia three, the natives of South Africa, even then at least four millions, were as if they were not. The real Greater Britain, now the Commonwealth, was a triumph of democracy. The Crown colonies were in a state of forgotten dependence.

According to Marxist doctrine all colonial empires are manifestations of economic imperialism and by their essence in a politically pathological condition. Capitalism, it is said, impelled by logical necessity within itself, must be seeking new markets, fresh supplies of raw materials, fresh outlets for investment, fresh reservoirs of cheap labour. This has encouraged aggression. Weaker peoples have become the victims of exploitation for the profit of adventurers who invoke the national power for the protection of their enterprise. The acquisition and maintenance of a colonial empire, therefore, strengthens and helps to perpetuate even in the home country the influence of rapacious interests. The activities of the so called 'Nabobs' in eighteenth-century Britain and the championship of slavery by the West Indian Interest are the classical examples, matched perhaps by some in the nineteenth century. It would be obvious to point to the Chartered Com-

1 Sir Charles Dilke, *Problems of Greater Britain* (Macmillan, 1890), pp 310, 315

2. *The Times*, 10th December 1937 A two-column report of a speech by the Rt. Hon Neville Chamberlain.

panies, but certainly their wealth, probably therefore their influence, has been exaggerated. The U.S.A. has its champions of robust individualism surviving into the twentieth century.

There was in Africa no man-made proletariat and the colonial status, condemned alike by Marxists and by 100 per cent Americans, is something inherent. A just system of human relationships is hard to establish just because of the natural weakness and incapacity of one of the parties. It solves no problem to eschew *de facto* annexation and to recognize the independence of natural dependants like the Republic of Liberia. Their development then falls inevitably to private enterprise which the infant State is quite powerless to control. British annexations of African territory have as often as not been the tardy assumption of responsibility for operations only a fully-equipped State could hope to keep in check. Lord Passfield (Sidney Webb) once told me how in his early career at the Colonial Office an order under the Great Seal had to be requisitioned to authorize the pursuit of a Briton guilty of malpractices in remote parts of the West Coast where there was no effective local authority. Economic development, which the weaker countries are in no position to undertake by themselves, is a necessary part of the process of securing their independent status in the world. The problem that persists is to exercise effective control over its agents.

The plea of economic advantage and profitable markets has no doubt been used as a bait; some such argument was necessary to convince hard-headed people at home, to whom solvency was synonymous with morality, of the wisdom of undertaking fresh responsibilities. The Victorian age still acknowledged the principle of the 'open door', but the advantages of a privileged if not an exclusive market have always had an appeal. In practice, such appeals were made without much actual effort to develop the colonial trade. Economic gain is stressed too exclusively as the motive for expansion. To some British imperialists, as to those of Germany, empire was rather an end in itself. Cecil Rhodes habitually used eco-

conomic power as a necessary means to the spread of enlightenment as he understood it. This motive was dangerous. The concession-hunting that went to the making of Rhodes's Chartered Company is an unpleasant story. But no reproach attaches to the name of Captain Lugard who played an active role about the same time in Nyasaland and Uganda, and some ten years later, judging that Africans had benefited, strained the letter of his instructions to add Northern Nigeria to the British Empire. The humanitarian influence inspired by Livingstone backed, if it did not originate, the demand for the annexation of Nyasaland; it helped also to move the Treasury to unusually lavish and disinterested expenditure on the Uganda railway. Economic development, it was hoped, would destroy the slave trade by stimulating such legitimate and wholesome activity as would help to make it superfluous. The humanitarians are not disposed of by assuming that they were only taken advantage of by scheming exploiters for their own ends.

It is to put a strained interpretation on the facts of imperial expansion to make exploitation its consciously and nefariously conceived design. Marxist theory is based too exclusively on European conditions. Home-stayers readily entertain exaggerated ideas of the wealth available for 'exploitation' in the tropics. Weak, poverty-stricken Africa had no power to resist aggression, but the most absolute control could hardly extract much profit for the exploiting capitalists. The really significant fact is not the distribution among imperialist robbers of the profits of the colonial trade—which only exceptionally reached an annual value of as much as £2 per head of the population—but that its total was in truth so miserably small. Those now engaged in African development, enlightened traders and technicians, and the host of enthusiastic and unselfish administrators, though perhaps imperial and authoritarian by tradition, are certainly not instruments of exploitation. Such men, with almost a monopoly of African experience, have reason to think that Africa has benefited from European con-

trol and repudiate charges of economic imperialism. Injured innocence then joins nationalist fervour to discredit Marxist theory as uninformed and the discussion tends to follow separate lines that never meet in the actualities of the African situation.

In all their history Africans have been caught in a vicious circle which defeats and discourages the best administration. Poor and ill-equipped because they are backward, they remain backward because they are too poor to better their equipment. The only civilization worth boasting of is the fruit of many peoples' experience pooled by the travel and intercourse from which the Negroes as a whole were cut off – far more completely than the peoples of the most secluded corners of Europe. Almost destitute of world knowledge, Africans could afford neither medical help nor mechanical equipment, nor the schooling that would enable them to use these. Their poverty – first fully revealed by Livingstone – is still neither their fault nor an imposed misfortune; it is a fact of geography and economics.

It was only the other day that Europeans in any numbers seriously began even to think of African bones as worth the picking, and then more often from love of adventure in the unknown than from hope of profit. The Great Powers, pressed to afford their subjects backing and protection, followed the early pioneers with marked reluctance. Economic enterprise proving difficult without security, they were induced occasionally to send troops or a gunboat to keep order, which African potentates were unable to guarantee. The sheer physical difficulty of effective action in raw country usually left the actual management of local affairs to the men on the spot who had ventured there primarily to further their own interests.

Economic imperialism has been a convenient label for some of the consequences. The national economy drew little benefit from imperial acquisitions, but enterprising individuals could do reasonably well for themselves. They counted no doubt on

one asset – cheap and, locally at least, abundant labour. The labour, however, was that of men unbaptized into the gospel of work for work's sake and content with all too little of the world's goods. To fulfil their hopes the new-comers soon became more concerned to put pressure on Africans to supply this labour than to devise means of harmonious development. The insecurity of frontier life may exercise in effect a decivilizing influence, forcing Europeans to lower their standards, both material and moral. This is one aspect of the 'frontier' history much favoured in America. As Dr Albert Schweitzer has commented of the white man's life in Africa, it is 'the tragic element ... that it is so hard to keep oneself really humane and to be the standard bearer of civilization'. In fact the white man, if he would recognize it, suffers with all Africans the influence of a land which is deficient if not lacking in most of the essential means to civilization. Abuses are inevitable without an effective civil government to shoulder full responsibility, but the Powers made no attempt to organize more than rudimentary control till almost our own day. The task of checking and rectifying the mistakes of a *laissez-faire* beginning now grievously retards the process of helping Africans to stand alone.

In what became the more advanced colonial communities Europeans settled down to live by agriculture and to make Africa a home for themselves and their children. Unlike isolated tropical traders, who tend to remain mere individuals, permanent settlers are thrown together by common interests to form a community of their own. Such communities, soon coming to claim and to exercise far more influence in the councils of government, are even less subject to control from a distance than trading venturers. In the workaday world of white-settled Africa life is peculiarly pleasant, its pace gentle, relations with Africans are normally peaceable and friendly. But the white agriculturists in their own struggle to survive put sustained pressure on the black inhabitants' land and labour. That in South Africa a huge proportion of the original

population is now a rightless proletariat is due not to the brute strength of capitalism but to the very weakness of this struggling white community.

It was for me an exhilarating experience to get in the predominantly African communities of the tropics a less astigmatic view of problems long familiar in the South African field. There, because of race and 'colour' irrelevancies, they can seldom be seen for what they are. Where colour comes in as outward and visible evidence of racial difference, the way of peace must be to reduce the possible causes of racial friction by attacking any that are susceptible of removal. Even the South African situation would be easier if it were not that the low standards of African workers directly aggravate race prejudice by bringing them into economic competition with the weakest of our own people. Mere lack of education emphasizes economic and political weakness. The progress made by transplanted Africans in the West Indies has been sufficient to push the 'colour' question into the background, so that in those islands attention is less distracted from fundamental social and economic facts than it is in parts of Africa where the colour theory dominates thinking and action. In predominantly black African colonies the one imponderable 'native problem', as it is called in the south, resolves itself into that whole series of varied activities needed to make African society 'capable of participating in the life of the modern world in its own right'. In concrete terms this means the advancement of education, health, agriculture and all else necessary for economic and human development, together with the evolution of a governmental machine capable of carrying out this development with the consent and co-operation of Africans themselves. A visitor from East Africa with whom I talked by chance at Achimota in the west was obviously right — the real difficulty of governing Africa arises, alike in south, centre, east and west, from the same cause, the backwardness of Africans.

## Chapter 2

# THE ROOTS OF BACKWARDNESS

### (i) ENVIRONMENT

THE historically decisive characteristic of the African continent is its inaccessibility. The modern traveller by air may get in the course of hours a view that explains why Africa and its peoples were so long cut off from fruitful intercourse with the outside world – first the great, often snow-capped barrier of the Atlas mountains guarding the Sahara, then the dreary 1000 miles of surf-bound desert coast that daunted the early Portuguese explorers. From Cape Verde the scene changes, but adverse winds and currents heightened for mariners the terrors of the climate of the Bight of Benin, for there was no possible landing but on exposed beaches. West Africa to this day remains a world apart. Not far south of the Congo the desert once more comes to bar the approach to the interior and reaches almost to the mountains in sight of Table Bay. The Dutch made no mistake in lighting on the delectable Cape Peninsula as the most favourable spot in all Africa for their refreshing station. For eastwards again the coast and currents became difficult, and the land more and more malarial. It was only in our own day that European pioneers discovered the Kenya Highlands cut off by an arid coast belt. For all such exploration in early days the Cape, distant as it is, was the only possible starting-point. Livingstone's line of approach was no accident. It was only across the dry but level and tolerably healthy plains of Bechuanaland that the ox-waggon could help the traveller as far as the Zambesi, carrying his provisions from the base at the Cape. Thence for Livingstone and other explorers, and for any Africans who dared, it was a tramp on foot all the way, carrying all necessities. When Livingstone's base was moved to much less reliable Zanzibar the weak line



of communications was fatal. Thus it was that little influence from outside penetrated into Central Africa, and almost less than nothing came out.

The great size of the African continent suggests variety; but places far apart show the same features and present the same problems. The characteristic scenery is neither dense tropical forests nor the South African 'open spaces'. The 'illimitable veld', feelingly described by a soldier of Boer War days as 'miles and miles of nothingness', has a richer counterpart in Southern Rhodesia, in the Masai country, the Kenya Highlands, and in patches elsewhere. But only those South Africans who know and love the ever-surprising Low Veld, which begins beyond the hills seen from Johannesburg away to the north, would feel themselves at home in the real Africa, the monotony of low trees, sometimes dense, often park-like, stretching almost all the way from the Limpopo to the Nile. The coast belt, subtropical or tropical, may be densely wooded, swamp, or occasionally, as in the south-west and in Somaliland, more barren than the Karroo, or desert. There are forests, chiefly in the west; the great lakes; the wonderful Kilimanjaro and other peaks in the east; and two or three mighty rivers – which are only in a minor degree navigable. But the essential feature is the endless *bush*, so much so that I have heard an African distinguish between people in London and those living 'in the bush in Manchester'!

Altitude in much of the country counteracts the tropical latitude; the interior in east and south centre is plateau ranging from 2000 to 4000 or even 6000 feet above sea-level. British West Africa rarely reaches the 1000 level; also screened from the trade-winds, its climate is far less equable than that of some places nearer the equator like Kenya. Much depends on rainfall. Not without reason the ceremonial, Sesuto-Sechuana greeting is the word *pula!* (rain). In Bechuanaland and other marginal areas a nominally twenty-inch rainfall may be concentrated into less than that number of days, or come in a flood after long drought; crops can be relied upon

only once in three or four years. Almost everywhere rainfall is uncertain, bumper crops alternating with poor crops or none at all. The South African High Veld has an average rainfall exceeding that of the eastern counties of England, but a long dry winter, with hard frosts. Much even of the tropical interior has only a short growing season; the intense heat of the sun, accentuated by drying winds like the Harmattan from the Sahara, neutralizes even heavy rainfall, unless where counteracted by the humid influence of the winds of the Guinea Coast. The map is no infallible guide to African possibilities. Great rivers look very well; the lower levels conventionally shaded green suggest growth and a teeming population. A forced landing from the air at Tete taught me that the lower middle Zambesi valley, for instance, is fiercely hot, an almost arid waste of thorny scrub: the Shire Highlands of Nyasaland on one side, the Southern Rhodesia high veld on the other, collect moisture which passes the valley by. So it is unmistakably about the Limpopo, on at least some parts of the Congo and Niger, on the Volta between the Gold Coast and Togoland. This is true significantly also of the Fish River, the scene of South African Kaffir Wars. At another extreme, Sierra Leone is an example of rainfall rising to as much as 200 inches. Cultivation which leaves the soil exposed to such torrential down-pour has much the same effect as over-grazing by cattle in drier parts. Loss of fertility by soil erosion is a growing menace to African well-being.

Optimists speak of the vast empty spaces of the continent and abundance of virgin soil. Pessimists counter that much of the soil if virgin is also sterile. Scientific soil survey, only in its infancy, reveals much of the country already studied – in Nigeria, for example, and Kenya – deficient in lime or phosphates or important salts. Nor do fertility of soil and reasonable humidity always go together; some of the richest soil in South Africa is in remote kloofs of the semi-arid Karroo; that of the well-watered southern Cape districts is 'sour'; the healthy uplands of Swaziland have good precipitation and moisture

but poor soil, the unhealthy Low Veld has better soil but inadequate water – humidity too favours mosquitoes and usually increases the risk from malaria. In the Kikuyu country of Kenya, treble blest with good soil, a healthy climate and both an early and a latter rain, as in Biblical records, two or even three crops a year may be possible. But inevitably population in such districts becomes overcrowded and over-cultivation, a grave risk to fertility; the older ‘shifting’ cultivation – the native alternative to fallowing – is becoming impracticable and the use of fertilizers is a difficult art to acquire. In fact the greater part of this vast continent is favourable to pastoral rather than agricultural pursuits, but an enormous proportion of the potential cattle country is infested by the tsetse-fly which makes cattle-rearing impossible – as very often it is now for want of water storage. Only seeing is believing the desolation wrought by a great African drought. Watering may keep garden plants alive, with no visible growth in months; on the farms beyond the very bush withers away to bare dry sticks; sheep and cattle perish by thousands. The physical and psychological strain on human endurance has repeatedly been a factor in determining the course of at least South African history.<sup>1</sup> Locust visitation may come only at long intervals, but often on top of drought which seems to drive the locusts from their breeding-grounds in the desert. Year by year, it is true, unless the summer rains break exceptionally early, both European-owned and native South African cattle weaken and die for want of grazing. This drought is seasonal, but farmers earlier in the year have turned their whole maize crop into cash, leaving none for their cattle. It is not only in native areas that grass-burning and heavy grazing have ruined the old *vlei* pastures.

1. W. M. Macmillan, *Bantu, Boer, and Briton*, p. 243 *et passim*. I have heard a leading Boer blame the effect on men's tempers of the droughty heat of Pretoria in 1899 for the ultimatum that brought on the Boer War. Cf. also de Kiewiet, *Imperial Factor in South Africa* (Cambridge University Press, 1937), pp. 16, 164.

Man has made some deserts, but he has also reclaimed a few, and may again. California was no Eden in the days of the early gold rush; gold was the means of attracting the capital it needed. Since the beginning of this century much land in the western Cape, useless for vines, has been proved first-rate for tobacco. Hot dry valleys in East Africa now support an important sisal industry. The rise of a great town like Johannesburg has made it possible for small-holders to win a decent livelihood from soil that would rank as not very fruitful pasture in a richer agricultural district. The copper belt mines similarly – even the smaller venture at Broken Hill – give market-gardeners a living in difficult country. The paradox rules that many areas cannot support a greater population just because their inhabitants are now so few. Many South African farms have been ‘tamed’ for sheep; much waste land in the remote interior has been well preserved and would support the cattle if the tsetse-fly could be controlled and the rank growth trodden down to allow the more delicate grasses to spread. There is general alarm about over-stocking or over-grazing in particular districts, but even in such pastoral country the cattle are insufficient for meat or milk, and even for the farm work. Energy now spent on trying to wean pastoral tribes from their cattle needs redirecting to get better care and use of the cattle they have – and better water supplies.

Africans with few or no tools for the struggle have immeasurably greater obstacles to overcome than the people of Western Europe, whose progress after all is at most some hundreds of years old. In pure agriculture it has fallen almost entirely to Europeans to pioneer new methods. The settlers, attracted by comparatively rich soil and an attractive climate to the high veld of Southern Rhodesia, to the Kenya Highlands and parts of Nyasaland, have found a wider scope for their energies than in the maize-growing and cattle-breeding to which their fellows were for the most part restricted in the dry, temperate climate of South Africa. Citrus, tobacco, coffee, and in a lesser degree tea, sugar and cotton, have in

our own generation become the bases of considerable industries both in subtropical parts of the Union and in the tropics beyond. These are evidence that in the crowded Transkei, even in derelict Bechuanaland, or in the relatively well-fed forest belt of the West Coast, the land can be made to yield more than it does now. The formidable tropical climate may under some conditions offer compensations in fruits and quickly maturing crops, but the tradition – as old as European literature – that the typical life of the south is an easy-going lotus-eating existence cannot stand in the light of modern knowledge. Poor methods of cultivation and of storage make even food often short. The wonder is that Africans survived as they have done, not that they made so little headway in exploiting their country's resources. Lotus-eating is the effect, not the cause of low energy and of general stagnation – as the better African employers are only now learning by experience.

The older Africa furnished little for the support of its own peoples, and less that was in demand outside. In historical times 'Ophir' in the East and parts of the West Coast have yielded some gold; the exploitation of the greater mineral resources lately revealed was beyond the power of the native peoples. It was no accident that for centuries the greatest export was man-power – slaves; labour is still the most important exchangeable commodity. Even had Africa been highly productive, the lack of natural harbours stood in the way of such active trade as stimulated both wealth and the spread of ideas in Europe and Asia. Coastal traffic was by sea from one exposed 'beach' to the next – beach is still a West Coast term for main street. There seems to have been slow migration of tribes towards the south, but the vast interior proved notoriously arduous even to European explorers. In most parts transport of goods could only be made by head portage. On the fringes of the northern desert – though even there a wheeled cart is still rare – horses and camels helped to keep Kano and Sokoto actually in closer touch with the Mediterranean and the centres of Islam than with the Guinea Coast. Canoe trans-

port on the great lakes and some rivers facilitated local exchange, but never on a scale to make a real link between the people of any considerable area. The Nile may be the father of civilization, and the wisdom of the Egyptians may have spread north, east and west, but till less than a century ago the source of the great river was a mystery and the peoples beyond to the south remained sunk in darkness.

### (ii) HEALTH

It is now generally accepted that African backwardness has a main root in an almost untouched problem of health. Colonial governments, inhibited at the best of times by financial straits, were slow to wake up to the state of African health. In the long-settled south, not unjustly trumpeted as a health resort, there was some excuse. Confident in the efficacy of the sun and in the beneficence of their climate, Europeans in South Africa, who are most inadequately provided with medical services for their own needs, tend to regard the white man's sun and his own scavenging pigs as sufficient protection for the black man's health. Strong as it is, colour-prejudice has never prevented doctors and nurses from attending generously to any Africans who, needing their services, come their way. But even as lately as 1932 the important Native Economic Commission, which went out of its way to question the accuracy of alarmist native mortality figures, provided no positive evidence of a more satisfactory state of things, and finally dismissed the whole subject in two scandalously inadequate paragraphs.

Science has given no final verdict on climate. Not much can be said positively about such things as the effects of solar radiation, of excess of humidity or a serious lack of it. It is known that heavy pigmentation and other peculiarities afford Negroes some additional protection against the intensity of the sun's rays. There is no evidence that the native peoples suffer appreciably less than Europeans from peculiarly Afri-

can dangers to health and well-being, some of which are almost unknown in Western Europe. There are hardly the beginnings of statistics – the advent of European medical men has revealed only something of the dimensions of the problem. The general position was summarized in the Annual Medical Report of 1928 for Kenya:

Almost every African native is infested with some type of intestinal worm. A large proportion suffer at one time or another from malaria. Over large areas plague and yaws are endemic. Syphilis appears to be becoming increasingly prevalent in certain districts. Pneumonia, broncho-pneumonia, and tuberculosis take a large toll of life.

*The circumstances of the people are such that they live under conditions which are admirably suitable for the existence and spread of the causal agents of disease or of their animal hosts. Even where huts and villages are not overcrowded with humans, they are always overcrowded with the causative organisms of disease or the carriers of these organisms, so that escape from infection is for the great majority of people impossible.*

This description applied not to such artificial conditions as prevail in European towns, but to the average condition of natives throughout the country; Kenya, of which it was written, has at least no worse a climate than most other colonies, more doctors than many, and a most active Department of Health. Malaria, which is present practically everywhere except in the extreme south, remains the most serious disability of life in Africa. It is a first principle of tropical diagnosis to test any patient for malarial infection, which may take unlooked-for forms. Sleeping-sickness may become a menace wherever there is the tsetse-fly. In 1933 I heard Gold Coast doctors flatly contradict each other about the prevalence of tuberculosis. Ten years later a leading authority serving with the Forces bracketed T.B. with malnutrition as the major causes for the rejection of a high proportion of military recruits. The prevalence of venereal disease may sometimes be exaggerated by hasty and incomplete diagnosis. Mission

doctors in particular have exposed a very heavy incidence of leprosy and with strong official backing are fighting this scourge in places as far apart as Tanganyika, Basutoland and south-east Nigeria. The health authorities in the West Indies keep an anxious eye on the mounting curve of typhoid cases; in Africa I have rarely heard the enteric group mentioned; yet it is a fact that only a few of the larger towns (happily a growing number) have a reasonably plentiful supply of pure water. How much serious illness like enteric remains unknown and unremedied can only be guessed. By often heroic exertions the frequency and the virulence of the visitations of some major diseases have undoubtedly been checked. Yellow fever on the West Coast now occurs only sporadically – though investigators of the Rockefeller Institute lately demonstrated that some 90 per cent of the natives examined had at some time been infected. Plague is endemic at least in East Africa; so lately as 1930–1 an outbreak in Uganda was responsible for, it is estimated, 56,000 deaths.

Improved communications have their dangers, and the opening up at all of West Coast air routes was questioned by southern and eastern neighbours fearful of their *stegomyia* mosquitoes catching and spreading the infection of yellow fever. Not long ago a vicious malaria epidemic in Brazil was actually traced to mosquitoes of the dangerous *gambiensis* variety carried by aeroplane from West Africa. The invasion was checked by the Brazil Government and the Rockefeller Foundation, at the cost of millions of dollars, only just in time – so it is claimed – to prevent *gambiensis* getting established in the highly suitable climate of the Amazon valley.

Another danger is that the life-and-death struggle with the threat of epidemic leaves neither time nor money for large-scale measures of prevention. Health officers have been known to report on general health in any year free from serious epidemics as 'fairly good'. Several colonies have a special staff wholly engaged in combating sleeping-sickness, which has decimated whole districts more effectively than any



war. Yaws, the most widespread, is perhaps the only important infection which can be cured quickly, painlessly and relatively cheaply. The typical problem in Africa is not mere disinfection, but to rid a countryside of millions of its natural inhabitants, tsetse-fly, ticks and many others.

Tropical Africa is, moreover, a favourable habitat for almost every known form of parasite, and 'almost every African native is infested with some type of intestinal worm'.<sup>1</sup> Not exclusively 'tropical', helminths get their chance from the African manner of life, particularly the difficulty of keeping food, the scarcity of pure water, and the indiscriminate eating of infected meat. It was first on the Belgian copper mines of the Katanga that labour recruits came to be systematically treated for parasitic infections before being sent to work. Low-lying districts are afflicted with hookworm (ankylostomiasis), which attacks through the bare feet. The spontaneous answer of a Nyasaland doctor to a question about health conditions was, 'Oh! 100 per cent hookworm.' More specifically, in a campaign which stands to the credit of the Kenya service, over 52,000 people were examined individually in the Digo district on the coast of that colony and all except 3152 were treated for ankylostomiasis - 94 per cent; as things are, even those treated are almost certain to be reinfected. So far south as Pretoria, and anywhere north or east of Johannesburg, bathing, which may be the only washing, carries the risk of *bilharzia*. The recognized preventive of *bilharzia* is to keep ducks, to check a snail that harbours the infection, but the ducks would probably be cooked and eaten. The jigger-flea, which lays its eggs under the skin, is almost a joke; native boys who are used to it dig it out with extraordinary deftness. Only in 1933 this pest broke out in the Nigerian tin mines where the local 'Pagans' were not so experienced. While I was there officials reported several deaths from septic poisoning.

The drain of comparatively minor ailments on ordinary physical and mental activity makes the supposed healthy

1. Kenya Report, quoted above.

active vitality of the normal African a myth. There are respectable historians who would attribute the decline of the old Mediterranean civilization to the effects of malaria. Hookworm contributes much more certainly to the weakness of 'mean whites' in the southern States. To carry head-loads for huge distances is held by medical men to be a matter of training and habit, not proof of robustness. A Kenya pioneer tells how fifty Kavirondo porters, 'huge, strapping fellows—seemingly as strong as elephants', collapsed when caught in a bitter hailstorm, ten of them dying by the roadside in a few hours. He remarks, 'seemingly they had no grit or stamina': It is a well-known tragedy how 3000 out of 4000 Busoga porters died on the march to Kampala during the building of the Uganda railway. In their case the hardships of the march were aggravated by lack of their accustomed food, and the eating of uncooked rice brought on dysentery. The unfailing cheerfulness of porters on the march may be temperament born of adverse conditions, the gift of the gods who in other ways have used Africans so badly.

It is thus another exploded myth that the health of the people living in 'natural' conditions is normally good. The appalling mortality rates in the 'locations' of South African towns are those of any ill-kept labour camp, and Dr R. Kuczynski, the well-known authority on population, assures me that had their 500 per 1000 infantile death-rates been anything like general in Africa, the race must by now have been extinct. The country districts of South Africa, being nearly free from tropical scourges like malaria and the rest, should be better off than most; according to the Basutoland Report for 1921, 'typhus and scurvy must now be regarded as endemic' — and scurvy is a deficiency disease. The typical African hut of mud or straw is easily destroyed and renewed, and in older days sanitation was maintained by frequent hut-burning. In South Africa both materials for hut-building and labour are now scarce. Overcrowding and landlessness have compelled the southern peoples to live in worse conditions than they

once enjoyed, but their manner of life had never been essentially different from that of their fellows farther north. Sir Donald Cameron was summarizing the answers from all colonies subject to inquiry when he wrote, about 1931, 'It is necessary to improve the material conditions of the people if their standards of health are to be improved'.

Defective nutrition robs most Africans of the reserve power that would enable them to withstand the onset of disease. The finding of researches in progress<sup>1</sup> when this book was written ten years ago is that Africans normally lack a varied, generous and balanced diet. The evidence then summarized here is completely confirmed, for example, as to the monotony of the diet, a seasonal shortage of staple foods, and the lack of important elements of nutrition. The staple food used is either millet, maize, cassava or occasionally rice, which is cooked as porridge and flavoured by a soup or 'relish' of vegetables, fruit or roots. Some of these crops are richer in mineral salts and certain vitamins than others, cassava and maize being inferior to millet and rice; but none of them can alone supply all the nourishment required. The lack of variety is itself a danger. Africans have long subsisted largely on the starchy type of food which we are told is of little value in building up physique. Meat is readily eaten whenever available, but this is chiefly on ceremonial occasions; these may be quite frequent, but seldom more than one beast is killed and it must be shared among all who come. Big-game hunters tell of the orgies of raw meat in which their porters will indulge after a kill, or of whole villages of natives waiting like vultures for the scraps. The Masai exceptionally eat too much meat and insufficient vegetable, but most tribes spare their cattle. The yield of milk is always low, and except as 'curds and whey' also dangerously impure. There is thus a general lack of protein. Seasonal shortage of green vegetables normally brings also a deficiency of vitamins. It is possible that strong sunlight may make up, and that — for instance as to the necessity of fat, of

1. Nutrition in the Colonial Empire, Col. nos. 6050-1, 1939.

which the quantity taken is extremely low by our standards – comparison with our own conditions may be misleading. But all authorities agree that deficiency is responsible for the universality of parasitic infections; at least one holds that the 'tropical' ulcer should be known as a 'deficiency' ulcer.<sup>1</sup>

The quantity of food is as uncertain as its quality. Few tribes are efficient agriculturists; at best the margin is small, and drought, even late rains, or a visitation of locusts, may spell famine. The two months before harvest are almost normally the 'hunger months', when most families are short of grain. The women, too, are busy in their gardens at this season, and too exhausted in the evening to give the usual time and attention to preparing food. After a long day's work, in consequence there is only a makeshift meal, and the efficiency of cultivation suffers.<sup>2</sup> Harvest, on the other hand, is naturally also the time for feasts, marriages and dances. After months in which the villager eats too little to maintain full vigour, he will certainly both eat and drink more than is good for him. It is feast or famine, but feast brings no more variety or better quality. The attraction is especially more beer than usual, beer requiring a more lavish use of grain and more preparation than porridge.

My impression on first passing out of healthy South Africa into tropical parts was of the greater variety of supplementary relishes available in the north. No doubt festivals were so frequent in older and, for Southerners better times, that meatless days may have been almost exceptional. Today, in the overcrowded 'reserves', it is little but an endless monotony of maize. The maize diet is often made more nutritive by a process of fermentation; but the very monotonous Southern diet is a surprise to people who know the curries of equally poor Indians, the 'pepper-pot' of the West Indies, the palm oil or groundnut 'chop' of the African West Coast. The diet de-

1. Dr W. McCulloch, *Dietaries of Hausas and Town Fulani* (Lagos, 1930).

2. A. Richards in *Africa*, April 1936.

ficiencies of Africa are continental. According to a semi-official Rand mines estimate based on individual examination, the average weight of medically examined, rigorously selected able-bodied mine-workers of from 20 to 40 years of age was no more than 129 lb.<sup>1</sup> I have myself looked through many pages of prison registers – in Nigeria, for example, where there can be no suspicion that European encroachment on native land has upset the native way of life – and been astonished to find that even 10 stone is an exceptional weight among young, presumably able-bodied men. On the Rhodesian plateau, where ‘reserves’ are reputedly more ample than in the older Union, the medical authorities were agitated by an outbreak of pellagra, a deficiency disease akin to scurvy, in the gaol of the capital, Salisbury. Investigation established beyond reasonable doubt that the defect was not in the gaol diet but in that of the natives’ home kraal. The victims were ‘boys’ from the country whose resistance collapsed under the not very serious rigours of ‘hard’ labour in the prison. There is no doubt that the regular and varied diet of well-run compounds tends to improve the physique of mine labourers in spite of their arduous work. The Belgian experience, that it is essential to provide medical treatment for mine recruits and to feed them, is confirmed on all hands. The poor physical condition of the normal African is an established fact.

European effort has done little yet by way of remedy. It has enabled a skeleton force of Europeans, official, missionary and trading, to live in Africa with scarcely more risk to life and health than in Europe; they do so only with care and at considerable expense. There is evidence that the survival rate of British artisans on the West Coast is noticeably lower than that of men in the administrative service; their tradition makes them careless of diet, leading them to rely too exclusively on the wrong kinds of tinned food. Where economic conditions are adverse ‘poor whites’ have come down to the average African level of health and efficiency. Good standards of

1. Quoted by Dr A. J. Orenstein in *Africa*, April 1936.

health demand always the economic means of maintaining them. The revolutionary improvement in public health in England in the nineteenth century – unattained yet in many villages – coincided with an increase in wealth and in real wages. This made expensive water supplies possible, and sewerage, and education to make people understand and value better food, clothes and housing. Mass ignorance and poverty make costly sanitation out of the question in Africa: protection from malaria by nets, and from hookworm by boots, is prohibitive for people whose total income, from wages or produce, may be perhaps ten shillings a month. The enormous growth of the urban population which accompanied expanding production in the Industrial Revolution compelled improvements in sanitation, and sanitation in turn helped the survival rate. Africa has yet to begin her economic advance. The white man has at last revealed what has always been and made a remedy possible.

### (iii) ECONOMICS OF POPULATION

This sombre background serves to emphasize that the population of Africa has always been insufficient even for economic health. The facts are uncertain; census-taking among illiterate people in the bush is difficult and no government has yet faced the expense of organizing the work effectively. Estimates based on the counting of huts or of taxpayers allow such or such an average per family or household, assuming just what needs to be verified. Errors may cancel each other out – globular estimates here making up for villages missed altogether elsewhere; but few parts have ever been seriously counted.

Historically it is certain that health conditions prevented economic development, and for want of this, primitive Africa can never have supported either a generally dense or a rapidly growing population. Africa, moreover, was ravaged for three centuries and more to supply the world with slaves: drained of men and women to an extent there is no means now even

of guessing. An old estimate put the number of Africans landed in North America and the West Indies between 1680 and 1786 at over two millions;<sup>1</sup> Dr R. Kuczynski gives guarded countenance to an estimate putting the total number transported from Africa in the course of the last four centuries so high as fifteen millions.<sup>2</sup> The great mass of the present population of the West Indies and of many American states is the living witness to this host; there is none to the loss of life in the Middle Passage or to the incalculable devastation wrought in Africa itself. The responsibility incurred by Europe for its share in the African slave trade cannot be overstated.

It is important, however, to avoid exaggeration and not to allow even slavery to divert attention from the more fundamental reasons for a generally low and stagnant level of population. Europe itself has peopled much of the Americas and of the British Dominions: not all the pioneers went of their own free will, and till the other day most of them travelled in appalling conditions<sup>3</sup> – little better than those on some slave ships. The peak of Western European emigration coincided in point of time with a phenomenal increase in the population at home. In Africa slavery was indigenous; slaves became almost the leading commodity and medium of exchange. West African tradition has it that, like convicts transported from Europe, many of those shipped off were persons who for some reason had fallen foul of tribal authority or, like Joseph before them, aroused the jealousy of their own relations. Perhaps, therefore, African losses by slavery are not to be deducted from the potential total by a species of compound subtraction. The yield of production was so low that even the ghastly business of the slave trade may have relieved pressure on the scanty means of subsistence for those who remained.

1. Bryan Edwards, historian of West Indies, *Encyclopaedia Britannica* under 'Slavery'.

2. R. Kuczynski, *Population Movements* (Oxford University Press 1936), p. 18.

3. C. M. MacInnes, *Economic History of the British Empire*, ch. iii

The demand for slaves stimulated gangs or tribes of African middlemen to doings which may have set tribes fighting each other. The rule with travellers and historians came to be, 'when in doubt, play wars' – for example, to account for the sparse population of naturally less favourable districts in the middle belt of the generally well-peopled Nigeria. Familiarity with the limited destructive power even of modern war provides a corrective to older pictures of wholesale depopulation. In Africa life is not held cheap, though even a beer-feast may be gory, and the necessity of living on the country put a severe limit to the numbers joining in any campaign, and on its duration. If villages are easily burned they are also easily rebuilt, and the bush itself is no bad temporary shelter. The burning of crops was more serious, and the drain of slave caravans on the food supplies of the villages through which they passed, as shown in Livingstone's narrative. The Chaka Wars on the Cape frontier, 1817–28, are an exceptional episode, a legend of brutality among Africans themselves. The picture drawn by Livingstone is rather of a state of feud than of organized war.

One effect may have been to induce some concentration of the population. Peace and security have tended actually to reduce the permanent population of large West African towns like Kano and Ibadan. In older unsettled days cultivators sallied out of these towns to their fields only by day or for short seasons, whereas now they scatter themselves over a wider area as more or less permanent country dwellers. Peace has also affected the size of the smaller village unit by making it easier for the kinship group to break up into a number of individual families.<sup>1</sup> This dispersal of the population is responsible now for increasing the pressure on some of the land. Anyone seeking the truth about African life must thus beware of two dying South African assumptions – that before the coming of the Europeans the population was stagnant or declining merely because the tribes were constantly 'killing each other', and that owing to a high natural rate of increase

1. Monica Hunter, *Reaction to Conquest*, p. 59.



among African tribes, it has been 'rapidly increasing' ever since.<sup>1</sup>

In the tropical colonies population was till lately almost invariably judged to be stagnant if not declining. In Uganda, for example, or in the Belgian Congo – where the 'Free State' regime is dubiously reputed to have reduced the population by as much as half – governments are well satisfied if they can find anything to justify the view that epidemics and actual decline of population have been checked. This is probably nearer the historical truth for Africa as a whole. The social studies of modern anthropologists show how strongly children are desired, and how large families are valued presumably because they are rare. The people themselves know the need of a strong population for work and defence. Investigation, for instance among Hausa women,<sup>2</sup> throws doubt on the general high fertility of native women. The practice of late weaning also helps to check the birth-rate. Whatever the birth-rate, the increase of population depends rather on the rate of survival; infantile mortality, wherever it can be estimated, is rarely less than 200 per 1000, and the evidence is that the expectation of life is short.<sup>3</sup> Polygamy is, of course, common, but no large proportion of Africans can really afford the expense of more than one wife. It is possible that more female children normally survive, but even polygamy can do no more than make spinsterhood unusual. At some stage in their history most peoples have been polygamous, and if polygamy by itself could counterbalance all other factors the world must by now have been crowded beyond the dreams of any Malthusian.

Population depends not only on physical factors but also on economics. Rapid increase anywhere has normally been attendant on expanding production and improved means of subsistence; in Africa nature has continued to dominate man.

1. Among many possible examples, cf. Theal, *History of South Africa*, V, p. 255.

2. McCulloch, *op. cit.*

3. Nigerian Census (1931) Report.

One reason is undoubtedly that the population of Africa as a whole is positively inadequate. The arts and crafts which are necessary to support a steady and increasing population cannot arise and flourish among pastoral tribes scattered sparsely through the bush. The more primitive the people, the more space they need. African agriculture at its best is still utterly incapable of supporting such a dense population as is common in many parts of the East. For sheer lack of skill any serious increase of population becomes congestion; in South Africa, for example, Africans will all but starve, even on tolerably good land, where the density is no more than 100 to the square mile.

It is sometimes suggested that any considerable reduction in the African death-rate might bring in its train a no less serious problem of over-population — that, on the present scale of African production, lives saved in infancy might be balanced by the losses that would follow presently from starvation among more numerous adults. The truth is that a better general level of health is necessary if even the present population are to support themselves with greater efficiency. The people are really all too few. Many hands are needed even to clear the minimum of land at present under cultivation, and then to keep it effectively occupied: so that the density of the population is often a rough guide to its economic well-being. Parts of Uganda and much of West Africa have long had both a denser population and a more active economic life than, for example, the Rhodesias, Tanganyika or even South Africa. It is significant that districts which have had the population necessary to make any such beginning of economic activity rarely become 'reservoirs' in the notorious quest of European-run enterprise for sufficient labour. Industry of any kind is absurdly small in proportion to the size of the continent and the economic needs of the population, but the labour required has almost always had to be brought from a distance.

In South Africa the shortage should have been palpable, but that white employers have always assumed that the wage

pittance they offered was enough to relieve the native population of the necessity of work at their own homes. As early as 1865 Natal imported some 6500 Indian labourers for work on its sugar plantations – and that in the most populous of the provinces, with ‘hordes of Zulus’ and others at its doors. The Witwatersrand mines, situated on the sparsely peopled High Veld and employing unusually large numbers, were bound to have difficulty as the industry expanded. About 1906 the mining houses made history by persuading the British Government of the day to sanction the importation of Chinese. Later, mining influence prevailed to secure Shangaan labour from Mozambique in return for concessions, made at some expense, to the Portuguese railway and port of Delagoa Bay, and these Shangaans became a mainstay. Even in the 1930 depression it was constantly protested that development was impeded by the chronic difficulty of maintaining the labour force at round about 200,000. In 1933 the abandonment of the gold standard brought a return of ‘boom’ conditions. At that moment prolonged depression was forcing unprecedentedly large numbers of Union natives to seek employment of whatever kind they could get, and by January 1937, without any increase of wages, the total employed on gold mines had been increased to a new peak of 306,896. Much new development demanding ever greater numbers was still projected, but the mines, like lesser ventures everywhere, preferred to proceed as if the supply were virtually inexhaustible. The organization of work on the Rand mines continued to be planned throughout on the assumption that the relative abundance of cheap labour alone made it possible to maintain this great industry on low-grade Rand ore. The set of policy was steadily against even economizing labour by mechanization. Any apparent abundance is due at best to poverty and social disorganization. The evidence from the mines’ own experience, confirmed from every corner of the continent, points to the conclusion that the population of Africa is unequal to the demand.

It is thus a just complaint that the crude labour demands

of the industries which ought to be the economic salvation of Africa are sometimes a withering rather than a helpful influence. At its present low level of efficiency the man-power of Africa is insufficient for its own domestic needs, and certainly cannot stand the strain to which it is often subjected just where those needs are greatest. A huge, sparsely populated, inaccessible territory like Northern Rhodesia is almost by nature poor and dependent. In 1930, when development on the copper mines was at a maximum, there are said to have been some 102,700 of its own natives, something like 10 per cent of the total population, 'in employment inside the territory or outside of it'.<sup>1</sup> Soon there began to be mention of villages where 50 per cent of the adult male population were normally absent.<sup>2</sup> It was to be expected that about that time local famine in Northern Rhodesia should be officially put down to lack of men to clear the fields for planting.

The governments at least of the recognized 'reservoirs' of labour have latterly begun to take alarm and to devise measures for checking the drain on their own resources. This is especially so since a Belgian Congo Report of 1928 set a new standard by insisting that recruiting is socially dangerous where more than 5 per cent of the adult male population is absent more than a short distance from its home base. Very often the lack either of employment for wages or of profitable independent activity makes it impossible to take strong measures merely to keep people at home. About the same time, moreover, diagrams prepared by the Johannesburg Chamber of Mines suggested that the most 'progressive' districts of the Transkei are in fact the best recruiting grounds, and that the supply of recruits from the more backward parts is abnormally irregular. Bomvanaland, for example, is a coastal district with heavy population but a humid climate which makes its people reasonably certain of crops of some kind. Its people are so poor and their wants so few that they go out to work only

1. Merle Davis, *Modern Industry and the African*, pp. 156-7.

2. Native Affairs Report, Northern Rhodesia, 1935.

when forced by the approach of famine. Even short-range labour requirements demand higher standards of living for Africans everywhere.

Mistaken ideas about the number of Africans free to work for other people have derived a good deal from the experience of the many white communities which, having originally assumed the relative emptiness of the land they settled on, are now gravely embarrassed by the visible congestion of their African neighbours. The total population is estimated today at about 150 millions, its apparent density ranging upwards from a mere handful in vast stretches of arid country to from 4 to 6 per square mile in Northern Rhodesia and the Sudan, 12 to 14 in Tanganyika and Kenya, 15 over all in the Union of South Africa, 30 to 35 in Uganda, Nyasaland and the Gold Coast; Nigeria and Sierra Leone exceed 50, the density of Sierra Leone being returned in 1931 as 69.24. The local variations within these artificial 'colony' units are more significant. In Nigeria, for example, much the most populous of the British colonies, the southern territories are said to average 91.1 per square mile, the drier north 37.76, the middle belt no more than 5 to 10; Kano and Sokoto, within reach of the desert, rise to as much, in Kano, as 165. In the important forest belt the Ibo Provinces of Onitsha and Owerri have an obviously dense population, officers on the spot claiming for small pockets of Owerri a density rising to as much as 1000. There is undoubtedly relative overcrowding in face of vast empty spaces, and tribal divisions are tending to intensify and perpetuate such maldistribution.

The tendency has naturally been to concentrate on fertile patches. The palm belt of the West Coast is exceptional in carrying a dense population because better supplies of food, especially the vitamin A of red palm oil, are a protection. Even the overcrowding which is the portion of most Africans in the Union has not induced Zulus to face what are to them the unaccustomed risks of malaria in the hot coastal plain of

northern Zululand. In East Africa the great concentrations of population are in three better types of country: first, the highlands of 5000 to 8000 feet, which have exceptionally rich volcanic soil – Ruanda-Urundi and the Kilimanjaro-Meru country, as well as central Kenya; next, river-side or ‘lacustrian’ alluvial plains like the Kavirondo country or central Uganda; also the coastal fringe where commerce and fishing give added support. Here and there the need for defence has forced the people into mountainous and inaccessible corners like Basutoland, as well as the less attractive fastnesses of Sekukuniland in the central Transvaal; on the Bauchi Plateau of Nigeria, also, naked but cheerful and upstanding ‘Pagans’ held their own against Mohammedan Fulani conquerors. Sparse settlement would have had dangers of its own, giving no protection either from other tribes or from wild animals; generally, therefore, people lived as close as they reasonably could. Even pastoralists will have their permanent dwellings clustered in villages, temporary cattle posts being normally scattered over a wide area, as in Bechuanaland. In good agricultural parts the local density is not uncommonly 200 or more to the square mile.<sup>1</sup> Bitter experience has made native Africans no bad judges of quality and possibilities – long ago it taught them to pick out for their own use most of the obviously favourable land.

It is for this reason that, more particularly in the settler countries, the few have seemed many. Here in fact is the key to a great deal of South African history. Long before the advent of the white man Africans had picked out the eyes of the country and established themselves in the spots the settlers were most likely to covet. The word ‘spots’ is used advisedly: from the earliest days the Cape farmers’ feuds with the Bushmen turned on disputes about fountains and water-holes, which were all too scarce. So it was conspicuously with the Griquas,<sup>2</sup> and, later, in the troubles of the ‘eighties on the

1. S. P. K. Baker in *Africa*, January 1937.

2. W. M. Macmillan, *Bantu, Boer, and Briton*, ch. iv.

Bechuana frontier.<sup>1</sup> The occupation of new countries inevitably happens piecemeal – new farmers making for parts whose agricultural possibilities have already been tested, just as surely as traders seek the established centres of population. On the bare South African High Yeld the farms nestle in the kloofs and scrubby *leegtes*, which were just the shelter the kraals would have sought before them. The ejected natives often stayed on as dependants, and some of them found real compensation by sharing in the economic activity of the new-comers – others still nurse their grievance in sullen helplessness.

These significant facts have habitually been obscured. The Kaffir Wars on the Cape frontier were invariably ascribed to the Kaffirs' 'propensities for cattle-stealing' – their objective was said to have been the thorn scrub of the Fish River valley and the cover it afforded to thieves. I think my alternative explanation is now accepted, that the objective of these wars was not the arid Fish River country but the well-watered foothills of the Winterberg and Katberg, the Kat River valley and the verdant Amatola Basin, all of which lie just beyond it.<sup>2</sup> The grave of the first missionary to settle with the paramount chief, Gaika, remains as witness that this chief's head kraal was originally very near the town of Fort Beaufort – a long way west of the country later known as 'Kaffraria'. I have heard an early Rhodesian settler disarmingly congratulate himself on getting a farm with 'plenty of niggers'. The original Rhodesian farm ran, in the generous South African tradition, from 3000 to 6000 acres, and the 'niggers' obviously were dispossessed. The area of white settlement in the Kenya Highlands was said to be thinly populated and little if at all used. The 1934 Land Commission<sup>3</sup> had to give several chapters to settling the claims of Kikuyu entitled to compensation pro-

1. de Kiewiet, *The Imperial Factor in South Africa*, Cambridge University Press, 1937.

2. *Cambridge History of the British Empire*, vol. viii. ch. xiii.

3. Cmd. 4556.

mised a generation earlier for disturbance of prescriptive rights.

Where Europeans have thus taken possession it has commonly been in areas where Africans were by their own standards firmly established before them. Africa is most imperfectly developed; but it is untrue that vast stretches lay waste, or still lie, waiting only the fructifying influence of European settlers. Even the so-called 'backbone', sometimes supposed to run empty and salubrious almost unbroken through Central Africa, is at best no more than a series of scattered islands – part of Southern Rhodesia, Abercorn, Iringa, Moshi-Arusha, central Kenya and, on the west side, some uplands in Angola. Unless for large-scale cattle-ranching, Europeans have been and will be no more attracted than Africans to great stretches of country which Africans neglected.

There is no sure starting-point for an estimate of the original population but that assumed has certainly been too low. Thus, South African writers have always set out from the demonstrably false assumption that the trekkers after 1836 occupied a country swept bare and all but 'empty' by the Chaka Wars, 1817–28, which immediately preceded. Tales of burnt huts and scattered corpses took little account of the ample kloofs and hidden *leegtes* even of the bare High Veld. Very soon the trekker republics were struggling with the problem of 'surplus' natives in their 'empty' Eldorado in Natal and also on the High Veld. As early as 5th August 1840 the new-fledged *Volksraad* of Natal, anticipating its successors in the Transvaal, passed the first of an interminable series of *Plakker* (squatter) laws vainly attempting to restrict the allowance of natives on any one Boer farm to 'five families'.<sup>1</sup>

1. The earliest map of Basutoland shows the French mission station, Morija, now in sight of the Union border, lying, in 1836, in the east centre of the country and the Basuto tribes as in occupation of all the eastern districts of what is now the Free State. They were penned within their present boundaries after a prolonged struggle ending only in 1868. Arbusset and Daumas in *Journal des missions évangéliques*, 1836.



Pastoral country will and can support only a limited number of pastoralists. It is common ground that European farmers on the old Cape frontier needed great reserves of grazing and were land-hungry of real necessity. Bantu migrations arose from the same cause which originally took Boer farmers so far afield, the unfriendliness of African soil and the constant need of fresh pasture. For the first time in the 'thirties and 'forties there is outside witness to their condition. After the depredations of Chaka the coastal tribes especially were caught between two fires, African raiders and refugees from north and east, and the European advance on the west. They were also the victims, in both decades, of exceptional droughts, of locust visitations and short crops – and in no state to tolerate or adapt themselves to new outside pressure.<sup>1</sup> Before that pressure had had time to make itself seriously felt in the Basuto country cautious French missionaries regularly testify that food shortage was normal long before the months of harvest, that the native wealth, even in cattle, was inconsiderable – thus anticipating and confirming the experience farther afield of Livingstone and most later travellers, who were so frequently short of food. In a formal and considered letter of 1849<sup>2</sup> the experienced missionary leader, Édouard Casalis, put the whole matter in two sentences: 'I fear much confusion arises from the very limited and erroneous ideas generally entertained respecting the statistics of the Basuto country. The population is under-rated, the actual and future wants of the tribe are not taken into consideration.'

In fullness of time the effects have begun to be felt, probably of underestimating the numbers of the original population, certainly of ignoring their future wants. The soil erosion due to over-grazing in these latter days is not, as is so often said, because the natives keep many cattle – the proportion lately in the Transkei or Basutoland was no more than one per head

1. W. M. Macmillan, *Bantu, Boer, and Briton*, esp. chs. xv, xvi; *Cambridge History of the British Empire*, ch. xxiv.

2. Quoted in *extenso*, *Bantu, Boer, and Briton*, pp. 276-8.

– it is due to the loss of spare pasture land.

None the less a Uganda writer's conclusion stands for Africa as a whole<sup>1</sup>: 'For economic reasons an increase in the population and a better standard of health is essential if progress is to be achieved. Uganda could support a population of ten millions instead of three and a third, and the resources of this Government would be increased accordingly.'

1. Papers on 'Health and Progress' Col. no. 65. 1931.

### *Chapter 3*

## **AFRICAN SOCIETY**

### **(i) THE PEOPLES**

UNLIKE the casual observers to whom all Africans are very much alike, conscientious students may be unduly bewildered by the variety of African peoples at different levels. Today, when almost all Africans are coming more and more strongly under similar European influences, differences may be misleading. A sympathetic understanding of local peculiarities is essential for good administration but may easily throw general policy out of gear if overstressed. Apart altogether from earlier chance influences from without, local conditions are reason enough for variety. In some areas obviously cattle have always been the basis of the domestic economy. Occasionally the spread of the tsetse-fly has forced pastoralists to take to agriculture or at least to give it more attention. In other parts the soil is the only possible source of livelihood. Some depend on the palm or other natural product of the forest as much as on their own tillage. Such different crops as maize, millet, yams, bananas or cassava will require different treatment and modify the whole 'culture' or manner of living.

Social organization accordingly is of different types, many of them familiar to students of early history. Nomadic hunters, though in parts game is still plentiful, are now very thinly represented by a handful of Bushmen and Pygmies. Nomadic pastoralists – who might be warlike – are less important than they once were; cattle need space and relative mobility. Agricultural peoples were the most frequent victims of slave-raiding, being tied to a restricted area and more vulnerable. One or two peoples of pastoral origin, notably the Baganda and Fulani, have become settled rulers of a relatively complex society and acquired a skilled and settled agriculture, some division of labour, and certainly a greater density of popula-

tion than cattle alone could support. European governments now restrict the wanderings of pastoralists and they can no longer exercise their military power or try to improve their lot by raiding their more pacific neighbours. Thus the Masai have never risen above a primitive level. The most widespread, though not necessarily the most numerous type are pastoralists with more or less of agriculture: they are described in the words Caesar used of the early Germans – *non student agriculturae*.

Most African peasants in fact 'make shift' – pick out the most likely spots, burn bush or forest to make room, using the ash as fertilizer, and when the soil has lost its fertility move on and clear a fresh patch. But South Africans, who are wont to judge all Africans by those they think they know, suppose them all to be inexpertly devoted to cattle, and wretched agriculturists. In Northern Nigeria, for example, cattle-keeping is still left almost entirely to the nomadic wing of the Fulani. The peasant tradition, good as far as it goes, is exclusively agricultural, and while South Africans struggle, for the Africans' good and a little for the white man's convenience, to break the 'Bantu' of their excessive devotion to cattle, Nigerian officers have to preach the advantages of 'mixed' farming – that is, of keeping a few head of cattle, more especially for ploughing. The extreme dispersal of South African tribes was a retarding influence. The Zulu threw up warrior kings and developed a degree of organization which made them a menace to their neighbours, but their unsettled life stifled any latent aptitude for arts and crafts. No southern tribes achieved the serious beginnings of trade, and none any appreciable degree of economic differentiation. •

It is accordingly West Africa that best illustrates the effects of different ways of life, and perhaps also the basic conditions of material well-being. The Muslim Emirates of Northern Nigeria stand probably higher in the scale of civilization than any other people in Africa south of the Sahara. Originally desert people, they were unique in being able to keep horses,

which carried their conquering armies over a wide area. The Fulani are now of two types; one section, much mixed with the Hausa peoples they conquered, have settled down as a ruling caste, with settled agriculture and some industry; others are still nomadic cattle-men. The bush and the tsetse-fly set limits to the conquests of their horsemen; though their slave-raiding made them the terror of their weaker neighbours, there are even yet unconquered 'Pagans' (as opposed to Muslims) in the inaccessible hilltops of the Bauchi Plateau. Their isolation has left these Pagans in many respects as completely primitive as any in the whole continent. Cut off from outside influence, and even from their own fellows, they have probably a greater variety of distinct dialects than the people of any area of similar size elsewhere – to the serious embarrassment of modern administrators and teachers. Yet there is no more striking example of Africans adapting themselves to circumstances. Pinned in on their hilltops the Pagans have made the most of by no means fertile soil. Their terraced cultivation shows industry and enterprise that would put many white farmers to shame.

The Islamic part of Northern Nigeria developed what is now an established 'culture' in the real sense of the word. In this community much wisdom has been handed down, perhaps with a little that would be better unlearned, by oral tradition and imitative practice rather than by formal education. Ancient, mud-walled cities like Kano and Zaria have a distinctive architecture of their own, suggesting the Biblical East rather than Africa – such cities as Jehovah took – 'heaping up dust, He taketh it'. Of the many skilled crafts of Kano, 'morocco' leather is famous. Besides the tanners and leather workers there are spinners and weavers, fullers and dyers, goldsmiths and blacksmiths. These towns of the north-west show the only important example in Africa of specialized craftsmanship.

Not far away in Southern Nigeria the Yoruba also have very considerable towns, of only nineteenth-century origin.

Some of these, like Ilorin, were conquered by northern Emirs. Ibadan, reputed to have a quarter of a million inhabitants, and Abeokuta with about one hundred thousand, have relatively strong native rulers. These African towns are still villages in organization and are not to be confused with the industrial towns of Europe, which mark a flight from agriculture. Their arts were carried on in close conjunction with peasant life. The inhabitants are still largely peasant cultivators who, in former times, gathered in these fortified towns for defence. The cement of Islam has given the towns of the northern Emirates a strength and coherence their newer southern rivals lack, but the latter are much more adaptable to Western influence and may even be catching up.

However it may have arisen, buying and selling – a phenomenal passion for trading, though perhaps not corresponding skill in that art – are distinguishing marks of most West African peoples; not only the far-ranging Hausas, but most coastal tribes from Calabar to the Gold Coast and beyond. The imposing head-dress of the ‘mammies’, Yoruba market-women, is a familiar sight in village markets as far away as the Gold Coast or Togoland. The rest of Africa has little to match this activity. It is the more surprising since trade is largely among neighbours who tend to have the same superfluities, and the exchange of products, as of ideas, demands good transport and easy communications. Here and there canoes helped, but till only the other day all West African travel was on foot, and the movement of goods in bulk impossible. Local markets may have a comic side, as, for example, when trade is done in safety-matches done up in bundles of eight, without a tinder-box. Women seem to tramp miles to market with a head-load of yams, only to return with other yams in exchange. These markets in fact help the exchange of services as well as of goods, providing public eating-houses for travellers; women may do a good trade in cakes and sweetmeats. Here and there ideas of value are as rudimentary as in many parts of East Africa, where eggs or bananas pass as approximately one cent

each in currency, equally in the scarce season and when supplies are plentiful. Many western tribes, however, have long used not merely cowry-shells but, for example, horse-shoe shaped metallic pieces known as 'manillas' about Calabar, or 'Kissy irons' on the borders of Sierra Leone. The authorities have wisely put into circulation a tenth-of-a-penny piece which stimulates petty trade – as the excessively large three-penny unit ('tickey') strangled it in the Rhodesias, and till lately in the Transvaal. The transactions of this internal trade undoubtedly help the community to weather storms like the economic depression of the 1930's; they merit straightforward study by economists rather than by specialists in 'custom'.

The internal economic activities which are a feature of everyday life on the coast today have roots which stretch far back into the unknown past. The coastal tribes had salt, and have long known how to preserve fish which was needed by tribes inland. Those inland in turn had iron and knew how to work it, and had better yams than could be grown near the sea. The famous Ashanti branch of the Akans were, it would seem, invaders from healthier country beyond seeking gold, not, as it would be cheering to suppose, a unique example of a forest people making good use of their superior resources, which included gold worked from fabulously rich deposits. This gold, which gave its name to the whole country, brought trade, some of it with Europeans, which helped them to survive the climate, and may even have bought the services of less prosperous neighbours as mercenaries.

Directly and indirectly the early Europeans may have influenced internal development more than is usually recognized. The climate, and their small numbers, prevented Europeans themselves fetching from the forest what they most wanted, gold from the Ancobra or Ashanti, slaves from behind the Niger Delta. From the beginning this important function passed to those so misleadingly called 'trade-boys'. Many of them must have been considerable merchants and in the fullness of time many of their posts or 'beaches' have grown into

small towns. These are unique in Africa, having a well-established *middle* class – a class with accumulated capital wealth acquired by the handling of goods rather than from production. The Efik merchant princes of Calabar, known as ‘kings’, welcomed the teaching of Scottish missionaries to help the enforced transition from slave-trading to traffic in palm oil. This middle class, evident in Lagos, Accra or Cape Coast, had a host of lesser ports from Opobo and Warri to Winneba, Saltpond and Sekondi, and others like Adda or Keta too far away to share directly in the great modern trade in forest-produced cocoa. The remarkable expansion of cocoa production, and certainly the handling of the crop, has been very largely the work, not of Ashanti or Akim peasants, but of middle class descendants of the merchants. The cocoa kings are more often Ga or Fanti, or the Akwapims whose residences dominate a remarkable group of towns on the relatively salubrious Akropong hills behind Accra. Even in the west Levantines have a large share of the produce and middle-man trade, but not the same monopoly as Arabs and Indians in East Africa, Indians and Europeans in the south; Abeokuta, for example, boasts that Syrians thrive as little there as Jews are said to do in Aberdeen; in advanced parts of West Africa there are always families with some social standing. Yet even these families live a great deal on each other. Relatively large sums may be spent on education; numbers of young people are sent to school, or even to British universities, and the expenses of education, as of weddings and funerals, are levied on the family as a whole or on those of its members who are at the moment prosperous. These educated members may be a family investment and in their turn will be sponged on by relations to the end of their days. Study is at last being given to the maldistribution of wealth, to the unfathomable problems of indebtedness among the peasants in particular – it is staggering to observe the number of civil debtors in some Native Authority prisons. Till lately modern British administration has been at fault in treating this complex society as if



it were of the normal, unstratified tribal pattern still prevailing in the unmitigated 'bush'.

As a whole, the economic life of the West Coast, which has thus at least a relatively wealthy class, has no parallel unless perhaps, thanks to the modern cotton export, in the Buganda Province of Uganda. Nyasalanders, the Baganda, the Wachagga of Kilimanjaro, among others, show the beginnings of enterprise. Arab example and influence may be responsible for at least a certain 'awareness' that distinguishes many tribes in Mozambique, Nyasaland, or as far south as Manicaland (about Umtali in Southern Rhodesia) from neighbours like the Mashona, the Matabele or the scattered peoples in remote parts of Northern Rhodesia and the Congo. The south, being dry and inaccessible, received little if any stimulus from outside, from the Arabs and Indians of the east or even from the slave traders. It is at most possible that some of the southern people may have lost a more advanced culture when driven out by the wars, so freely postulated, into more arid and difficult country. The lost culture of Zimbabwe may perhaps be an example, that of the Bechuana another. In exceptionally difficult and almost arid conditions some Bechuana agriculture is respectable. One tribe at least, the Bakhatla, store their grain in admirably effective clay granaries, which are a contrast to those of their neighbours and also to the rat-riddled straw containers of the Xosa, or even the Baganda. Early travellers speak with respect of their skill in wood and metal, but little evidence of this remains except in wares offered to tourists at wayside stations; and also the Bechuana dried skins or *karosses* which are of high merit. The better Bechuana houses, with containing wall and courtyard, are far ahead of the rough huts commonly found elsewhere. To make the best use of the rare springs of water, the Bechuana almost alone have built towns comparable to those of the Yoruba. Kurreechane, described in John Campbell's travels as of considerable size in 1812, disappeared early, but Khama's or Tshekedi's Serowe still has a dry-weather population of

25,000, Mochudi, Kanye and others 10,000 or more. The Bechuana are in many respects ahead of their seemingly stronger neighbours.

Progress and development have been very much a matter of opportunity. The old Cape policy was more educative than that of Natal, and the Fingos and the Basuto, for example, have had a century of missions, and, therefore, of education. The Swazis have had barely fifty years of missions and even less of settled government. The Freetown area of Sierra Leone is exceptionally non-tribal, a philanthropic settlement of freed slaves. Uganda and Nyasaland were at an early stage the objective of a zealous missionary interest. Christianity, is widely professed, and Uganda has made conspicuous material progress; Nyasa 'boys', though less fortunately placed for domestic prosperity, have been unusually well able to fend for themselves away from home and have proved useful to a good many neighbouring countries. In Rhodesia and Tanganyika, whose own inhabitants have been much less effectively evangelized, a Nyasa 'boy' will often be preferred.

In the long run all opinions and judgments about the capabilities of Africans contradict each other. Always European prepossessions are to be discounted. The Zulu has a reputation as a warrior. His military qualities – which include, presumably, a steady submission to discipline as well as a measure of self-assurance or conceit – earn him a monopoly in the native police of the Union, and high estimation as a domestic servant. In the intellectual field Zulus have, for one reason or another, achieved less than Basuto or their own close relations, the Xosa. In Zululand itself there are Basuto in leading, profitable positions. Similarly the Masai, the warrior tribe of the north-east – not now very numerous – are often described as specially fine specimens of African humanity and contrasted with the Kikuyu whom they were wont to plunder. Basuto and Kikuyu are small and wiry, Masai and Zulu tall, the Zulu sometimes heavily built, and those who gave them their character went a good deal on appearance. Many tribes

get discredit for their very cleverness which, like that of a precocious child, may show itself in something less than bluff soldierly honesty; deceitfulness is a natural reaction to an alien people little understood and much mistrusted. There is universal testimony to the fidelity with which African servants tend household goods entrusted to their care. Yet among themselves Africans go in pitiful fear of thieves, especially in West Coast towns. One casual first impression of the West Coast abides, of the extreme contrast there between near neighbours, some very advanced – families, if not tribes, who for generations have been imbibing what only Europe can give – others virtually of the Bronze Age. There is also a sameness in the things that are lacking. This is due to adverse conditions which are capable of being changed, and are already changing.

#### (ii) AFRICAN 'MORES'

The tendency is to give the institutions of undifferentiated African society too much form and precision, as well as comeliness. Except in the West Coast towns there is little specialism or division of labour, therefore little to give rise to a conflict of interests – there is no considerable wealthy class, no dominating priesthood, no privileged aristocracy. The Emirs of Nigeria, the Kabaka in Uganda, and a few others known as 'kings', are not far removed from the patriarchal chief. A conquered tribe may remain subject, but in general caste is foreign to African ideas. This absence of privilege is, as a rule, a negative equality due to lack of opportunity. For the most part villages are self-sufficient. The life of the average individual is ruled not by distant authority, but by duty to elders of his own family or clan, or, as a champion of African ideas has put it, he has 'a rounded system of thought ... provided you do not ask him to think beyond the limits of the social unit within which he and others share ancestral guidance'. There are major divisions like Ibo and Akan, Xosa and Bechuana, distinct in language and custom, but few of these are social,

still less political entities. Real community extends only to the little groups who have learnt to stand together.

Possessions are not held in common. Grazing grounds are village commonage, but there are no communally owned crops or stock. Households have their own property in cattle, crops and gear, none of which can be disposed of even by chief or council. The status of the individual derives from membership of the group, and advances only with age. The major disability of the women's status is their heavy burden of work in home and field. The African tribesman is thus sure of his portion in the common lot and this makes innovation particularly difficult. Since no effort can be made without the co-operation of others there is little opportunity for the individualism of adventurers and pioneers whose efforts may add to the general well-being. Questions affecting all are thrashed out by a council, as a rule a general assembly or *folk-moot*. These councils seldom take any constructive action. In the typical African village there is no squire, not even a *kulak*, no village or manorial functionary, no public servant, above all no parish priest whose links were with a greater world, Canterbury or Rome, and no clerk or monk to keep a record.

African society is, in fact, very like that of our own ancestors in or before the transition to feudalism. The general level is that of an early English hamlet before there was any co-ordinating central authority. The life of tropical Africa today is the best possible human commentary on texts and documents about man-price (*wergild*), the composition of courts and councils, the ordeal, land tenure; on how the obligations of kinship were superseded by the common interests of neighbours, and communal custom developed into law. Earlier English constitutional history is very largely concerned with the growth of the modern State out of a customary society, especially with the evolution of a machine which would still function when, by chance of the hereditary system, or perhaps a fault in 'education of the sons of chiefs', the succession passed to an incompetent king. All through history

tribalism has in the end had to give way to institutions better able to cope with more complex conditions; it is not as if the emergence of the individual from the group were a new phenomenon.

It is facile to envy the tribesman his freedom from our anxieties. In tribal life there is nothing unexpected; the individual is as helpless in any unforeseen emergency as he is utterly powerless against the disapproval or hostility of his group. The frequent calamities of a precarious existence, disease, death, loss of crops or cattle, are the more unendurable for the belief that they are always manifestations of the supernatural, either caused by a man's enemies or sent as punishment for unconscious sins. The African appears as convinced as the medieval Christian of the unreality of the material world and the strength of spiritual forces. The cruelties committed under the influence of African religious beliefs, like the burnings of the Inquisition, were cruel for a high purpose. But the Christian has the advantage that he can improve his spiritual position by moral effort; the African is the helpless victim of spirits which affect every moment of his life. Innocent and unsuspecting persons may suddenly become channels of malicious influence and be abandoned by their closest kin – at best avoided, perhaps banished, in case they should bring trouble. In older days ostracism or banishment from the group was probably equal to sentence of death. Even where Africans have been in contact with Europeans and grown slack about the traditional ceremonies they will attribute calamity to their neglect, perhaps leave their employment and hurry home to have the proper rites hastily performed. It is because superstition is so strong that power readily falls into the hands of 'witch doctors' – or fetish priests who dominate by fear. Fatalism and lack of initiative are natural to a people living in dread of an uncontrollable and incomprehensible spirit world against which all mankind is helpless. Modern nationalist movements led by advanced or even educated individuals have played on the masses' fear of *ju-ju* for their own gain. The callousness

and suffering which result from these beliefs bring no compensating happiness or feeling of good done. The first missionaries called them heathen superstitions, and themselves having more faith they were perhaps better judges than we are.

African religions have never been a force like historical Christianity, perhaps just because so often the social, the economic and the religious pull in the same direction. If, as sometimes, chief and priest are one, so much the worse for freedom, for religion will be no check on the power of a tyrant, nor civil loyalty an antidote to blind obedience to the Church. Most of the freedom we enjoy we owe to centuries of conflict between Church and State. The Christian Church at its weakest had standards. It never completely forgot that the world is the enemy, and has combated both the tyranny of the State and the pressure of economic needs. Western civilization drew its nurture from the independent Western Church and owes all that is best in its traditions to an individualism begotten, not of self-seeking economics, but of Christian teaching and experience of the dignity of human personality. Pagan religion is formal like Leviticus, and unethical. In civilized life the 'Thou shalt nots' of the Decalogue are implicitly even if imperfectly accepted as the necessary basis of any tolerable national society, and ultimately of satisfactory international relationships. The majority of African communities have yet to learn this elementary lesson.

Africans would seem to have exhausted themselves in concentrated effort to maintain the integrity and secure the continuance of their numberless little groups – an apotheosis of the *status quo*. The conditions which make a man dependent on his neighbours were at least some check on personal greed. Only neighbours would help with tasks which are beyond the capacity of the family to perform alone – house-building, harvesting, bush-clearing. Such 'communal' labour is not organized by the community. Whoever needs help will proclaim free food, beer, on big occasions even meat, for all who come. These 'work parties' gave social occasion for song and

dance. They even helped the distribution of the food supply. The host and his wife or wives have the work of preparing the feast and brewing the beer. The workers may come late to work but in time to drink the beer, and the carefree spirit would produce only indifferent work – though it may be that Western efficiency has been bought too dear by reducing to painful drudgery what tribal society made healthful recreation. There is evidence, however, of economic status which only needed opportunity to develop. The impression that Africans have become more mercenary by European example is exaggerated. The chief had more cattle than he could manage himself, and in this way he acquired the services of herdsmen and increased his prestige. It is true he would be expected to hold a reserve for his people in time of need. But chiefs and the older men who have never been contaminated by European influence are by a great deal of evidence shameless in the claims they make on workers returning home. Under sanction of tribal morality the fathers will lay claim to their wages as a father's right, chiefs and headmen also extorting all they can in the name of duty and piety.

At every point custom is Law, but African law remains unsystematized Custom; law is personal as in early Europe, not territorial. Every wrong has its material compensation; adultery, significantly, ranks as theft. Perhaps just because there is little opportunity of amassing wealth the tribe sets itself with special rigour to compass thieves. Nigerian officers today are embarrassed by the severity of native courts which, prevented from decreeing mutilation, will impose penalties of two years' imprisonment for the theft of two or three yams. Debt, too, was a burden long before the advent of our money economy. Just because the individual has no rights apart from his group, the whole group is answerable for debts incurred by one member. Used to accepting responsibility for the debts of distant kin, or even of ancestors, tribesmen are slow to repudiate such obligations. There is little real thrift because savings are liable to be impounded to meet the debts of some

extravagant or unscrupulous kinsman. Individualism is thus checked: and equally the tribesman himself escapes personal responsibility for his own doings.

In a quest after elements characteristic of African institutions in general it is difficult to avoid being driven back upon negatives. Energy, which in more fortunately placed societies might go to improvement, is overwhelmed by forces bent on keeping things as they are and always were. Innovation under the guise of legal fiction is not unknown, but for the most part the elders decide what is 'done' or 'not done'. Almost by corollary ridicule is a most efficacious check – the errant individual hates to feel himself out of step with his fellows. In such a society local tribal bonds left no room for a wide patriotism – the tribe itself is little more than a glorified family, dominated by its older members. When there is a chief he is normally closely controlled by councillors who give voice to tradition. Such authority has the merit of representing, to some extent, the opinion of the people themselves. 'The chiefs', wrote Livingstone, of Central Africa, 'have scarcely any power; they have to court the people rather than be courted.' The difficulty of impressing ideas or of imposing cohesion on these atoms is well known to British administrators. Africa has never had from rulers of its own the benefits most European countries have owed at some time in their history to the benevolent despotism of an enlightened central government.

The Fulani emirs of Northern Nigeria almost alone have maintained some semblance of a governmental system over any considerable period of time, perhaps also the Obas of Benin, a city which was described by European visitors as flourishing at least as early as the sixteenth century. The disintegration of the diverse-tongued Bauchi Pagans of Northern Nigeria is more characteristic, and not to be explained wholly by the raiding of their Fulani neighbours. In the forest country of Eastern Nigeria, very near the quasi-monarchy of Benin and within easy reach of the great Yoruba towns, the lack of indi-



genous organization is almost as complete. Though village markets are particularly active, forest paths make communications difficult, and the villages themselves are scattered and amorphous. It does not follow that these apparently leaderless tribes are broken fragments who once had, but have lost, some more definite organization. They and many like them may equally well be 'broken' because they never acquired coherence, or even the art of defence. It may be that African institutions are naturally democratic, as in fact every man has a say in council. At the same time our African subjects are even astonishingly law-abiding. In these days enlightened governments are the rule, and world opinion has checked the worst forms of exploitation; but it is as if in the not very distant past Africans have accepted the grossest ill-usage as a natural exercise of power – power being a gift to be enjoyed.

Yet the way of the despot has always been hard. As in feudal Europe flight from a tyrant was easy; chiefs in general learnt that, in words attributed to Sandile, a victim of the Kaffir Wars, their 'patrimony consisted of men, not of cattle', and that men must be conciliated. Despots, even those whose ascendancy was based on personal ability and character, never surmounted the succession difficulties which hampered the rise of kingship in Europe. Perhaps African chiefs normally preferred an infant heir to one who might become a serious rival while they lived, and regencies gave endless opportunities of faction and intrigue. There were no towns strong enough to further their own interests by backing the more intelligent chiefs, or even, like London and many other European cities when occasion arose, to put a bridle on despots. The degree of unity over a fairly wide area achieved by the Zulus has relatively few parallels; the rivalries of petty tribes like those of Bechuanaland are far more usual. 'They are a rope of sand,' wrote Livingstone again, 'there is no cohesion anywhere ... each village is independent of every other, and they distrust each other.'

## (iii) THE 'EMERGENT' AFRICA

The study of African life usually stops short with the tribe. But Africa is not unchanging, and is no longer uniformly tribal. It is only a half-truth that the disorders of modern native society are European-made, still less the result of 'over-rapid' development. European example has inevitably brought a great awakening of African thought and ambitions. In almost every community today there are individuals, often a considerable class, wholly or in part cut loose from the old tribal life. The ferment of ideas is hopeful in so far as it promises to undermine the passive submissiveness which has certainly helped to keep Africa backward.

African teachers, lawyers, clerks, doctors, parsons are the obvious example of entirely new occupations and ways of life. Wage-labour takes Africans to new places and teaches them new ways, leading many individuals to pass from casual employment to whole-time occupations completely divorced from the old tribal life. Under the influence of traders and by the direct stimulus of education there is a growing demand for new, if not better, things. The insistent call for revenue, too, much of it to meet new needs, has powerfully reinforced the influence making for a transition from the old order. These demands in turn cause the rise of African traders and of a growing class catering for the special wants of those in new occupations. The unprecedented development of travel further helps to spread ideas and to stimulate new wants. Everywhere on the continent Africans show an amazing faculty for discovering in the most unlikely places friends and 'brothers', with whom to exchange news and views. These emancipated travellers may have a cocksure opinion of themselves. A servant of mine, originally from an old port on the Niger delta, had had little or no schooling, but in service in Lagos had learnt from friends to read and write, and would habitually use English as a *lingua franca*: he was a little at sea in the Muslim north, but completely contemptuous of the people

of an Ibo district near his own home as 'bush'. The Rand dandy may not be as superior as he likes to appear to his raw brothers in the kraal, but at least he rouses their envy. The wretchedly paid teacher has more enduring standards and a harder struggle. He cannot afford mere display, he must somehow provide himself with necessities without which civilized life is impossible. The educated need all the energy and stimulus that comes of new ambitions to help them against buffets from all sides. Almost in proportion as they have education their needs are greater: but the family too has powerful claims and they suffer not only hostile criticism but endless interference. If they find profitable occupation they must satisfy the clamorous demands of poor relations.

Unnecessary tears are shed over the preference the educated show for clerical, collar-and-tie occupations. There are so few openings for anyone dissatisfied with the monotony of life on a constricted Transkeian holding, or even in the wide undeveloped tropical bush, that it is most natural for the educated few to turn to black-coated callings. In agricultural Scotland or France the law and the Church long provided the easiest openings for clever and ambitious sons of peasant families. In our own Middle Ages all scholars were 'clerks', by no means always reputable, a class apart; their limited opportunities made them too almost anti-social, and went to live by their wits. Some very respectable South African natives are credibly supposed to have practised I.D.B. (illicit diamond buying) for years without getting trapped. Not all have the art and originality shown by a notorious gang of coin-counterfeiters about Ijebu-Ode on the Guinea Coast. Our own wandering scholars<sup>1</sup> attained impeccable respectability only after pious founders had endowed the scholastic life by founding colleges – as in the words of the memorial prayer still in use at All Souls, 'for the relief of distress and the advancement of learning'. Many Africans make great sacrifices for education, only to be obliged to resort in the end to callings

1. Cf. Helen Waddell, *The Wandering Scholars*.

like that of the professional letter-writer. The black-coats may enjoy prestige, but they by no means always pay their way.

It is a common lament that the educated are so seldom content with a life on the land, but the land offers little prospect of reward for hard work, and as yet too few outlets for intelligence and initiative. Some already handle the products and minister to the wider social wants of the basic agricultural society. Only general development and more efficient production can really make room for more. No merely tribal village can afford to pay a teacher adequately, and many young Africans who might turn to rural teaching are deterred by the poverty and isolation to which the work would condemn them. Thus African society is no doubt top-heavy. The educated handful, and even more the merely sophisticated, have too little outlet for their acquirements. They are separated from the majority by the great gulf that yawns between the man with a smattering of schooling and another with none whatever. This, at least, is remediable – the demand is there; and the perilous isolation of the educated few will diminish or cease only with the spread of education.

It is in fact the exceptional position of the educated that makes them uncertain of themselves and easily unbalanced. By all historical analogy they will and must be individualists – as the brighter spirits of our own Renaissance notoriously were – more concerned about their own careers than about the social weal, resentful of criticism from without, and very distrustful of one another. The new African is probably so much absorbed today in learning new ways, so full of new hopes, as to be good material for the subversive teachings of ‘agitators’. It is therefore dangerous political expediency to try to check the process of ‘detrribalization’, or to give even the appearance of seeking to put the clock back. It is a misfortune that civilization today offers no clear-cut system of ideas for Africans to follow, no creed such as Christianity or Islam once offered with confidence, no simple and thrilling rule of life for

the convert from barbarism to embrace, hardly even a civic system of which he can feel himself a part.

The most important element in African education can now only come from Europeans. Not so long ago it was commonly assumed that 'contact', especially perhaps 'under discipline', is the best of all schools for Africans. The argument has swung altogether too far in the opposite direction. The consequences of the sometimes merely unintelligent treatment of many subject African peoples make it convenient to ignore the manner of the impact and to have the consequences written down as the inevitable result of 'contact' as such. South Africa, where the natives' human interests have suffered more sharply than anywhere else, affords evidence that the older view was warranted. The ordered white society has given South African Natives advantages none of the less mixed communities possess. Not only because schools have had longer to spread their influence, no colony of them all has so large a number and proportion of educated civilized Africans. Even their cattle-keeping has been an advantage; the girls have been sent to school while the boys tended the herds, and African women have nowhere made such marked progress. With all respect to their West African contemporaries, which are at least the Africans' own, the *Star*, the *Cape Times* and others are more solid newspapers and are widely read by Africans. The better farms and mines also do something for the education and enlightenment of individuals who come their way, and in spite of their many disabilities life in Cape Town or Johannesburg offers cultivated Africans a good deal that is missing in Lagos or Accra. The life of South Africa is more complete than that of the small and unrepresentative European segments of a tropical town could ever be, and the artistic, cultural and educational influences of South African society give Africans a wider background and a better knowledge and understanding of the outside world. Any European speaker must feel that the common ground between him and an audience of comparatively highly educated West Africans is less firm than it

would be with an average South African audience of lower scholastic attainment. The charming urbanity of Southerners may some of it be of the same quality as that of 'Uncle Tom' or any other old family retainer – imitative, even subservient. There is sturdy independence in the resentful, narrow attitude of the West Coaster. But his South African fellow has insensibly acquired much that he lacks, and may yet find it easier to bridge the gulf between the old African order and the complicated new world.

In all parts, highly moral and intelligent Africans will show themselves not only faultless in manners but quick in debate – with an African gift of making a joke even of hardships and of grievous wrongs done to them and their people. This assurance may lack depth – the consciousness of 4000 years of civilization that enables the Brahmin to look quietly down his nose at the most finished product of the West. It is more serious that they lack a tradition of service and, in matters of routine, a sense of the value of work well done for its own sake. Almost all are still incurably local and parochial in outlook. It has been left for Europeans to supply even names for the larger groups. At most Akan or Ewe or Egba or Zulu marks the limit of social and, therefore, of political interest. The Gold Coast, Nigeria, Nyasaland, Tanganyika (in spite of a national anthem sung in its schools to the infectious air of 'Clementine'), or for that matter South Africa – all are mere names – highly artificial units cutting across established tribal boundaries. These subdivisions are not necessarily final, but the need is for a strong civic morality prepared to put the interests of new and greater wholes before those of family or tribe.

If only for this reason the future depends on the new individualists rather than on the old groups, since they must of necessity find their place in the life of the colony rather than that of the tribe. It is already certain that no tribal chief can hope to lead and hold general native opinion merely by hereditary prestige. Yet European opinion is too often distrustful

of the 'intelligentsia', bent on adapting education to its own idea of African needs. There need be no fear that any would wish their children to forget their own language – indeed there are the beginnings of a rampant African nationalism, with all its manifestations – but fewer still do not want Western education undiluted, for its own sake. European sponsored returns to African custom are not impressive. Achimota College lately witnessed a rather artificial revival of African dress and some development of native dancing, and these rouse interest and approval. The South African native national anthem, 'N Kosi sikelela Africa' ('God save Africa') is purely African – sad or rousing as the occasion may demand. Among the Baganda, under an exterior of modern dress, in spite of conversion to Christianity and of considerable economic prosperity, the old native life persists. Africans, in short, will imitate, but they will absorb what they do – in spite of us – in their own distinctive way.

Many Europeans genuinely regret and deplore the strength of Western influence, honestly believing the 'raw' African to be better and happier – not merely more easily managed – than his peculiarly troublesome fellows. The bush native has fewer opinions, it is maintained, but those he has are based directly on experience and he himself is more interesting, simpler and in every way to be preferred. This is, however, little relevant to the new situation. The patronizing metaphor of the 'child' races is following the old epithet 'savages' out of fashion, in spite of its 'administrative convenience'.<sup>1</sup> It is useless to proceed as if the awkward age of adolescence were an avoidable mistake in the development of a nation, any more than it is in the maturing of the individual. The Westernizers are the gear-moving factor in modern Africa, the active force developing and asserting opinion. They are, after all, themselves of the people, rarely so much as two generations removed from the soil. They are in closer touch with the masses than it is the fashion to suppose, and it is not so certain that

1. C. W. de Kieuret's phrase in *The Imperial Factor*.

the masses are static. It is a tragedy that the educated are so few, and that some fail to realize their duty to others of their own race. Our share must be to help them, as best we can, to remove whatever now stands in the way of African well-being.



## *Chapter 4*

# **THE BASIS OF SOCIETY – LAND, LIFE AND WORK**

### **(i) THE OLD ORDER**

AT the first of a series of conferences convened by the Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa in 1923 to consider the so-called 'native question', it was my lot to call attention to the inadequacy of the 'Reserves', to the congestion even there, and to the landlessness of millions elsewhere. This exposition was at that time a novelty and brought at once unanimous testimony from African spokesmen that the restrictions of Pass Laws, the industrial colour bar and the rest, might be cheerfully borne if only their people were left a real possibility of continuing their old life on the land. The 'Native Question', they declared, is a land question. To Africans everywhere it is a commonplace, not a romantic dream to be realized in old age, that life and work normally depend upon and centre round gardens, crops and cattle.

African agriculture, on which all life mainly depends, is still what conditions originally made it, for the most part primitive. Many tribes even today set to work with only a cutlass to clear the ground, and a stick to prod a hole for the seed; relatively few have any tool more efficient than a heavy hoe. The cutlass can be put to very skilful use, and the hoe is a most efficient weapon for its proper purposes; but no degree of skill could achieve great agriculture with such limited range of tools. Many Africans are learning to use the plough; but in the unending stretches of fly-infested country draught animals cannot live and the general use of ploughs is impossible. Where women do a large part of the work in the fields any change of method involves also difficult social readjustments; women, for example, do not handle cattle, and have not the

strength required for good ploughing. New processes frequently require more work and time rather than less, and the women are said to object, as well they may. The conservation of water is very rare, and in general utterly beyond native resources. The use of fertilizers is an art, and the large parts without cattle also lack the most obvious supply, so that practically everywhere crops depend wholly on the vagaries of rainfall. If plant or animal disease breaks out it runs its course with hardly the possibility of control. There is much waste, like the felling of palm trees by people too careless or too ignorant to be at the pains of tapping the live tree for wine. Little attempt is made anywhere to accumulate any reserve food supply. A good crop merely means more tribal festivities.

Not that all African agriculture is equally and utterly inefficient. The pastoral south, which is best known, has a poor tradition; but even there the Pondo always plant tobacco in old cattle kraals. West Africans show skill in the cultivation, for example, of yams. As far south as Nyasaland there would seem to be less need of teaching than in Southern Rhodesia. The bush-burning which normally precedes planting is wasteful, and in the long run disastrous to the forest, but in a shorter view it conserves the humus, provides a useful seed-bed and avoids the deep digging and clearing the soil of roots that would otherwise be needed. By long trial and error Africans have learnt rudimentary methods which serve well in the bush. They may have quite good empirical reasons for refusal to adopt new crops or new methods. The danger of soil erosion may be greater from intensive modern methods than when 'shifting' cultivation was the normal routine. The practice of interplanting a variety of field-crops in one small garden gives a variety of crops ripening at different times, and this suited African needs better than fields all of one kind, besides helping to protect the surface. 'Shifting' cultivation was also a rough substitute for the rotation of crops, for even science has by no means solved the problem of conserving soil fertility under tropical conditions.

African agricultural practice as a whole, however, is what might be expected of a people so long shut in upon their own limited experience. Other people have learnt the finer arts of tillage or the intense cultivation of a limited area only when they had to, but the pressure of population has been hitherto little felt in Africa. In most parts land was sufficient for all purposes, enabling the workers to rest it by frequent 'shifting', and yet to allow ample reserves for grazing, hunting and fuel. Until there was production for outside markets land was a means of subsistence only. Ideas about ownership were rather like our own about the use of sea or air, which we neither buy nor sell. Only customary rights prevailed, the tribe entering into it rather as trustee for non-arable land. Individuals had recognized rights to land they were in the habit of using, and no one would lightly interfere with what another had cleared. In some parts even strangers, so long as they came in peace, were readily allowed to clear and dig, probably in return for a gift which would be regarded, it is said, not as a price, but as an acknowledgment of the laws and authorities of the village. Certainly migrating tribes welcomed strangers as reinforcements, if settled and congested tribes did not. Even today in most parts a new garden may be made so long as no one actually objects.

Agricultural holdings are still normally limited to what can reasonably be worked by one family, often subdivided for working by individuals. The area actually cultivated in any one year did not mark the limits of the land over which each group exercised rights. A village, moreover, is not necessarily a compact geographical unit. The names boarded up along the roads of Togoland show the same root occurring at intervals, very much as those of some English villages record the scattered make-up of many manors and hundreds; so also the unfenced scattered strips of cultivation in the open glades or *dambos* of the central African bush, in the valleys or on the open hillsides of Basutoland and the Transkei, suggest what medieval European cultivation must have looked like. The

old tillage undoubtedly required more space in proportion than better methods would.

Boundaries were vaguely defined, but families, villages and whole tribes seem to have had their own 'spheres of influence' in any land more or less regularly and permanently cultivated, grazed or hunted over. The waste, therefore, was much of it reserve. In Tanganyika I have seen a chief stake a claim in an unoccupied tract that was in process of being cleared of tsetse-fly by building a hut and planting a garden of millet. It was obviously a claim on behalf of the tribe against outsiders; equally obviously the one hut and garden site in a thirty-mile lane covered a claim to more than the ground they stood on, and were by no means the limit even of the chief's personal rights. Such rights would not survive indefinite abandonment even of a clearing. In a crowded Transvaal district it was equally according to native custom for the Native Commissioner to require men either to undertake cultivation or abandon a claim to land they were leaving unused.

While rights in land thus depend to some extent on use, crops belong without doubt to the man who plants them. There is general recognition of property in trees; fruit trees once planted near a hut can continue to be picked by the planter or his heirs after they themselves have moved and the neighbourhood gone 'back to bush', or even if a new family should come to cultivate the land. On the West Coast the family will keep a claim to palm trees even where land has been 'given' to strangers. There is no more typical example of how old usage may hinder necessary and desirable change. In these days the old West Coast trade in palm oil can probably only survive if the trees are improved by orchard cultivation; but enterprising individuals find the removal of worthless old trees obstructed by family claims, and possibly also the full disposal of new trees planted on 'family' land. Similarly, attempts to provide quick-growing wattle plantations in fuelless South African districts, or to plant trees as a check on soil erosion, may break down on account of claims to owner-

ship lodged by chiefs, as well as from popular objection to suspected encroachment on common grazing land. Such planting by the European administration comes under suspicion as an attempt to stake a European claim.

The idea that the land 'belongs' to the people or to the chief is new and alien. To suggest that the land belonged, for instance, to the Alake of Abeokuta would, said a leading Yoruba, be a 'sure way to start a revolution'. But to speak of the land as belonging to the Yoruba people is true only in the sense that the land of France 'belongs to the people of France'.<sup>1</sup> The modern Yoruba who may lease land from the local Native Authority instead of from its family owners may be acting on a useful new principle, but he is certainly not 'following native custom'. So little was the land ever 'the people's' anywhere in Africa that land for public purposes is notoriously difficult to secure; the authorities have been faced with plausible claimants even to land reclaimed from the waters of the Lagos Lagoon! In the past it was hardly worth even a chief's while to assert any theoretical claim to ownership of land. It is modern governments that have sometimes encouraged a chief to exercise rights over land which he did not hold by tradition. That it is convenient for them to have a local agent who is also spokesman for the tribe has enabled chiefs to claim or seize privileges and perquisites for themselves. For this reason, in Natal for example, the more progressive educated Zulus flock to the so-called Mission Reserves (land attached to old mission stations) to escape the interference or even the exactions of a chief. In Basutoland, the white ruler has sometimes had to step in to give progressive individuals special protection from the exactions levied by chiefs and, since the improver is also an innovator, from the outraged feelings of the community. Always, of course, the spirits are a factor – the innumerable shrines in animistic districts are evidence of the need felt to propitiate them.

1. Report on Yoruba Land Tenure, by H. Ward Price (Lagos, 1933)

## (ii) AND THE NEW

In the old Africa land was for 'use' only, but its yield was less adequate than would be thought right and necessary by modern socialist theory which approves use as the true end. Only more and better directed agriculture can meet, for example, the proved defects and insufficiencies of diet. It is not enough, though that in places needs some effort, to secure the natives on their land, to use as they please, and it is dangerous to allow revenue needs to concentrate energy too exclusively on economic or export crops to the neglect of food.

It is, in fact, impossible to distinguish sharply between production for home use and production for export. Africans are fully aware of and eager to seize any new opportunity of lessening their poverty. For good or ill land now has a new value and purpose. The growing of economic crops, or even of food-stuffs for a more active local exchange, is unduly handicapped by social restrictions which have become irrelevant. Permanent crops like cocoa or oranges have an annually realizable value, and a value which increases with the maturing of the tree. Good farmers or ambitious young men may reasonably wish to pledge crops, or even a portion of the land itself, to raise cash for better farm equipment—frequently to pay for education. Such permanent improvements as modern houses, cocoa- or coffee-drying or fermenting plant, cannot be forfeit if the originator moves elsewhere. The progressive individual who tries to raise a crop of winter wheat must fence his crops, but where fields revert in the winter to common pasturage, as in South Africa, he will be depriving others of a valuable right. Not only where the alienation of land for European settlement has upset the old ways the older subsistence economy is breaking down.

The peace and security brought by stable government has worked in the same direction. With the increase of population, the greater pressure on land enhances land values. Govern-

ments, which could not if they would put an end to shifting cultivation, limit and restrict freedom of movement. In areas of white settlement tribal boundaries have been narrowed and rigidly fixed. International political boundaries which cut tribes into two or more parts may, or may not, confine each section within its own reduced area. In all parts administrative centres, which normally grow into townships, attract men into wage-earning and provide a market for economic or cash crops. The decencies of civilization require solidly built administrative offices, school buildings, churches, better housing generally. Neither the administration nor missionary educators could move their buildings to follow the people round, nor are native house owners any longer mobile. Yet the administration's rooted preference for dealing with tribal units, rather than be faced with the complications of mixed areas, does nothing to encourage the tribes to mix – even when some are congested within their boundaries and others have only too much space, as in the classic instance of the Masai and Kikuyu.

There is evidence that under stress rules of possession are, or were, undergoing a process of adaptation. Among the Kikuyu the implications of the so-called *githaka* system have become apparent only now that 'squatters' on what was supposedly unclaimed land in the 'white' highlands are found to be unwelcome on tribal land to which, on the communal theory, they ought to have an equal right with all other members of the tribe. Ejected squatters, unless they happen to be members of a *githaka*-owning family, can obtain land in the tribal reserve only by paying rent in money, kind or labour to other Kikuyu. The exaction of onerous terms by tribesmen from other tribesmen is certainly contrary to all African practice, and the sale of *ithaka*<sup>1</sup> also reported is an innovation. This may be a not unnatural assimilation of European ideas, but it is also evidence of unlooked-for fluidity in African institutions – of vitality, not only of dissolution.

1. *Githaka* is the singular form, *ithaka* the plural.

It is significant that in parts of West Africa, where alienation of land to Europeans has been effectively prevented, the change is no less obvious. There is such serious congestion in Southern Nigeria that in places the normal period of fallow has dropped within recent memory from seven years to five, or to three; in a few districts, though manuring is rare, the land is worked every season and gets no rest. Again, so far apart as the Calabar province and the central Gold Coast, administrative officers divide their time, more especially in the planting season, between arbitrating in land disputes and writing reports; these show that tribal rules are disintegrating, or perhaps struggling towards reintegration.

In economically advanced parts of West Africa there is extra-legal buying and selling of land, and sharp division between old and young as to how far it is possible or desirable to adhere to 'native custom', which requires the consent of the whole family to such transactions. Short of outright sale, it is common for family land to be pawned, in effect mortgaged, to provide education for youths, or to raise credit for agricultural purposes, frequently for house-building. The would-be mortgagor must obtain 'the consent of the family', which in practice means presents all round, or to all who matter, to produce a 'paper' which the mortgagee can plausibly pass on as proof that the necessary family consent has been given. With or without this consent parcels of land are constantly changing hands. In particular cases officers have discovered technically 'communal' holdings to be doubly and trebly bonded. In the end a 'sale' is forced and a stranger acquires actual possession of part of a family estate. Sometimes custom is adapted. The value of the gift required for the use of the land may make it a price, and land is in fact bought and sold, although the term 'gift' is still used. The gift may sometimes very inadequately represent the value of the land originally pledged; but often the mortgagees are money-lenders who know they have no support in law and, after their sort, expect a reward commensurate with the risk they are taking. In-



justice and hardship are suffered, and scandal created, and the law as it now stands provides neither check on malpractice nor indemnity for wrong suffered.

If the social and emotional ties of the family are thus being weakened, it is owing to pressure not from without but from within, and with strong and growing popular feeling on the side of the emerging individual. There should be no question of any overt attack on the family, which is no less the foundation of society in West Africa than elsewhere. But the recognition of private rights is already so general that rules might and ought to be evolved to meet the new conditions, and to provide legal means of showing that in particular cases family restrictions are not merely unenlightened or selfish, but unjust. Nothing less will help the family to make better use of its economic resources, and at the same time save it from destroying itself by the revolt of its own ablest members. The more progressive elements are equally entitled to consideration. The majority, if such it really be, need not really continue to be protected by authority from any change that might weaken their power to live on the enterprise of their fellows.

The Buganda province of Uganda on the other side of the continent is one instance where the European government once intervened with reasonable success to help the native system to adapt itself. It is probable that Sir Harry Johnston was more European than African in his interpretation of the 'feudalism' he found there, but his changes made relatively little disturbance of established practice. Sub-chiefs became rather European-style landlords, and *bakopi* (peasants) became tenants, their uncertain and arbitrary dues commuted to a fixed rent for family or cotton land. Landlords, moreover, were taxed according to the number of their tenants. Land was still easily obtainable, even by purchase from the chief turned landlord, and many tenants have become freeholders — there were lately 16,000 where originally there were only 3000. The man who acquires land is still installed by a representative of the *kabaka* and enjoys social status—and since

any may rise to the office of chief, there is perhaps something of the career open to talent.

It can at least be claimed for the Uganda land policy that it saw the country through a period of unusually active economic development, helping the people to seize the opportunity which world demand for cotton and the fertility of their soil afforded. To this result the spread of education contributed. But there is evidence that excessive reliance on the one crop, cotton, has been at some cost of soil fertility, even to the extent of soil-erosion – also that as the first wave of prosperity ebbed new social tensions were beginning to arise. My own notes of a brief visit to Uganda are full of various informants' dark allusions even sixteen years ago to a 'Bolshie' element among the 'new' younger men. These discontents are only to be understood as evidence of the birth of politics in 'Africa Emergent'.

The typical Africa even yet is neither South Africa nor Uganda, nor the economic whirlpools of the West Coast, but those almost amorphous communities whose people still use and enjoy the poor fruit of their land without any need to think about rules of tenure. There is need, and there should be time, to take account of what is actually happening in the more advanced communities and to plan ahead for those as yet less affected. As it is, experience goes to waste. The obvious differences in local conditions are over-emphasized, and the fashionable demand is for detailed local surveys. These, the indispensable foundation, are no substitute for a broader study. The Colonial Office once got so far as to appoint a West African Land Commission, but it died in the 1914 war. Present-day research has the inevitable weakness of going to work in academic seclusion, which robs it even of educative influence. Less is heard now of the need to solve African land problems on lines consonant with the law and custom of a time when the land alone had to provide a meagre subsistence for all. The hope of a stable African society calls for sym-

pathetic understanding of the old order, but even more for a clear appreciation of the nature and extent of the new calls that are being made upon it. A real regard for African welfare demands indeed that, so long as responsibility is ours, Governments should actively control and direct.

Even within homogeneous tribal areas there are times or instances where consideration of the peoples' own economic welfare necessitates some check on established custom, so far for example, as it hinders tree-planting for fuel or as a defence against soil erosion. Afforesting is essential in the almost devastated cattle-carrying 'reserves' of South Africa: already cattle dung is so exclusively used for domestic fuel that little or none remains to fertilize the soil. In the Gold Coast, clearing for cocoa has gone to lengths that imperil the forest on which the cocoa depends. The people, to whom in theory the land belongs, reluctantly accepted the delimitation of forest reserves; but suspicion that the ulterior object was to stake a claim to mineral rights led them to insist on making the control of the forest a function of the Native Authority – and its regulations are so half-heartedly enforced that the future of the cocoa industry is gravely menaced. Responsibility may yet teach the Gold Coast. In eighteenth-century England useful and necessary improvements, which would have been impossible under the old common field tillage, were initiated and carried through, at needless cost to the poorer classes, by landowners; these selfish but enlightened landlords also governed the country with a large measure of popular consent. But Africa is far from being a ready-made community, and governments must beware of actually bolstering up the old conservative vested interests. Left to themselves, the younger school, already ardent for freehold, would saddle Africa with the worst abuses of European land systems; the older, jealous of their privileges, would allow the old forms to harden and fossilize. Africans in general have clear enough ideas of *meum* and *tuum* but are weak in appreciation of truly common interests. The problem is to reconcile the reason-

able rights of individuals with the continuance of a public control that will be more broadly based than the old family system.

The object and the test of sound land tenure must be more intensive use of the land. It may be indifferent housekeeping that makes West Coast Europeans largely dependent on preserved food, but it is not their fault that milk is unprocurable, good meat almost so, and the range of vegetables even yet very limited. In the more temperate climate of the south it is not wholly due to the pressure of white settlement that the famous Transkeian Reserve, an area of some 15,000 square miles, is less than self-supporting. Much of it good arable land, with reliable rainfall, this unit normally imports rather than exports maize, failing to produce sufficient of its staple crop to support its million inhabitants. In less favourably situated South African native districts the only question traders have to debate is whether to begin their annual import of maize three months after harvest or wait for six months. The available records show only how far African agriculture is behind that of the rest of the world. The agricultural output of native Africa has always been small in quantity, besides being as a rule inferior in quality. Well-attested pre-war figures made it a commonplace that the one African 'raw material' of first-rate importance in world markets was palm oil (at one time 76.5 per cent of the total), the only others that seriously count being groundnuts (22.4 per cent), and perhaps sesame (6 per cent). The production of foodstuffs is more considerable—cocoa, over half the world supply, and a steadily growing yield of coffee and fruit. The average yield of the staple crop, maize, however, even for South Africa where production is mostly directed by European owners, was in 1931 the lowest recorded, only 2.2 quintals per hectare. Rhodesia, with newer soil, had an average of 8.8 per hectare. It is true that the Union as a whole is self-supporting in maize, but these leading African producers stand at the bottom of a list which rises from 10 in Brazil, 15.7 in Chile, 17.8 in Argentina, to 20.4 in Canada.

The poor yield even of European-directed South African agriculture undoubtedly reflects in part the inefficiency of the African labour on which it mainly depends, and purely African effort in other parts fails to obtain even as good an average. Agriculture thus calls for scientific guidance, as well as for transport and other public services involving heavy capital outlay: otherwise production will continue to languish and even the possibilities remain untested and unknown.

There is need, no less, to promote the training of the native peoples to play their part better. European-directed enterprise has not yet helped as it ought just because so few have seen that the elevation of Africans is the essential foundation, even for that better production for export which has been the too exclusive aim. Thus the palm-oil industry of the West Coast has suffered from the competition of the plantation product of Sumatra, but peasants are slow to take pains about the orchard cultivation of a tree that has always looked after itself. Africans are slow to accept changes of method or to adopt new crops. It is a common complaint that farm 'boys' after years of training will perversely return to their traditional methods on their own land. It is true that a good deal of what is represented as sheer obscurantism arises from want of the slender capital needed for implements no European farmer could do without. New methods often require new implements, and mean more work, or more work at an already busy season of the year; and there is always the probability that the population, at least at any given point, is short of spare hands for such extra labour. For that matter some European farmers who have land enough, perhaps even for 'shifting' cultivation, fail to practise the rotations assiduously preached to Africans and are accused of using up the soil by growing nothing but maize. In the course of generations Africans have, in fact, successfully adopted many crops introduced by the Arabs or the Portuguese. Potatoes have quickly become a staple food among the Kikuyu. The African peasant family providing its own labour may have positive advantages for at least two or

three crops like cotton and the coarser 'black-fire' tobacco of Nyasaland. A Southern Rhodesian Commission looking for new fields for white settlers rather regretfully concluded that cotton is essentially a 'native' crop. Groundnuts are grown by natives of many different parts, both for food and for export, and Africans are growing coffee with fair success in East Africa. Near Cape Coast peasants whose first plantings were stood over, if not done for them by white officers, now boast complacently of 'our' lime-juice industry:

The most successful of all African ventures, the cocoa industry of the West Coast, is also an outstanding example of African limitations. It began with exceptional advantages. The climatic conditions the tree demands are comparatively rare, and little capital or organization was required; the cocoa market was expanding and paid good prices. Once inertia was overcome the original planting was a comparatively simple matter – as with the palm, nature does most of the work, and before the first trees reached the age of maximum production the West African product had captured a very large share of the world market. Till well into the 'thirties West African cocoa was free from disease which had ravaged the West Indies. The chief anxieties were that much experiment failed to find a satisfactory fertilizer, and that it would be a formidable task to make thousands of highly independent small peasants apply the necessary remedy should disease develop.

The prosperity of the Gold Coast had also its drawbacks. It is not peculiarly African that peasants will put all their eggs in one basket—thirty-odd years ago market-gardeners from Grahamstown regularly hawked their vegetables to wealthy farmers on the Fish River who were too busy nursing lucerne and making money from ostriches to grow their own green food. But in native Africa the social consequences may be more disturbing. Even in a year of depressed prices, like 1933, the markets in the best cocoa districts carried an unusually large stock of imported tinned foods, some of them probably luxuries, but many of them a dear and unnecessary substitute

for native-grown 'chop'. Gold Coast peasants have more serious reasons than Fish River farmers for neglecting the food supply. While the cocoa tree is young it is practicable and it has been usual to interplant with food crops. When the cocoa matures interplanting becomes impossible. As it is, the cocoa is often too closely planted. Food crops thus come to necessitate new clearing of the forest and this tempts more cocoa-planting. There are parts of the Gold Coast where already the natural forest is irretrievably ruined; in newer cocoa districts of Southern Nigeria it is threatened: and experts are by no means confident of maintaining cocoa-planting or replanting without the natural forest shade to foster the young trees. Finally, the 'forties brought at once the threatened onset of cocoa disease, and a long period of sagging prices,<sup>1</sup> with the consequence that discouragement led to general neglect of plantations and made it harder than ever to get peasants to use the care and skill needed in tending and picking the crop, or in the processes of fermenting and preparing it for market. It is significant that the plantation-grown and cured product of Trinidad continued to find the best world price even when in several West Indian islands the poorer plantations had gone to ruin.

There is no doubt that the quality of most African peasant production is inferior. The 'native' product is not and need not always be below the best standard, but for purposes of the open market the 'get-up' is likely to be inferior, the maize or wool or groundnuts probably 'dirty'; without supervision and organization by some outside authority the produce will be ungraded. Even the best native producers may have to accept the lower price quoted for the 'native' product—even if it is unusual nowadays to hear of an experience like that of some

1. By 1947 prices were soaring again but 'swollen shoot' disease was rampant. The only known remedy is to cut out diseased trees and plant afresh. Some experts were of opinion that unless Gold Coast leaders are more successful in persuading peasants to attempt this unpopular process, for which compensation is offered, fifteen or twenty years may see the end of cocoa production.

Basuto I knew, who were trapped into accepting an 'unusually good' price of fourpence a pound for their wool, when in fact the war-time boom had taken the current price to fifteen pence. The limitations of the African peasant make it in fact very hard for him to succeed with a crop needing specialist or even specially delicate handling. The curing of the finer grades of cigarette tobacco is a scientific and specialist accomplishment beyond the skill of the average European settler. The production and distribution of fruit, tomatoes, even bananas or citrus, clearly demands complex organization and skilled supervision; so that, for example, not even the progressive Gold Coast has developed anything like the fruit export from ex-German plantations in the Cameroons. There are, in addition, paying economic crops which African peasants cannot hope to set going because of the heavy initial capital expenditure they need – sisal, for example, now the chief export of Tanganyika, and sugar. Africans themselves are eager for sugar, yet the total African consumption is now ridiculously small, and the production from canes grown on African soil almost negligible. The tragically low purchasing power of Africans means that it is worth no one's while to equip a native sugar industry with the necessary outfit of mills, mulling machinery and means of transport. Large-scale enterprises must, moreover, be prepared to add to their expenses by providing their own scientific and research staff, besides making the best they can of the routine labour of these still untrained and illiterate African peasants.

The well-known shortcomings of this labour are, of course, the same that dog Africans themselves in all their work. By the classical definition, 'work' is the generic term, and 'labour' is *hard* work – so that while effort has gone to getting Africans to work hard in the interests of other people, little or none goes to remedy the obvious causes of the inefficiency that has always made their own work hard out of all proportion to the result they get. It was long assumed that African society has ready-made all the essentials of a sound peasant system.



Far the greatest menace to their security and well-being was supposed to be from European encroachments on their land. British policy, for example, took high credit for having firmly refused to allow the Lever interests to establish a model palm-oil plantation in West Africa, and for refusing to vest even ultimate control of Gold Coast land in the Crown. Guidance was admittedly needed to get a better balance of food and cash crops, but the difficulty chiefly feared was that the choice of suitable cash crops was limited and uncertain.

Today increasingly intensive African study makes it clear that there is no such simple road to a better and more assured state of well-being. The findings of the Nutrition Report of 1939 marked something of a new epoch, causing more stress to be laid on food crops. A better fed people will produce more even for export, besides having more for exchange with neighbours and for the development of internal trade. The war years continued the educative process; the medical examination of African recruits confirmed and amplified the findings of the Nutrition Report, at the same time that shipping losses cut off imports. Permanent benefit is likely to result, for example, from the experience gained in West Africa in the production of butter, cheese, pork and bacon, potatoes, and a variety of hitherto untried vegetables. The slight but representative studies of Nigerian 'Native Economies' published by Nuffield College in 1946 leave no further excuse for misapprehension: the combined efforts of whole families even in the best parts of Nigeria normally bring in a yearly surplus of perhaps £2 to £4.

An accustomed subsistence which is also reasonably assured may be valuable in itself but it is a formidable obstacle to necessary and obvious reform. Too many of the African peoples struggle to earn a poor living from the soil alone. Fewer workers, better directed, must get a better yield from the land before hands can be available for productive work, for example in light industries. But the African peoples as a whole have yet to learn the art of steady work at anything like

the standard of productivity normally attained in other parts of the world.

African society cannot in any event continue to be exclusively peasant and agricultural – still less wholly pastoral. More would have been heard before now of overcrowding and landlessness in purely native parts had it not been for local adjustments. In the emirate of Kano, where many land-holdings are mere auxiliary gardens, there is only no serious land problem because local trades provide alternative means of livelihood. Division of labour has at least eased the problem in the crowded Ibo country of Southern Nigeria, which is much less highly developed, and has few considerable towns to give employment to the overflow. Practically all Ibos may have some lien on a family holding; but it would be a poorer living even than it is for them if it were not that so many depend largely on activities like trading or fishing, or engage in minor trades and callings. Professional palm-climbers travel far afield to other parts of the coast; their professional domestic servants are almost a guild – the practice by which almost every ‘boy’ has his own boy attendant amounts, in fact, to a rough system of apprenticeship.

All over the continent the trend is similar, but the pace very slow. Africans of their own initiative look for alternative or supplementary means of livelihood. Their hold on the land perhaps helps some to exercise a choice in the matter. The Wachagga of Kilimanjaro, who have suffered considerably by alienation of land to European settlers, have achieved enough through coffee-growing to make them comparatively independent. They have taken also to trade, and the proprietors of neighbouring ‘white’ estates find, a little to their surprise, that for wage-labour they must draw for the most part from poorer tribes from some distance. But the old inefficiency or lack of quality remains the hall-mark of African labour, and even the semi-independence the workers enjoy as landowners in their own right positively helps to keep their labour cheap. Actual starvation is as rare as inadequate diet is normal,

and employers and governments have had little occasion to concern themselves about social services. At no visible cost to employers or to the revenue of the country the family and the family land provide in some fashion for sickness, invalidity and old age. The family system has elements that are of permanent value and the modern drive for social welfare services must not disregard it. But immediately, the strongest element in the old African system is in this and other respects a source of weakness in the transition to a new order.

Europeans have failed as yet to play a full part as apostles of civilization in Africa. Even now their contribution is more considerable than they always get credit for in face of the sometimes glaring ill-effects of 'contact'. That Africa is no longer the dark continent is almost entirely a European achievement. But the Europeans have been either rulers, too few in numbers and too weak in resources to do more than wrestle with administrative routine, or else settlers and industrialists defeated like Africans before them by the struggle with the natural forces of the continent. The inefficiency of the African population has always been obvious to new-comers from the outside world. Their reaction has normally been to see 'wasted bounties of nature' and the possibility – under their own direction – of wealth for themselves. The countries with white settlement were the first to reject Dr John Philip's century-old invitation to consider the native African, not as a producer only, a present convenience, but as a potential consumer. For all Philip or others could say or do the Africans' only appropriate function was held to be to work under direction for wages. The purely African tropical colonies did not escape the example and the contagion. Even there the future was held to depend on the production of wealth for sale and export, to provide revenue for the necessary work of government, for the reasonable remuneration of British capital, and only then for essential and primary needs of the country. The advancement of African civilization remains impossible till such time as this becomes not a remote aspiration

but the first and direct aim, formerly, one had said, of all *our* policy. Ten years ago few Africans anywhere doubted that the essential help and guidance could come only from Western civilization. Today this belief is questioned. Short cuts are the fashion, and some Africans may be led by their impatience to try to break away prematurely on ways of their own devising.

## PART II



### *Chapter 5*

## EUROPEANS IN AFRICA

### (i) FIRST ATTEMPTS

THE question is of 'undeveloped' Africa, of a country whose native inhabitants always failed to make adequate use of natural resources for themselves but whose agricultural or mineral opportunities attracted few outsiders to try to do it for them. That this condition persisted into the twentieth century is evidence that the land is intrinsically poor, 'marginal' land brought into world economy only by the exhaustion of easier possibilities elsewhere; and that, as in the copper belt, latent wealth is difficult of access. To conquer natural obstacles and equip the African people to play their proper part must be, apart from all social and moral difficulties, a highly costly undertaking.

Venturers from outside have normally shown themselves little aware of this fundamental condition of lasting success. It is not unusual to pile up instances showing foreign penetration of Africa as a record of cruel exploitation of the weak by the strong. But even episodes like the slave trade do not of themselves make history. Till lately the significant thing has been, rather, the small impression made by Europe except on the outer fringes of the continent. The early history of outsiders in Africa is as scanty as the influence was slight. Arabs, we know, traded on the East Coast, almost immemorially coming and going in their dhows with the advancing and returning monsoon. In course of time many of them settled

along the coast, often intermarrying with Africans. Together with Indians, who came in much later, they still do the larger share of the East African native trade. The Taro Desert, and perhaps the warrior prowess of the Masai, confined them to the coast in the north; but from Zanzibar and other bases farther south Arab caravans penetrated into the interior, not only seeking slaves, but also on less dubious commercial enterprise. Arab influence must thus have been considerable. Those tribes who took kindly to the calling of porters were kept a little in touch with the outside world. The Arabs share with the Europeans of the West a heavy responsibility for the slave trade on African soil. The Arab slave was not a prisoner, he might accumulate wealth and eventually buy his freedom, and he undoubtedly learnt much that was useful. Slavery of this type is vaunted by some as valuable discipline. But Arab slave-raiding, brutal in itself, fostered the development of military qualities in those attacked, and some who resisted successfully became slave-raiders in their turn, thus extending what well earned description in its final phase as an 'open sore'.

Both east and west the first Europeans to seek fortune in Africa were the Portuguese. On the East Coast they wrested from Arabs the trade in gold of the Zambesi country and for nearly two centuries carried it on with profit. In Angola, likewise, their interest was first roused by rumours of mineral wealth, whose reality was perhaps the Katanga. By the seventeenth century, however, Brazil was proving more attractive, and Portugal itself in decline. Angola, we read, was poorly defended and, dubiously, 'over-populated', and the plantations of Brazil needed labour. By this time internal disturbances had virtually killed the old traffic in gold on the Mozambique coast, but the increasing American demand for labour now gave the African slave trade its stimulus. Thwarted by the decline of more legitimate enterprise, the Africans' own trading habits sometimes found an outlet in the sale of their own kind. The trade was a sinister if not an entirely new development which gathered strength owing to the decline of activities

that in earlier times had followed a healthier course.

Portuguese enterprise, like that of the Arabs before them, was for the most part confined to the coast. Especially in the sixteenth century, however, missionary zeal and the quest for gold carried individuals far inland. Tete, more than 200 miles up the Zambesi, has still the remains of a sixteenth-century fort. The Portuguese thus staked claims which in the nineteenth century secured them possession of extensive colonies both in East and West Africa. In three centuries Portuguese administration had apparently done little to justify any rights based on effective occupation, little more indeed than collect rents and revenues where it could, and it has become usual to dismiss the Portuguese with contempt – as if all were said when it is sorrowfully recognized that they intermarried freely with Africans and, therefore, ‘degenerated’. Wayside gardens in Angola are witness that members of the little Portuguese garrisons still throw in their lot with their adopted country as completely as Dutch or British have ever done. Between them, the Portuguese and the Arabs introduced most of what are now the staple African crops, maize, yams, manioc (cassava), the sweet potato, besides sugar-cane, peppers, ginger, citrus, tomato, pineapple and tobacco; by some accounts millet also, and other food crops. Africa as the Portuguese found it was useless even as a port of call to supply the East Indian ships with fresh supplies on their long voyage to the more important East.

There is much to be said, therefore, for the Portuguese who made this momentous contribution, and also succeeded in getting their African pupils to adopt these new crops as their own. That they were not unduly hard taskmasters is a conclusion borne out by the self-respect and independence of many tribes in modern Portuguese territory. There are enthusiasts for native institutions who regard the Portuguese as the model colonizers because more than most others they left these undisturbed. The Portuguese also have a continuous record of missionary work; which means that there have

always been a handful of Africans in Portuguese territory receiving some rudiments of education. Nor has the prejudice of any white working class set up a bar against Africans in Portuguese colonies learning crafts and trades.

The truth is that Portugal has never had the resources in men and material either for large-scale enterprise or for close and continuous administration. It is typical that in modern Portuguese colonies road surfaces are often far above the standard of those in neighbouring British colonies. They are the product of a *corvée* which is perhaps not very burdensome; at least if the forced labourers are poverty-stricken, so are their employers. For want of capital resources a good many of the bridges are bamboo structures that are put out of commission by the first rains, so that excellent roads may be almost useless for heavy or long-distance traffic. The managers of plantations or of mines, where these exist, are, of course, very much a law to themselves – controlling labour regulations, admirable on paper, must be ineffective without a competent authority to see that they are steadily observed. Relatively little land has, in fact, been alienated, and exploiting capitalists are so few that the life of the inhabitants may be almost unaffected.

The Portuguese record establishes in advance the truth of at least one fundamental principle. The promise of achievement faded visibly after the sixteenth century, not because the yield of Africa diminished, but because Portugal itself 'declined'. The Portuguese soon lost, if they ever held, any considerable share of the slave trade. The decay of the profitable East India trade reduced their shipping, and a steady decline in the demand from passing ships for fresh food and travellers' goods removed the inducement for anyone to try to stimulate African development. The centuries of stagnation that followed were the natural result. It was as true then as it is today that there is little to be got out of Africa except by those able and willing to put a great deal in.

Slight as it was, the Portuguese achievement compares



favourably with that of any European rivals in the tropical parts of Africa. The only other field of early activity was the West Coast where, before long, in spite of the commercial enterprise of the indigenous population, and of hopeful names – the Grain Coast, Gold Coast, Ivory Coast, Guinea Coast – the only substantial traffic was in slaves. Most European Powers dabbled in this trade at some time or other; parts of the coast are dotted with the remains of forts and real castles built to protect their nefarious interests – above all, perhaps, from one another. Several of these survive complete and are still in use. Elmina, a feudal castle which was begun by the Portuguese, taken and added to by the Dutch in their seventeenth-century greatness, would for its architectural merits and rare beauty be a show-place anywhere in Europe. Elmina, however, Danish Christiansborg (Accra), almost a rival in beauty, English Cape Coast Castle – all are planted, almost symbolically, very nearly in the sea. European authority reached little beyond the range of their guns. From the beginning the natives were the real traders; the garrisons kept close to the castles – where mosquitoes from the well-dug moats were, had they known it, their most formidable enemy. Little inland towns in Calabar may still speak of the shopping centre as the ‘Beach’, and store and canteen boys ring ‘bells’, ship fashion, through the night – to show the master that the watchman is awake. But unless perhaps as a stimulus to the ‘middle’ class, European influence was as slight as that of the Muslims of the Niger whose delta the Europeans frequented for centuries without discovering the connection with the great river beyond.

In the course of the years Africa was sometimes trumpeted as a ‘vent’ for manufactures. African companies were floated but none really flourished. Governments soon learned to look on any African colony as a liability, it has been said – a ‘nuisance’. Though the coast is so near Europe, what trade there was went largely by the slave ships of the Middle Passage to the West Indies. The West Coast remained the White Man’s Grave; the stretch of sea towards the Canaries – where

on the voyage home the cooler weather often brought out malaria – has been called the Bone-Yard. This ill repute was tragically confirmed by the failure of the great philanthropic venture of the Niger Expedition in 1841 – a calamity that broke Fowell Buxton and perhaps finally quenched the hope of positive work resulting immediately from the efforts of the emancipationists. In nearly four centuries the only apostles of civilization, except Catholic priests in Portuguese territory, were the slave traders. The Niger expedition was inspired by fondly cherished designs of building up well-planned, large-scale trade and industry in the very heart of the old slave country. This fresh and overwhelming evidence of the difficulties of peaceful enterprise carried the consequence that for many years longer all was still left to casual adventurers. The best to be said of it is that, in spite even of the slave trade, African life must have continued very much as it was before ever white men set foot in the country.

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Emancipation of itself wrought no sudden conversion or change of outlook in the Europe where for many centuries no voice had seriously challenged the ethics of slavery. It is on record that James Stephen's zeal to complete the draft of the Emancipation Bill led him once in his life to break the Sabbath, but there is no evidence of any similar enthusiasm in Downing Street to follow up that beginning. In the so-called opening up of Africa the old mentality still ruled, little modified by the experience of new and more disinterested adventurers. It was not to be expected that scattered enterprise would achieve anything so considerable as to attract more serious attention to African possibilities. A few equally scattered missionaries pressed the human needs of African peoples, but there was nothing to tempt governments at home to undertake new African responsibilities – nothing to offset the discouraging influence of the steady decline in the fortunes of our only other tropical dependencies, the once-prosperous West Indies. Excessive poverty and backwardness among the

black masses of the West Indian population, the warning of the unprosperous condition of the long-established white Creole community, were ignored even by their compatriots in Africa till I myself came to make an investigation.<sup>1</sup> The short view of the man on the spot prevailed – that the prosperity of the islands depended first and last on successfully persuading or inducing the ex-slaves to continue as a source of cheap labour. A similar theory ruled in Africa.

The neglect of Africa was further confirmed by the sense of futility arising from experience in the southern extremity of Africa itself. There Downing Street soon gave way in its attempt to enforce the principles underlying emancipation against local South African opinion. From 1852 onwards direct British intervention was spasmodic, and so fiercely resented that the home government's most settled point of policy came to be to avoid fresh commitments of a kind which experience seemed to prove must involve it only in thankless expense. Even the idea of trusteeship had not yet found verbal expression, and so nearly another century passed without establishing any sounder tradition of the nature of Europe's civilizing mission in Africa or of the means of accomplishing it. It was the age of *laissez-faire* economics, and no European government did much more than launch an occasional punitive expedition to assert its dignity – rarely on so considerable a scale as the expedition to Kumasi in 1874. Most of what is now British territory in tropical Africa was acquired only under the influence of a more confident imperialism at the turn of the nineteenth century.

#### (ii). THE EUROPEAN ACHIEVEMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA

The one exception to the negative record of early European ventures is South Africa, where in the course of centuries

1. W. M. Macmillan, *Warning from the West Indies*, Penguin edition, 1938.

Europeans have established a strong State. This considerable achievement is almost entirely their own. The foundations were laid round Cape Town. In this Western Province, a most beautiful and fertile district, the oaks, vines and fruit trees of many kinds imported by the early settlers add immeasurably to the resources of the country, and enhance its natural beauty. Except in this immediate neighbourhood, where also the only indigenous inhabitants were a few weak Bushmen and Hottentots, the advantages of a temperate climate were balanced by the defects of poor soil and uncertain rainfall. Early pioneers had governments against rather than with them in their struggle to overcome the difficulties. Distances were immense and the stream of colonization penetrated the interior very slowly, at first eastwards along the coast; only towards the end of the eighteenth century a clash with the Bantu tribes diverted the Boers inland to the north, where cattle-farming became their only possible means of livelihood. After 1820 the colony was reinforced by parties of British settlers, to whom it fell to carry out the settlement of the eastern Cape, an area more suitable to sheep-farming, while the Boers pushed on and out in their 'Great Trek'. The story of these pioneers has an epic character – in the passing of Drakensberg their ox-waggons often enough had to be taken to pieces and carried. The 'triumph over a numerous, a barbarous and a cunning enemy' (the natives they supplanted) is less striking than that, nurtured in isolation on their only book, the Bible, the pioneers kept alight the torch of civilization. They were seriously checked only when the poorly equipped frontier Boers reached the malarial Low Veld and fell back, stricken by sickness, from the Zoutpansberg to the northern edge of the High Veld at Lydenburg (*lijden* = suffer).

The South Africa the Boers so largely made is now, in material resources, very nearly self-contained and wholly self-supporting. Of its European population an unusually high percentage enjoy higher education at well-equipped universities which maintain a sound standard of learning. At least two or

three of its citizens, South African by birth or adoption, have their secure place in the world history of their age. Many more who have attained acknowledged eminence in their own sphere – in politics, in journalism if not in letters, in pure or applied science or engineering, certainly in high finance – have either been nurtured in South Africa or served there a period of apprenticeship at a formative stage and benefited much from the experience. In the end South Africa has attained sovereign independence in her own right – earned perhaps an even stronger claim to originality by her contribution, direct and indirect, to the theory and practice of that greater than national experiment in free association which is the British Commonwealth of Nations.

The South African achievement has been against heavy odds, and it is incomplete. Though the Cape was founded barely one generation later than New England the total white population of South Africa (two millions) has not even yet quite reached the total passed by that of the original thirteen states of North America before the War of Independence. Conditions are vastly less favourable and resources less varied than in America. By no one's fault, farming had to be mainly pastoral. There was nothing to teach or encourage intensive agriculture, and that which established itself was of a wide, superficial type. Most districts, it is true, have a few well-worked, intensively developed farms; the efficiency of these show-places forces itself on the eye of the visitor, but serves only to emphasize the low general level of accomplishment. Even allowing for the political influence of the farming interest, and its tenderness to its own, it is evidence of poor results that the yield of Union income tax from agriculture, including sugar milling, was about 1930 only something over 4 per cent of the total from all sources. It might be argued that if other trades suffice to carry the farmers there is no ground for anxiety. There clearly are such grounds, the substance of which I have detailed elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> The White South African

1. W. M. Macmillan, *Complex South Africa*, Faber & Faber, 1930.

agrarian system is basically unsound.

For a long time recurring intervals of considerable prosperity were so regular that South Africans, like Americans, became incurable speculators in land values, even more seriously neglecting the interests of land development. No one stopped to examine the foundations of these booms. In earlier days European wars often brought an enhanced demand for provisions from ships passing to and from the East; at a later stage the frequent frontier campaigns, involving heavy expenditure and the upkeep of garrisons, were sufficiently far away to bring profits to a farming community little affected by the inconvenience of war. A heavy slump in the 'sixties, accompanied if not induced by severe drought, was relieved by the great diamond rush and the first gold discoveries. When this stimulus had declined, in the 'nineties, the development of the Rand brought a new land boom based, in the north at least, on hope of profit from mining options rather than from agriculture.

By the turn of the century a grave accumulation of disasters had come near to revealing on what insecure bases society was founded. Calamitous losses of cattle by rinderpest in 1896, soon followed by the desolation of a three years' war, showed frontiersmen and their children to be but poorly equipped for times when land was no longer to be had for the taking, when what there was would yield a competent livelihood only in return for close, intensive work. Indifferent agriculture, a burden of debt, the subdivision of farms, had ruined many. Nor had a race of landowners ever made provision for a class who could not hope to be more than tenants; the land law still leaves the so-called *bijwoner*<sup>1</sup> wholly unprotected. In

1. *Bijwoner* is the Afrikaans term for a numerous class of customary tenants, originally perhaps the land-owners' near relations, who may give services in return for the right to work a garden or graze a few cattle. The nearest English equivalent, 'squatter', carries a suggestion of 'intrusion', which is inappropriate. Many modern *bijwoners* are in effect *metayers*, or share-croppers. See W. M. Macmillan, *Complex South Africa*, Faber & Faber.

1906 the ominous term 'poor white' appears for the first time as subject of inquiry by a Select Committee of the Cape House of Assembly, and two years later a strong Transvaal Committee reported on 'Indigency'. Once more there was a respite. When I first knew the interior of the country, about 1911, a wide area, including the Karroo, was once more enjoying prosperity, based this time on bounding prices for ostrich feathers. Before World War I the tide was beginning to turn back. From then till the latest and greatest mining boom, lately ended, the future of a landless class, rustic bred, but fast becoming an urban proletariat, was directly or indirectly the main issue of South African politics. No remedial measures have so far altered the basic facts, or warranted any reduction of an estimate published over twenty years ago – that South Africa has a 'submerged twentieth', perhaps 100,000 of its white population, who never rise to competency.<sup>1</sup> Semi-official researches<sup>2</sup> in fact made it clearer than ever that there are probably many more than 10 per cent whose share in the triumph of civilization over barbarism is to be measured by the thickness of the white skins with which their Maker has endowed them.

Till lately South Africa counted for little in the world. Its experience reinforces the lesson already drawn from that of the Portuguese, that effective development of African resources is not to be looked for without heavy capital expenditure. Through ups and downs of nearly three centuries public finances were precarious, and no one seriously thought of sinking capital in South Africa. The present high status of the Union, and its lately abounding prosperity, depend overwhelmingly on its mining, first the Kimberley diamond fields, later gold in the Transvaal. The better equipment of the farming industry became possible only with revenues from mining to pay the bill. If the general standard of South African farm-

1. W. M. Macmillan, *South African Agrarian Problem* (1919).

2. Carnegie Commission Report on 'Poor Whites' (Stellenbosch, 1932-3), 5 vols.

work has continued low, today it is at least munificently supplied with government-aided scientific direction of a very high quality. The Union has now an almost lavishly equipped Department of Agriculture, and for the cattle and sheep farmers a Veterinary Department which has well earned an international reputation. Both of these are essentially twentieth-century achievements, too recent yet to have taken full effect. How recent they are, and why, are not always fully recognized.<sup>1</sup>

The more progressive and also the more self-confident phase of South African history began with the rise of the great capitalist, Cecil Rhodes, who seized the opportunities created by the exploitation of South African mineral resources. I am just old enough to remember the stir Mr Rhodes made in the farming world of the sleepy Stellenbosch of the 'nineties by the institution of the Rhodes Fruit Farms, which brought a notable influx of English farmers with new ideas. This much-needed stimulus, besides beginning what later became an important export trade in fruit, led to a new and considerable diversion of capital to agriculture – some of it from de Beers, some brought in from outside by new-comers. The Western Province experiment was followed by the settlement of gentlemen-pensioners on semi-residential farms in pleasant places like George in the extreme south. Plantations of a more venturesome kind have now been established with some success in tropical districts of the north-eastern Transvaal – the very districts that defeated even the Voortrekkers.

### (iii) SETTLEMENT IN THE TROPICS

It was the same inspiration that now turned white men at last to attempt the development of the essential tropics on South African lines, carrying numbers of South Africans, and with them perhaps some of the expansive and unreflecting optim-

1. Not even in an admirable account by the late Mrs L. C. A. Knowles, *Economic Development of the Overseas Empire*, vol. III.



ism of that early dawn especially to the Rhodesias and to the Kenya Highlands, incidentally to corners of Nyasaland and Tanganyika. Confidence then was little chastened by apprehensions, as it might have been even a decade later when South Africa had become more conscious of its 'poor white' problem. The earliest Rhodesian pioneers were certainly inspired by the hope of profit from gold-mining rather than by zeal for agriculture, but before very long they began to settle down to make what they could of the farms distributed among them as reward for their enterprise. Since the middle 'nineties Rhodesia has attracted a steady flow of settlers, and most of those who have tried it have been enthusiastic in their advocacy of citrus or tobacco planting in Rhodesia as offering economic possibilities, and, above all, a life worth living. All are proud to call themselves Rhodesians and concerned to make a future for their families in a country to which they look upon themselves as belonging. It was the ambition of Rhodes, as it still is of the settlers themselves, to build up a self-supporting colony, to make of Rhodesia, as later of Kenya, another Canada or New Zealand.

The Rhodesian experiment directly, the Kenya settlement at a very near remove, inherited thus from the big ideas of Cecil Rhodes. Perhaps partly because it fell in the decade of the Boer War the movement for tropical settlement took at once a strongly British national character, the leaders apparently thinking that they would thus eliminate what they could not but recognize as unenlightened in South African practice. Both Rhodesia and Kenya possessed in themselves, and perhaps inspired at home, a confidence arising from the prominent part played in them by Britons drawn from a superior class of society. These, it was accepted, would also be superior in agriculture – and incidentally more enlightened in their attitude to the African population. In both colonies the not inconsiderable South African, and especially the Afrikaner element among the settlers, has played second fiddle. The dream was to follow on the lines of the successful experiment

near Cape Town and to reproduce the English country estate in tropical Africa. It is doubtful if the prophets of this faith had really considered the economic bases of English country life – the extent to which the English landlord's living came from rents, and how much he usually relied on income from outside sources – or had thought out the conditions of transplanting the system they admired to its new and strange setting. The Western Province of the old Cape Colony was very different in soil and climate, in its proximity to markets, as well as by reason of the numbers, training and status of the coloured population, from Kenya or Rhodesia, even as they were in the 1930's. Even in the Western Province the fruit industry was not established without heavy backing from private cheque-books, to say nothing of Rhodes's millions.

Development certainly has not gone according to plan. Till very lately the help looked for from mining proved disappointing in Rhodesia, almost negligible in Kenya. It is true that minerals are now Rhodesia's greatest asset. But it was due first to the resources of de Beers and the Chartered Company that Rhodesia got a start with an indispensable skeleton of railways. The Beit Trust latterly stepped in to improve roads and build bridges, and even airports. British Government grants and loans made possible the Uganda railway, and an effort to make it pay its way was the immediate occasion for settlement in Kenya. In spite of special rates for agricultural produce the cost of necessary imported goods made living expensive, and the service of the railway has often been a burden on enterprise in both colonies.

In Rhodesia, as I saw it even during the great depression, many farm homes were apparently well able to maintain the high standard of living which is characteristic, and which perhaps efficiency in a tropical climate demands. It was and is a question how many maintain themselves thus out of the soil alone, without the help of private means, drafts from home and overdrafts, very often a war pension. Many of the more prosperous farmers have not only farms, but a political

position, a lawyer's business, an agency of some kind or a store. Without such help the many who borrowed when credit was easy in the boom after the first war were hard put to it to meet their commitments even at lower rates of interest, or to survive at all the early 'thirties. Long and easy credit, characteristic of agricultural communities, is carried to unusual lengths in these colonies; partly it is a survival of the optimism of early days; partly it arises from the relatively high social status of so many individuals in a small society where every man is well known. Traders must put up with a good deal from customers whose place may not be taken by others should they depart.

The great depression did little more than reveal weaknesses inherent in the policy of settlement originally followed. It was significant that in Southern Rhodesia the towns began to vie in political importance with the rural districts, and were returning to Parliament a number of members of a so-called Labour Party. This phenomenon was curious in a community presumed to be mainly agricultural, where manual labour was supplied by unrepresented natives. Almost virgin land was still easily obtainable, but Europeans, few as they were, had found difficulty in establishing themselves as independent farmers on the lines originally intended.

The settlement in Kenya, begun just after the turn of the century, has always been on a smaller scale; the area deemed suitable or available for the purpose is only some 16,000 square miles. The original motive for the project was little more than to promote as much development as would lighten the burden of cost of the new Uganda Railway. In the event H.M.G. proved an even less indulgent foster-mother than the Chartered Company, and less disposed than Rhodes's direct heirs to make the white community the be-all and the end-all of the colony's existence. For this reason, strained relations between settlers and the administration have often put Kenya in the imperial limelight. There may even be justice in settler

complaints. The Uganda railway, which alone made settlement feasible, also saddled the colony with a burden of maintenance. The Government looked to the settlers to achieve the development of the country, and to increase its revenues, but was little inclined either to give them direct help or, failing this, to allow them a free hand to do things their own way. When the rush of settlers came there was no machinery to deal with them, and many were kept eating away their capital while they waited for their title-deeds. Where native interests were concerned the Government was nervous, but had no clear policy of its own other than hoping and praying that settlement might disturb the native *status quo* as little as possible. When encroachments on native land began, inevitably, to cause friction, such administrative action as was taken aroused the distrust of both sides.

Whatever their special disabilities from a more negative government, the experience of the settlers has been like that of their fellows in Rhodesia, and their economic position today is much the same. In Kenya Lord Delamere was self-appointed to fill the difficult role of Cecil Rhodes, without Rhodes's capital resources. His financial adventures are significant. Someone had to risk money in experiment in this untried country, and there were unpleasant discoveries to be made. Many found that their capital had disappeared before they had discovered what would grow. Delamere, though far better off than the average settler, spent his private fortune, mortgaged his English estate and, in fact, lived his whole life on credit; over and over again unlooked-for cattle and crop diseases cost him thousands.<sup>1</sup> Land which looked fair and promising was found to be unoccupied for good reason; the Masai knew of a defect in its mineral content, but Delamere carried on in spite of them and lost his first herds. Game carried infection, wheat was subject to disease at both high and low land altitudes. Some early undertakings were perhaps haphazard and rash, but direct experiment in the beginning

1 Elspeth Huxley, *White Man's Country* (Macmillan, 1936), 2 vols.

was the only way to test the possibilities of the colony, and similar work done with smaller losses ruined many less wealthy men. Even those with experience elsewhere (Lord Delamere had had some time in Australia) found African conditions novel and defeating.

Companies with land to sell have not scrupled to issue prospectuses setting out the advantages and profits to be looked for, using as a bait not only imperfectly fulfilled promises of ready-planted citrus groves, but the flattery of the suggestion, no less used in Kenya than in Rhodesia, that men of the 'right type' were reasonably sure of the success that has eluded a good many South Africans. So far as this meant that they should have money behind them, the stipulation was justified. The first settlers had everything to provide; there was little or no preparation for them, certainly no special organization or planning. The bitter experience of Kenya, confirming that of South Africa and Southern Rhodesia, has got it accepted that the new settler must himself provide a modicum of capital to tide him over the difficult initial stages of development, and to allow him to maintain his status. The amount, originally only £300,<sup>1</sup> came to be conventionally fixed at something like a minimum of £2000. Brains and hard work would do the rest – the work haply not too hard; one of the attractions has always been the alleged unlimited supply of cheap native labour. The slow trickle of capital represented by the settlers' private means has in fact helped them to build solid houses and to provide the amenities of civilized existence. But nothing served to attract capital on the scale needed, capital in millions, such as has gone, with little immediate reward to investors, to the building up of North America or of the British Dominions. The conventional £2000 is a fantastic underestimate so long as it falls to the settlers to supply all the insistent needs of a new country.

The settler achievement is considerable. It is undoubtedly

1. Elspeth Huxley, *op. cit.* The minimum has continued to rise. I heard mention lately, 1947, of £8000 or £9000. See also chap. xv below.

their work, undertaken at personal risk, that has tested and revealed the economic possibilities of tropical Africa. Africans, like the native coffee-growers of Kilimanjaro, have profited by the experience. Settlers have set themselves resolutely and adventurously to overcoming the disabilities of which they hardly dreamed when they began, so fair and deceiving are these empty African spaces. Thanks to these pioneers and their hard-won experience, well-kept estates and smiling farms have sprung up in waste places, new crops have been established, and thriving little towns to handle their produce and supply their needs. Nairobi, a town built in the unpromising surroundings of a swamp that made a conveniently level railway depot, now offers all the amenities of civilization.

It was evidence of the progress made in one short generation, and of the confidence felt in the future, that as late as 1923 the British Government hazarded the experiment of granting all but complete self-government to the settlers of Southern Rhodesia. A white community which thirteen years later totalled barely 55,000 thus became responsible for maintaining a full cabinet and legislature, as well as the first-class civil service required for the administration of 150,344 square miles of territory, and a trifle of a million virtually unrepresented natives. Only seven years later a famous White Paper<sup>1</sup> reaffirmed a doctrine of 'paramountcy' of native interests which rudely disturbed the few thousand Kenya settlers' hopes of a similar grant in their favour; or if this document be discounted as the work of a Labour Government, the report of an All-Party Joint Committee in 1931 showed no less clearly that the wind had set in a new direction, and that public opinion, less blindly confident, was growing uneasy lest white settlement, as still practised, might not be raising problems more acute than any it had yet solved.

. Not the least formidable of the problems of any such

1. Cmd. 3573 (1930), H.M.G.'s Conclusions on Closer Union in East Africa.

colony, where much depends on maintaining high standards, is to keep up the social efficiency of the scattered population. As things are now, parents who can afford it are put to the considerable expense of keeping their children at private boarding-schools in the colony, if not of sending them to England. If happily very few children suffer complete neglect it is only because the governments of Kenya and Southern Rhodesia, like that of the Union, foot a bill for European education out of all proportion to the payment made for the native population.

Both Rhodesian and Kenya settlers, to their credit, dislike and distrust the 'planter'—meaning by that term the adventurer who has no intention of making a permanent home in the country. But actual experience points to the conclusion that there is little future for the independent 600 or even 6000-acre 'farmer', for the man who has high standards for himself, but insufficient resources to be really efficient. It was natural and inevitable in their day that the settlers should have begun as they did, but plans continued rather to assume just what needed to be verified, the wisdom or inevitability of continuing on the lines first followed, without certain knowledge of how many of the original settlers had 'made good', what their resources were, the history of their holdings and what the efficient average holding would seem to be. The optimum size of land-holding has yet to be determined. A European peasantry was never the aim and would clearly be impossible, but there is almost equally little doubt that the average farm was too large for the resources of the average settler. As in America, a fleeting prosperity was sometimes achieved at the expense of the fertility of virgin country. It was not uncommon for landowners to live, while it lasted, off the timber on their estates. The mining demand for pit-props and fuel is often the occasion of more ruthless deforestation than any of which natives have been guilty. The worst soil erosion I happened to see in Rhodesia was not in a crowded reserve but on an old mining concession. Railways run entirely on wood are

another heavy drain. Some bad agriculture, or the neglect of good – especially the over-continuous use of the soil for the same crop – is to be balanced against the positive achievements of the settlers, as of South Africans before them. As it has become clear that an abnormally large proportion of the population attempts to make a living by agriculture,<sup>1</sup> the emphasis is increasingly being laid on industrial development. But here is the crux. The obvious market for secondary industries is the people of the country, and the African population of all the white settled countries remains as poor a market as any in the whole world.

All this twentieth-century tropical settlement carries the marks of its origin – its characteristically nineteenth-century faith made the civilizing mission of Europe self-operative and took no direct thought for the part of Africans in the development of Africa. Having to some extent overcome the unimagined difficulties that had long paralysed the native population, having tamed the country and made it produce, European colonists had some excuse for feeling themselves the makers and the rightful possessors of this new Africa. They were apt to estimate the achievement by what it cost themselves. To elevate Africans in the moral scale, even to improve their economic conditions, has rarely been accepted as an essential part of the colonizing task. South Africans have often been, some still are, conscious of a 'native menace' – something regarded as outside the essential life of the country. Only in the last generation, and then only as the correlative of the 'poor whites', men have come to think and speak of an internal 'native problem'. In Rhodesia so lately as 1931 a prominent and intelligent citizen replied spontaneously to a question about the state of the million native inhabitants: 'Oh! There has been no *trouble* for thirty-five years!' (*i.e.* since the 'rebellion' in 1896 of the Mashona, who only in 1891 had been 'saved')

1. In South Africa the proportion was lately 70 per cent, black and white, as against only 20 per cent in generally better country in U.S.A. (Prof. H. D. Leppan in *Daily Telegraph*, June 1937)



from the depredations of their neighbours the Matebele).

Europeans in all these countries have continued too much on the defensive. It has been revolutionary, to their way of thinking, to suggest that the difficulties and the failures of more experienced and immeasurably better equipped Europeans in Africa are the measure of those with which its own peoples contended with such poor success. In what some European minorities have chosen to regard as a contest, their enterprise has sometimes been at the expense of the African peoples, their much wider experience always less beneficial than it should have been. The concerted pressure of what a blue-book has described as the 'full-blooded convictions of those on the spot', in South Africa or Kenya, has been the strongest force in shaping the destinies of these countries, the opinion of experienced administrators finding less effective expression. Even in South Africa, it may be said, absolute control by the local white community, long the aim, has been achieved only in this generation – elsewhere it is only a cherished aspiration, frustrated by the interference of Downing Street. But in the last resort Downing Street has never been effective in enforcing its will. In the eighteenth century minority interests clearly ruled a small colony like Jamaica,<sup>1</sup> if only because they alone had access to the local governor and ultimately to Downing Street. South Africa, which has never forgotten or forgiven the retrocession to the 'Kaffirs' in 1836 of the Cis-Kei (the Province of Queen Adelaide), has refused to recognize how very soon and how completely on that and on other occasions colonial opinion had its own way. The truth about the doings of John Philip,<sup>2</sup> highly unpalatable even when it followed closely on the first full sympathetic study of the 'poor whites',<sup>3</sup> was in a

1. Cf. R. Pares, *Ware and Trade in the West Indies* (Oxford University Press, 1937), pp. 81, 85.

2. W. M. Macmillan, *Cape Colour Question* (1927); *Bantu, Boer, and Briton* (1929). *Cambridge Hist. of Brit. Emp.*, vol. viii, cc. x, xii, xiii.

3. W. M. Macmillan, *South African Agrarian Problem* (Johannesburg, 1919), fully confirmed by Report of the Carnegie Commission on Poor Whites (Stellenbosch, 1932-3), 5 vols.

natural sequence, the competition the whites suffer today from natives being directly due to the 'extermination' from the land which Dr. Philip struggled in vain to mitigate. The impact of Europe in Africa creates serious difficulties, but they are not different in essence from those of any other political society. Social health depends always on striking a just balance of interests.

## Chapter 6

# EUROPEANS AND AFRICANS: THE NATIVE—IN HIS PLACE

### (1) POSITION OF NATIVES IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN PROVINCES

FROM the beginning Europeans seeking to make their homes in Africa have been at one with their governments in regarding the native African population as an embarrassment. At the Cape the Dutch East India Company would take no responsibility for them; the Bushmen were left to be hunted out like animals; the Hottentots, in the colony, were never of it, and had no recognized legal status. This early government established at least one fatal precedent. The burghers were a handful, the aborigines neither competent nor very numerous; within a very few years slaves were imported to meet the need for labour — Malays, and Africans from farther north. The opinion that this created indolence and a contempt for manual work among the colonists hardly squares with the evidence that the normal Boer is a person of more than average physical strength and often of great mental energy. The trouble was rather that for a century and more, till expansion brought the settlers to the 'Kaffir' country, their only acquaintance with black-skinned people — the Hottentots and Bushmen were yellow — was in the relationship of master to slave. The element of *hubris* that thus crept in has persisted.

The 'Kaffirs' (Ama-Xosa),<sup>1</sup> with whom a struggle began

<sup>1</sup> A suitable collective name for the Africans of South Africa is difficult to establish since Afrikaans usage has appropriated the term *Afrikaner* for Afrikaans-speaking Europeans. Afrikaans practice has made *Kaffer* a name of contempt, so that Kaffir is ruled out except for the historic 'Kaffirs', the Xosa tribes who so long maintained resistance on the Cape frontier. The Zulu word, 'Bantu', which had a short vogue, is rejected by the non-Zulu African majority and is now the accepted

only after 1770, proved to be an independent people. They were never slaves. The Company's policy was no more than to bid them keep themselves behind an arbitrary and ill-defined colonial boundary. Many of their kraals had, in fact, long been established well within this line: a few years later some of them, having proved difficult to move, were permitted – in a curious phrase – to remain on the colonial side 'without prejudice to the ownership of Europeans'.<sup>1</sup> The British Government which followed the Dutch Company long maintained a purely defensive policy, taking little interest in schemes of colonization. Lord Charles Somerset in 1819 reported on certain so-called 'ceded' territory as 'worthy of consideration with a view to systematic colonization'. Sir Benjamin D'Urban in 1835 created some stir in Downing Street when he commended the annexation of the Cis-Kei on the ground that ample provision for the offending tribes would still leave scope for the profitable 'operations and speculations' of European settlers.<sup>2</sup> The supposed influence of 'philanthropists' in upsetting D'Urban's plan was a major grievance with restless land-hungry frontiersmen who had actually been encroaching here and there on tribal lands. 'Kaffir' resistance, none the less, was so fierce that the eastern boundary of the colony stayed at or in the near neighbourhood of the Great Fish River for more than half a century – from 1778 till 1847. The first officially recognized 'Kaffir War' was in 1778, the ninth and last in 1877, so that in effect the Cape frontier struggle was South Africa's Hundred Years' War.

The Home Government was thus involved in prolonged, very heavy and profitless expenditure for the garrisoning of this frontier. At home the anti-slavery agitation was gaining term for the 'Bantu' group of African languages. It thus becomes necessary often to fall back on the very unsatisfactory term Native, which must always be spelt in this national context with a capital N.

1. Theal, *History of South Africa before 1795*, vol. III, p. 181.

2. W. M. Macmillan, *Bantu, Boer, and Briton*, p. 134. In the P.R.O. original of this despatch this phrase is repeated in the margin with exclamations!

ground, and it was the association of leading Cape missionaries with this movement that caused the belief that the Government was completely under the influence of 'philanthropists'. In fact, neither Downing Street nor the Cape Government took the practical advice of the chief of these evil counsellors, Dr John Philip – that the only remedy was to accept full civil responsibility for the protection both of white colonists and of the Bantu, and to substitute civil for military rule on the frontier. Similar advice from frontier officials was as vain. In 1833, out of a new-born and to the colonists very unnecessary respect for the rights and feelings of inferiors, slavery was abolished throughout British territory. The Home Government, hesitant about defining the precise status of ex-slaves even within the colony, recoiled altogether from adding to the number of free but obviously inferior subjects. So it came about that Cape frontiersmen resenting emancipation trekked bag and baggage beyond the frontier into native or, as they first thought, 'empty' country. It was their hope to maintain 'proper relations between masters and servants', in republics of their own, free from the fussy intervention of British missionaries and their creatures the Government. In 1852, after vacillating attempts to assert British authority over both tribes and trekkers, Downing Street was led to compromise with the trekkers; talk even arose of the need to maintain a united front with the Boers – as 'a barrier against barbarians'.<sup>1</sup> Two republics were thereupon recognized whose original constitution laid down, in defiance of philanthropists, that for the blacks there should be 'no equality in Church or State'.

Neither in the eighteen-fifties nor long after was there any reason to expect the centre of South African gravity in politics or economics to swing as it did from the Cape to the bare High Veld. It was the republics, however, that were really to be the cradle of the native policy of the later Union of South

1. Governor Sir George Cathcart, quoted in *Bantu, Boer, and Briton*, p. 287.

Africa. The course of action they followed was what might be expected of a scattered community of farmers who even for their own purposes required very little administrative machinery, and preferred a minimum of government. It was literally true, as they said, that all they asked was to be left to themselves. Co-operation, even with one another, was limited to joint action against any disturber of their peace. Only late in the century two forceful personalities, Sir John Brand and President Kruger, made of these republics two reasonably strong states.

The country the trekkers had entered was by no means as empty as has been supposed.<sup>1</sup> The Matabele, under Moselekatze, had to be driven out to the north-west; the Basuto kept the Free State at war for many years; Sekukuni came near to causing the downfall of the Transvaal in the late 'seventies; and lesser tribes and chiefs took so much 'keeping to their duty' <sup>2</sup> that an anti-native 'commando' of some sort was an almost annual occurrence in the Transvaal right down into the 'nineties. It is easy to overstress the effect of this campaigning. Over the greater part of the country native resistance was slight. Much of it was bought off by 'treaties' with the weak native chiefs. A good deal more was crushed by confiscation of land for the sin of rebellion. Many Africans lived on practically undisturbed, and even those dispossessed suffered little actual hardship; many individuals positively benefited, paying rent in kind if there was anyone to collect it, but drawing in return perquisites like milk, an occasional animal, often cast-off clothing. There was in earlier days nothing to prevent 'squatters' from hawking, as they did, any surplus of their own in maize, cattle, or sometimes horses. The labour required by trek-Boers being easy paced, many squatters' use of the land was possibly less disturbed than it had been before, their certainty of reaping what they sowed enhanced. The Transvaal even practised a primitive and undisciplined form of 'indirect rule'. Many chiefs whose tribes survived were

1. *Ibid.*, ch. xiv, xv.

2. Transvaal *Grondwet*, § 105.

allowed to hold courts and conduct their own affairs so far as their customs did not overtly conflict with civilized standards. All was so casual that, in spite of promises to the British Government by the treaty of 1881, the Transvaal had still made no considerable demarcation of definite native reserves when the republic was finally conquered in 1902; and since the natives' use of land on farms was little disturbed there was in fact little demand for 'reserves', and no great urgency.

The practice in two other provinces of the Union repeats this theme with only minor variations. When the Orange Free State had at last deprived the Basuto of the attractive wheat lands of the Caledon Valley H.M. Government roused the Boers' indignation by intervening to take the Basuto under British protection. To some extent this solved the Free State problem by securing the mass of the native population in a location or reserve – the compact remnant of Basutoland. In the Free State proper, soon after Union, fourteen-fifteenths of the total native population were 'squatters' on farms.<sup>1</sup> The proportion of whites to blacks in the Free State has always been comparatively high, one to about two and a half: so that there were comparatively few 'redundant' natives, and those there were 'squatted' very much as in the Transvaal. I have found a good many observers who agree that the Free State 'farm native' fared better on the whole than those of Natal or the Cape.

In Natal the disproportion in the numbers of the two races is more serious, and the European population, still barely one in ten of the whole, has always been peculiarly nervous; the warlike reputation of the Zulus made Natal concentrate on keeping order at all costs. Like the Transvaal it followed a variant of 'indirect' rule. Consciously and deliberately the administration was delegated, under stringent control, to a large number of petty chiefs. Zululand proper, conquered in 1879, was for a time divided up among petty chiefs hopefully described as 'the Kilkenny cats'. A similar partiality for the

1. U.G. 13 of 1916.

principle of *divide et impera* marked the allotment of native reserves. This at least was carried out quite early, securing the natives one-eighth of Natal proper, some of it good land, but more than a fair share what a Natal authority has described as 'country fit for baboons'.<sup>1</sup> The saving fact here, no less than in the Transvaal, was that so long as the pace of economic development and competition was gentle, landowners allowed or even welcomed natives as 'squatters'. So late as 1915 very nearly half <sup>2</sup> the native population of Natal were located not in reserves but on European-owned farms, where a good many of them were left free to follow their own devices. A common language, moreover, and the vigorous Zulu tradition, conserved a strong feeling of tribal or national unity.

The Cape Colony had all this time worked on very different political assumptions inspired by Liberalism. In 1828 the Hottentot population was freed by a famous Ordinance, No. 50, from the disabilities of its former status. In 1842 this measure, still specifically for 'Hottentots', was superseded by a general Masters and Servants Law which applied to all without distinction of colour. The premature dispersal of the scanty population of the colony by the 'trek' was a severe social and economic loss, but at least the withdrawal of the more emphatic opponents of 'sentimental' regard for native rights gave a respite for the consolidation of liberal measures. When in 1852 the Cape attained the dignity of a parliamentary constitution, no one questioned the right of persons of colour to share the privilege of enfranchisement if their property and other qualifications entitled them to registration. It is true that the descendants of Hottentots, blended now with those of Malay or Negro slaves, have been too few and too poor to endanger white political supremacy. But that 'Eurafricans' soon ceased to be a special problem and rank as a 'civilized' people, whose privileges no party in South Africa any longer sought to challenge, is a triumphant vindication of liberal

1. R. Russell, *Natal*.

2. U.G. 13 of 1916.



policy. Till the other day, moreover, qualified Africans shared the political privilege of citizenship.

Outside the sphere of politics, and where the 'Kaffirs' were concerned, the Cape never liyed down the example set by early governments, both Dutch and British. How reluctant the Home Government was to sanction new annexations is a matter of clear and frequent record. Because of the Government failure on the eastern frontier a state of war was almost continuous for a century, and almost every 'war' brought a piecemeal distribution of former native land among European farmers. This was sometimes a military precaution, often a casual reward for military services rendered by individuals. From time to time whole blocks of tribal land were added to British Kaffraria, a creation of 1847 which was itself incorporated in the Cape Colony in 1865. It was only in 1895 that the annexation of Pondoland carried nominal British authority all the way from the Cape to the Natal border. Beginning from the troubles of 1835, when special provision was made both for conquered chiefs and for certain refugees, the friendly 'Fingos', it became usual to assign 'locations' or 'reserves' to any tribes annexed, in recognition that even natives must live somewhere. Normally the reserve was some minimum of their own old holding, but by no means always; the security of the colony or the idea of inflicting punishment for offences committed prompted some deliberate transplantations. In Kaffraria, particularly near King William's Town in the old Kaffir country, forts and farms were designedly interspersed among the 'locations'. Even so the Cape, unlike the neighbouring states, systematically planted its Africans in 'reserves'.

Considerable as it was, the number of Cape Africans who had their only homes on European farms was, about 1915, when the newly-formed Union was shaping its policy, a much smaller proportion of the whole than elsewhere – only about one-seventh.<sup>1</sup> Like the rest the Cape had its 'squatters'; there were also 'Kaffir-farmers', Europeans who lived from rents

1. U.G. 13 of 1916.

paid sometimes in cash,<sup>1</sup> more often in kind; everywhere numbers of natives remained after conquest on the farms annexed, providing labour for the farmers while continuing also as cultivators and herdsmen in their own right. The Cape by this time was certainly poorer than the Transvaal, and less prosperous than Natal – even its European farmers' need of public services was very inadequately met. Competition, therefore, was keen and, more especially in those large areas in the east where resistance had been most prolonged, real wage-rates were lower in the Cape than anywhere else. The Cape natives had need of their small measure of political freedom, especially of relative freedom of movement and comparatively generous educational facilities, to make the pressure of need bearable.

It is the disability of natives dispersed like those of the republics on European farms that, except by the courtesy of employers, or it may be in the absence of the landowner, they are effectually isolated – not indeed from Europeans, but from missions, therefore from schools. Republican practice interfered relatively little with the original habits of the natives. Africans, so long as they enjoy free access to and use of the land, are likely to be unconcerned about technical ownership; and the truth is that, especially under absentee owners, many so-called 'squatters' enjoyed more independence than they could hope for in overcrowded Cape reserves. In the old republics Boer discipline was sometimes rough and hard, even merciless to those judged to be delinquents, but it is wrong to speak of rule by *sjambok*. The truth appears in the familiar spectacle of lifelong attachment by natives and their families to one Boer *Baas* and all that is his – a devotion that in hundreds of cases survived the searching ordeal of the Anglo-Boer War. It is true that they were in fact rightless tenants holding only at the will and discretion of landowners, and themselves had no atom of influence. But it is only in our own more

1. Certainly sometimes in Natal as much as £1 per month. De Kiewiet, *Imperial Factor* (Cambridge University Press, 1937), p. 308.

strenuous and crowded days that landowners have begun with reckless one-sidedness to eliminate this old-time 'squatting', and to use their power to supply themselves instead with cheap labour. Thus it is that the easy happy relationship of Europeans and Africans has been put to new and unprecedented strain. Instead of allowing natives this qualified and unchartered freedom on European-owned land, the modern South African view is that European farms are no place for natives to make their homes, and that their only proper sphere is in the reserves.

#### (ii) RESERVES AS A POLICY

It is the distinction of the Cape that, above all under Sir George Grey, it learned to look-forward to the 'Kaffirs' becoming fully civilized 'inhabitants of one country' with Europeans; yet the Cape is also the awful warning of the limitations of the 'reserve' as the basis of policy. Fairly compact native areas remained, but tribal disintegration was such, and the older line of chiefs so utterly broken, that administration could not be anything but 'direct', and was in fact left to a handful of devoted officials, Captain Robert Blyth, and a succession of Brownlees and Stanfords. There was little revenue to spare for native areas; railways, even main roads, almost invariably passed the reserves by; but these men did what they could.

By the turn of the century unthinking neglect of essential Native needs and welfare had begun to make its effects sharply felt. It was no accident that the Cape, including the self-contained Transkei, became far and away the most important labour recruiting ground after 1908, when the Rand mines first began to depend more largely on South African labour.<sup>1</sup>

1. The Cape in 1935 provided 127,163 out of a total of 316,696, 5 per cent of the total native population as recorded in the census of 1936; the Transvaal only 26,908, barely 1 per cent; Natal and Zululand, 20,345, something over 1 per cent. For many years the Cape has pro-

Economic stress was the compelling motive but this attracted no notice. In 1924 I was responsible for a pamphlet<sup>1</sup> on the poverty and ruination especially of the Cis-Kei. Researches made also by the late Dr J. Henderson of Lovedale<sup>2</sup> brought out not merely the generally lamentable condition of the native population and of their reserves, but positive evidence of a marked economic deterioration in the fifty years of colonial rule that had passed since 1875. Some deplorable locations in the neighbourhood of Lovedale and King William's Town were worse only in degree than others farther afield, masses of the residents being landless 'squatters' on their families' holdings. Many of these plots were nearly worthless, having the top soil washed away and only weeds for grazing. Yet very few of those in authority had any conception of the true state of affairs.

In 1925, when officially entrusted with the duty of making a sample economic survey of Herschel, I started out with some sad experience of mixed areas, quite accepting the impression of certain of those who commissioned me, that this self-contained, purely native unit would show a fair degree of well-being. I did not set out to challenge the prevailing view that Natives in the 'reserves' were well off; that some could almost be said to have both town house and country seat. Actually I discovered that local production came nowhere near maintaining the people of Herschel. Their chief export by far was labour; the final estimate being that 75 per cent of the adult male population was absent at work outside the district at least six months of the year.<sup>3</sup> Never controverted, vided fully one-third of the total, the balance being made up from Portuguese territory and the British Protectorates. S.A. Year Book No. 17, p. 1014.

1. 'The Land, the Native, and Unemployment' (Johannesburg Council of Education, 1924).

2. Published later, S C. 10 of 1927, Appendix A.

3. W. M. Macmillan, *Complex South Africa*: ch. xi records the substance of this report on Herschel, an attractive High Veld district at the meeting-point of the Cape with the Free State and Basutoland.

the facts have been officially confirmed and emphasized.<sup>1</sup> With curiously little regard for European farmers' experience of the intractability of the land, South Africans generally had assumed that these thousands of natives could both supply labour for farms, or mines, or in the white man's kitchen (this last often much the best paid), and at the same time win subsistence for their families, and even a profit, as farmers. They were considered lucky to have such opportunities and, to encourage the lazy to use these, a flat-rate poll tax had long been levied on 'adult' males, including, that is, boys of eighteen and often under. For those with land in the reserves the rate was stabilized about 1925 at 30s. (an increase for many Cape districts), an amount few could expect to pay from holdings whose average yield was perhaps £1 per head of population per year. Supplementary wage-earning had become steadily more general and inevitable.

This labour exodus and the rural slum conditions found in Herschel and most of the Cis-Kei prevail in a lesser degree everywhere else. They are characteristic even of the Transkei, which is often held up outside the Union as the model for all reserves. Unique administrative and social features in fact give the Transkei a corporate life of its own. What has come to be known as the Transkeian or Glen Grey System owes its more hopeful features to a now discarded Liberalism. In the Transkei the mere man in the kraal participates in the indirect election of his own spokesmen in the local council; this in turn sends members to the General Council (the 'Bunga' at Umtata), which 'advises' the administration, to some effect. Under sympathetic magisterial direction Africans have come near to working the mysteries of Western political institutions—the same that are now widely considered to be unsuited to their needs elsewhere. Several thousands of them played their part in electing European parliamentary representatives. With only slender revenues, provided by its own local tax, the Bunga has developed specialized training in agricul-

1. Cf. especially U.G. 22 of 1932.

ture, improved or made local roads, promoted education and various measures of self-help. Besides helping thus to mitigate the effects of congestion and economic depression, it has shown how even the rudiments of representative institutions can provide an expression of native opinion – keeping more wholesome the relations of governors and governed.

The best administration must be hard put to it when life-giving economic activity is absent – as in any reserve it almost must be. This experiment, in which the Cape alone seriously tried to promote Native progress, was based upon the normal nineteenth-century view that individual land tenure is the natural, sufficient and only possible way of advance. The well-known Glen Grey Act of 1894 which gave it being set out from the admirable principle that as many Africans as possible should have a home base on the land. In endeavouring to secure this aim its framers were forced to cut the coat to the cloth, without regard to the economic efficiency of the units. The same Act, which asserted the principle that to learn to stand by himself the African landowner must have surveyed title, was forced to decree that he must not practise this new individualism on anything more than four morgen of land (eight and a half acres). The principle it made famous was 'one man, one lot'. As a further guard against evils attendant on individual ownership, such as bonding, the Act and subsequent proclamations not only discouraged but went so far as to prohibit sales and transfer, thus effectively hindering any attempt by the people themselves to make adjustments and adaptations.

In Glen Grey, and wherever else the Act runs, the four-morgen unit has remained the maximum holding, by no means also a minimum. Both a lower limit, a minimum holding, and an upper maximum, would have much justification – the former as a very necessary safeguard against excessive subdivision and fragmentation, the latter against land-grabbing and monopoly. The four-morgen maximum is at once unjust and an economic absurdity. Some better-off or more capable

individuals may evade the law and, for a consideration, work brothers' or sisters', or especially widows' portions as their own. To keep within the law the best trained pupils of the Bunga agricultural colleges must set up as farmers as best they may on these four morgen. Except on a few quit-rent holdings which have survived from earlier days, there is and can be no real farming class to give the system backbone. It is a further weakness that a hard-and-fast division between arable land and common pasture has worked badly. The many arable plots gone to ruin through over-continuous and unskilful tillage cannot be allowed to revert to pasture – this would upset the surveyed title; on the other hand, much commonage, comparatively well-fertilized by cattle, is permanently and rigidly closed against cultivation, in surveyed districts by law, everywhere else by the natural objection to any encroachment on what is common property. In tribal days, and in remote Transvaal reserves even yet, the individual would normally be allowed perhaps three 'lands' – with no rigid limit if for any reason more could be worked. In the Transkei, by a Proclamation of 1913, the minimum holding was fixed at three morgen; but in fact the Land Register in what are reckoned 'good' Transkeian districts shows more holdings of one morgen, or one and a half, than of the legal three – and there is no adequate record of those entitled to three or four morgen, yet having no land at all. Only seven districts were surveyed. Faced by a desperate situation, the authorities soon found it easier to carry out a squeezing process (which allows some fragment of land to a larger number of people) by leaving it to headmen to 'pace off' allotments.

There were many 'white' farms to show what must be the inevitable consequences – those, for example, held on 'undivided shares' by great families of 'poor whites'. The reserves are just such unfenced, unpaddocked, communally-owned cattle-runs – and much more populous. They have gone still more rapidly to ruin, losing fertility, the soil eroded and becoming progressively less capable of supporting any popula-

tion whatever. The model Glen Grey district, which gave its name to the Transkeian system, has many holdings officially listed N.B.O. (non-beneficially occupied) from which the arable soil is washed away, only dongas remaining. The few older reserves in other provinces<sup>1</sup> are in much the same condition, and the still beautiful hill pastures of Basutoland, in effect the great Orange Free State Reserve, suffered perhaps the most calamitous soil erosion to be found anywhere in Africa.

It was not till 1932 that a Native Economic Commission made a systematic inquiry into conditions in the reserves, and its findings more than confirmed what the critics of the Government had been telling it for at least seven or eight years. Thus:

Unless precautionary measures are taken against overstocking, the conditions in the Transkei and the native areas in the rest of the Union will be tomorrow what the Ciskei is today. The same causes are at work there, and they will inevitably produce the same effects in the near future—denudation, donga-erosion, deleterious plant succession, destruction of woods, drying up of springs, robbing the soil of its reproductive properties, in short the *creation of desert conditions*<sup>2</sup>.

This, to say the least, promised a difficult start for the policy the Commission contemplated, the purposeful development of lands gone barren for want of such development in the past. The first essential, the Commission goes on, is to check overgrazing. The assumption that the run is the fault of the natives was misleading and, in the reassurance it gave to already complacent European public opinion, positively dangerous. The reserves undoubtedly are disastrously over-grazed; but the stress is due fundamentally to the numbers and poverty of a neglected people, only incidentally to the depredations of their cattle. Without exception these southern tribes have always been pastoralists, reckoning wealth, it is always said, only in cattle. The Commission's figures for the Transkeian districts

1. *E.g.* at random, Sekukuni-land, or the Moilo Reserve in Lichtenburg

2 U.G. 22 of 1932, § 73.



and for Herschel<sup>1</sup> are a comment. Whereas estimates have credited the Tanganyikan Masai with nearly twenty head of cattle per individual, besides considerably more than a dozen sheep,<sup>2</sup> here is a whole community of cattle farmers with an average of barely two or three animals of any kind per household, this total including useless small stock responsible, undoubtedly, for the grave depasturing of whole districts.

It is obvious that cattle-keeping is never suited to a dense population with restricted land. These southern tribes, far more than the Masai, have been under the necessity of 'anchoring'<sup>3</sup> their stock in a much restricted area. Yet in much smaller units of similar or even inferior country European farmers keep proportionately far larger herds, resting the pasture by paddocking, and using the paddocks alternately. Winter-feeding is easier too when farms do not have to support as many owners as beasts. It is no doubt true that the territories as a whole would be better off with fewer cattle of better quality. Merely reducing the numbers will not by itself secure even this aim. In a district like Herschel the average life of a cow may be no more than three or four calves, instead of the normal eight or ten. This is a factor consistently ignored in reckoning the increase of native cattle. The benefit of immensely improved veterinary services is very largely offset by the deterioration due to bad pasture and underfeeding. From the Cape to Kenya it is known that squatters value farm grazing because it is so much better than that to be had in reserves – moreover, that the better quality beasts turned loose in native reserves succumb to the struggle with weeds and stones. Mere reduction in number, to be effective, would leave the people almost destitute of cattle and poorer than ever – with social and political consequences no government would dare to face.

The solution is not to eliminate or restrict cattle, but to im-

1. U.G. 22 of 1932, pp. 39, 40.

2. *Complex South Africa*, pp. 188, 205-7.

3. Mrs E. Huxley's term, *The Times*, 13th June 1937.

prove the pasture – without this the improvement of stock is in fact impossible. The grazing itself must be restored and conserved by paddocking; which the people must be persuaded to accept and enabled to pay for. Few Africans can now afford the necessary fencing; and any fence must encroach on common grazing rights, so that any individual wishing to fence his own land must face public outcry against such innovation. The problem of overstocking, by no means confined to South African reserves, is causing grave concern in Kenya which has not reached any such pitch of denudation and congestion. The truth is that European control has so immobilized the population in relatively restricted areas that the old nomadic ‘ranching’ of cattle has become impossible. The next step must be to realize that European methods of conserving and improving pasture now offer the only way out.

Some uneasy consciousness of a growing native problem was one factor helping to induce the South African provinces to sink their rivalries and in 1910 to form the Union. When the new State began to take stock of the situation it would appear that perhaps rather more than half the total native population still retained a home in reserves, this number including a small proportion on Crown lands or large mission estates, besides a handful on privately owned farms of their own. All but a third of the total were located on land owned by Europeans but, in the north especially, not necessarily occupied by its owners; the remainder, even then about half a million, were more or less permanently resident in towns, though possibly retaining some connection with tribal headquarters in reserves. Later evidence was that the number and proportion of natives on unoccupied European lands in the back-blocks of the north-eastern Transvaal was originally underestimated.<sup>1</sup> Thus the position was that something over

1. See Preliminary Census Report, U.G. 50 of 1936, where the native total greatly exceeds estimates based on the earlier count of 1921. Examination shows at once that whereas the increase recorded for

five million natives had to make shift on a small if uncertain fraction of the land in undisputed native occupation a century earlier, in all about one-thirteenth of the area held by under two million Europeans. European occupation had forced Africans to carry on in this limited area in the old way without reserves of pasture, and with steadily decreasing possibilities of resting the soil by shifting cultivation. The native areas, effectually segregated from European teaching, and from general economic development, inevitably came to ruin. The reserves are scattered islands that cannot hope to maintain a 'separate' economic existence. The institution of reserves always was and must long continue necessary to ensure the native population some minimum of land of their own. It has become normal to treat this provision as a maximum: which is quite another matter. Modern restrictions condemn all natives in European areas to remain indefinitely in the lowest grades of employment, but there is no move to implement vague promises of unlimited opportunity in these special areas.

As a basis for its modern native policy South African experience covered two strongly contrasted experiments, tried out respectively in the Cape and the republics. The Cape set the example of leaving the larger part of its native population with well-defined and originally not wholly inadequate homes of their own. In practice this worked out at shutting them up in wasting reserves, thus cut off from the main stream of economic development. The comparatively generous demarcation of native reserves became economically almost a disability. The ruination caused by the inevitable pressure of population on this land permanently weakened the basis of their future material welfare. Yet at least liberalism was not fruitless: the Bunga is hopeful, and Cape Native education shows, on the whole, the most creditable achievement in the settled Transkeian districts is at best slow, the apparent growth, *e.g.* of Middelburg, Nelspruit, Pietersburg, Potgietersrust, Zoutpansberg, is nothing short of phenomenal.

African continent. The great Cape schools are few of them in the reserves, except the Transkeian Bunga's invaluable agricultural colleges.

On the other hand, the republics refused or failed to make any real provision of native reserves, set themselves against education for natives, and definitely refused to contemplate the idea of their sharing or receiving any training in citizenship. The situation was saved, and the African population of the republics kept reasonably well content, only because the natives as a whole enjoyed easy access to and use of almost as much land as they needed. Such tolerance lasted only because, and as long as, general agricultural development in the republics was slight; at least it saved all but tiny fractions of land from suffering such a fate as had overtaken cis-Keian Middle-drift, Herschel, Basutoland. The land under direct European control and perhaps, on the material side, its native occupants, came off better in a bad bargain. Today, in the name of progress, the freedom of squatters, such as it was, is ended. If farm natives, other than restricted labourers, are in fact thrust with the rest into reserves, this must even worsen the condition of those already there.

The conclusion must be that with two sets of experience for guidance the Union has chosen to combine the worst features of both. Those South African leaders who profess to be following the Trekker tradition should see that the saving feature of republican practice was that at least it left the bulk of the indigenous population in virtually undisturbed occupation of land they had always used. The policy of today applies the Cape system of reserves to all Africans, and couples it with the Trekker denial of the citizen rights which alone could give an effective call on the revenue necessary for the development of the land left to them. A long battle for 'segregation' raged in South Africa from the Land Act of 1913 to the Native Representation Act which in 1936 killed the 'Cape franchise'.<sup>1</sup> Its inspiration was the real distress of the 'poor

1. See old ch. vii now reproduced in *Appendix I*.

whites' who had reason, as things were, to fear black competition. Their state is the proof that any temporary advantage gained by the white fragments of a colony at the expense of the native majority must be fatal to the best interests of the white man himself, and that in the not very long run. The Africans have given the Union its character, its labour, the comforts of its domestic life, the variety and interest of its public life – all of which have helped South Africa in the past to produce a fully higher proportion of men of real distinction as Empire or even world figures than the more numerous populations of sister Dominions. While using these natives as an economic asset and convenience, South Africa was to be governed as nearly as possible as if there were no such five or six millions of them to destroy the homogeneity of the white nation. This grave experiment was the Union's own venture – and the Union is learning by experience. It need only be said now that the future of the Union and of all Africa would be brighter if a tithe of the energy that has spent itself in an unreal attempt to separate the races were diverted to making smoother the working out of the inevitable partnership.

## SOUTHERN RHODESIA AND NYASALAND

THE lesson from South African experience that first forced itself upon the pioneers of white settlement in the tropics was that the native population ought to have land enough for their own purposes. The usual but less happy deduction is that this is best secured by the creation of 'reserves'. I lately hit upon an entry in an old notebook – made in Rhodesia in 1930 at a time when I was using some energy to emphasize the inadequacy of South African reserves – to the effect that in both Rhodesias leading citizens, including Native Affairs officials, felt that they at any rate had no need for anxiety since, 'unlike South Africa', they had amply provided for the land needs of the African population. Southern Rhodesia at that time was contentedly working out its Land Apportionment Act (1930); in the north the demarcation of reserves, embarked upon after 1923 when the colony was taken over from the Chartered Company by the Crown, had quite lately been completed. It was genuinely felt that the land allotted to natives was in all respects adequate.

It is worth considering this question of 'adequacy'. Devoted officers in the Union and elsewhere have spent themselves vainly urging the necessity of some decent minimum allowance, some stated figure, perhaps as much as five morgen per family.<sup>1</sup> Rhodesia, however, had not yet attempted a complete census, and no colony had the beginnings of the material on which to base any serious estimate of the probable future of the African population, whether it be increasing or decreasing, or stagnant. The optimum size of the reserves must in any case depend on the purpose they are supposed to fulfil. There was much to be said against closing unnecessarily large areas to

1. U.G., Eastern Transvaal Land Committee Report, 1917.

petition. They were surprised when, as in the old days, <sup>pro-serve natives</sup> the country. A native major, <sup>in the country</sup> seek their fortune in <sup>the tribe</sup> an <sup>in the country</sup> ~~in the country~~ must be not only a man himself. <sup>the modern life</sup> he modern life, moreover, to jog along carefully <sup>the by</sup> ~~the by~~ sudden subversive change, under no pressure to learn even more intensive use of their holdings. The measure of 'adequacy' would need to be more generous than in the past. In practice the course of action was to secure as much land as possible for European development, leaving Africans no more than expediency necessitated.

The pioneers and their successors, farmers no less than miners, soon showed themselves aware that since the natives were very backward, and under no pressure, labour might be difficult to get. To check 'Kaffir farming', which they feared might tie up both land and labour, a Private Locations Ordinance in 1908 expressly restricted rent-paying native tenants on alienated land to a maximum of forty adult tenants for every 1500 morgen. Many natives also continued to reside as squatters on Crown land. They might even acquire individual possession – as a few have done.<sup>3</sup> There was, therefore, no urgent pressure, and it was only in 1920 that defined reserves were formally vested in the High Commissioner and set apart 'for the sole and exclusive use of the native inhabitants'. The Reserves Commission of 1914, on whose recommendation this step was taken, knew nothing of the 'segregation' policy, but worked throughout on the assumption that reserves were only a minimum, and that 15 to 20 per cent of the natives – perhaps a modest estimate – would continue to find homes and work elsewhere.

A new phase began with the Report of the Land Commission of 1925–6, shortly after the grant of self-government in 1923. The setting up of this Commission was due, it was said, to fear that friction might arise from competing claims of

1. To an extent of 45,000 acres. Southern Rhodesia Year Book, No. 2, 1930, p. 286.

natives and Europeans to land outside the defined reserves. The report proposed that to prevent dispute all land immediately suitable for settlement should be divided up into areas definitely marked off for the exclusive use of Europeans and natives respectively, leaving certain 'neutral' areas for possible absorption in the native belt, as well as considerable stretches – dry and most of them tsetse-infested – which were to remain for the present 'unallotted'. There were now, in fact, to be 'reserves' for whites as well as for natives. The Land Apportionment Act of 1930, which put the recommendations of the report into force, assigned to the Europeans some 49,000,000 acres, over half the total; to the natives, absolutely, some 29,000,000 acres, 30·3 per cent of the total area of Southern Rhodesia, leaving 18,000,000 acres unallotted. By South African standards, which inevitably ranked as the norm, one-third of the country was no bad allowance.

In one direction in particular Rhodesians must be credited with logic and foresight. Granted the basic assumption that Europeans and Africans should develop their own separate societies, they recognized that there are now or must soon be Africans who will not conform to tribal rules and will need their opportunity as individuals. 'Native Purchase Areas' made it possible for such to acquire their own farms, on essentially the same terms as those open to European settlers. It is early yet to judge the progress of this venture. It marked a definite advance, for example, on the rule which limits the progressive Transkeian farmer to his single peasant's 'lot'.

This Rhodesian Land Apportionment Act is in other respects a good deal less generous than bare figures might suggest – it is on maps that ignore details like water supply or tsetse-infestation that the unallotted areas still available for future emergencies make their best showing. 'The native', says one typical exposition,<sup>1</sup> 'will be encouraged to develop his own area where it is hoped that all the needs of a civilized community will be created.' The European reserve includes,

1. B. K. Long in *The Times*, 2nd August 1937.



as a matter of course, all the towns, the working mines, practically every foot of land within reasonable distance of the railways, Europeans naturally retaining what they claim are the fruits of their own initiative and enterprise. No new and poor country can afford to produce such things in duplicate. Native society, if it is ever to furnish itself with the needs of a civilized community, must start from the beginning – as in the Union, with only such financial help as their rulers choose to provide. For a time 'native development' had all to itself a special State department which is now merged in general 'Native Affairs'. This was as if the welfare of the natives is something separate and distinct from that of the essential Southern Rhodesia. The Native Affairs Department's work has included useful beginnings of agricultural demonstration work and health services, as well as efforts to improve, for example, the water supplies of native districts, or, in a different sphere, the preparation of hides and skins for the export market. But always the native community actually starts from behind scratch. Rhodesia could never have obtained its modest prosperity without native help, and it is an integral part of the 'new' policy that there must still be an adequate, even abundant, supply of this same native labour. So that building in the native areas must in any case proceed without the co-operation of some considerable proportion of their own able-bodied and most experienced members.

- The Land Commission's incidental recommendations defining and limiting the rights of the many natives who have long been and must necessarily remain in the European areas are, therefore, as they were in the Union Land Act, the essential innovation. The numerous Africans who are indispensable for European purposes will be allowed in the European areas only so long as they are working for Europeans, and with no higher status than that of labourer – as if the right to work for wages were privilege enough. The framers of the report, like the politicians who passed the Land Apportionment Act and its South African prototype, failed to see that these provisions

would carry with them social effects nothing less than revolutionary for the native population as a whole. The outlets for the skilled and educated of the unmixed West African countries are notoriously limited. It is a mockery to point to the Rhodesian reserves as the sphere for the realization of the skilled African's ambition to live a civilized life. The 'white' area in Southern Rhodesia has definite physical unity and coherence, whereas the scene of the future African civilization is appropriately spoken of in the plural as the 'native areas'. Most of these date in fact from the days when the older theory prevailed - when the parts of the country most effectively occupied by natives were conveniently recognized as 'Native'. The reserves, therefore, are widely scattered over the whole area of the country. Originally in ninety-three separate fragments, including four said to be uninhabited, the total is now reduced by linking up to perhaps about thirty-six more compact units.

This extreme subdivision not only impairs mobility; it must tend to confirm the exclusive habits of the tribes rather than help them to conform to the more modern setting they have been forced into: so far from favouring the development of one native society, it must multiply the chance that particular parts will degenerate as so many of the older South African units have already done. Even in 1937 a report was cited as authority for saying that the arable land of eighty-nine of the units was already fully taken up.<sup>1</sup> If there is any serious growth of population, minimum holdings must presently become maxima, as in the old Cape Colony. A good many of the reserves are already no better than the similar pens for Africans in the south. In a saner world, looking for the civilization of Africa as a whole, it would be seen for the folly it is that in an under-peopled and under-worked continent the responsible authorities everywhere should be spending so much of their zeal in devising ways and means of fitting a few more hundreds here, or thousands there, into one or other

1. Rev. F. Noble in *Rhodesia Herald*, 4th June 1937.

of these scattered and already overcrowded economic backwaters.

Very early in the settlement of Kenya it was conceded that Europeans should have a preferential claim to land in a considerable area of the highlands, and by degrees some important part of this was effectively occupied. Experience elsewhere made the Government careful to issue proclamations safeguarding native rights of occupancy, and to keep close control of settler activities. The first-comers who – like the Voortrekkers in Natal – judged that most of the highland country was ‘empty’ soon had reason to discover that however imperfectly the alienated land may formerly have been used it was far from being uninhabited. The moving of a whole section of the nomadic Masai from one side of the railway to another was administratively convenient – there was much to be said for putting a limit to their wanderings – but the precedent of such care for European convenience impeded smooth adjustments elsewhere, in particular among the Kikuyu of the central highlands. The uneasiness resulting led to the appointment, under the same chairmanship as the former Rhodesian inquiry, of a Land Commission. This reported in 1934 that for all the changes of thirty more than usually eventful years a number of old inhabitants were still able to establish a claim to compensation for disturbance of their recognized rights in alienated land. The population of the Kikuyu Reserve as a whole was in the neighbourhood of 500,000, and there were as many as 110,000 Kikuyu, ‘most of them squatters’, resident outside the reserve. The reserve itself was fully occupied, parts of it admittedly congested. Some proposed additional land, parts of it to be thrown open to leasehold tenants, left it a problem to find room in Kikuyu country for something like a quarter of the tribe who were not wanted in the ‘white’ area.

The responsibility for Kenya, a Crown colony, continued with the British Government, with only partial devolution on a local council. Between the wars the settlers had means

of making their influence strongly felt at home where champions of native interests were more active and vocal than about Rhodesia. In addition, the India Office, spurred on by the turbulent politics of India itself, raised its voice on behalf of the many Indians in the country. Besides clerks, artisans and peasants, Indian traders especially have played a large part in developing trade in Kenya and the neighbouring territories. A certain liveliness, therefore, attended the disputes that raged from time to time, incidentally about the relative burden of European and native taxation, and the equitable allocation of revenues devoted to social services, above all about rights in and access to land in the 'white' highlands, and about means of 'encouraging' natives to give their labour. Settlement undoubtedly contributed to the development of the country as nothing else could have done in so short a time, but now the continuance of the useful experiment was rather taken to depend on barring Africans from all except wage-labour in the settled area. Agriculture of the traditional type had become more difficult, and of course tribal arrangements in the crowded Kikuyu Reserve would never admit of the rapid adoption of new ways. On distant new areas it would be no easier for Africans than for Europeans to do pioneer work on modern lines without costly development, and there certainly are no Africans with even the £2000 minimum of capital recommended as necessary for Europeans. Yet the 'white' highlands were not fully occupied.

Here was another acute land problem in relatively under-peopled country. Kenya has great physical attractions, proved agricultural possibilities, and advantages of railways and markets. The debates that raged about it opened a new chapter in imperial history, posing the complexities of governing what it is now the fashion to call a 'plural' society composed of elements so diverse and unequal as Europeans, Indians and Africans in Kenya. Downing Street was perhaps caught in two minds about the experiment. The preferential claims of Europeans in the highland area had been recognized partly under

political pressure, partly for administrative convenience. It is always easier to deal with compact tribal units. The tradition of the Colonial Service in Kenya being laudably protective and paternal, African interests were often seen as quite distinct from if not opposed to those of the Europeans, and even liable to suffer from any general development of the country.

The settlers for their part, with little consideration for anything more than their immediate labour needs, pressed for legislation to regulate the position of natives on their farms. Anticipating the Commission of 1934, an Ordinance of 1925 had already so far followed the southern model as to introduce a 'labour-tenancy' requiring the squatter and his family to give a minimum of 180 days' service in return for limited grazing rights and temporary agricultural occupancy of farm lands. There was no serious attempt to make the rule absolute. Many Kenya settlers, like farmers in the south, were very content to have a reserve of labour on their farms, so that many natives continued to squat on alienated but undeveloped farm land. The conditions for stock on better organized farms were a great attraction to natives, even on labour-tenant terms. The Commission thus had to reckon in all with as many as 150,000 squatters and labour-tenants, or in the local term, 'resident native labourers'.

The pressure of man and beast in certain of the native reserves is, in fact, considerable and there is ground for the alarm caused by denudation due to over-grazing. This is the likely consequence of the policy of keeping natives in pens. The danger of similar destruction in the 'white' areas is less just because more intelligent control is a safeguard against serious soil erosion. Yet the Land Commission actually made the over-grazing of the reserves a reason for increasing the pressure on their soil by requiring them to accommodate these superfluous squatters. A crucial passage<sup>1</sup> reads: 'It may well be argued that the conditions under which natives should be able to obtain a lease of land should correspond with the con-

1. Cmd. 4556, § 1496.

ditions under which Europeans are able to obtain a lease in native reserves'. Thus the difficulty that so many natives were already in occupation drove the Commission to the remarkable conclusion that the 'white' highlands, defined as some 16,700 square miles, should be strictly kept henceforth as in effect a European 'reserve'.

White and native reserves are in no way comparable. There is no possible economic advantage to be sought by European agriculturists in a native area. Reserves are only a *pis aller*, a device to put some limit on the 'extermination' of the weaker by the stronger. The principle is open to grave objection when it is extended to strict separation, as the Commission itself inadvertently admitted. Of the coast~~at~~ Swahili it noted the 'most remarkable circumstance' that a population 'in great measure detribalized' (this not unnatural transition was to many in those days an unmitigated disaster) come and go with great freedom, so that the 'coast has good reason to be satisfied with its arrangements for the accommodation of the Natives'. Repeatedly also the Commission advocated 'fluidity' in the native reserves. It commended, for example, the possibility of Kikuyu agriculturists finding room in Masai country, and expressly deprecated 'rigidity' as likely to discourage such friendly intermixture of tribes; it therefore advised that some areas should be marked off as temporary reserve, others left unassigned to any particular tribe. This was sound reasoning. But by this time experience seemed to confirm the administrative convenience of rigid separation. It was complained in particular that owners of undeveloped land allowed 'accumulations' of 'uncontrolled' squatters, and that such Alsatias of the lawless became centres of thieving and of stock infection and an embarrassment both to the administration and to their neighbours. The remedy was to carry the law to the lawless, if necessary even to the absentee landlord. The Commission was for removing the people wholesale and making a peaceful desert. But European landowners definitely need a good deal of native labour, and the further development looked for must

necessarily give rise to a demand for the services of more Africans, not fewer. The not insoluble problem was to ensure these Africans a secure life where their work was.

The settlers cannot be held responsible for the lameness of these attempts to reconcile the interests of Europeans and Africans. The Kenya settlers, whatever the truth about those of South Africa or Southern Rhodesia, have never been doctrinaire segregationists. Lord Delamere, for example, retained a life-long faith in the civilizing efficacy of direct white teaching. Even the Land Commission's findings and its segregationist principles were imposed on them from without. Few of them would wish to dispense with their squatters. The Commission, in fact, repeated the southern mistake of tacking on to its proposals for settlement of a land problem an unconsidered and untested labour policy:

In considering the rights of Natives to land in the European Highlands *it is perhaps necessary to mention* labour tenants or squatters.<sup>1</sup>

From this inadequate approach the Report went on to ban squatting as absolutely as in Rhodesia or the Union. It would secure peace and uniformity by the preservation of as solid a Kikuyuland as was still possible, and discourage – if not prevent – the removal of Kikuyu to permanent homes in a 'white' area where they would lose touch with their own social organization. So far as Downing Street gave qualified blessing to this negation of policy they deferred too much to the doctrine that it should be the first aim of policy to conserve tribal units and prevent 'detrribalization'.

On the issues of land and labour the Colonial Office might have drawn with profit on its own experience in almost the smallest of the African colonies. In 1936 Nyasaland, poor, inaccessible and rather neglected, suddenly appeared in the news in an official report<sup>2</sup> calling attention to a catastrophic

1. Cmd. 4556, § 1976.

2. 'On Migration of Labour', Zomba, 1936.

exodus from certain districts of tribesmen seeking employment elsewhere. Nyasaland being a small colony, Nyasa migration is to foreign parts, therefore more than normally disturbing of domestic routine. The migration is actually heaviest, and the demoralization emphasized by this report immeasurably worst, in the purely native northern districts which have suffered no alienation of land to estates. It is not white settlement that has shattered the basis of their old tribal life, but rather the aspirations of the people themselves. It is dangerous to generalize about the qualities of native tribes, but it is certain that, perhaps by long 'contact' with Arabs or other slave traders, Nyasas of one sort or another are widely and favourably known in all neighbouring territories as exceptionally intelligent and unusually venturesome. Thanks to the number and long standing of missions, at least primitive 'bush' schools are more widely spread among these people than usual. The great migration itself is not uninfluenced by the preferential demand for Nyasa labour in other parts. The latest scheme of co-ordinated settlement by a company under Lord Chesham in the southern highlands of Tanganyika, like farmers in Rhodesia habitually, was employing Nyasas as more dependable than local labour. Nyasaland has, in fact, better features which are less widely studied than they deserve; its central area has a good deal to teach its greater neighbours.

The Shire Highlands, the heart of the country, while not so high by Kenya standards, barely 4000 feet, are at once beautiful and tolerably fertile. These districts continued to be harried by slave raiders till a very recent date. Missionaries who followed in the steps of Livingstone about 1875 encouraged traders as a check on slave-raiding. These brought other Europeans in their train, and large concessions, acquired almost entirely in this area where land was said to be weakly held or relatively 'empty', perhaps devastated by raiders, were the occasion for the establishment of British rule in 1890. As usual, the alienation of land was soon followed by a return of former inhabitants, or by an influx of new-comers attracted by oppor-



tunities of wage-earning. The so-called certificates of claim on which most European titles were based normally safeguarded the rights of native families established on this land – as did a later Crown Lands Ordinance of 1912. It is the habit of Africans to keep changing their kraal sites, and as early as 1903 a Land Commission found it impossible to distinguish between natives with rights as original occupants, and hosts of others who had drifted in and established themselves, either as part-time labourers or as tenants paying rent in cash or kind. Natives no less than settlers know very well where conditions are favourable, and a later commission reported of the district of Zomba that ‘the greater part’ of its population was ‘collected in the southern half, which is almost all in the hands of private owners and contains the large European estates’.

As usual Government control of labour conditions was negligent, perhaps Government itself too weak to interfere, and in 1915 Central Nyasaland became the scene of what the circumstances of the war made a serious rebellion. The rising was also unique in being led, not by a despairing tribal chief, but by an educated preacher, one Chilembwe. The occasion undoubtedly was the disposition shown by some landowners to make the shortage of native land, and the preference shown by natives for the better land, an occasion to exact more onerous labour services. Here, for once, the people were sufficiently independent to resist.

After this warning disturbance the Government in 1917 made an attempt to settle the matter on lines of rather abstract justice, making it illegal to demand services in lieu of rent. Without taking power to compel landowners to accept tenants this was to go too fast. It is easier for natives to do service by way of rent than to find cash, and there is no reason in principle to forbid the practice so long as the tenants’ rights are protected. The prohibition soon broke down, and by 1920 practically all natives on farm land were nominally labourers, most of those who refused their services having been given legal notice to quit. There were thus more labourers than the

estates could usefully employ, and a considerable class of landless natives to be provided for. Significance attaches to the very different way Nyasaland has dealt with a situation so very like that in the segregationist countries or in the Kenya highlands. The report made by the purely local Land Commission of 1920<sup>1</sup> deserved more study than it seems to have had from those who subsequently set Nyasaland's neighbours on their course.

Nyasaland, alone among colonies with any considerable amount of land alienated to Europeans, was guided by this report to decide against the usual plan of 'safeguarding' the rights of Africans by confining their activities to specific reserves. Land alienation had gone so far that no redivision could now make sizeable units of native administration. South Africa and its northern imitators made their attempt at 'segregation' in districts where a satisfactory division was at least as impracticable as it would have been in the Shire Highlands. The Nyasaland Commission drew from their own observation conclusions flatly at variance with segregationist theory. Proceeding from the fact that many if not most natives in the alienated districts are labourers, they recognized it to be convenient that labourers should have their permanent homes near their place of work. The dispersal of tribes – a relic of the slave raids – made it, they thought, specially desirable to allow or encourage small widely distributed villages rather than large agglomerations: 'We believe that the institution of reserves, by which we mean the collection of large numbers of natives in defined areas, would be an unwarrantable interference with the free occupation by the people of their native land, and would be in addition totally unsuited to their mode of life.' This approach, in itself too much out of fashion in parts where the 'moving' of the native population is so lightly undertaken, leads to an examination of the Glen Grey system, and to the blunt conclusion: 'We believe that the experience of other countries tends to show that reserves become centres of

1. Nyasaland Land Report, Zomba, 1920, No. 10582.

bad behaviour and of sloth, and in our opinion their establishment in this Protectorate would be a complete disruption of the normal conditions of native life for which we see no existing justification'. This report sets an example in making it the central object to safeguard the conditions of Africans – on European farms, in towns or wherever else their work and lawful occasions may happen to take them. Nyasaland rightly retains a considerable measure of Crown control, but it has refused to pen its own people in reserves, without in any way closing down on further leases of land for economic experiment by Europeans.

The position of natives, other than those on their own or on Crown land, thus came to be governed by the natives on Private Estates Ordinance of 1928. Regularizing the widespread practice, this law expressly recognized a right to render labour 'in lieu of or in abatement of rent'. Recognizing also that progress is impossible without reasonable security of tenure, it made tenants' contracts run normally for five years. Labour was paid at controlled rates of wages and the services rendered, not to exceed six months, were distributed between the wet season, the time of planting, and the dry months of harvest – an important guarantee that labourers should have time at their own disposal and not be prevented, as they frequently are in South Africa, from taking profitable employment away from home in their spare time. The most original, almost daring, part of the experiment was the provision that where the landlord had no employment to offer, the recognized tenant was to be given instead opportunity of growing an economic crop, this to be disposed of, at a valuation, to the landlord. The working control of the system being vested in Local Boards, on which the official chairman had only a qualified casting vote, the landlords' just rights seem to be no less protected against neglect or malpractice by the tenants; and with all this the 'penal sanctions' usual in labour-tenancy as practised elsewhere are absent.

This important experiment demanded the attention of all

concerned with the vital task of reconciling and harmonizing the interests of European landlords and African tenants. The area concerned is smaller in Nyasaland than in Kenya, but the mix-up of farms and tribes rather greater; on the face of it the solution of the problem of locating '49,000 huts', for whose inhabitants there was in 1920 no land available in Blantyre, together with '23,563 huts' from Zomba, on 83,957 acres of non-pastoral land,<sup>1</sup> might have thrown light on how to place the 100,000 Kikuyu. Much of the labour used in the Shire Highlands is supplied by immigrants from Portuguese territory, but the law makes no distinction between immigrants and indigenous inhabitants. Many of the tenants are these alien Anguru. The native Kikuyu had a reasonable claim to at least as good terms of occupancy in what till only the other day was their own country.

The small-scale Nyasaland experiment in white colonization has thus come to follow a different pattern. Settlers of the amateur type usual elsewhere have tried but, hampered in part by poor transport, have never succeeded in establishing themselves in considerable numbers. Those who predominate – there are barely 2000 Europeans in all – are rather of the 'planter' type, agriculturists, that is, using a relatively high degree of skill to direct the work of a numerous body of labourers. They are by no means 'birds of passage'. But in Nyasaland there is no body of opinion expecting to build up a separate purely white society. Its Government has had healthy stimulus, and the benefit of criticism and active help, from a considerable body of independent Europeans who, without hurt to their own interests, have come nearer than most of their fellows elsewhere to identifying their fortunes and happiness with those of Africa. This example is not to be ignored. In South Africa itself there is no surer escape from the strain and anxiety aroused by contemplation of the 'native problem' than a holiday in the Transkei or the Protectorates, where the tiny European communities, while in no

1. Land Report, 1920, Appendix.

way disloyal to their own society, have similarly come to feel themselves part of a greater African whole.

The peaceful contentment of the Transkei is real. The very placidity of life in such quiet backwaters is in some degree responsible for the unhappy trend of policy in so much of the rest of the African continent. The peace of the native areas has disguised the weakness inherent in the idea of keeping as many as possible of the people of Africa in such 'reserves'. It became the one aim even of the champions of African rights to have as many more Transkeis as possible in the Union, and ample reserves elsewhere. Only the earliest lesson of all has really penetrated – that without special safeguards much native land will inevitably be lost to European and other creditors. In the special circumstances it is essential to guarantee the weaker people a minimum home base. The newer lesson is that African development is impossible without the full co-operation of African man-power. This cannot be if European trustees are to put obstacles in the way of more capable African individuals attempting the difficult climb to economic independence. Everywhere the development of purely native areas is work for generations. In all the mixed countries the most immediate need is not to make the reserves more 'adequate'; it is to secure the position of those Africans who have to spend all their best working years outside them. It is hopeful that since the war at least Northern Rhodesia has joined Nyasaland in breaking away from the tradition of providing reserves for its native population. The older alienations are now known as 'Reserved' land. In both colonies all land other than Crown land or such 'reserved' areas – in Nyasaland 95 per cent of the total – is now vested in the Secretary of State as Native Trust land, to be administered in consultation with the Native Authority, any proceeds from grants of such land, whether to Europeans or Africans, accruing to the Native Treasury.

## PART III

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### *Chapter 8*

## CAPITAL – THE PLACE OF MINING ENTERPRISE IN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT

IT needs no Marx to trace economics behind the moral issues raised by the juxtaposition of advanced and backward peoples. One weakness in Africa has been that the capital resources brought to agricultural development have rarely been adequate for the task. European governments have been inhibited by theory from any attempt themselves to provide even minimum needs of a kind likely to be thought essential by private capitalists hoping to make good use of an undeveloped estate.

It was always left to private capital to stimulate development and to take the risks governments might not incur. In older days, in the less favourable climates until quite recently, the stimulus was seldom more than what came from a planter's concession here and there, and from a sprinkling of traders setting out to make what they could of direct trade with native producers. Witnesses so different as Livingstone and Mary Kingsley, with intimate knowledge of different parts of the country, looked to commercial enterprise to work a large part of the material regeneration of Africa. By 'trade' both meant something more constructive than the barter of beads for palm oil, but even their experience underestimated the limiting effect of African poverty. On the West Coast commerce was the first influence to penetrate the interior, and the wealth of the Niger country proved rewarding. Alone among the chartered companies to which British enterprise was entrusted in

the last years of the nineteenth century the Niger Company almost from the beginning paid regular dividends. Even there the pioneers of commerce as a rule found the extraction of a profit from trade with resourceless Africans unproductive of new supplies of capital, and an insufficient warrant for new commitments. Africans had many needs traders might have satisfied, but lacked the means of paying for them. Largely because of the inefficiency and unreliability of African production, in despair rather than of desire, European firms have often been driven to take up land and themselves produce direct for the outside market, leaving Africans only the drudges' share in the enterprise they seemed incapable of conducting themselves. Hence, too, where the climate allowed, governments welcomed white settlement, as the quickest way of securing not only increased output but a ready market for manufactured goods from home, to the benefit both of home exports and of colonial revenues.

Africa, in short, is a 'new' country with a difference. It was the attraction of new countries such as the old American colonies and the Dominions once were that their development provided venturers from Europe with almost unlimited opportunities of healthy work. It is the difficulty of tropical Africa that the work to be done, to make it even healthily habitable by its own people, is so overwhelming in variety and extent as to deter private enterprise. There is little to build on, and a dearth of builders. The colonial governments' slender resources normally limited expenditure for public amenities to the little that could be spared out of current revenue. Private enterprises, though they may escape the local taxation they often complain of at home, find instead that they must supply their own local services. The text-books vaguely attribute lack of enterprise to the exceptional 'risks' which attend the sinking of capital in a backward country. In Africa there has been very little physical insecurity, and even less danger of political upheaval, but the private venturer in Africa must add to the calculation of his own private risks the cost of providing

what at home are public services.

European imaginations will not readily grasp the rawness of most of the African continent. Before productive enterprise of any kind can be begun, let alone carried on efficiently, there are not only offices, mills or warehouses to be provided, but also houses and labour lines, and all the services which at home are ready to hand – roads and bridges, water supplies, light, drainage, probably even railways. All the materials required must normally be transported, sometimes by porterage, often over great distances. Building materials and fuel are often hard to come by locally. For fuel many enterprises, including Central African railways, still use wood; to carry coal from the few places where it is mined would be prohibitively costly. Houses for the staff are no less important than business premises; efficiency demands that life be made as healthy and pleasant as conditions will allow. All the ill-health which beset tropical pioneers and ruined their work was not inevitable; some came of roughing it exposed to heat and damp in termite-ridden houses of mud and straw, of a type still common as homes both for settlers and for government officials. Bad water and contaminated food were other potent sources of disease. Everywhere water has to be purified, having first been collected and stored. Anything like a town or village demands draining and cleansing, and special precautions against malaria. Station houses must, if possible, be sited to benefit from the prevailing breeze; often, therefore, they are at a distance from the works and add to the cost of the roads that require to be made, and kept fit to carry motor transport during the rains, which may be torrential for six months of the year. In towns the cost of installing and maintaining services is enormously increased by the spread of houses – Nairobi was an almost extreme example of a mileage of roads and water-piping out of all proportion to the numbers served. Physical exercise is very necessary for anyone doing continuous work in the tropics, and wise employers contribute freely to the cost of tennis courts and golf courses, staff clubs and recreation



halls. Clearing and draining for golf often pays dividends by reducing the danger from mosquitoes. The impecunious farmer-settler inevitably often has to struggle on in make-shift conditions.

• It is a general result that everywhere the cost of living at civilized standards is excessively high – with the incidental effect of helping to check any rise in African standards. This qualification being prefaced, there are many examples of what adequate capital expenditure can do to make life more varied and wholesome, not only for the European immigrants but for all classes. It was my fortune to make my first landfall at Beira soon after the end of the 1918 war when it was still in something like its original condition, a desolate sand-pit with fetid mangrove swamps dividing it from the mainland, completely shut in on its own resources. Ten years later its rising prosperity as the port for Rhodesia and Nyasaland, to some extent also for the rapidly developing copper belt, had made it worth while to convert this fever-smitten outpost into a clean modern town. Greatly improved harbour facilities, well-metalled roads and pleasant bungalows, even give it vogue as a winter seaside resort. A generation ago few on the Rand would have dreamt of the still more complete transformation of Lourenço Marques, made possible similarly by a profitable share in the development of its Transvaal hinterland. Centres of activity like Mombasa, Dar-es-Salaam, Accra, even Kumasi, and the crowded island of Lagos, are all such clean and reasonably healthy towns as tropical Africa till lately never knew. The opening up of the central copper belt has established hives of industry in the tsetse bush, with beneficial economic effects which reach to distant parts. The most obvious illustration of all is South Africa itself.

#### MINING IN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT

Immediately, development has most to hope for from mining enterprise; great mineral wealth is already proved and no

other activity, certainly so readily attracts the capital required. Other countries, notably California, to some extent Australia and New Zealand, have owed a great deal to mining booms which left them in the end better equipped for all purposes.

It is exceptional for mineral discoveries to be made in established centres so that their effect, in the first instance, is often disturbing. Mining, which has opened up entirely new districts, has led to much shifting of population. The benefits to South Africa as a whole were for this reason rather at the expense of established interests. The benefits even of railway development were impaired when the lines from the three seaports, Cape Town, Port Elizabeth and East London, were all driven towards Kimberley and Johannesburg, leaving the much longer settled and agriculturally more promising coastal districts almost unserved. This neglect certainly emphasized the poverty of 'poor whites' in these districts<sup>1</sup> by throwing them back on their own resources. The mines' demand for labour has also been responsible for transplanting tens of thousands of Africans, with immediately even more disastrous effect on their home economy. Mining thus gets blamed for tensions which must have resulted from any unwonted activity in such undeveloped country.

South African mining has been on a vast scale. It is estimated that the value of the gold produced from the beginning of serious operations to 1940 exceeded £1,800,000,000; diamonds well over £330,000,000; with coal and base metals the total value of the mineral output was nearly £2,400,000,000. South Africa was for many years producing more than half the world output of gold, this predominance having been reduced latterly only by the combined effects of new Russian production and of the enhanced price which has brought hitherto 'unpayable propositions' into the field. In the diamond market the South African share has also been vast, and its voice in control is still dominant.

1. W. M. Macmillan, *South African Agrarian Problem* (1919).

Gold is normally found in the undeveloped, not because of the richness and frequency of the deposits but because the metal is easily transported and has hitherto been sure of its stable high-priced market. As well as on the Rand, which is unique, gold-mining is important in Southern Rhodesia and the Gold Coast. It is negligible in Tanganyika, Kenya, Nigeria and Sierra Leone, where the working of more or less payable quantities has to counter greater initial difficulties than in the settled and developed Union. Diamonds, the Union's second string, are also known to be widely distributed. The abnormally fickle market for precious stones has given rise to and perhaps needed rigid monopolistic control, but it is possible that the growing industrial consumption of diamonds may facilitate the opening up of many more potential fields all over the continent. For the different reason that the probable profit was so much less, the development of the base metals had, till the Second World War, little more than begun. The copper belt of the Katanga and Northern Rhodesia was the one first-class field in active, though far from maximum working. Others of relative importance include the tin of Nigeria, manganese in the Gold Coast, iron in Sierra Leone, chrome in Southern Rhodesia, asbestos in parts of the south. The mines now working are far from exhausting the possibilities. These and other colonies have samples of almost every conceivable mineral, including radium and uranium in the Katanga. So far oil is the one important exception, but there is no reason to suppose that the potentialities have yet been fully explored.

The output of this varied mining enterprise contributes appreciably to world supplies, but it gives a truer measure of its social importance to realize its local predominance. The mineral output of South Africa long represented little less than 75 per cent of the value of its total exports from all sources. In Southern Rhodesia minerals before the war accounted for about 70 per cent of the exports; in Northern Rhodesia there is little else. In the Gold Coast the mines were more than balanced by cocoa, in Nigeria and Sierra Leone by

palm oil; but even there, as in Tanganyika and even Kenya, a relatively small increase in mining activity must, from one point of view, 'upset the balance', economic and social. Further progress must depend, in the first instance, on how far world demand makes it worth while to sink the capital necessary for recovery of the product. By the effects of speculation and of changes in world demand the price obtainable for base metals has fluctuated wildly. In spite even of the long railway haul Central African copper mines have natural advantages, but these were insufficient to prevent the closing down of all but two of the newly developed Northern Rhodesian group at the end of 1931. On the other hand, a total output of 3087 tons in 1931 had risen by 1934 to 131,784, and in 1936 to 142,018 tons, valued at £145,962, £4,137,722 and £5,586,981 respectively. All ventures have got to allow for such market vagaries, as well as for the natural risks and uncertainties of underground mining. The nature and extent, both of these risks and of the chances of great profit, are much misunderstood. Mining methods have improved so much that when thorough preliminary investigation of the field is followed up by the skilled application of 'sufficient' capital, the danger of complete failure is less than it was. The record of dozens of gold mines for many years past, far from being a gamble, might for steady yield and stabilized profits be the envy of any reputable City firm; and there is no doubt that so far as production goes the copper mines could undertake and carry out a contract for a very large and regular tonnage for an almost indefinite number of years to come. Failures in the past have arisen more than is always allowed from hasty and inadequate prospecting and indifferent mining. The influence of the Stock Exchange where, in the late Lord Keynes's phrase, 'average opinion' sits enthroned, nervously watching its own opinion of market values, has been an unstable factor. Capital for new mining ventures will be available only according to the market fashion of the moment - it may be all too easily, for rash and ill-considered ventures, or it may be

with quite unreasonable difficulty.

Many mines, for example on the Rand, have at times been kept going when barely making their expenses only because so much capital is already invested that their proprietors have been reluctant to cut their losses. The uncertainties of mining, and especially the long preparatory period bringing in no return at all, have been such that the only authoritative estimate puts the mean annual yield on the total capital sunk in the Rand gold mines at no more than 4 1 per cent.<sup>1</sup> The truth is that a very great deal of expenditure has gone to buying experience. This experience is now available to save the African mining of the future from many of the failures and follies which have marred its past.

It is commonly forgotten that there is more to look for from the mines in the short-lived 'development' stage than even at the height of their production. The spending of £17,000,000 in three or four years about 1929 to get five great mines equipped in Northern Rhodesia meant vastly greater activity than is to be looked for from the same five mines in full working – however steady and profitable their production may be. There was one distressed and stagnant Johannesburg of about the year 1931, and a very different city in the Jubilee year 1936. Then the price of gold had suddenly risen from 85s. to 140s., new mines were developing on every side, and the building industry was booming to meet the needs of a rapidly expanding industry – just as Ndola, in Northern Rhodesia, was a vastly busier place in 1929–30 than it was in 1937. The question to be asked and answered about the future of mining is something rather different from speculation as to the probable life of the Rand or any other single field. Obviously neither Johannesburg nor Ndola can look to stay long at the 'developing' stage of prosperity, or even to return to those 'peak' years; and the best mine must be worked out at last.

For reasons good and bad mining represents 'capital' in a

1. Communicated from an unpublished paper of Professor S. H. Frankel. See his later *Capital Investment in Africa*, O.U.P. 1938.

form widely suspect. The humanitarian is at one with the anthropologist in deploring the spread of an industry which draws so many able-bodied men from their homes and families to the artificial and unwholesome life of 'open' compounds on the Rand, or the confined conditions of the 'closed' type in Kimberley – there to drudge in the bowels of the earth while tribal life disintegrates and agriculture stagnates for want of those on whom both depend. It counts for too little that the best of the great mining concerns, financially strong enough to dare to be enlightened, have shown themselves better employers than any of their rivals, and often highly public spirited. The South African Institute of Medical Research in Johannesburg is much more than a device to reduce the cost of compensation for miners' phthisis. This was a mines foundation, as in origin was the Rand Water Board whose services make life bearable on that dusty plateau. The health and social betterment work organized by Dr E. Mottoule in the Katanga with the backing of the Union Minière would do no discredit to a missionary society. There has been little to match it in any African venture, public or private. Some people in high places had lately got little past the stage of thinking of mining as a shady business managed by 'magnates' who, as obscurely but surely responsible for much serious trouble in South Africa, were to be kept at arm's length in other parts. This is a view little different from that of the backvelder to whom de Beers is still the personal devil responsible for the Jameson Raid and all its sequel. It serves to make all highly organized mining suspect, and inspires the widely-shared opinion that, if there must be African mining development, the pick-and-shovel prospector and the small-scale private company are to be preferred as more easily controlled agents than Big Capital.

The truth is that in South Africa, so far as the interests of the white community are concerned, organized capital met political opponents who were fully its match. Forced to wrestle with physical difficulties, without any pampering,

Capital evolved a mining organization which, in marked contrast to that, for example, of the British coal fields, has attained and maintained a very high standard of modern scientific mining. At the same time the State has come nearer than usual to a useful and remunerative working partnership with the industry, as well as to very effective and profitable control. South African mining began, as was natural, with a rush of individuals working each his own claim, or small parcels of claims, or combining at most to form a working 'syndicate'. The significant story of the Rand is condensed in the statement that records survive, some of them very slight, of no fewer than 736 companies floated between 1887 and 1932; that of 183 existing in 1893, 104 had then produced no gold; but by 1932, when the output was higher than it had ever been, only 57 companies survived, practically all of these controlled by no more than six great mining and financial houses, known as 'Groups'.<sup>1</sup>

In the beginning this ordering of chaos owed something to the example and influence of the great Kimberley corporation, 'de Beers'. Superseding the claim-holders whose workings, by undermining each other, had become impossible, de Beers at the same time set about organizing to prevent such a flooding of the diamond market as must have destroyed the industry itself. The immediate problems of the Rand gold mines were different; but from the beginning Kimberley experience, financial and technical, was at hand and drawn on. Rand gold was present not in nuggets or alluvial deposits, but buried in the blanket reef; from the first the laborious process of extracting it from the crushed rock demanded organization and capital, costly machinery and a large labour force. Transport of food and fuel to the treeless and unfarmed High Veld added greatly to the overhead charges. In addition, and by no means least, the Boer Republican Government, ill-equipped to deal with the Uitlander industry, was determined at least to make the strangers pay highly for the privilege of

1. John Martin, *The Group System* (British Association, 1929).

working at all in the jealously guarded Boer sanctuary. The more the mines threw the more suspicious and financially exacting seemed the Government. The companies, cut off from political help, were forced to help themselves, and self-help took the form, in the language of a later day, of very thorough 'rationalization'. The degree in which this was successful is very accurately measurable: whereas in the early years of the century the average grade of ore worked was 11.4 dwt. and the average cost of working it 29s. 6d. a ton, in 1929 the costs of working, often at great depth, averaged 19s. 9d. on ore of an average grade of only 6.55 dwt.; by 1935, materially helped of course by 'boom' due to the enhanced price for gold, the return on the capital of the companies then working was, instead of the old average of 4.1 per cent, not less than 24.5 per cent.<sup>1</sup>

The Group organization, to which most of this achievement is attributable, has features of more than local, or even of exclusively mining and industrial significance. The combination of central planning and direction with a high degree of local initiative represents such a nice balance as is rarely attained; it is much needed in the political field, for example in the relations of central government and local administration. In its own working sphere each mining company, in effect each mine, remains an independent unit, the mine manager a very highly paid servant with almost unchecked discretion, subject perhaps only to the knowledge that failure or indiscretion may earn summary dismissal. For all common purposes of business the Group steps in, for example to manage the purchase of supplies and machinery, the collection and distribution of labour, measures for health and welfare, besides the relatively simple matter of marketing the gold. The distinctive feature of the system is that in all matters of scientific and technical import the Groups exercise supervision, and supply advice through engineers of such ability and experience as no smaller unit could train or provide – men whose

1. Professor S. H. Frankel, *op. cit.*



whole time and energy are available for consultation on their science, and on the general problems of its application, free of responsibility for the details of local administration. These specialists are perhaps the backbone of the Groups. On the Rand at least the Groups themselves co-operate most effectively through the so-called Gold Producers' Committee – an inner circle of men of standing who function to all intents and purposes as a common executive.

By this example the whole mining industry has been drawn together. The same names recur in the directorates of most mining companies and 'holding' companies of any repute. Several of the Rand Groups have come to take direction or control of gold mines from Rhodesia to the Gold Coast, and they or others of similar calibre and organization manage Central African copper mines, Trinidad oil fields, besides base metal, or other ventures in Mexico, North America, the Far East, South America, even the Arctic Circle. At its best this must be taken to signify, not one gigantic intrigue against the public interest, but a very wide appreciation of the skill necessary for any successful mining enterprise. Helped originally, it may be, by its non-competitive nature, the gold-mining branch has gone far to give the industry as a whole such an appreciation of technique as is turning a once almost shady art into a genuine profession. Organized mining still differs from the ancient fraternities of medicine and the law in that it knows and enforces no standard of public conduct – is far, therefore, from having earned a right to self-government. But few industries have so nearly achieved 'technocracy'. The pure financier of mining – the 'magnate' of tradition – has visibly had to give way to the technician, the professional engineer whose proper professional pride makes him intolerant of financial adventure. Experience in South Africa has now established the distinction between mining as a science and mere mining speculation. There is no excuse for trustee governments to allow the exploitation of African mineral resources in the newer territories beyond to be made the happy

hunting-ground of speculating amateurs.

South African principles of mining control are of universal validity. The example of the original Republican Government of the Transvaal has brought most States to recognize the expediency of asserting State ownership of minerals, distinguishing these from surface rights in land. In South Africa, common sense, fortified by distrust of mining interests, has carried the State a long way from the original, common law rule that ownership carried with it a right to all minerals under the surface of the land. More especially outside the Transvaal the owners of the land as well as the discoverers of the minerals are still, if their title dates back any length of time, secured a number of claims in any field opened up. Precious stones were definitely secured to the State by an Act of 1927, and all other mining is effectively controlled. The lesson has on the whole been learned outside South Africa. In most of the tropical colonies the State is now the sole mineral owner. The Gold Coast is an important exception.

It is again South African experience which teaches that a strong and efficiently organized industry is fully more easily controlled in the public interest than a chaos of small ventures. It would certainly have been impossible with less efficient mining management to arrive at the successful blend of co-operation and State control which makes the conduct of mining on the Rand today such an astonishing contrast to the lack of system thirty or forty years ago. Mining law still speaks in terms of 'claims' – the gold-mining claim being no more than 150 × 400 feet, an area which bears no relation to the practicable gold-mining unit. The normal sequence was a 'strike' by some wandering prospector, the proclamation of 'diggings', the ear-marking of fifty owners' and twenty discoverers' claims, followed by a public rush to peg. The 'rush' might become an actual race, on a given day and hour from a starting-flag – those who could afford them often employing trained runners. Profitable mining became possible only as the weaker holdings came to be amalgamated or 'squeezed out'

by those better able to bear the costs of active development.

Today anyone opening a new mine must make a bargain with the Government Mining Leases Board. The State now makes a grant of its mining rights on lease, to cover some area which in the opinion of the Government Mining Engineer constitutes an economical working unit. The lessee must satisfy the Board that he has the necessary capital resources to carry out his undertaking; his work is subject to inspection and must attain a satisfactory standard; to prevent the locking up of mineral resources he is normally required to give an undertaking to work to some time-table of capital development expenditure. The State, for its part, guarantees such security of tenure as makes it worth while to venture the capital required. The South African Department, more trusting than some others, sets no time limit, contemplating a lease which shall last for the whole working life of the mine, at a rent which secures the State a very handsome revenue from mining. Some care is even taken to spare the goose that lays the golden eggs. The Act of 1908 which authorized the Transvaal Government to undertake mining itself has been rendered unnecessary by the Union Government's very effective system of profit-sharing. Instead of being content with the usual royalty payments and standard income tax, perhaps with addition of 'excess profits', it bases mining taxation on a flat rate, supplemented, according to a highly technical formula, by a payment which depends on the ratio of profits to gold produced and tonnage of ore worked. In prosperous years the State has sometimes been in the happy position of stipulating for all the revenue it needs, instead of being constrained to exact all it can get. The equilibrium reached will come under strain as prosperity ebbs. But, for example, a proposed excess profits tax was dropped for fear that the attractions of new leases, and in particular the fortunes of low-grade mines, might be adversely affected. It is, in short, the policy agreed between the State department and the industry to prolong the life of the industry by making the fullest use of as low a grade of

ore as possible. The mineral resources of South Africa are, in effect, farmed out to powerful well-organized corporations, which still find it worth their while to shoulder the risks even when required to pay a solid share of their profits to the community.

This practice is quite clearly the model to be followed by the younger African colonies whose resources are very much less fully explored or exploited. Before they can hope to do so to full advantage they, and the Colonial Office behind them, have one complementary lesson to learn. The South African achievement depends not only on the Group system of the mining industry itself, but on the exemplary efficiency of the Government Mines Department evolved in course of time to protect the public interest. According to wholly reliable tradition, the suggestion out of which there developed both the leases system and the modern plan of taxation originated from within the Chamber of Mines. The more famous form of lease was based on a 'sliding scale'; there are cases where a flat-rate payment may be more equitable, if not in the long run more profitable to the State. As it happened, the first 'sliding-scale' lease was a stupendous success, the famous mine known as 'Government Areas'. The conclusion of a bargain satisfactory from the public point of view requires that the department which represents the public have expert knowledge to balance that of the lessee, and solid grounds on which to judge of the bargain proposed.

In this vital respect the Crown colonies are on the whole very poorly served. A few of them have made progress with a geological survey of their resources. Some would seem to regard this as ending the State's responsibility in the matter. The geologist is concerned rather with large districts or areas and general indications of the presence of minerals; the very different province of the mining engineers is to determine the possibility of working particular 'propositions'. A good deal of such mining as there is in the Crown colonies dates from the era of the individual prospector and the small local mining

company. The staffing and equipment of many colonial mines departments fits them for little more than acting as the registry of titles and of old-fashioned 'claims'. Under Group control such routine work is either much simplified or safely left to the industry itself. There are already individual mines of the modern type in Crown colonies. It is inefficient to set junior or less successful men to deal as a Government mines department with such members of their own highly skilled profession as serve the stronger mining Groups. Equally, it is impossible to look to such representatives to operate successfully an elaborate system of mining leases. Few single colonies could now afford to equip themselves fully for work like that done by the South African Mines Department. It is for the Colonial Office to shoulder this responsibility on their behalf. As things are, local governors are under the necessity of framing their own mining policy as best they can, without the expert guidance which is provided as a matter of course, each in its own sphere, by other scientific and technical departments. It is an immediately remediable weakness that the Colonial Office has no mining staff nor inspectorate, nor so much as a semi-permanent mining adviser.

The Crown colonies have drawn less revenue and direct benefit than they ought from their mines. On the Gold Coast and in Ashanti mineral rights are still vested in the native owners of the land on which minerals are found, and mining concessions have been granted to companies for a wholly inadequate lump-sum payment. This leaves the exploiters to do much as they please, and the State to exact what dues it can as best it can. Sometimes a not inconsiderable annual rent is payable to the chief of the native 'state' concerned, to be disbursed at discretion. Native institutions were never evolved to deal with any such substantial revenue, and it is no easy matter for the central government to impose so strict an audit of accounts as would be necessary to ensure the maximum benefit to the 'native owners' as a whole, as represented by the State.

Two other exceptions to the principle of State ownership of minerals – a direct legacy from the days when the British Government eschewed African adventure – now impose a costly burden on struggling communities which might have looked to mining to set them on their feet. The British South Africa Company, when it shed its political and administrative responsibilities, remained sole owner of the mineral rights in its wide domain, the two Rhodesias and North Nyasaland. The Southern Rhodesian Government seized an opportunity to recover these rights in 1933 for a lump sum of £2,000,000 – with great profit to itself. H.M. Government omitted to reach any similar agreement for Northern Rhodesia. There the value of the mineral rights has now been proved to reach what a great authority has described as an ‘astronomical’ figure. Northern Rhodesia, therefore, remains under the necessity of paying royalties on all minerals produced – and that in perpetuity – to the chartered company. The Royal Niger Company retains till 1999 a lien on half the royalties on minerals produced in its old domain in Northern Nigeria, which includes the tin belt, the most considerable mineral wealth so far discovered.

In general, colonial governments have shown themselves unduly shy of laying any burden on enterprise. In part this has been because their need of capital is so overwhelmingly great. There has been no effective pressure from an anti-capitalist electorate like that in South Africa, so that the mining royalties levied range from 2 per cent to no more than 10 per cent, supplemented here and there by old-fashioned ‘excess profits’ levies. Till the war brought the income tax, most colonies relied for revenue largely on indirect taxation, to which no doubt, through customs and railway rates, the mines were large contributors. It is the disadvantage of customs duties that they add to the cost of living in general. Thereupon artificially high costs hinder improvement in native standards, throw an excessive burden on the salaried staff engaged either in administrative, commercial or industrial work and,

therefore, ultimately discourage new ventures. The hardest hit was perhaps Northern Rhodesia which, being inevitably dependent on very long distance railway transport, had the highest cost of living of them all. It is no accident that in spite of its exceptional mineral wealth this colony presented the picture of a handful of struggling settlers confronting a native population evidently among the poorest in the whole continent.

The first edition of this book may have helped to call attention to a disability that is now perhaps on the way to being remedied. Since the capital engaged is necessarily imported, the product and the profits of African mining must normally leave their country of origin to pay its owners their rent. For convenience, moreover, tropical African mining companies are commonly registered in London, where income tax is automatically deducted at what is not even by courtesy to be described as 'the source'. Thus colonial governments, besides being in no position to 'discourage' new capital ventures by adding to their burdens, could not even drive the best bargain by way of 'sliding-scale' leases to companies which had this British tax to reckon with. Too heavy a share of the revenue from profitable enterprises, therefore, went to the country which was rich enough to supply the capital. Some effort is at last being made to establish a fairer equilibrium.

If the Crown colonies are to take better advantage of the new possibilities of order and stability in their mining industry, one sure rule for the future is to vest the exploitation of minerals in the strongest possible hands from the very outset, thus eliminating the wasteful speculation which has usually marked the early stages of mining enterprise. When those best able to do so are allowed to take the risks of the venture without having to buy out weak competitors, they should be able to guarantee the State a return proportionate to the value of the privilege thus conferred upon them. The British South Africa Company, as sole owner of the minerals of Northern Rhodesia, has at least made the best possible use of its vast assets. The process of extraction from copper-

sulphide ore involved costly and elaborate organization; its management is as efficient as any in the whole continent. The Nigerian coal field at Enugu is one solitary small-scale venture in State mining, where the management perhaps suffers a little from over-rigid application of Treasury rules which do not always suit the exigencies of mine development. The diamond industry of Sierra Leone is one example of control leased to one strong Group, with good results.

On the more recently discovered gold fields of Kenya local interests were sufficiently strong to force a compromise – rather more than one-quarter of some 6000 square miles were reserved for individual enterprises and small companies, the remainder let to large-scale operators. Settler interests, as in Kenya, are among the slowest to learn from the experience of their South African fellows; self-governing Southern Rhodesia, in particular, looks with favour on any chance for the settler who has failed as a farmer to try his luck at mine management. The deposits in Southern Rhodesia are widely scattered, on the surface or in quartz reefs, often in pockets so small that they require no elaborate organization such as was indispensable for working the blanket buried deep below the Transvaal High Veld. It is a difficulty, here and in other parts, that to get great mining houses to apply their skill to mining of this superficial type may be to cut blocks with a razor. Even at the lowest depths of depression in 1930 there were 286 small ventures in Rhodesia. About that year ‘public’ opinion forced the British South Africa Company to abandon plans for a large-scale, exclusive prospecting lease of a kind which had had phenomenal success in Northern Rhodesia; instead of this, by 1934, the total number of ventures had grown, with much official encouragement, to over 1400, including 198 listed as producing ‘not more than 500 oz.’ per annum.

Up and down the continent there is a certain amount of mineral wealth which can be had with the minimum of skill and organization. To keep a sense of proportion it should be remembered that even in Rhodesia all this small-man effort



taken together has rarely produced as much in any one year as the nine or ten real mines, besides yielding considerably less to the State. Historically it is true that it was mainly by the efforts of small men, even of the pick-and-shovel prospector, that Rhodesian gold-mining was first developed. In Southern Rhodesia it was actually the natives who showed the way; as in parts of West Africa, they had been working surface deposits for centuries past. It was not so in Northern Rhodesia, for example, nor in Sierra Leone where a geological survey gave the clue, and well organized science paved the way for recent vast extensions on the West Rand.

It is the worst feature of small-man mining that it gives rise to inordinately difficult problems of control. The damage done to the surface of the soil by the actual mining operations, and by the ruthless quest for fuel, may, in the long run, make agriculture impossible. There can be little anywhere to match the ruin wrought on individual diamond 'diggings' in South Africa by what has often enough been fruitless toil. On these South African diamond diggings about 1929 there was a floating population of 'poor whites', people who had long been living and bringing up families of children in unspeakable squalor, yet drifting from one temporary township to the next before the best efforts of education officers could provide them with the rudiments of schooling. The spice of romance and adventure attaching to this kind of life is some of it, too, at others' expense. Native 'boys' have often served for months without receiving a penny of the wages earned from adventurers whose only hope of paying is a 'strike' that may never come. These extremities of social and economic squalor make it questionable if any State is justified in yielding to the popular clamour which insists that the 'small man' be 'given his chance' of wealth from mining thus conducted.

The State, in short, is in duty bound to insist on the reasonable competence of those to whom the work and the opportunity of mining are entrusted. Against the long tale of mining failures there stand many instances in which a mine has proved

a success, not at the first or second, but at the third or fourth attempt – and then, not owing to some change in a fluctuating market, but because at last the work has been competently undertaken by those with the appropriate equipment and knowledge. No one should be entitled to embark on any mining venture without affording better proof than a prospector's licence, costing £5 or less, or even a £5 digger's certificate, that he possesses both technical skill for the work he undertakes and financial resources in some degree adequate for its efficient accomplishment. Sound principles of policy can bring mining to play a unique part in the programme of African social reconstruction.

## Chapter 9

# LABOUR

CAPITAL development already in progress needs much labour, a fact that reinforces the former argument that at its present level of efficiency the population of Africa is insufficient to meet the calls upon its labour man-power. The demands of mines and of farming or industry get some attention, the needs of domestic production much too little. The development now being planned everywhere means more calls on man-power for public works, for the building of schools and hospitals and for staffing them. The quality of the service rendered by African workers, and the work they do for themselves, is almost invariably poor. Slavery on African soil was the exception, but the earliest employers of African labour, those who set the tune, were soaked in its tradition and went about their office like their slave-owning predecessors. Without the slave-owners' power to use ruthless discipline to enforce their directions, they concluded that the manifest defects of African labour must be made up for by quantity; it became a ruling dogma that the cheap abundance of docile labour is the one great economic advantage Africa has to offer.

This theory overlooks the patent fact that in at least one favourite calling African labour reaches a high standard of efficiency – domestic service. The promising domestic servant almost alone gets the benefits of kindly discipline and close personal training. For far the greater part, company directors report monotonously on the 'adequacy' – or more often the inadequacy – of the labour supply during any year under review, without a reference to its quality. I can now quote only from memory a newspaper cutting destroyed in the Johannesburg University fire of 1931; according to a Salisbury correspondent of the *Cape Times* of about March 1897 labour had been very 'short' after the rebellion, but a patrol

had lately destroyed some crops and natives were now 'coming in better'. The official view as late as 1921 betrayed itself in reports from Basutoland and Swaziland where the one comment on social welfare is that the people were, or were not, availing themselves of great opportunities of betterment by turning out for labour in the Union.

Employment figures are very largely guesswork. Before the war an authoritative estimate for British Africa, excluding the Union which is the largest centre of employment, put the number of African labourers who should be under the protection of the British Government at any one moment as at least one million. The average labourer spends only a fraction of his working life in employment, so that the total number actually at work at some time in the year would be three or four times as many, besides the large body of squatters and farm labourers and a considerable number of Africans working for other Africans. Whatever the total, it is well to remember that whole-time wage-earners are in most parts a small fraction of the African community.

The history of European dealings with African labour is of a constant struggle to resolve the paradox of actual shortage in presence of the deceptive appearance of plenty. According to a report of so long ago as 1876 the Cape Government, with cheap native labour at its door, was 'called on to survey mankind from China to Peru' to find 'willing helots not troubled with the inconvenient ambition of bettering themselves'. The African peoples' own work is unordered, and a good deal of it seasonal: many of them will inevitably throng round to see anything new going on near their village. Numbers of tribesmen habitually drift to busy centres like Freetown or Lagos; in these and other towns there may very well be a steady local surplus of labour-seekers of some sort. These obtrusive but highly localized examples have given rise to the belief or assumption that there are plenty of people with time on their hands and that the labour shortage is really due only to natural laziness. Taxation has been tried as a corrective and incentive

to work. In the 'nineties when Kimberley was at the height of its prosperity the diamond interests joined hands with Cape farmers to include a special labour tax in the famous Glen Grey Act. In 1905 this tax was repealed because in spite of the criticism it provoked its yield was negligible: there proved to be no 'dandies swanking about the kraals' to pay its penalties.

It is another easily resolved paradox that the shortage of labour had no effect in raising wages. The flow of volunteers ready to take wages for a short time has been fairly continuous. The worker may be poverty-stricken and sometimes greedy: but he is a free man with work of his own to do and returns home to it as soon as he has earned enough to be going on with, to pay taxes or supply marriage cattle or meet immediate needs. Everywhere the rate of wages is affected, if not determined, by the consideration that wages are thus something extra. African workers have been ready to take what comes but they will occasionally discriminate. A very useful 'boy', known from the speed at which he worked as 'Bicycle', once took a holiday by leaving a two-pounds a month place for another where he got only fifteen shillings. When found employed elsewhere he explained to his former *Baas* that he was now doing only fifteen shillings' worth of work! In the Union the stress under which the people lived set the standard and kept it as near bare subsistence level as it was possible to be. A common South African farm wage was long in the range of six shillings to ten shillings a month, even the 1914-18 war bringing no rise. Two shillings a day was then obtainable by the relatively small wage-earning class in the Gold Coast. The mining industry was able to keep its unskilled labour through all the fluctuations of the last generation at a virtually fixed wage. It is true that expenditure on food, medical and general 'welfare' and amenities greatly increased. A Union *Minière* official was able to claim that about 1930 the Katanga basic wage of one shilling a shift was only part of a total cost of some three shillings and a penny. The basic Rand average of just over two shillings a shift rose only fractionally in thirty

years. By very elaborate labour-recruiting organization the mines have been able to bring together and maintain at this low level a force latterly of 300,000 workers.

Low wage-rates reflect in part also the very low standard of efficiency attained. The workers' own homes and agriculture have themselves suffered severely, but have told against their making a real job of their new employment. Few questions were asked about the state of the society from which the labourers came until the Belgian Congo Commission of 1928 at last insisted that there must be some limit to the demands on African man-power. By this time many, especially but not only in Union reserves, had reached the point where it was a choice between work for wages and sheer starvation. In Herschel, for example, crops normally sufficed for six months at most. Year after year imports to make up the deficiency had to be paid for out of wages – in 1924 'passes' to seek work outside the district were issued to 11,649 out of the total population of 40,000 (some receiving more than one); in 1925, a year of better harvests, 8510. The wages were largely absorbed in maintaining life in the home district.

There is a growing class who have no land to fall back upon, no relatives to keep them in emergency. Such dependants may even yet increase the strain on native society, but today regular wage-earners have in general higher standards and are not content to return to mere subsistence. It is serious for them that many have to compete with reserve natives who can still afford to take what is less than a living wage for men with families to support at the high rates prevailing in the white man's towns. It is futile to deplore the process of industrialization. Kano and Kumasi, Lagos and Accra are more hopeful towns than they were before they came under white rule, and Johannesburg or Nairobi have been no unmitigated evil and loss even to Africans caught up in their sometimes senseless whirl. The short-sighted labour demands of organized industry are only in part responsible for the chaotic results. It was not to be expected that inexperienced labourers

would immediately find a secure place in the new society that is evolving. Restrictions have been imposed but little help afforded in adjusting themselves to their new surroundings.

There has been little systematic attempt to make these Africans better workers. Only here and there some wise employer, like the Union Minière, puts the raw recruit to systematic instruction in the use of simple tools and implements. More often instruction is hurled at the recruit mingled with impatient abuse, in a strange language. What skill the emigrants pick up on mines or even on reasonably well-equipped farms is of notoriously little direct use to them for the development of their own territory; they are either kept at mechanical tasks or habituated to the use of elaborate equipment they cannot hope to provide for themselves. Even the journey involves an outlay which eats into their prospective earnings, or inordinate waste of time in travelling possibly hundreds of miles on foot. South African Dutch *bijwoners*, hurled without preparation into economic struggle by their agrarian revolution, get more of the sympathy they undoubtedly deserve. They are at least of the same stock as their employers. The African worker becomes a stranger in his own land. It is as if all governments as well as employers had been concerned only to maintain or increase the supply of that raw unskilled labour on which the employers have come to depend.

The evil effects or accompaniments of wage-labour are most glaring in the Union of South Africa where earning, at least for some period of time, is now normal for nearly every African male, and also for a good many women. The elements of the problem are essentially the same even where wage-earning is less universal. The overall shortage of labour is evident in the sparsely inhabited tsetse country of the copper belt, and recognizable for example in the Gold Coast where the more far-sighted mine managers are increasingly mechanizing their work to save calling for more hands. The demand for labour is, as a rule, small when measured as a proportion of the total population. The important Gold Coast mines working at full

capacity before the war employed fewer than 40,000 men. This, however, was in a vigorous colony where trade was brisk, where African cocoa farmers offered an uncertainly large amount of more congenial farm work, and public services were even then expanding. Here, too, as in economically less advanced parts, and far more than in any of the cattle countries, the people's own agriculture is at their present low efficiency an insistent first call on man-power. Physical fitness is another limiting factor; malaria and helminthic infections are on the whole a more serious drain even than the poor and impoverished diet of the peoples of the healthy south.

Agricultural preoccupation and poor physique may have as much effect as choice and aptitude in limiting the field for labour recruitment to something decidedly less than the total population. In most parts the wage-workers are drawn preponderantly from perhaps only two or three among scores of tribes. Records compiled at the River Volta crossings show that every year more than 100,000 labourers pass from the Northern Territories into the Gold Coast and as many back again. Hausa from Northern Nigeria and Ibo from the south-east are found far and wide. Forest peoples like the Ashanti and the Akim are some of them sufficiently well off to become employers themselves, others are possibly incapable of severe physical effort. The number at work on mines even in their own country is negligible. The Tiv of the middle belt and other backward people seem unambitious to better themselves, and are often physically unfit. Northern but not Central Nyasaland is a famous 'reservoir' of labour. Tanganyika sisal planters draw from the far west and south, little from their own neighbourhood. Ruanda-Urundi, another well-known 'reservoir', contrasts with Buganda where cotton farmers are many of them employers of labour. The Masai are an obvious example of stay-at-homes. It does not follow that there is any great untapped reserve of labour. So long as workers have to be brought long distances to their work improved communications and transport are a necessary economy. There is much



to be said for the Belgian plan of 'stabilization', the policy that would substitute 'settled' for 'migrant' labour and so eliminate most of the travel altogether.

The workers suffer everywhere from the general immobility of African labour even in parts where there are no pass laws. Everywhere the difficulty of moving to new work or to seek better conditions elsewhere keeps wages down. The greater towns and seaports are an attraction and those in search of employment tend to flock there. Relatively few mining or industrial undertakings in the bush can satisfy their requirements locally without drawing on outside sources. In either case the new worker is cut off from tribal control and out of his element — in the bush it is a choice between a strange camp life and existence in one of the nondescript extra-tribal 'mushroom' villages which inevitably spring up on the outskirts of mining camps to provide food and services, and to help the employees to spend their wages. The tropical towns, no less new and strange than Johannesburg, offer the novitiate experience of an opposite kind. The restrictions with which he is loaded on the Rand include at least some which furnish an element of protective restraint; in Lagos or Freetown he finds himself almost completely free to go to perdition by ways of his own choosing.

The free Africa must draw instruction as well as warning from the story of the Union. It is the ambition of West African leaders especially to see their people play their full free part in the world. Nothing now hinders so much as their own weakness. South Africa, for all its faults, is economically the strongest State in Africa chiefly for the reason that its native people are more productive, on the whole better (or less ill) trained and educated than their fellows in the tropics. It is insistently preached, even in highly disciplined Britain, that there is no way out of war-time austerity except by greater productivity. The enviably admirable African principle that extra effort is worth a free man's while only to win extra 'cake' must prove a costly way of going to work to spend the few

million pounds available from the Colonial Development and Welfare fund for measures to set the African people to stand on their own feet.

There is evidence other than the experience of capitalist employers to show the generally poor quality, and therefore the costliness, of African work. It may be laudable tribal clannishness that keeps so many 'brothers' together in domestic service; it is of course the demand or the custom of the servants, neither the opulence nor the convenience of European residents, that requires them anywhere in the tropics to keep whole households of domestic retainers. A labour census in the well-developed Kenya colony, in 1945, remarked on the fact that for every three adult workers in agriculture (excluding resident labourers) there was one in domestic service. Clearly this showed little advance on the practice in Tanganyika where one well-grown lad hanging about a house where I stayed some years ago described himself as (whole time) 'turn-boy' - he travelled round to use the starting-handle in a country where flat car batteries could not easily be recharged! On the West Coast every considerable 'boy' has his own 'boy' in attendance, as helper and sharer and not only as apprentice. In the more advanced Union the 'boy' is not afraid to undertake a whole-time job: 'two boy' houses are rare outside Parktown or the Johannesburg Ridge. Throughout the country the great majority of domestic servants are of the order of 'cook-general'. Still more significant, women have long ousted men from this calling in the Cape and are rapidly doing the same on the Rand and even in Rhodesia. I was glad lately to see the very slender beginnings of such a trend at least in the Gold Coast. No capitalist economy could afford so many 'turn-boys' - still less can a community of peasants.

This was the experience of the late H. V. Meyerowitz who wore himself out in an effort to organize industries in the Gold Coast on a soundly African basis. In Accra, where we often talked the sun down, his theme latterly was that for every ten of his African potters or weavers he would like at least one

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European supervisor. In a London street, a few days before his tragic end, he gave me what proved to be his last message to the Africans for whom he toiled – that their supreme need was to learn, ‘in one word, *work!*’ Ultimately the only way out either for employers suffering labour shortage or for the building of a better African society is increased productivity.

Instead of measures to improve African efficiency and self-reliance, the keyword of policy as set originally in the settler countries, which are also the chief employing countries, came to be ‘control’. Whatever their status, Africans must not live outside prescribed ‘locations’, normally at a distance from the activities of the town and from their work. Perhaps the least known ‘controls’ are those preventing Africans from easing their rent charges by keeping lodgers, swollen as these rents sometimes are by the cost of paying white men at white trade-union rates to build the ‘location’ houses. The more notorious restrictions are the Transvaal Pass Laws, emulated lately in Southern Rhodesia. In administration rather than in principle these are a source of irritation and vexation. While under the pass laws men and women are subject to constant interference in their lawful comings and goings, liquor laws make them subject to periodic police raids on their homes at any hour of day or night. In the purely native Transkei the cost of police and prisons is negligible; their costliness in European areas is a main excuse for spending too little on the constructive work of administration.

The basic laws for the protection of workers are on the whole adequate. That of the Transvaal, for example, was and is based on the old Cape Masters and Servants Act of 1856, which was itself in direct colour-blind succession from the famous 50th Ordinance of 1828. The ‘Masters and Servants’ title suggests an old-fashioned political economy; but Africans everywhere have reason to bless the impartial protection given them, especially by the higher courts. Their major disabilities arise from their own strangeness in court and the difficulty ever of establishing their own unlettered, unsup-

ported testimony against that of any white employer who chooses to act unscrupulously. The law is not always easily accessible. Protection can be fully effective only if the law is taken to them. Somewhat on this principle a Union Act of 1911 provides 'Protectors of Native Labour' on the Rand and in certain other recognized 'labour areas' – omitting, however, farms and small towns where protection is no less needed. It was left for the Mandated Territory of Tanganyika to set the example, now widely followed, by which labour officers fully endowed with magisterial authority travel round to see that labour regulations are fully complied with, and to enforce them on the spot. To attract Africans to wage-labour it was obviously necessary to grade up to the level of the good employers – not, having secured labourers, to devise ways and means of keeping them forcibly tied to their bargain. In the most remote and unlikely places new enterprises have, as a rule, little difficulty in getting some to embark even on unpleasant and dangerous work like underground mining. But as a rule, also, only employers of whom Africans approve have continued through the years to get anything like the regular service they require. The attraction tried may even be questionable. Certain worldly-wise mine officials wink at occasional thefts of ore, as a sort of insurance paid to attract labour – the rule holds that persuasion is more successful than force! In the worst economic depression labour has not been so abundant that Africans could not to some extent pick and choose their employment – picking and choosing usually taking the form that a dissatisfied 'boy' will pack his bundle overnight and desert; and for all the elaboration of the police system the deserter is usually able to make a clean disappearance. This experience has not yet led to the working out of a satisfactory passport system – till individuals are more readily identifiable Africans themselves cannot enforce claims to compensation for injury, or on any system of social insurance. The elusiveness of dissatisfied Africans has produced, instead, follies like the South African pass laws which are useless as a

system of identification. Their notoriety positively hinders the growth of an effective system elsewhere.<sup>1</sup>

The better employers being on the whole well supplied, the demand for laws 'controlling' labour has come from those who have difficulty in getting and keeping it, from indifferently managed plantations, for example, or those in some unhealthy coastal swamp, much more than from employers who pay wages punctually and are at pains to improve conditions. The most insistent pressure has undoubtedly come from the politically vocal, economically weak, small-farmer community. Organized strike action has often made both industrial and farm labourers liable to individual criminal prosecution for desertion; many incipient South African strikes have been easily broken by simple enforcement of this law. Not only desertion and failure to pay tax, but failure or refusal to carry out the master's order, negligence, even 'impudence' – all of them difficult charges to establish – are frequently punished, and all as criminal offences.

If the law is to protect Africans, their legal position must be clear and in writing. It is, however, a matter of long experience that the illiterate African worker has learned to distrust the binding contract for fear of its bringing him within the grasp of the criminal penalties he knows so well – he is unwilling to be bound in writing where desertion is a criminal offence; perhaps also he wants to feel free to return at once if there is any urgent call to the other work he has left behind him at home. 'Penal' sanctions are defended not only because

1. It took me once the better part of a day to trace a sickly old man, the husband of my servant, who had been arrested for being ten days overdue with the fortnightly renewal required for his *exemption* from work. In the morning when his wife reported his disappearance telephone messages to various police courts failed to place him. This was not surprising. Though the old man could write, I found he had been registered under one variant spelling of his name at the Johannesburg Fort, under another at the labour camp to which he had been marched, and in yet another form at the prison hospital to which finally he had to be removed.

the African worker could not pay damages but, authoritatively, also as costing him less; the price paid is in fact the enormous bill for police and prisons.

The employers who have had to make some special effort to attract and keep their labour have also contributed most to a remedy for the evils generally associated with the spread of industry. The Rand mines, more than any other South African employers, have pioneered services for the health, welfare and reasonable comfort of their African workers; they almost alone provide a full complement of doctors and hospitals. While many city stores and many private individuals still consider their duty fulfilled by supplying rations of maize-meal, the mines were the first to provide a full and well-balanced diet, including not only meat and beer, but incidentals like jam or fruit, or hot cocoa for men coming off long spells of duty underground. Their experience has contributed materially to the world-wide study of nutrition in the last generation. The mine compounds have regular picture evenings, games and dances, as well as organized competitions in 'first aid'. Directly and indirectly the activities of the mines themselves, and of compound life, absorb a very considerable number of educated Africans in relatively well-paid positions of responsibility. It is an experience to see the size and feel the quality of the audiences which will gather even on outlying mines for lectures of a 'W.E.A.' type and standard. The mines' welfare work extends to the provision of rest camps and food depots, sometimes of motor transport, to help the workers on their way to and from their distant homes. All this the mines can well afford to do, which the private employer probably cannot. In recognizing the need for such services they were far ahead of municipal and even government employers.

The Rand mines, however, have inherited many disabilities from a less intelligent past. Mines whose life is far advanced are slow to modernize their compounds, to sweep away, for example, the many colossal dormitories which house perhaps seventy 'boys' each, with no more privacy than is to be got by



fencing off a concrete bunk with shawls and blankets. The Rand also has grown up with that completely unnatural life which is inevitable where the proportion of the sexes is as seven male to one female. It has fallen rather to the newer mines of the copper belt to set the modern standard. This sparsely peopled, tsetse-infested, malarial country had to import its workers; there was no question of labour requiring only to be 'induced' to leave neighbouring villages in sufficient numbers. In such a climate, too, the casual negligence of South African towns would have meant the speedy decimation of any mining population that collected there, white as well as black. The Belgians in the Katanga have boldly embarked on a policy that goes far beyond the furnishing of a few essential amenities and deliberately tries 'stabilization': to reduce the wear and tear of coming and going, and to end the unsatisfactory double life of the workers, they hope gradually to collect and rear a settled population of whole-time industrial workers. Instead of the barrack compounds, the copper belt as a whole has admirably laid-out villages, not of mud and straw but of solidly built huts; there is always an adequate supply of water and the carefully considered schemes of sanitation rise occasionally, as on the Roan Antelope, to water sewerage, an extravagance almost unheard of elsewhere even for Europeans. The best of the villages have gardens or garden plots. The result owes much to the assistance of Catholic religious Orders which the Belgian authorities have associated with them in the work. The expense dismays would-be emulators in other parts.

The policy of stabilization calls for a great deal more attention to native needs than the haphazard drift elsewhere. Special care is lavished on new arrivals by the health service; the hospital system of the Union Minière includes a fully equipped bacteriological department which provides serums and vaccines for many more than the mining population. Maternity and child welfare work is well developed, with ante- and post-natal clinics and medical inspection of children;

submission to inspection is encouraged by allowing children to earn supplementary food tickets for meals provided at the schools and clinics. There are schools for all children up to fourteen and special training for superior posts. The older children have light duties to perform, like keeping the streets tidy and weeding, some of this under an age-group system believed to approximate to their own custom. Perhaps even here the supposed necessity of 'control' makes the authorities favour compact villages which destroy any illusion that this is a natural emanation from the African village community. It is early yet to judge how far 'stabilization' has really been successful in creating a permanent labour force. Evidence from West Africa is that many more African workers than the authorities supposed in fact spend virtually a lifetime in mining or other permanent employment, and in the interests of their own efficiency the number ought to be increasing.<sup>1</sup> For mining towns or villages to develop into real communities conditions will have to be less artificial than at present. However docile the workers, and however careful and humane the management, the people must be free to be themselves.

The organization of the Northern Rhodesian mines is much as on the Congo, but British policy, both mining and official, has not committed itself to the same deliberate policy of 'stabilizing' the industrial population. Short of this, not only the copper mines but at least the great coal mine at Wankie in Southern Rhodesia, and on a smaller scale the base-metal mine at Broken Hill, are very different from the Rand in having married quarters which give sometimes as many as 60 or 70 per cent of their workers at least some semblance of normal family life. The numbers involved in the Congo or in Northern Rhodesia count, of course, only in tens, not as on the Rand in hundreds of thousands. Critics point out that it is a risk thus to divorce even a few thousands from their roots in the land; the numbers employed by the *Union Minière* had dropped

1. I have detailed some of this evidence in *Europe and West Africa* (Oxford University Press, 1940).

from 17,257 in 1929 to only 3758 in July 1932; in Northern Rhodesia scarcely less catastrophically from 31,942 to 7523 – so that social insurance is an essential precaution. The labour policy of all the mining companies has been inspired only by motives of self-interest. They certainly look at least for a good indirect return for their outlay. The directing organization is inevitably remote – though, as a rule, intelligent enough to allow wide discretion to good local officers. The Belgian compounds are perhaps better than those in Northern Rhodesia, but also even more closely regimented. It was on the Belgian side of the frontier that one official made it clear that mine gardens were intended for domestic food crops, not for tomatoes to be sold in the Elisabethville market; another inadvertently exclaimed that schools ‘of course take care not to teach them too much’! The alternative of allowing a proletariat to drift into being has little to recommend it. A stabilized working class would have more chance of improving its own conditions than migrants semi-dependent on the primitive agriculture which now gets such divided attention.

Some incidentals of the quest for labour have attracted international notice, conspicuously the practice of ‘recruiting’, chiefly by the mining companies. Not all the criticism is well founded. The W.N.L.A., for example, the Rand Labour Association, operating mainly in Mozambique, and the N.R.C., the Recruiting Corporation for British South Africa, do a great deal for the comfort and security of the workers on the journey to and from work, facilitate remittances of pay, encourage thrift by a system of deferred pay. ‘Boys’ undertaking a march in search of work from remote districts, if they go on chance, are exposed to greater risks and disappointments, besides loss of time and of wages, than when an employer takes some responsibility for them, eliminating the obviously unfit at the start and giving sure employment at the end. In return the mines are entitled to a reasonable contract of service. Recruiting practice has improved on the older systems of indentured labour; there is less blind marking of

'papers' which commit the worker to long years of he knows not what. The Rand mines have at least succeeded in inspiring so much confidence that a great proportion of their labour now joins voluntarily without the mediation of the recruiter.

The trouble and expense of the system have, however, been undertaken with an eye always to the employers' convenience, only incidentally for the benefit of the workers, and with no regard for any public consideration other than the immediate profit-producing capacity of the industry concerned. The heavy cost, not only of welfare services but of this recruiting, has stood in the way of such increase of wages as would have enabled the workers to provide better for their own needs. Expenditure incurred in disputing the identity of African individuals, and designed really to avoid payment, is alleged to have been given out as part of the cost of workmen's compensation. The mining interest definitely threw its weight against the ratification by South Africa of the Geneva Recruiting Convention because it would make 'boys' fares to and from their distant homes the employers' liability – and this was on the eve of increasing the number of those to be brought for the Rand's convenience all the way from tropical parts as far afield as Nyasaland. By old custom, traders and others with local knowledge have acted as the mines' agents. It has become part of the routine of life in the territories for 'boys' to be allowed credit at the stores – till the trader decides that it is time he reduced his debit and uses pressure to make him 'join'.<sup>1</sup> A system by which the agent receives a fee for each recruit he sends up is open to obvious abuses, but also has its own automatic checks: these peoples seldom fail to win the affection and interest of Europeans making their living among them, and are not so helpless as some would suppose against any who abuse their confidence. The fee, none the less, is in effect a tax on wages. Not many years ago, when the Rand mines extended the normal term of labour contract from six months to nine months recruiters generally complained that

1. 'The Join' is the colloquial name for the Recruiting Agency.

the result was to reduce the amount paid them in fees without improving mine efficiency. The change is at least no boon to the workers. The mining 'month' means thirty completed shifts. By the time lost through minor accidents or indisposition, and above all through uncompleted shifts – when for some irregularity the worker is given a 'loafer's ticket' – the nominal six months mean in practice eight months, and the nine-month term means eleven months or a year; the longer term of absence interferes very much more seriously with the routine work of the home kraal, already so severely strained by the unconsidered and unchecked drain on its man-power.

In South Africa the inefficiency of the African worker, his unredeemed 'backwardness', has long made a struggle against natural forces take the guise of competition between black and white. Only a few enlightened employers have made some positive attempt to teach and train African workers and to open new doors. Not only unskilled and ignorant poor whites but thinking artisans – even leaders of the Labour Party or of the W.E.A. – defend the industrial colour bar on the ground that the only effect of its removal would be to allow industrialists to employ cheaper labour. In the long run the best hope for the European worker too lies in making more openings for better-trained Africans so as to draw them off the general labour market. This may speed up the inevitable process of teaching employers, including the mines, that the native unskilled labour, so long abused, is in short supply. Failure to learn this elementary lesson has too long hindered the fruitful co-operation of European teachers with their not so inept African pupils for the common ends of civilization in Africa.

Till the very eve of the 1939 war labour questions got little notice outside the white-settler countries and the Katanga. The great growth of Labour Departments in the tropical colonies is very largely war or post-war. If these are not merely to tinker at welfare services but to evolve a labour policy consonant with the programme for African economic develop-

ment, it is the carefully assessed experience of the Southern countries that must be their warning and guide. Agricultural 'labour-tenancy'<sup>1</sup> is fortunately a local phenomenon unlikely to appear again. In the industrial field the better mines have, on the whole, the best record; certain mines are to this day lonely exceptions to the mischievous West African practice of paying wages only monthly: this usage is defended on grounds of convenience, also as 'native custom' – to the great profit of African money-lenders. The better mines unquestionably lead government employers in their care for housing, health and diet, in all of which Africa at large is so sorely deficient. These are also good things in themselves, and may very well be worth more for their educational value than higher cash wages without them. Some would still commend rather the example of certain wealthy mines in West Africa which long worked on the old plan of leaving the workers to house and look after themselves. Almost studied neglect has been defended as 'freedom',<sup>2</sup> being said to interfere less with the natural economy of African life, and to be what Africans themselves prefer. In fact, casual ill-directed labour can teach the workers little or nothing, and may interfere with the routine of home life more than the bad example of inefficiency and carelessness warrant. There is an element of discipline, if only a sense of order and regularity, without which neither Africans nor any one else can hope to get far. The problem in the end is to strike a mean between regimentation from without and chaotic freedom.

1. See old ch. vi now embodied in *Appendix I*.

2. The late Dr W. B. Maclaren in *The Times*, 7th August 1933.

## PART IV

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### *Chapter 10*

## THE RULERS OF BRITISH AFRICA - COLONIAL OFFICE AND COLONIAL SERVICE

IN the greater part of Africa European influence is still represented only by a handful of missionaries and traders, by mining interests here and there, and by a scattered band of administrative officials. It is no longer possible to accept without question the paradox current in the years between the wars, which many took as a commonplace, that the prospects for the welfare of Africans are brightest in those parts where there are fewest Europeans to help and guide them. It is true that in such parts there has been the fullest scope for the qualities which give the British Empire its distinctive character, among them moderation and a sense of fair play. It is a just claim, for example, that imperial authority has rested on the very minimum of force. Policy is seldom strong or determined, there has been no high-handed imposing of doctrinaire expedients, with the exception, perhaps, of *laissez-faire* free-trade. It was entirely typical that a Secretary of State of the day was able to boast that the British Empire follows almost as many distinct colonial policies as there are separate administrations.

This vigorous centrifugalism has one supreme merit. Each separate British colony, however small and dependent, is conceded a well-marked individuality. This sense of having a recognized life of its own helps to bind the units in loyal attachment to the whole. It is not so clear how the imperial

authority can have the means of arriving at a just conclusion about any matter at issue. In practice the merits of any new plans put forward by interested parties, or by disinterested students, are often canvassed by voluntary committees. These, though often tolerably well supplied with specialist knowledge and advice, touch only a limited circle. It should be said that such help, and readier access to official and local papers, makes it easier in London than, for example, in Cape Town or Pretoria, or any single colony, to get some balanced view of the colonial scene as a whole. It is a weakness that the recognized leaders of British opinion have a gift for putting all the stress on positive achievements, while ignoring even reasoned criticism as 'negative'. The published Annual Report for a good many colonies long carried a sub-title innocently begging the question - 'Report on the *Social and Economic Progress* of the People of ...'. The popular middle articles in newspapers were, as a rule, pleasantly descriptive, perhaps with a flavour of the 'left-centre'<sup>1</sup> to suggest the desired enlightenment with moderation. The grievances that must occasionally arise in so vast an empire were sure of sympathetic consideration - experience had also taught that, even with little attempt made to change the course of the ship of state, storms in time blow over. The result is that colonial policy has seldom or never been a party matter; even left-wing critics, rarely offering any sharply defined alternative, habitually treated incidents that provoked them to protest as exceptional deviations from tradition. The prestige of the Colonial Office stood high as the repository of this tradition. The colonial empire was looked on as a finished achievement. There was thus little drive behind any demand for a more active and direct discharge of imperial responsibilities.

It says much for the work of the Colonial Office that the attachment of the subject peoples of the Empire has been on the whole loyal and sincere. The supreme direction and control of their local administration is vested in a minister responsible

1. Phrase used in this context by *The Times*, 30th November 1936.



only to the people of Great Britain. Till 1854 the portfolio of the colonies was an adjunct of the Secretary of State for War, and in the century following 1827, when Earl Bathurst ended his unusually long term of office, there were some fifty-three different Colonial Ministers; an average term of barely two years in office gives little enough time for even the most brilliant statesman to master the complexities of his task. A very great deal has always depended on the permanent staff of officials, and from the days of Sir James Stephen onwards – the Mr Mothercountry of the Gibbon Wakefield epoch – the Colonial Office has never lacked great public servants. The weakness is that whereas Home Office red tape is checked by public opinion, which ensures that administrative action and public demand should, to some extent, correspond, the office responsible for distant colonies is inevitably in the highest degree bureaucratic. Everything must be done by correspondence and ‘minute’, with little possibility of free discussion. The result may be a slavish adherence to precedent that does not always govern a broadening freedom; any wrong step once approved may itself become the authority cited by Colonial Office apologists for approving worse.<sup>1</sup>

A bureaucracy also is habitually timid. Well situated as it is at the centre for taking a comprehensive view of the needs of imperial dependencies, the Colonial Office is even yet shy of launching plans of its own for local development. Its tradition is to wait on local initiative; it may offer advice or initiate inquiry but generally confines itself to criticism, seldom originating more than suggestions or model ordinances which may or may not be adopted by local administrations. Even when the Colonial Office has funds to disburse, as from the modern Colonial Development Fund, its economic advisers sit in judgment on schemes submitted by needy colonies. From the unique experience acquired in the course of a cen-

1. Colonial Secretary's reply, 3rd November 1937, that a Kenya Labour Ordinance objected to was 'mainly a consolidation', its penal sanctions 'substantially the same as those already in existence'.

tury or more from every corner of the world, they themselves might reasonably give a lead. This special knowledge, if not lost altogether in the pigeon-holes that overflowed into the ample corridors of the office in Downing Street, was very lately dispersed among uncoordinated departments whose concern was still rather with geographical units than with the main problems. Africa first began to be studied as a unit by Lord Hailey's unofficial *Survey*. Lord Hailey himself came in the end to the Colonial Office where he has helped to open the new chapter of research and development. Mere accidents of earlier history – perhaps the strength or weakness of individual governors – had by this time brought it about that very different courses were followed, and widely divergent powers and privileges allowed to native chiefs, in such neighbouring territories as the Gold Coast and Nigeria. Though each colony could give warning and example to its neighbours, transcending any local differences, Downing Street had commonly failed to garner either the one or the other.

One radical weakness has been that the Colonial Office is itself only a cog in the British governing machine, subject not to those it governs but to influences in British politics. In theory, the policy to be applied in Crown colonies requires the formal consent of Parliament, which at least necessitates the tacit approval of public opinion in Great Britain. In practice, as in 1936, perhaps half a day of parliamentary time is devoted to the Colonial Office vote – when those get a hearing who can. Anything palpably unjust or invidious in colonial administration or legislation is likely to be brought up and may be checked. But that colonial policy and the interests of the colonies rank as non-party has been a dubious advantage. Party influence and active parliamentary backing are the normal agent and driving force for getting things done; the colonies have suffered for being everybody's concern, and no one's. Execution has depended on ministers thrown to the front by the chances of domestic politics more than on the sound judgment of permanent officials. The Colonial Secre-

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taryship has been a lesser Cabinet post which seldom got first-rank politicians and was quickly abandoned for preference elsewhere. Having won the ear of its own minister the Colonial Office has still to carry the Treasury, which is expert in fencing with claims on its funds. The minister must be forceful, too, to win the active support of a Cabinet preoccupied with the pressing affairs of home electors whose passions are left cool and whose interests are unaffected.

In the colonies themselves the organization of government follows a standard pattern. At the centre are the governor, the chief (or colonial) secretary, and the heads of departments; a distinctive colour is given to the administration by the secretariat, the channel through which all business filters. There is, as a rule, some form of legislative council, but except in the settler colonies local political influence has as yet been too weak, though not unimportant. The governor's authority, therefore, especially in 'unmixed' colonies, is almost completely autocratic, and just because control exercised from home is habitually lacking in preciseness of direction, the fortunes of any colony are very much at the mercy of the governor of the moment. For this reason the record of development in any one of them shows a notorious lack of continuity. The benevolent despotism of a governor with initiative and resource has often begun good work only for it to languish and fail under a feeble successor. The governor's term of office seldom exceeding five years, the history of many colonies can be described as an endless series of new beginnings, with minor interruptions while the governor is on leave. On the other hand, the machinery of government being limited, and what there is hard worked, the local life runs in so many diverse channels that any rigorous despotism would be impossible.

For administrative purposes each colony is divided into districts, each under its own officer, associated in groups under a provincial commissioner or resident, who is the link with the central authority. Almost every province, if not every district, is to a great extent self-contained, with interests of its

own. The Press is seldom really national, showing very little knowledge of or communication with other provinces, and rarely any consciousness of membership in that very artificial unity, the colony itself. The real burden, therefore, falls on the district officer (the 'D.O.' or 'D.C.') – somewhat as in Tudor England it fell on the monarch's man-of-all-work, the J.P. The D.O. rules and judges the people, manages and directs their affairs, hears their grievances, individual and social; in moments snatched from bench or office he may have to inspect schools and prisons, survey and engineer the roads, plan the bridges, supervise experimental plots and seed-farms; like one I knew of he may be called on to help the people's marketing by auctioning their cattle; even, like another, to play the part of executioner. In his newer role as 'indirect ruler' it was the D.O.'s duty to advise the new Native Authority on all such matters – to keep himself in the background, yet get things done. It is evident that the administrative officer must take years to learn to know any one people intimately. If moved too soon, his acquired experience, and especially his mastery of the vernacular, may be wasted; left too long in one place he may settle into a groove. The compromise favoured in theory, seeking at once to broaden the local expert's outlook and to strengthen the links between capital and provinces, is to bring men in to serve an occasional 'tour' in the secretariat at the centre where policy passes under review. In practice shortage of staff makes changes of station far too frequent. The D.O.'s sphere is administrative only, policy being rightly the responsibility of his seniors. Yet the experienced D.O. is the likeliest person to know the parts in detail, any peculiar wishes or prejudices of the people, and the effect on them of instructions from the centre; his work is therefore vital, his reports are essential to the guidance even of policy. The lowest rank in the administrative hierarchy is that on which the efficiency of the whole most of all depends.

It is one secret of the relative success of British colonial rule that in this respect the colonies have, on the whole, been admir-

ably served by officers who have inherited both the fruits of long experience and a highly honourable tradition. Administrative posts in all African colonies, with the exception till lately of the three South African High Commission Protectorates, and of the Sudan which is under the Foreign Office, are now filled from a 'unified' Colonial Service. This service, unlike the famous Indian Civil Service in being recruited by selection not by competitive examination, is acquiring an equally high reputation for intellectual ability, integrity and devotion to duty. Owing to changes in India it now in fact attracts from the universities many men of the type that would formerly have gone East, and the work of selection well earned the approval of the authoritative Warren Fisher Report<sup>1</sup> of 1930. For most purposes a university honours degree is now required, and the only doubt concerns the field of selection – in particular the extent to which Oxford and Cambridge, drawing largely from the Public Schools, should enjoy a preferential claim. The Commissioners, disclaiming any suggestion that the Public Schools have the monopoly, commend a 'team spirit' and kindred qualities as specially desirable in men chosen for lonely and responsible colonial work. According to the report, of the total of 927 colonial appointments made in the years 1927–9, only 409 were from Oxford and Cambridge, the remaining 518 from other universities, headed by London (108) and Edinburgh (91); but this confuses the issue by lumping all posts together. On the Commission's own showing, for the administrative service Oxford and Cambridge together supplied 79 out of a total of 83 recruits in 1927, 84 out of 88 in 1928, 73 out of 89 in 1929 – the Appointments Board drawing largely on other universities only for medical, scientific and technical posts. If the colonies develop as they ought, these special services – which are the forte of the newer universities – must be of increasing importance. Even on small stations it is already quite usual to find associated with the 'political' or district officer a medical man,

1. Cmd. 3554.

agricultural or veterinary officers, probably a supervisor of schools, possibly a forester, or an engineer directing public works. Everywhere these special departments are growing in strength – mining being perhaps an exceptional instance of one which should be strongly staffed, but rarely is. As joint 'torch-bearers of civilization' it is desirable that all these should work together with the political service in the 'team'. The specialists necessarily have a different training from the politicals, who, being overwhelmingly from Oxford and Cambridge, also inherit or acquire a rather different outlook. Awkward questions of departmental relationships are constantly arising, and in the last resort the point of overlap brings them all into the sphere of the political branch of the service. This fact alone requires of the political service the widest possible sympathy for all sorts of points of view. The D.O.'s responsibilities are now more complex than ever before – his training is probably weak on the practical and 'business' side – yet less depends on his own unaided efforts, and a great deal on effective co-operation. It is part of the remedy to give the administrative service a broader basis by finding a larger proportion of recruits from Scottish and provincial universities.

As it is, the 'team spirit' does not always make a team. Distinctions of rank are so sharp within the service as to hinder that free interchange of ideas which the weakness of African public opinion makes peculiarly necessary. Since the service has the fullest knowledge, criticism must come chiefly from within, but its free expression is damped down more than the requirements of discipline would necessarily demand. The new model service was only instituted after the first war. Originally 'Native' Administrators were largely recruited from the Army, or from the ranks of a semi-military police force like the old Cape Mounted Rifles. In those days administration was less centralized, and men of strong character enjoyed considerable latitude: at the Cape, for example, it was left entirely to officials like Charles Brownlee to lay the foundations of what is best in the Transkeian system, and in very

many districts the officer in charge became the local patriarch. Men like these, who have served Africa best, would be the first to claim that what success they had was due most of all to the human interest and variety of the work and to the qualities of the people ruled. African administration more often makes than mars men; whether they come with specialized training, or lacking it, the work gives latent qualities of character a unique opportunity to reveal themselves. In essentials conditions are little changed since those earlier days, and relations with Africans are necessarily such as to call for quick authoritative decision.

The tradition of the modern Colonial Service would seem to be less that of the Army than the unwritten code of the Public School. The regiment is a great family. The subaltern meets his colonel in the mess on more intimate terms than the D.O. is usually allowed by his seniors at the Station Club or Government House. It adds to the difficulty and perhaps sets the pattern that 'H.E.' at the top of the tree has to function at once as executive head of the State and representative of its dignity; his dignity makes him unapproachable; in spite of his executive responsibility he must, for fear of showing favouritism, be cautious how he consults his juniors; and he may be lonelier in the last resort than the King's Majesty whose representative he is. Even the junior official in Africa is one of a tiny ruling caste, living a life apart, seldom answered back in his private any more than in his public capacity. Responsibility is always some check, but one psychological effect of lonely eminence, aloof from and above the great mass of citizens, seems to be an anticipatory deference paid to the dignity and importance of the handful of officials who are more eminent still.

Concern for the future, therefore, reinforces the contention that to meet a rapidly changing situation the administrative service needs a less rigid uniformity of outlook, and perhaps more real independence. The strong point of the essentially English spirit that dominates the Empire is individual self-

reliance, rather than such qualities as the wisdom and foresight more particularly needed now that Africans are beginning to graduate from school. It is perhaps typical that at Oxford the undergraduate is thrown on his own resources, receiving from his tutors guidance, and often stimulus, but little direct instruction; lectures by the greatest authorities are notoriously poorly attended, and received by custom in a silence respectful but indifferent. By contrast, the ancient Scottish universities rely too exclusively on direct teaching. Professors, hopefully chosen for eminence in their special branches of learning, are almost expected to pontificate, but by immemorial custom their solemn pronouncements may be met with applause expressing the reaction of the audience, subtly critical, perhaps gently mocking. More readiness within the Colonial Service to laugh at itself and at the fallibility of authority would help to ensure success in the great experiment of teaching laughter-loving Africans to govern themselves. So long as the best available substitute for public criticism is the local knowledge and experience of officials, both D.O.s and specialists, the test of the system would be its success in turning these to the fullest use. The service, if it must be academic, would find the college a better model than the school. At college meetings the senior Fellows can, without loss of dignity, set themselves to elicit the bright suggestions of their junior colleagues. There is no lack in the service of brilliant young men who might possibly unduly upset routine if given their head; tradition is strong enough to avert any serious danger on this ground.

The whole service, including the Colonial Office, perhaps necessarily spends much time putting its work on paper. I have suggested that in some Crown colonies business may suffer from too much talk.<sup>1</sup> In Africa, unless councils are factious, the weakness arises more often from too little resort to discussion and the spoken word, and too much to the written 'minute'. This is in the tradition of Whitehall itself but at

1. W. M. Macmillan, *Warning from the West Indies* (Faber & Faber).



home, public opinion has the last word. To circulate district reports for leisurely study and reasoned comment by a chain of officials is certainly a useful way of ensuring careful digestion; 'making a file' is also well calculated to keep business an unduly long time 'under consideration', and is in any case an inadequate substitute for the art of dialectic. Clear-cut decision is rarely a characteristic of any colonial secretariat. It is because of the system followed that the main lines of policy are so often blurred that 'paper' inevitably collects and chokes the channels.

The methods of the Colonial Office itself have been authoritatively summarized from within the service, thus: <sup>1</sup>

The despatches of the Governor are generally full, reasoned, and expository, and are supported by confirmatory reports and documents. The replies of the Secretary of State are brief and concise in form, framed in a style which long experience has perfected, distinguished alike by reserve and lucidity, at once considerate and conclusive.

Long experience has perfected also an official technique of dealing with those inconvenient questions that do not lend themselves to such treatment. These are supposed to be most conclusively answered by being left unanswered! This device may give the bureaucrat peace for the moment and save him from committing himself. It is more than anything else responsible for those unsolved problems of the colonial empire that most disturb his slumbers by coming back again and again just because reasoned discussion has been so effectively stifled. In this newer age of information services the publicity officer is prevented from helping to get the backing of public opinion by the old rule that any plan of action 'under consideration' remains confidential or secret till a decision is reached. Publicity is then too late.

The dangers of a sterile authoritarianism are peculiarly great in the 'unmixed' colonies whose welfare depends so

1. Sir Anton Bertram, *The Colonial Office* (Cambridge University Press, 1930).

much on the efficiency of the administrative service. The troubles of the settler colonies have arisen rather from the upsetting of the machine's natural balance when the peculiar interests of the settler community are pressed at the expense of the local people. From the point of view of the officials themselves the presence of a European community may carry the inestimable advantage that they live in humanizing touch with their own fellows, are not constrained to part from their wives and young children, and do not have to depend for recreation and intellectual stimulus exclusively on the limited and artificial European station club,<sup>1</sup> or whatever resources they may have within themselves. There is almost everything to be said against the plausible but false economy of lengthening the period of the 'tour' or term of tropical service in those predominantly 'native' areas where normal family life is virtually impossible. It begins to be common for European women and very small children to spend at least part of a tour even in the essential tropics, and it is often apparent how women can transform station life. An opportunity is opening to women at once of making their men more complete representatives of civilization and of adding their own distinctive contribution. There are an increasing number of women with their own work to do, teachers, social workers, even government servants, but wives have only an indirect share in their husband's work. Direct participation would probably not be encouraged, but during the war any wives admitted had to find useful work and this may continue to some extent, and with advantage. If they have no occupation women are left much alone, their numerous male servants are strange and totally unused to taking orders from women, and cultural amenities can only be rare. Some mines, among others, holding strongly that unoccupied women set up tension in the camp, deliberately discourage the presence of wives by providing only bachelor houses. This negative policy is sometimes excused also on the plea that the undoubted abnormality in

1. Well described in *The African Witch*, a novel by Joyce Cary.

the life and position of women makes official dealings with African leaders more stiff and formal, and leads to complications which may even rouse or intensify race feeling. European society in tropical Africa suffers, in short, from defects and limitations like those characteristic of British India.

The hopeful work of European administrators in unmixed areas, therefore, has pitfalls of its own. There may yet be hope of the colonies of white settlement reaching a better balance. For it is not true, as so many would have it, that Africans do best with the minimum of European help. Even now there are small areas of white settlement which point to the possibility of better things.

In parts of Tanganyika, as well as in Nyasaland, settlers are active but not dominant, with the result that their influence is something like the stimulus it ought to be in the economic and even in the political sphere. For the administrative officer a term of service in some of these districts has certainly often had a tonic effect. It is useful that he is not quite cut off from the company of his own fellows, and that he enjoys a greater measure of physical comfort. But the essential benefit is the mental stimulus, and the corrective provided for any leaning to authoritarian bureaucracy. An appreciable number of the very best officers in the African service owe much to the comparatively rare experience of having good and early in their careers been compelled by the free criticism of their equals to think out and justify in detail every step they might feel called upon to take.

## Chapter 11

# TRADITIONAL COLONIAL ECONOMY

### 'SELF-SUFFICIENCY' – TAXATION – DEVELOPMENT

SETTLER or non-settler the essential task of government is really the same in any part of Africa. British policy has certainly followed the same main lines everywhere. A Gold Coast cynic has ungratefully suggested that as the entrance to New York harbour shows the figure of Liberty, so the new Takoradi might suitably be adorned with a statue to the 'saviour of West Africa' – the anopheles mosquito! But till only the other day the direct development of natural resources by white settlers was impossible almost anywhere on the coast, and the inaccessible interior was exploited, if at all – and in the respectable sense of the word – by the chartered companies. The generation of Cecil Rhodes completed the modern map of Africa but hardly even began the serious administration of the huge areas it 'won'. Officers still living describe how they would march a body of military police from headquarters to refractory villages to enforce order and inculcate respect for distant European rulers, who before 1914 had hardly given a thought to the future of their new subjects. Rhodes himself, after the Jameson Raid had broken his alliance with the Cape Dutch, is said to have used the slogan, 'Equal rights for all civilized men south of the Zambesi'. He and many others, with no trace of antagonism, mostly forgot the native Africans. None of their speeches or writings shows the least appreciation of the necessity to associate the people with any attempt to develop their own country. All must depend on the white man's efforts. Even later the popular conception of the 'Dual Mandate' would make the development of the African people and of African resources still the 'White Man's Burden'.

When it came to dealing with the difficult hinterland of

Lagos or Accra H.M. Government was best pleased when its responsibility was limited within the narrowest possible bounds. Local differences in the management of colonies, boasted of by a Secretary of State, sometimes by the colonies themselves, have roots in the past. It has seldom or never been possible to start with a clean slate. European governments stepped in as a rule only when they felt obliged to take action, often no doubt chiefly to forestall European rivals, sometimes to protect commercial ventures, sometimes to put a stop to actual scandal. Even yet governors complain of having to use up administrative effort and energy in the struggle to correct earlier mistakes or in coping with well-established local interests. For their guidance there was only one clear rule of policy. The responsibilities of annexation held out little hope of profit. Even those who felt that possessions were in themselves glorious agreed that it must be laid on governors as a first duty to keep their colonies from becoming a charge on the home Treasury. It was, in fact, a less fortunate working corollary of the admirable principle of individuality that, even when this book was first published, each colony was expected to live off its own resources, to meet all the costs of its own administration – even to furnish the means for its own economic development. It is on record that in 1875 Lord Carnarvon declined a project to help railway development in Natal on the plea that he was already committed to asking for a guarantee for Fiji. ‘Two guarantees for colonial objects in one session would be a severe test of the patience of Parliament.’<sup>1</sup> The discoverer of this official minute comments justly that though vast sums of British money were spent in South Africa ‘the British Government made it almost a rule to pay only for disasters’. Thus the details of policy everywhere have been determined by long and desperate struggle to fulfil the requirement of the Imperial Government and make ends meet.

1. de Kiewiet, *Imperial Factor in South Africa* (Cambridge University Press, 1937), pp. 9, 42.

It is needless to labour evidence of the futility of expecting African colonies to work out their own regeneration without material aid. Their own primitive inefficiency as primary producers emphasizes the effects of climatic vagaries and market fluctuations – revenues have been liable at best to the extreme ups and downs characteristic of the marginal lives of feast or famine lived by most African tribes. Even on the well-to-do Gold Coast the world depression brought customs revenue down from £2,500,000 in 1929–30 to £1,700,000 in the following year – a drop of 32 per cent in sources yielding, as customs did in that colony, three-quarters of the total revenue. Many weaker units inevitably came to be ‘on the Treasury’ – which meant in practice, not that they drew for all their needs on the bottomless purse of the British Exchequer, but that even the administrative staff was cut to a skeleton and development brought to a standstill. The greater the colony’s weakness and need, therefore, the worse were the chances of improvement. Here typically is the root of the trouble in the much discussed South African High Commission territories;<sup>1</sup> even their administrative service, recruited largely from local talent, was paid to save expense at less than standard Colonial Service rates. Their poverty stopped the development needed to give them the capacity for self-support.

Everywhere inadequate and at best unstable revenues have to meet first of all the relatively heavy costs of administration – and it is an almost universal complaint that this burden is excessive and ‘top heavy’. In Bechuanaland in two normal years, 1929–30 and 1930–1, the revenue was £146,384 and £148,500 respectively, in 1931 only £106,635. The cost of pensions, general administration, police and the like varied between £74,000 and £79,000; in the abnormally bad year, 1933–4, when local cattle disease deepened the depression, the revenue dropped to £78,271, but the main administrative

1. Cmd. Nos. 4114, 4368 and 4907 – M. Perham and L. Curtis, *The Protectorates of South Africa: the question of their transfer to the Union* (Oxford, 1935).

charges remained practically the same, about £74,000. This same year, with the help of a Treasury grant of £30,570, the highest sum then recorded went to providing medical and education services for some quarter of a million people scattered over an almost trackless area fully half as large again as Germany. The amount set aside for 'capital works' reached a maximum of £27,548 in 1932, then ceased altogether for three years.

This is by no means to argue, like the local critics, that the costs of administration are in themselves excessive. Settled government is one of the real blessings we have brought to these countries; the work cannot be too well done, and the public servants who do it are poorly paid by the standards ruling in the world of business for posts of far less responsibility. In any economically healthy colony the cost ought to be steadily expanding. Civil administration is an expense for which the old African society made virtually no provision; though dues and services may have been paid to chiefs the new charges are different in kind and heavier in amount. The cost of modern government was necessarily more than undeveloped colonies themselves could afford, and it would have made a revolutionary betterment in the conditions of the colonies if only the imperial trustee had earlier had the wit to ease the burden. The money paid did not even circulate in the colony that found it. The poorer and more primitive the colony the more its officers were obliged to supply their equipment, sometimes even to provision themselves, from home; where also they must spend their well-earned periods of leave. Almost every penny of pension necessarily leaves the colony and though, to the advantage of the Empire as a whole, officers are frequently transferred from one colony to another, each is responsible for any share of pension earned within its borders.

Colonists in general have an exaggerated idea of the total paid in salaries and pensions, and they would be ill-advised to economize on staff. But the bare minimum of administration is relatively so heavy a drain on revenues that little remained

for the productive expenditure needed to make the burden more bearable. Hence it was that even the 'unmixed' colonies continued dependent on the generosity of Christian missions for the greater part of their education. The cry that costs are excessive is actually loudest from settler colonies like Kenya, where the settler contribution ought to make up some of the deficiency and help the slow process of raising native standards. European demands, however, have added to the heavy initial cost of setting up a full administration by requiring, for example, a more costly police force than would normally be necessary. Africans may, to some extent, share the advantages of urban water supplies and electricity, or travelling facilities; but for social needs like education they are expected to pay their own separate way. In the settler countries the burden laid on Africans has often been more onerous than elsewhere, leaving even less to spare for increasing their efficiency. For this reason chiefly, the contrast between East and West can be drawn to the advantage of British policy on the West Coast where any genuine degree of self-support attained was almost necessarily by the agency of Africans themselves.

Though development has languished for want of revenue taxation has proved a burden, and governments have been so concerned to collect what funds they could that, till the Second World War brought a great development of income tax, attention to method failed. The history of native taxation is a sorry one. With only one exception, other than the Gold Coast which levied no direct tax, the levy has invariably been either a poll tax or a hut tax, or some combination of both, always at a flat rate. The poll tax, it will be remembered, was never more than a temporary expedient in England, and even under Richard II the tax was graduated; after 1706 it was abandoned as burdensome, inequitable and economically unsound.<sup>1</sup> The

1. The late Sir James Currie used to tell of Lord Cromer's blunt retort to an officer who proposed the stock-pattern African poll tax for the Sudan. the greatest of pro-consuls was 'd . . . d if he would base his administration on a tax that penalized a man for the offence of existing'.



hut tax – preferred in some colonies as a rough means of discriminating against the wealthier individual – was even more objectionable since it put a premium on overcrowding in a wretchedly housed country, positively discouraging improvement.<sup>1</sup> Taxation has always been defended as a civilizing factor; the first levy was apparently in the more settled parts of the Cis-Kei after the ‘War of the Axe’ (1846), and took the form of an annual quit-rent paid for land in the newly assigned ‘locations’. Even then a leading official considered that the rate was fixed too high at £1; later, in the Cape and elsewhere, direct taxation was, covertly or openly, approved as a useful means of stimulating the flow of labour.<sup>2</sup>

As the readiest method of raising revenue that suggested itself the South African poll tax became the model for the greater part of the continent. In South Africa and elsewhere chronic ‘financial stringency’ made it difficult for governors or treasurers to lower the rate, or somehow temper the wind to the shorn lamb. One difficulty was that among Africans there were originally few gradations; the man who was not either a peasant or a labourer, or both, was a rare exception, and the peasant-labourer had to bear the whole cost of the country’s administration. In South Africa it is so completely forgotten that originally the tax was return made for the recognition of rights in land that every tenant in Crown reserves – there is no landowner – now pays a special additional ‘local’ tax. There and elsewhere poverty was so deep that the yield of the levy was almost stagnant, yet the rate of the ordinary tax was fixed so high relative to earnings as to represent anything up to two months’ wages.

Modern attempts to lighten the burden have been due largely to the influence of officers used to Nigerian practice who have recoiled from the crudity of the South African system. On the Nigerian new model, district officers periodic-

1. Cf. also *Warning from the West Indies*, p. 132.

2. *Bantu, Boer, and Briton*, p. 268, and, for the conflict of theory and practice, pp. 66-7.

ally survey the wealth of each separate district, taking into consideration all possible sources, including trade and industry, as well as varying agricultural achievements and possibilities. The annual levy takes the form of a Land and Property Tax, the amount of which will vary with the ups and downs of economic fortune. The district assessments are certainly not all of equal merit: sometimes, no doubt, the process is reversed; a rough preliminary calculation of how much revenue is necessary, or of what rate of tax would be reasonable, becomes the basis of an estimate of the district's income, but even this rule of thumb is to be preferred to an arbitrary flat rate. Nigeria has not by any means reached the goal of individual assessment: the appreciable numbers of well-to-do individuals still escape too lightly. For this reason there is much to be said for fixing a so-called 'lump-sum', which leaves the smaller units, the villages or families, to settle the details of incidence. It is objected that this lays the weak open to extortion. At least responsibility rests on the people and their traditional leaders; the village best knows the inequalities of wealth, and has its own remedies against extortionate headmen. There must, in any case, be advantages in the educative process of leaving so much to them. This originally Northern Nigerian system, based on old Muslim practice, has already been extended to most of Southern Nigeria. The process has thus begun of teaching the lesson that taxation is the return they make for services received, even if it should also bear some relation to capacity to pay.

The African poll tax truly belongs to the age of the *gabelle* and the *corvée* – and was at any rate like a device for extracting blood from stones. By its nature the yield of a poll tax must be inelastic; it is specially burdensome in bad times, when also the yield may fall catastrophically – in Bechuana-land, for example, £42,451 in 1929, £26,027 in 1932 and only £9,624 in 1933. Yet neither can its rate be quickly adjusted. Africans commonly pay from force of habit – there was a taxpayers' riot in protest against a change that would have

benefited more than it penalized in Northern Rhodesia in 1935.<sup>1</sup> The total yield cannot possibly expand more rapidly, at best, than the crude total of the population. Thus in South Africa the proportion of poll tax earmarked in 1925 for purposes of native development, including education, failed hopelessly to meet naturally growing needs. The prevailing South African theory that the population was growing abnormally fast was refuted by the poll-tax returns and before long the South African Development Fund was bankrupt.

The management of native finance would seem to be according to the rules of paternal economy, appropriate to the pocket-money of children in the nursery: roads, bridges, even schools and agricultural colleges, to whose cost succeeding generations might well contribute, are laboriously paid for out of current revenue. No part, for example, of the South African Development Fund was capitalized. Even in the newer colonies the hand-to-mouth struggle for financial existence made the central governments lay it as a duty on the district authorities to accumulate a local reserve, but rarely to establish a regular loan account.

Short-sighted finance has been incidental to expedients of more positively ill effect. In their despairing quest for cash revenues all governments alike have fallen readily into the snare of encouraging whatever seemed likely to bring in quick returns. Almost the essence of colonial policy was to stimulate agricultural production not for local use but for world markets. Exports served to attract and pay for imports, which were made to yield additional revenue from customs duties. Where African productivity failed – as it was bound often to fail – the main burden of agricultural production sometimes fell to European settlers. If governments have been tender, even weak, to capital as represented by stronger mine owners it is because of the desperate hope that they would provide employment, at once helping poor Africans to find their poll tax and enabling the administration perhaps to pay its way.

1. Report on Disturbances, Cmd. 5009, 1935.

*The Times* quoted with approval from the *Empire Economic Survey* of 1934: 'Self-sufficiency is in no sense the policy of H.M.'s Government, or the local Governments of the Colonial Empire. On the contrary, everything is being done to encourage and develop the export trade on sound lines'. The old free-trade policy of the 'open door' at least kept fiscal burdens light. But till the war years the colonies benefited little from such nationalist economics as we have come to practise ourselves and had little attention paid to domestic needs and standards. Profitable production by Africans depends, first of all, on the efficiency and well-being of the African people.

As things are Africans have no accumulated reserves of their own, no credit facilities, no standing with the banks. It is difficult for the individual to acquire so much as a plough, and all but impossible to launch a new industry. African needs must first be supplied by fostering the internal market. In Nigeria, for example, it is useful to improve the quality and increase the export of palm oil, but hardly less so to promote its sale to cotton-growing tribes inland. Much could be done to improve the general standard and the variety of African diet if tribal divisions and barriers could be broken down, and with them some of the conservatism that sends even the much travelled 'boy' scouring markets for his own particular 'chop'. There are instances now of yam-eaters taking to cassava or maize, others acquiring a taste for palm oil or groundnuts - to their physical benefit. There is tragic under-consumption all over Africa, not only of manufactured goods but of actual food. No one yet knows what really healthy Africans might be and do. The ultimate touchstone of practical policy is that any new enterprise be calculated to raise the people in the economic scale. Production for export to world markets has failed because it neglects the foundations.

The war years have finally changed the British point of view. It is now realized that if the colonies are ever to pay their way they must be able to draw on something more than their own revenues, supplemented by what their possibilities chance to

attract from private capitalist enterprise. The hopefully named Colonial Development Fund of 1929 heralded a new purpose of 'aiding and developing agriculture and industry' in the colonies; grants made for urban water supplies and various health measures indicated a liberal interpretation of the objectives. But the 1934 report comments significantly that 'in examining the schemes submitted to them the Committee have kept principally in view the question how far they satisfy the two conditions of the Act' – how far, that is, in 'aiding and developing the Colonies' they were 'thereby promoting commerce with or industry in the United Kingdom'. What was in itself the expression of a new spirit was linked with our own new economic nationalism. The help most needed by most of the colonial beneficiaries would be schools and hospitals, and the men to staff them; roads even more than railways. In the interests of local development it would be an additional advantage that as much as possible should be spent on applying local labour to local materials. As only a proportion of the funds voted were free of interest the Committee's recommendations might even add to the colonies' already excessive burdens, by making them answerable for interest due for the supply of British goods, with little corresponding increase of their capacity to pay such charges. How justly this criticism applied even to the great Zambesi bridge is evident in the later Development Act of 1940 which 'wrote off' its charges.

The new spirit wrestled at first with the old prejudice that holding colonies at all required some economic justification, at least ready-made sheltered markets. The British politician, and the burdened taxpayer behind him, had still to learn that the imperial burden can be lightened by a free flow of commerce only when the peoples of the colonies have first been put on the way to bettering their own conditions. A long-term investment was needed. Two fallacies died hard, that the old African life was easy and comfortable, and that Africans subsisted happily enough without what we regard as the elements of a decent existence. African work in fact lacks the quality

and direction needed even to make the land yield a better return. Much of their effort is wasted. There has been no real attempt till our own day to remedy defects in their physical and economic condition, their mental and moral equipment.

If Africa is ever to take its place in the civilized world it has to learn to support its own civilization. Outsiders cannot continue indefinitely to pay, as they have done in the past, for what little education there has been. Hitherto no African government has contributed more than inadequate grants-in-aid even of popular education; in the most prosperous colonies public works went short and social services were the first to be cut in frequently recurring times of 'financial stringency'.<sup>1</sup> Alike in settled and non-settled colonies there was this negative sameness about the old colonial policy. The inauguration of the Colonial Development Fund in 1929 showed at last a realization that some more positive activity was called for than tradition allowed. The First World War, a turning-point in Africa no less than in Europe, had brought the enunciation of the doctrine of 'trusteeship'. It materially helped a change of attitude that, as it were all of a sudden, native peasants in Nigeria and elsewhere had begun to show themselves capable by their own efforts of producing quantities of such crops as groundnuts; in Uganda, cotton; in the Gold Coast, presently, cocoa. War-time need and high prices helped several tropical colonies to astonish the world by growing comparatively wealthy by their own almost unaided efforts. More abundant revenues gave an impetus to administrative experiment on new and constructive lines. The experience of Uganda and the West Coast was held out in obvious contrast to South Africa where at this very time the ill effects of South African native policy were becoming notorious – it was soon a guiding aim at all costs to improve on South African practice. The re-organization of the Colonial Service, evidence in itself of the new and more enlightened interest in the welfare of Africa, was a material step towards better things. In 1923 came the

1. Moyne Report on Kenya, Cmd. 4093.

pronouncement that in British Africa native interests must be paramount – a doctrine which was none the less new that in the old British fashion it was explained to be a mere clarification of traditional British practice. Gradually this new doctrine, which rudely shocked more than the Kenya settlers – and suffered more than one reinterpretation – yielded pride of place to a less contentious formula. It was to be the rule of British policy in Africa to associate the African peoples with the work of African development, and to this end to govern them as far as possible through their own institutions in accordance with their own customs. Only the Second World War brought a full programme of development and welfare. Between the wars the new principles took shape in the experiments which came to be known as ‘Indirect Rule’.

## NATIVE ADMINISTRATION (N.A.)

### (i) THE POLICY OF INDIRECT RULE

SOON after the turn of the century the then Sir Frederick Lugard had the originality not only to preserve but to try to build on the unusually well-ordered native society he found in Northern Nigeria. Recognizing that the country could not hope to afford or even find European staff to do all that needed doing, he chose to proceed somewhat on the lines of the Treaty States in India. For the first time in Africa a serious attempt was made to use in administration those to whom the people had been accustomed to yield obedience.<sup>1</sup> Years before the promulgation of the doctrine of 'paramountcy' in 1923 Lord Lugard and his officers were quietly consolidating a system<sup>2</sup> by which the Fulani Emirs continued not only to exercise their jurisdiction but to develop it. Presently Nigerian practice suggested the possibility of building up in other parts also a purely 'Native Authority' based on indigenous African institutions. After 1925 Sir Donald Cameron began his work of adapting the Nigerian system to the different conditions of Tanganyika, whence it spread all over Africa.

The rather meaningless epithet 'indirect' is the established convention; and I well remember how it was in Southern Rhodesia it suddenly came to me as a revelation that except as an arbitrary power in the background much so-called 'direct' rule was in effect no rule at all. Having struggled to remote villages by execrable roads, sometimes more comfortably across the open veld, I realized that visits at intervals of six months or a year by the officers who were piloting me were

1. A similar policy had actually been suggested at the Cape more than half a century earlier by Dr Philip.

2. Lord Lugard's 'Instructions to Officers', issued as Political Memoranda, 1918.



the only links these villagers had with authority of any kind, other, perhaps, than an occasional policeman. The rest of the time they were left entirely to their own devices. The best exponents of the new policy emphasized that 'Indirect Rule' was an attempt to provide Africa with effective *local* government by vesting chiefs and headmen with executive powers and local responsibility. In practice the powers of the Native Authority differ greatly from one colony or district to another; though it is always called 'N.A.', the 'A' may signify only 'Administration' rather than the more comprehensive 'Authority'. In either case the vesting of a native ruler with administrative powers was a radical break with British African traditions. It was an attempt to create real civil government to supplement the paternal authority occupied hitherto merely in keeping order.

British tradition has always been shy of anything resembling a set programme or formula. Though it has in fact been more uniform than is usually admitted we have taken pride rather in its elasticity. The older policy was thoroughly national, and perhaps a subconscious effort to carry men of all parties over this break with tradition inclined some exponents of Indirect Rule to allow the new experiment to harden into a doctrine, almost a test of orthodoxy. Yet here if anywhere elasticity was essential. The regeneration of Africa is not to be effected in the course of one or two lifetimes, and there can be no ready-made solution. Any move is conditioned by the shape of things as they are. It is enough if in its general direction the road leads out of the present disorder. Does any new policy serve to strengthen the fabric of African society? Does it come any nearer than the old to attacking and remedying the causes of African 'backwardness'? Does it make for better and fuller individual and social life?

Indirect Rule at first perhaps attracted some advocates whose prepossessions were embarrassing in allies. The danger of reproducing the evils of the South African situation, or what were considered the disastrous effects of 'European'

education in India, seemed to be met by the stress on native institutions. Much was heard in the sentimental motif of the 'Scholar Gipsy';

But fly our paths, our feverish contact fly!

The strength of this cult made many Africans suspect a departure from older ideals towards a new imperial version of South African 'segregation'. In truth slight and distant 'contact' makes hardly less ferment in West African native life than conquest has brought in the south. We have to deal not so much with things and persons as with ideas, which cannot be confined. In the unmixed Africa, as in the Union itself, this flying of contact was trying to avoid the inevitable. The points of gravest difficulty are naturally those where the ideas and interests of white and black meet and interlock. There is no finality in separate development. The problem is to find ways and means of bringing both to share in the unity of civilization. Indirect Rule was at any rate the first serious attempt to strengthen the foundations of African life. It was much gained that though the 'dual' policy has not yet been discarded the stress was now on the African side. The problems of African development would long ago have assumed a different complexion if they had always been approached from the angle of African domestic needs rather than from considerations relevant chiefly to the effort to make African resources serviceable to the outside world.

(ii) NATIVE ADMINISTRATION IN ACTION -  
THE FOUNDATIONS - THE TREASURY

N.A. already has achievements to its credit - and lessons innumerable, especially for people in the settler countries who are shy of trusting Africans with executive responsibility. In the ports and capitals, Lagos and Accra, the native core is perhaps overlaid with European extras; many other West African towns, and a few in the east, are teeming centres of

bustle and activity almost entirely created by Africans – down to the last detail; Africans as policemen controlling African crowds or very efficiently operating telegraphs and telephones. This life is older than the new principle of government. Lagos, Tanga and many more may have native or Mohammedan magistrates administering the people's own law and customs; but the polyglot coastal communities do not lend themselves to administration through tribal machinery.

To get a true estimate of its value and fruitfulness N.A. should be judged not as a political expedient, not by the wholeheartedness of its use of 'native custom', but by its success in handling prosaic routine work like that of our county and borough councils' and magistrates' courts. It was more than chance that Northern Nigeria became the original field of experiment. Only these Mohammedan Emirates had the ready-made basis of an administrative system. Their courts have long administered written Muslim law, and the *mallams* had the tradition of learning necessary to a professional class. There also, as nowhere else, taxation had been based for generations on the principle of assessment. These States had not only more accumulated wealth than is usual elsewhere but also a regular revenue. When tax-farmers who often made the levy a burdensome exaction were checked by honest administration the old tradition served for the building up of the Nigerian system, which was such an advance on the unscientific and unfair hut and poll taxes prevailing elsewhere.

The scope of N.A. will vary. A few of the greater administrative units have native courts of the higher grade, with jurisdiction in capital cases. A native treasury is usual. This is sometimes little more than a name, but N.A.s of the first rank have effective if controlled management of annual revenues reaching in Kano and elsewhere to most of £100,000 a year. The Emirs or the Alake of Abeokuta have justices, a treasurer and often a chief minister, or *waziri*, a stronger body of advisers than any tribal council of elders could be. Their work necessitates a considerable staff, from court registrars and

treasury clerks to N.A. police and messengers, all of them directly employed by the N.A. and paid out of N.A. revenues. The needs of this staff and the sense of dignity it gives – which in itself is new – have given rise to new standards in building. The Emirs no doubt have long had ‘palaces’, but courts of record and treasuries and administrative headquarters necessitate public buildings which may range from mere offices to public halls, as in Ibadan and Abeokuta. Besides their police (sometimes a finger-print system if not the rudiments of C.I.D.), N.A.s often have prisons which are equipped to deal with more than casual offenders. The Kabaka’s prison at Kampala in Uganda dominates one of Kampala’s seven hills. Kano has its N.A. reformatory. Suitably built N.A. headquarters are to be found even far away in the bush of Tanganyika. This Territory has, incidentally, made a practice of erecting semi-open-air court rooms where the whole assemblage is sheltered from sun or rain by picturesque thatched roofs reaching beyond and very nearly to the level of the low parapet wall. It is one inevitable drawback that the expense of providing the necessary rudiments of equipment has left too little to spend on social needs and reconstruction services. The salaries of the chiefs are, as a rule, calculated as a sort of insurance against temptation; in the old unfettered days they took all they could get. Salaries, together with the pay of the staff and the cost of building and maintaining the machine, commonly absorb from 50 to 90 per cent of the N.A. revenues. The overhead costs of administration are appreciable even when its agents are Africans.

Even before the war N.A. activities nevertheless included an impressive variety of ventures of a kind less easily and less frequently attempted so long as the whole burden of initiative and expense rested on the central authority. Several larger units had their own public works department to maintain roads and bridges and for general work, usually under a European engineer seconded from government service. The N.A. had also provided several towns with electric light – the traffic

lights which may hold you up at the ancient gates of Kano are maintained by a purely 'native' local authority. Kano, also by the agency of its N.A., had a good water supply, Abeokuta one that was lately not quite so good. The larger town of Ibadan was either slower to recognize the advantages of water or shied at additional rates, but it provided an object-lesson in the value of being able to throw the responsibility for slum clearances on to the people's own leaders. Like Kano and Zaria it had done more to let in light and air to the crowded central market area than Lagos, where a less popular government-controlled council had to struggle with a problem made inherently more difficult by restriction of space on an island enclosed by lagoons. Medical work is less impressive. Maternity or child-welfare clinics – usual now in the larger towns – owe most to the devotion and zeal of individual doctors and nurses, but are sometimes under the wing of N.A. Often there is only a 'bush dispensary' run by a dresser with periodical visits from the doctor. The N.A. is matter-of-fact and likes to see value for its money. Most of them are eager for roads, for their own sake and for the opportunities their construction provides for wage-earning. In West Africa more especially, the local authorities have often built new markets in which the letting of stalls brings in an appreciable revenue, but they are sometimes content to leave the scavenging to vultures. After an intensive tour of one important town I find I noted no more than that it was 'neither smelly, nor very clean' – in another, that for the use of a population of 30,000 the erection of latrines was 'under consideration'. Under pressure of 'advice' from the health authorities many N.A.s do better; the staff of sanitary inspectors may take pride in using effective incinerators to keep towns, and especially markets, in very good order. But another note I made on the spot – evidently as a corrective to the great impression left by the first sight of so much new work in progress – was the comment of one of my guides, 'there is really only the *beginning of anything*'.

It was evidence of the possibilities opened up in a very few

years that many of the achievements of the great urban centres were matched by those of newly created, rural and purely tribal N.A.s, especially in Tanganyika. In this Mandated Territory Sir Donald Cameron laid emphasis on the pivotal importance of the native treasury; some later imitators were apt to concentrate on the native courts and their trappings. The poverty of tribal authorities necessarily cramps their energies and the proportion of their budgets earmarked for overhead charges is even greater than in towns. But tribal N.A.s, in addition to their roads and bridges and their contributions to the upkeep of hospitals and bush dispensaries, pay special regard to rural needs. They often support agricultural experimental stations or stock farms – and agricultural instructors work with if not entirely under the N.A. In some tsetse-fly areas, especially where the fly threatened new encroachments, the existence of a recognized Native Authority has given cohesion to collective tribal measures to clear the bush and check the invasion. The Survey School at Kano was ten years ago a striking example of vitality and natural growth. Planted in an Islamic area where general education is still the function of 'Koran' schools it followed rather in their tradition. As the *mallams'* pupils acquire some little wisdom, not by their memorizing of screeds from the Koran but from serving their masters and living with them for years together, so the very varied work of the Survey School was done almost entirely by men trained by and equipped with the experience gained in twenty or more years of service under its original European director. From the intensive revenue survey, necessitated by the very close settlement of land in the immediate neighbourhood of Kano city, it was natural for the School to pass on to other activities. The accumulation of records presently gave rise to printing, and the school became the official N.A. printer, as well as map-maker for many neighbouring districts. The survey again meant that the work of the School lay more than usual in the rural parts of the Emirate, away from the dominance of the city. By a

natural development the School staff came to be called in to make a preliminary survey and go to advise on rural roads and bridges, sometimes on minor irrigation works, water supplies and wells, possibly on crops under irrigation, even on the upkeep of outlying rest-houses or dispensaries. Thus the School had the makings of something like an N.A. Department of Lands. It is reasonable to hope that departments may develop by some such natural process even where there is less to build on than in Kano.

By the old method Africans were allowed to do nothing for themselves, except perhaps so far as with or without our leave native courts continued to function. I have heard Sir P. E. Mitchell put it that the aim today is to substitute for alien dictation something which will be, not what the Rand policeman is now even to the law-abiding schoolmaster, but a friend and protector like the London bobby – a truly native authority. The foundations on which to build are, for the most part, extremely inadequate. Earlier attempts to use existing African rulers have been for official convenience. When the one preoccupation was to ‘keep the Kaffir in order’ it was often found that none could do this so efficiently as a chief of good standing. Almost everywhere the characteristic tribal organization was in some sense democratic. In an exaggerated instance, on the Gold Coast the British authority recognizes the native chiefs but de-stoolment is so frequent that good administration is endangered. More commonly the reliance of the British administration on the chief’s prestige lifts him above and beyond the traditional control exercised by his own people. He can obstruct the administration in the name of traditional privilege, yet be irremovable by his own people just because he is indispensable to the government. Even under the new system it is almost inevitable that chiefs and new African officials should become more sensitive to control exercised by the central government than responsive to the wishes of the people under them. We ourselves have attained our high standards of incorruptible public service only

in the last century. It is certain that police 'boys', sanitary inspectors and others use a traditional method of influence and threats, for example to extract favours from women or otherwise impose on the people, Sir Donald Cameron expressly warned his own officers of the danger that high native officials may abuse delegated authority and that abuses may be difficult to expose. Direct rulers know less of what goes on than they may like to think, but 'Indirect' rulers have the danger to guard against that chiefs and 'sons of chiefs' may grow into a privileged bureaucracy.

The recognition of tribal rulers was not new when Sir Donald Cameron, bent on applying his Nigerian experience, in 1925 began to give it new significance. As he himself impressed on me in my early travels the ruler must be left discretion against unforeseeable emergencies; the problem is not to make detailed rules in advance but to vest this necessary discretion in an agent who can be held responsible for results. The first step is not to provide a strait waistcoat – which makes effective administration impossible – but to constitute chiefs, or perhaps assemblies of elders already functioning, as the responsible local authority. Experience soon brought to light the unexpected persistence of native loyalty to native tradition. Many chiefs were found to enjoy their status with their people, and even to exercise practical jurisdiction over them, long after they had been officially superseded – for example by the Germans in Tanganyika. It thus became a great object of research to find the real repository of African allegiance and to explore the actual working of tribal organization. About this time the South African Government appointed its own ethnologist and gave new attention to the differences between tribes hitherto lumped together as 'Kaffirs'. Nigeria was driven to modify its plans for the extension of northern N.A. to the south-eastern districts. In this leaderless area it had been usual to select old soldiers, often Hausas, and make them chiefs by 'warrant'. As in Tanganyika, the result was doubtful or dual allegiance and the practice was discredited and superseded.



The rule came to be 'to find the real chief', who might be only the village or family head. In their enthusiasm some researchers and officers perhaps assumed a greater degree of organization than appeared on the surface, or supposed that Africans necessarily make a secret of their allegiance. Over-zealous inquiry may even suggest and stimulate local divisions among equal, friendly villages and make them less friendly.

There is in fact very little existing machinery. Authentic tribal units under well-recognized chiefs may be too small and weak to carry on local government worthy the name. In the Sierra Leone Protectorate there were originally treasuries with an annual budget of only £200 or £300. There and elsewhere the central authorities have reason to regret that the stronger tribes of older days, if not deliberately broken up, were allowed to disintegrate. In north-west Tanganyika, for example, some success has been achieved in developing the so-called Usukuma Federation out of many separate units. The Wasukuma, apparently happy and prosperous, are a thoroughly tribal people, with little or none of the complexity arising from 'social stratification'. It is now set practice to encourage similar and even smaller fragments elsewhere to come together of their own accord to make a single more effective unit of local government. In much fragmented parts of south-eastern Nigeria officers sometimes as a last resort summoned to council all the senior men of any apparent standing – perhaps sixty or seventy of them from all the villages round about. The dull routine of official business soon reduced the attendance. The dozen or so who survived provided the nucleus of a working council – and it does not appear that crises are of such frequent occurrence that there is a serious danger of the old diehards turning out to upset the smooth functioning of this new but useful piece of machinery.

It is in the true historical tradition that the court fills a large part of the picture wherever Native Administration strikes root. In our own history not only the law courts, but the

Cabinet and Parliament itself derive directly from the *curia regis*. The general 'palaver' is the traditional African way both of settling disputes and of communicating or explaining administrative proposals made by the central government. Men of standing and ability are not very numerous and those who interpret the tribal custom to litigants necessarily also lead the tribal deliberations. Any administrative action to which these may lead naturally attaches to a body not unlike that known to students of our own early history as the 'undifferentiated' court, the new local authority.

Tribal courts are now officially recognized all over Africa. Till lately there were certainly many South African natives whose only acquaintance with the law or administration of the country was likely to be through the police court, which so few of them quite escape. In the Cape, where the administrative head of any district is still officially known as C.C. and R.M., the resident magistrate had so completely swallowed up the civil commissioner that intelligent undergraduates had, I found, rarely any conception of the proper place and function of the commissioner. In the tropical colonies the commissioner is very often so burdened with bench work that the administration of his district suffers. Under active Indirect Rule this insidious danger should be lessened. The supervision of native courts must be less wearing than having to conduct all native cases, leaving the D.O. more leisure for the reconstructive advice it is his duty to press discreetly on the N.A. Courts in the narrower sense need a good deal of attention, especially the keeping of records necessary for general supervision. It is a nice point, too, how and where to draw the line between custom conformable to civilized usage and that not so conformable. Recognition confirms and may stereotype bad custom; on the other hand direct interference may only drive objectionable practices underground.

The new system at its best tries also to teach the handling and the control of revenue and expenditure, and to inculcate a sense of financial responsibility. Some colonial governments

perhaps have recoiled in alarm from this phase of the experiment as too venturesome. But, as a rule, a part of the direct tax is refunded by the central authority to be spent by the N.A. on local needs. The proportion allocated varies from 10 per cent to as much as 60 per cent in the well-established Nigerian Emirates. In addition the N.A. retains court dues or fines, and may also draw an appreciable amount by way of market fees or in payment for any public services it may have initiated. In the more primitive districts, with only rudimentary treasuries, the D.O.'s advice may be law. I have known this officer reduced to demonstrating with heaps of stones that with so many shillings in the treasury the new road the people want will leave only so many for other purposes. Even so, the process has begun of teaching the purpose of taxation, and that tax-money is still the people's own. Tax-paying in the past has taught nothing of how the public control of taxation may be the mother of political responsibility. The wealthiest and most prosperous colony, the Gold Coast, is unique in having been content, till the war-time introduction of income tax, to pay its way by customs duties and mining royalties. It is not their fault if Africans who have enjoyed the status of free British subjects for two generations and more have learned so little to associate rights and privileges with corresponding duties and responsibilities. Inevitably they still look to 'Government' to do what they ought to be doing for themselves. Political capacity can grow only as they learn to suffer for their own mistakes. Financial responsibility is the crux, but a strict audit, imposed as a matter of course in our own business, public or private, is not easily applied. There are, moreover, poor colonies like Nyasaland and the High Commission territories whose chronic financial straits make it very nearly impossible for the central government to make any return of revenue to local native treasuries without upsetting the precarious financial balance of the central authority. It is an advantage when the institution of the treasury can be used to check arbitrary exactions of tribute by the ruling chiefs. It is a different matter when the

revenue raised for N.A., instead of relieving the common man of an old charge, imposes new burdens.

At any rate the pre-war years saw the Crown colonies make a substantial advance on the practice of the older local Native Councils of South Africa – these were in no sense ‘authorities’, though uniquely endowed with what were described as ‘full advisory powers’! Indirect Rule in some form has become the officially approved policy for British Africa as a whole and the general attitude has perceptibly changed. In South Africa, too, there has been some attempt to develop the Native Councils to supply a link between the people governed and the magistrate and, through them, to provide the reserves with health services, to improve schools and the status of teachers, to give the occasional if not whole-time help of technical and scientific officers. Elsewhere it is perhaps too soon to look for initiative and enterprise from any but the most exceptional native authorities. Doubtless, too, quoting a high official, ‘many Africans are happy and comfortable at a low level of subsistence’, very few ‘want the bother of governing themselves’, and many ‘hate change and development’. Indirect Rule strictly applied to such would often mean not only stagnation but deterioration. Alternatively, it often happens that ‘advice’ is so firmly backed by gentle pressure that in the effort to make them want what he thinks they ought to want the D.O.’s rule becomes wholly ‘direct’.

The dilemma is evidence of the danger of any formal doctrine. In the most active Northern Nigerian N.A.s, where the officer on his rounds is always accompanied by the Emir’s representative, it is claimed that the relationship is well understood. On the other hand, it happened in a neighbouring province at a time I was there that orders given by the N.A. were defiantly repudiated by a section of the people; opposition was overborne only when they were given to understand that the N.A. had the authority of the central government behind it. The former example may be the goal, but the latter is at this stage almost inevitably the more typical.

What Africans really think of it all it is impossible to judge. One of the duties imposed on officers is to keep a District Book, recording experience of the local people and their customs for the guidance of new generations of officials. (It was some time before I awoke to the fear that the best and fullest District Books may be those of the officers least distracted from study by work with N.A.s.) It is clear that Indirect Rule itself is an innovation. Few African tribes had known any effective authority till the advent of European rule, and most are naturally distrustful of new powers exercised by members of their own community. The old organization is incapable of fulfilling its new functions without radical development. The native authority of the new age must be something outside tribal experience, called into being by that also new and strange entity, the colonial government. Europeans need to beware their tendency to feel their own dignity upheld by a chief who is well aware of his own status. Relations are naturally less easy, because less formalized, with new men from among the masses. It is not enough, therefore, 'to build on native foundations' unless the definition of 'native' is wide enough to allow for the growth of the new elements that are an essential part of the Africa that is.

Sir Donald Cameron, the prophet of the second and expansive phase of N.A., has laid it down that the criterion of success is not what the D.O. achieves by his own effort but what he leaves behind him when he moves on. An analogy from English history seems apt. The work of Henry I, called the Law-maker, was immediately succeeded by the period of chaos known as the reign of Stephen - beneficent laws were useless without an administration capable of giving them effect. Henry II, on the other hand, gave shape to many of the characteristic forms of later English administration and though his successor, Richard I, spent most of his ten years out of England this brought no recrudescence of the earlier disorder. Using the machinery devised by Henry II, the officers he had trained carried on and the land had rest throughout

those kingless years. It is right, therefore, that the conversation of administrative officers should readily turn to questions of procedure. The great hope must be to provide Africa with new machinery of government and, above all, to give more and more Africans the will and the training to work it.

## Chapter 13

# THE ATTACK ON BACKWARDNESS

### (i) HEALTH SERVICES

INDIRECT Rule, at least till it has trained more African helpers, will not necessarily increase and may even impair the energy now applied to reconstruction, to the promotion of health, education and scientific agriculture. The inauguration of social services and the main burden of their direction and support are still the business of the central government, and policy in such matters of common national concern must necessarily remain subject to central control. The central government now has to win the local authorities' support for its plans. Health reform, even education, and certainly improvement in agriculture, could never be imposed by fiat from without, but in this sphere there is little that is African to build on. A good deal of deeply rooted custom now stands in the way of essential changes. It is no longer necessary to warn against enthusiasts who make it the chief merit of Indirect Rule that it is calculated to ensure a policy of 'Go slow'; of less positive content than 'Slow but sure', it is very doubtful if the motto at all corresponded with the aspirations of the generality of Africans. But there is also a principle enunciated by a wise old Scots missionary, 'First the Law: then the Gospel'. Our duty to apply our Western knowledge to the mitigation of African suffering and the betterment of African health is perhaps a crucial test for 'trusteeship'.

African ways of life positively impede reform – the dark ill-ventilated huts, for example, normal in most villages. Some years ago when an outbreak of plague drove the authorities of one colony to put a price on rats' tails a holocaust of some two million rats according to a competent judge reduced the average number per hut from fifteen to fourteen!

For reasons of poverty pure water is rarely available, nor are building material and the skill to use it. There is wisdom in the plea by one prominent health officer that Africa needs great general practitioners who are also, almost of necessity, humanists, rather than experts sent at heavy expense to seek a remedy for endemic ills like plague or malaria!

Till quite lately government medical officers, especially on the West Coast, were primarily intended to serve the needs of government servants. Being only a handful they were kept sufficiently occupied. Today perhaps a little headway has been made in getting the direct help of Africans in ministering to the physical needs of their own people. The number of fully qualified African doctors is still not more than sufficient to show that, in time, they should be able to staff their own services. Uganda has for some time been providing at Makerere College, and Nigeria at Yaba College, a five-year course of training for partly qualified medical assistants to take over work now done by the class known as sub-assistant surgeons, mostly Indians. South Africa, among others, began with a similar plan but now provides a full university course for African doctors and dentists at Johannesburg. A good many N.A. bush dispensaries are in charge of mere 'dressers', men who have had only a year or two of special instruction in the use of standard drugs. Such a makeshift cannot be expected to inspire great confidence and, in fact, some dispensaries are poorly frequented - ten or eleven was the daily average attendance at some I have happened upon. In the Belgian Congo, also in Kenya, Africans have shown great talent for microscopic work in bacteriological laboratories. Many - male and female - have been successfully trained as nurses, or as hospital attendants of one sort or another. South African experience alone would prove that nursing as a profession for African women is capable of indefinite expansion. Much depends, of course, on improving the low school qualifications.

A great deal of the pioneer medical work has in practice been done by missions, and by private employers like the



mines. Once enlightened self-interest had made the mining corporations realize the necessity of health measures their financial resources were an immense asset. The Rand mines have done much to check the pulmonary diseases which specially afflict employees brought from warmer climates to windy dust-swept heights, where they are subject to violent alternation between damp heat in the mine and dusty cold outside. Experience on the Rand and the copper belt of the wastage due to more fundamental causes of African ill-health has, as much as any other single factor, thrown light on the deficiencies of African diet. The medical work of missions, on the other hand, though it has a longer history, has usually been hampered by the inadequacy of funds, and governments have done too little to augment these. The missionary doctors have not only a natural concern for the welfare of their people, but a peculiar interest in gaining their confidence, if not a special aptitude for doing so. The training of girls from mission schools as nurses made the training of African nurses originally a mission-hospital enterprise. Trained women are peculiarly well fitted to carry the new light into the less accessible tribal centres, but girls' education is everywhere backward.

Rural Africa is after all the crux of the health problem. Industrial and administrative urban centres, because of their resources and for fear of their becoming foci of epidemics, have been the easier starting-point for new health services. Few considerable towns today are without hospitals, maternity centres and infant welfare clinics and, necessarily, sanitary services. Seldom has Providence supplied, as at Kumasi, all at the same time, an outbreak of plague to alarm the authorities, a bumper revenue from the high cocoa prices of the nineteen-twenties, and health officers with the skill and patience to convert a fever-stricken swamp into a model town. It chanced also that Kumasi being conquered territory was Crown land; while no African interest suffered, there was no hold-up due to private land claims. The privately-owned and rat-infested warrens of Lagos island are still typi-

cal of conditions in other large towns. Kano, centuries old, has its own peculiar problem in the more than four hundred burrow pits from which the mud was taken to build it. These remain unfilled and unfillable—obvious rubbish-dumps, and breeding-grounds for malarial mosquitoes against which only the watchfulness of inspectors and the growing will to better things among the people are some check. Great centres like Lagos and Kano have a large trade and considerable accumulated wealth to sustain their efforts, but even they not so long ago had wells and *salgas* (cesspits) dug side by side—perhaps not even *salgas*. This is not really matter for surprise; earlier European travellers to Benin, neighbour of Lagos, saw in it only a considerable city comparable with their cities at home—where plague was equally endemic, and perfume used for its original purpose. The great mixed communities with special native quarters under our own control set no better example. Professor Julian Huxley told us in *Africa View* that the native ‘locations’ of Nairobi, where natives must adjust themselves to civilized life, ‘filled him with gloom’. Such is familiarity that I toured Nairobi only a few months later and merely noted some things better done than in the ‘yards’ of Johannesburg, others perhaps not so well as in a few better South African towns.

The authorities are well aware that, indispensable as the cleansing of the towns may be, the village is the real centre of infection for the typical African scourges. As fast as health officers can clean up and medical men effect cures in urban hospitals, reinfection drifts in from the outlying villages in the country. There a few scattered individuals struggle against the odds. Hospitals being few Africans still shun them as places to which their friends have been carried, very often only *in extremis*, therefore only to die. Hence in the medical as in all the tropical services the measure of achievement is often the measure of the energy and character of the individual officer. At one of many hospitals visited in neighbouring and not dissimilar parts of West Africa the doctor had attacked one

major difficulty by going out into the by-ways and persuading them to come in. He had about fifty beds (an elastic term in Africa); the number of inmates was a hundred or more, and the out-patients legion. All round the sufficiently primitive hospital buildings he had allowed them to build huts and these were crowded, as a rule by whole families infected with sleeping-sickness or leprosy. He had learned to wink at the presence of relations or dependents 'squatting' on the hospital grounds while their friends underwent treatment; the additional and temporary huts were rather designed to encourage the inmates to live their own life altogether in their own way. Some doctors using similar temporary huts to circumvent inadequate government grants go a little further and contrive to make them just a little better than the normal, introducing easily imitated improvements in roofs, floors or structure.

At a second hospital – in an average district with a normal frequency of leprosy, yaws, helminthic infections, malaria and the rest – sixty to eighty beds were somehow expanded to one hundred and thirty, all occupied; out-patients were innumerable. The doctor was remarkable in being an enthusiastic surgeon, incidentally an oculist. His patients showed their confidence by an unusual willingness to submit to major operations. This solitary medical officer and his overcrowded hospital were, besides a limited number of N.A. bush dispensaries, the only official provision for the health of a district reckoned to have a population of half a million or more. Curative medical work could at best touch only the fringe of the problem. A third example emphasized how much, even then, must depend on the individual. It was situated in a more advanced, thanks to mining revenues even a wealthy district, where also the effects of a no less pestilential climate are mitigated by a better and more varied food supply. Yaws was notoriously and visibly bad, and with it the other accompaniments of foul conditions. The hospital had some twenty beds; only ten were occupied, three of them by victims of lorry accidents.

It is an incidental weakness that administrative necessities make government officers subject to frequent transfer and give the best men the disheartening work of building all over again elsewhere, leaving a stranger to maintain, if he can, work due to their personal gifts and energy. It can only be said that there is a little to show for these decades of direct European administration. For what unreliable statistics may be worth, the infantile death-rate has probably been halved in many towns – as in Lagos. A little has been done for the health of African women, though the proportion of women patients in hospitals is still small; mission hospitals so far apart as the well-known Mrs Maynard's institution at Shinyanga in Tanganyika and another American venture in Durban have completely disproved an old assumption that African women are almost immune from the complications that may attend child-bearing. Plague, yellow fever, sleeping-sickness, smallpox, could hardly now take epidemic form without speedy steps being taken to counter and control the outbreak. Famine, also, would certainly be met by government relief measures. But it still needs to be stressed that budget allocations for public health are not to be thought of as a concession to one of the 'spending' departments. Health services are *par excellence* work of reproductive development.

Can Indirect Rule do better – now that every new move requires to be pressed on the local N.A. as advice, no longer as a command to be obeyed? Even in the past French and Belgian health administration has on the whole been more successful than ours thanks to its altogether benevolent authoritarianism. British efforts, on the other hand, have usually been marked by an equally benevolent squeamishness. Respect for the principles of freedom made us hesitate to enforce new and strange rules of health. Now more than ever the medical officer, no longer M.O.H. but adviser, may lack the powers of compulsion enjoyed by the sanitary inspector in the meanest English village. Even when he has persuaded old-fashioned chiefs to take his advice there is no native machinery

to put it into effect. The attack on bad habits and on ignorance becomes, in the first place, the business of the school, and the persuasion of the peoples to a better way of life a work of education.

### (ii) EDUCATION

Education in Africa has a long and active history thanks exclusively to the work of Christian missions. Lovedale in the Cape is a prototype of very useful missionary institutions, originated to consolidate and perpetuate mission work, which developed into major central schools. Relatively few in number, these carried pupils perhaps to Standard VI or VII, many of whom, with or without further training, helped to carry a necessarily limited and thinly-spread school system over most of the colonies. This is by no means the whole story. Many individuals stayed on to imbibe from their teachers as much, for example, as enabled an outstanding group of old Lovedale boys to serve as effective leaders of the South African Natives in the debates of twenty years ago. Many in less troubled colonies have made their mark in the professions or in public service. It is a rough gauge of the more general attainment, however, that while the masses are little affected, some colonies long accepted Standard V as the jumping-off ground (as it were matriculation) for more responsible posts. Southern Rhodesia was lately of this Standard V group; the Gold Coast definitely held out for Standard VII.

The pioneers have it to their credit that at any given moment there are at British universities hundreds of Africans whose talent suffices and whose educational groundwork is well enough laid to enable them to qualify for the professions. The majority are from West Africa; natives of South and East Africa are less able to afford such expense and are drawn from a smaller population. But the South African University College at Fort Hare makes going abroad unnecessary; its regular courses prepare Africans for the recognized degrees of

the federal University of South Africa, and are ahead of anything provided elsewhere. Fourah Bay College, in Sierra Leone, affiliated to Durham University since 1876, has a theological side which has made it no less a centre of great influence. Nigeria had various higher colleges more advanced in the courses provided than anything, for example, in Kenya or either of the Rhodesias. Makerere College in Uganda and the Prince of Wales's College at Achimota on the Gold Coast were even before the war shaping to become University Colleges, but they still carried a burden that limited their scope for higher education.

Official zeal for higher education, and for more and better teacher-training, is a mark of the newer age, when governments have emerged from the fetters of the *laissez-faire* theory to share more fully in promoting general education. One commission before the war advised the development of higher education in Uganda; another during the war threw this onus on the government even more fully for West Africa; both recognized the demand and the need for fully educated men and women in the life of all these countries. Government activity has not ended either the work of missions or the need for it. Moral direction was never the strong characteristic of tribal life and what restraint its sanctions provided has often broken down, leaving a house swept and garnished. As Secretary of State in 1940 the late Lord Lloyd officially accepted the view that co-operation with the missionary bodies will continue as the best way of filling this moral vacuum. Schools, accordingly, largely remain under mission direction and control, the State coming in to maintain and raise their academic standards. At the centre the Colonial Office has now a strong Advisory Committee which keeps an eye, in accordance with this policy, on details and on the situation as a whole. Each colonial government has its own Education Department.

Disappointment with past achievement has driven some into revolt against traditional and especially missionary methods. Education in Africa is bound to be revolutionary in its

effects. It needs very little learning to drive something of a wedge between that fraction of the community which goes to school and the majority who suffer the bewilderment of new things without the beginnings of understanding. The educated minority, moreover, gets little of the training and stimulus that come of cultured home life. The sometimes unfortunate results can be remedied only when the whole population has been brought nearer to some decent minimum standard. Making the rudiments generally available is more important than any special adaptation of method and content. If the critics are to be believed the typical school products eat their heart out in search of black-coated occupations. It has often been proposed to give education a bias towards agriculture or some local industry, without a thought for the real trouble, the lack of opportunity – there is no outlet in African villages for craftsmen and specialists. In any case, part of the difficulty of specialized training is the poor groundwork on which it has to be based. Instructors in trades or arts, even in agriculture, commonly have to devote a large part of their time to re-teaching the fundamentals, the three R's. This is not a fault of school method but the result of a hopeless struggle against the inertia of the old order by teachers little removed from it.

This is really the root of the matter. It is too early to pose ideal alternatives; should the aim, it is sometimes asked, be a high general level of enlightenment, or a more modest standard for the masses, with the very highest possible for the élite? It may be accepted that the desirable aim would be rudiments for all, together with specialist training for scientific, technical or industrial workers, the training of the largest number of teachers possible, and humane learning for those who must carry public and administrative responsibility. A recent commission on 'mass education' failed to find a single workable method of immediate education for all. The attack must in fact be at all points at once – primary school teachers need at least secondary education, secondary teachers

need a university course. It is impracticable, and dangerously provocative of discontent, to plan to measure out specialist or higher education to eager and ambitious individuals strictly according to the capacity of the community to absorb those so trained in remunerative employment. Always the difficulty is to provide teachers. An uneducated and backward people cannot hope to produce and support educated leaders by their own efforts. The finest products of the ancient English universities would be unthinkable apart from the whole rich background of English life, letters and history. In Africa the foundations of an educational system are lacking.

The equipment of African elementary and 'bush' school teachers is still, in fact if not inevitably, deplorable. In the Union, which is educationally ahead of any of the colonies, nearly 20 per cent of those in all types of school lacked in 1934 even the very modest pupil-teacher certificate. Instruction reaching Standard VI or VII is virtually unobtainable in the villages. The Cape of Good Hope may be taken as far above the average; its long habituation to civil administration also gives grounds for accepting statistics as comparatively reliable. By the census of 1936 the native population was just over two millions (2,045,110), and it may be reckoned that the children of school age would be anything from one-third to one-quarter of this total, by the lower guess half a million. The number of native children actually on the school roll in 1934 – the highest total then recorded – was 159,310 – 32 per cent. Of this fraction, 54 per cent were in what are known as the sub-standards; such is the wastage that 79 per cent go no further than Standard II, leaving only 21 per cent in classes above Standard III; 1.5 per cent attained Standard VII or over. Figures for other provinces of the Union emphasize the details of this picture: the proportion in Standard II or under rises to 79.4 per cent in the Orange Free State, 82.3 per cent in the Transvaal, the Union average being 80.1 per cent.<sup>1</sup> The total

1. Union Year Book, No. 17.



number of children of school age is uncertain, but it is a reasonable guess that the proportion on the roll of the 'State and State-aided schools' was under 20 per cent in Natal and the Transvaal, perhaps 25 per cent of the school-age children in the Union as a whole. By a similar reckoning, which includes children at unaided 'bush' schools, the 25 per cent figure was exceeded in Basutoland and equalled in Southern Rhodesia, was possibly approached in Nyasaland and Uganda, but not in Kenya or Tanganyika, not even in the Gold Coast which has relatively generous endowment of more advanced institutions, and certainly not in Nigeria, either Southern or Northern.<sup>1</sup>

Poor as it is, measured by the need, Union achievement is also far ahead of all other parts of Africa in one decisive respect. Its schools alone have a high, actually preponderant percentage of girls on the register. It is a peculiar weakness of the advanced Gold Coast, in only less degree of Uganda, that the education of its women makes very slow progress. Whereas in the Cape in 1932 the proportion of girls at mission schools (a virtually inclusive category) was 55 per cent, in Uganda the proportions were 145,541 boys to 82,884 girls, 64 per cent and 36 per cent, in Nyasaland only slightly better, 53,725 to 35,851, 60 per cent and 40 per cent; but in the Gold Coast 32,075 boys to only 7633 girls. The backwardness of girls' education inevitably emphasizes the isolated position of the educated men. The disproportion of the sexes among the really well-educated is in practice probably less pronounced, but so long as most of the mothers are wholly uneducated the homes of the masses of the population must remain as they now are — very poor nurseries for the educated of the next generation.

The proportion of those attaining any high standard of education is if anything even smaller in the tropical colonies than in the Union. By an authoritative pre-war account 'the

1. W. Bryant Mumford and B. N. Parker, 'Education in British Africa' (*J. R. Afr. S.*, January 1937). Cf. also *Yearbook of Education*, 1938.

percentage of children enabled to proceed beyond the primary level' in Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia was nil, in Tanganyika 0.14 per cent, in Uganda 0.4 per cent. Even if it is true that a full course of primary education may be a reasonably good preparation for life, it is startling to translate percentages of scholastic attainment (the best in Africa) into round figures. Taking African Standard VI as representing approximately the top class in the British primary school, the number of Africans who attain this minimum in the Union is 24 per thousand of those on the school roll, perhaps 6 in every thousand of the total population. Fifteen per school thousand in the Cape, 16 in the Union as a whole, equivalent to perhaps 4 in every thousand of the population, proceed to Standard VII or beyond; which is to say that a total of 10 in every thousand Union Africans reach or pass the *minimum* educational requirement of all citizens in Great Britain. In all other parts of Africa this educated minority is a definitely smaller proportion – not 1 in a hundred. The devastating consequence of the shockingly high wastage is that masses of Africans who have had their two, three or four years at school are able to read and write in later life as fluently perhaps as our own average seven- or eight-year-old. For all the positive service their education may be to the State its cost goes down the drain.

Yet this is an incomplete deduction. A not inept old definition makes education 'what is left when a man has forgotten most of what he learned at school or college'; there remains deeply implanted by the unforgettable experience of school, to be transferred to millions of their fellows who have missed the experience, the glimmering awareness of a great unexplored world, an inspiration to know more of it and to share in it. The bubbling excitement of tiny African children learning their first letters is a thing often seen and never to be forgotten. Very rarely, in much travel, have I met teachers who have had reason to complain of deliberately and negligently slack school attendance. The very poor record of some location schools in backward Northern Rhodesia has been publicly

noticed.<sup>1</sup> On the whole there can be no doubt about the strength and genuineness of the African demand for education and more and fuller education.

A formidable problem of ways and means stands in the way of meeting this vigorous demand, which is properly the province of officials and administrators. Perhaps it is left too much out of account by European educationists whose energy and devotion go to making the education now provided as fruitful and effective as possible. The training of teachers is not what it hopes to be even in Europe, but the direction of schools and of policy in Africa is devolving more upon men and women who have received the best training available, together with special preparation for work in African conditions. In the field itself conferences are frequent, and there is always the Imperial Advisory Committee to stimulate and to take stock of new ventures. But the lower ranks of African teachers remain very poorly equipped, and so poorly paid that few ambitious educated men dream of village-teaching as a career.

The most original and now distinctively African experiment is possibly the so-called 'Jeanes' school, of which the governing idea is not merely that education must be related to the life of the people it serves but that it should be the means of building up a stronger *community*. Southern Rhodesia, Kenya and Nyasaland have been pioneers in the adaptation of a well-known American plan which grew from the needs of the peculiarly scattered Negrôes of the Southern States where there is no tribal organization – indeed hardly so much as a real village. In tribal Africa there is usually the village to work on. These institutions need a strong European staff, their special role being to develop the capacity of working teachers; the Jeanes-school pupils, *par excellence*, are men selected for special training after independent experience in rural schools, preference often being given to those accompanied by wife and family, so that the womenfolk may be equipped to share

1. Merle Davis, *Modern Industry and the African*, p. 85.

in the desired 'community-building'. These schools habitually give 'refresher' courses – a useful function where the academic foundations and the preliminary training of all teachers are necessarily so imperfect. Many teachers are obliged to work cut off from all intellectual stimulus and lose incentive to keep up the standards with which they began.

It is no small part of the difficulty of social work by African missionaries (in the broadest sense) that all must live so dangerously isolated. It is, for example, impracticable to send out trained young women to live alone as teachers or nurses. But already there is in many villages a considerable nucleus of essentially 'new' types round whom to build. N.A. is providing a good many – medical assistants, health visitors, agricultural demonstrators. It is a favourite theme of at least one energetic health officer that sanitary inspectors should be valuable exponents of the new 'technique of living' – theirs is, in fact, an essential complement to the work of agricultural demonstrators if Africans are to maintain adequate standards of cleanliness, and so get better prices for their products. There are also N.A. court and treasury clerks, who cannot be mere bush-men, and always a growing host of those stimulated to new ways of life by example.

The most effective teaching under present conditions is unquestionably where the children are for some time boarders, withdrawn from normal home and village influences, under constant discipline and supervision. Africa is inevitably on the road followed by English tradition rather than Scottish; a period of boarding-school is the normal ambition of all with serious aspirations. It is a question how far the new product, being necessarily different from the uneducated bush-man, can be any more or any less 'essentially African' than the much criticized product of the educational methods of the past. Africans are suspicious of well-meant efforts to 'adapt' education to specific African needs. In reaction against manual training and agriculture, reserved often for the freshest time of the school day, they will even revert to Roman

history, 1066 and all that. And indeed it is impossible to give all education an agricultural or even a biological bias; children of tender years should be set to systematic, even old-fashioned, drill in the three R's – or their later efforts may be vain.

It is the work of very recent years that a serious attempt is at last being made to reach the African peoples through the medium of their own languages. The study of African vernaculars and their reduction to writing proceed apace, and it is good that some linguistic attainments are now demanded of officials. The work of language specialists is not above criticism. It seems to be irrevocably decreed that African children must be helped on their way by having to acquire not merely the twenty-six letters of the traditional Western alphabet but the hieroglyphs of the phonetic script in addition. Enthusiasts for phonetics are responsible for some strange innovations, I have seen the established spelling of the Transkeian capital, Umtata, disguised as um Thatha. Educated Bechuana, who had an old and not inconsiderable printed literature, were lately reduced to impotent confusion by the re-spelling of their language. Even its name, well known as Sechuana, has in the last few years undergone a bewildering series of changes – being variously rendered as Setshuana, Tshwana, Ts'oana, Chwana! It is common sense, perhaps, that young children should be saved the unnecessary effort of learning their first lessons in a strange tongue, and should start by learning of their own environment. It is not so certain that they should be strictly protected from early introduction to unfamiliar scenes and circumstances; unnecessary tears or laughter have been called forth by the discovery in an African school of a textbook, in English, which opened with the suggestive sentence, 'The sparrow is the farmer's friend'! Children are not so wedded to the usual, and it is good and pleasurable exciting to realize that things do not happen everywhere in the way we are used to.

Doubtfully wise purism also decries the early introduction of English. Scores of vernaculars are quite unsuitable, if

not impossible media. They are often so numerous that a *lingua franca* is indispensable – not only to enable the peoples to learn as they must from the outside world, but even to allow them to communicate with each other and the teacher with them. English is then the obvious choice. Both in east and west, however, great local languages, Swahili and Hausa respectively, both much used in trade and allied to Arabic, have been pressed even on tribal peoples to whom they are unfamiliar. The usual excuse was not merely local convenience – but that such African languages were less likely to speed up the dreaded process of ‘Westernization’. Where Swahili or Hausa is introduced, perhaps about Standard IV, English inevitably has to be added later to the acquirements of the more advanced students. The obvious effect is the loss of time and effort that hampers the work of those specialist courses where a knowledge of a European language is indispensable. The common experience that foreign languages are most easily acquired at an early age is a good reason for allowing English to be mastered as soon as possible. African opinion, if that should count, is strongly for English, which they believe indispensable to success in the world as they know it. English is often the lure that brings people to school at all. The expert, ruled by his own anxiety to preserve the essentials of African life, may overlook the true aim – to teach the pupil how to learn, and to acquire standards of comparison by which ultimately to choose for himself what is good either in the old ways or in the new.

Indirect Rule and the spread of N.A.s may perhaps speed up the process of supplying general elementary education. But N.A.s are not always amenable to direction. Africans, in general, pay school fees cheerfully enough, but they have so long been accustomed to have the brunt of the burden borne by others – the missions and the central government – that few of them understand how costly any serious expansion of the school service must be. The N.A.s as a rule, even the most active, regard education as a central government obligation;

their budget allocations for education are both absolutely and relatively small. The onus and the lead in providing education, therefore, remain with the central government. The missions can hardly do even as much as of old. Support from home is weaker than it was – if only because the older settlements are ceasing to be thought of as virgin fields and the African Churches are of set policy being thrown on their own resources. The consciousness of African needs, and perhaps the reasonable expectation of Africans themselves, are growing faster than the means of satisfying them.

In the pre-war decades the State was at last taking its share in trying to elaborate the educational system and to fill up gaps. Of the three experiments on the higher levels Makerere College in Uganda and Yaba College, Lagos, were the creation of their own Education Departments, and under their close supervision. The third, Achimota, the creation of Sir Gordon Guggisberg during the time of the Gold Coast's greatest prosperity, opened its doors in 1925. The aim was originally to carry children from their very earliest years, four or five, through the whole of their education – ultimately to the university stage. For this ambitious scheme the college was exceptionally lavishly equipped: the original estimate, £607,000, was considerably exceeded. Its founder's conscious and deliberate policy of getting later governors committed to this scheme succeeded well enough to be a substitute for endowment; in the lean 'thirties the grant was reduced from £60,000 to £48,000, but was to be cut again only with the consent of the Legislative Council. Numerous scholarships mitigate the criticism that the opportunities offered by Achimota are accessible only to those whose families can pay for them. It has been objected that the cost of Achimota is an unjustifiable drain on the revenues of a colony which is already, even relatively, backward in the provision it makes for elementary education for the population at large. This neglect is inexcusable, and yet a separate issue. It is the distinction of Achimota to be a rare example of something like extravagance in a State-

endowed school, or perhaps in any kind of institution intended solely for Africans. This lavishness furnished, besides agricultural equipment, no more than the administrative, teaching and residential buildings which would be expected in a college with similar aims for any European community. It was a deliberate attempt to provide for at least some Africans education of a standard demanded as of right by middle-class Europeans, and under approximately the same conditions. The only valid objections would be that such education is in itself undesirable, and perhaps that the solid planning of the buildings now makes change and adaptation more difficult.

It was a more important feature of this experiment that the size and qualifications of the staff, European and African, together with the reasonably assured and adequate revenues, have been warrant for allowing Achimota an unusually large measure of internal self-government – vested in a council of fifteen, of whom seven must be Africans, the government also being directly represented. Achimota thus became a self-contained community, in close touch with yet independent of the central government, virtually endowed, constantly gaining practical experience of what was required. The tradition built up by strong personalities has long given Lovedale something of this independent character. Achimota was the first example in the tropical colonies of a live community, including wholly non-official Europeans with a proper complement of wives and children, and a proportion of educated Africans.

The war saw the beginning of a new and substantial drive for better educational development, and with it a heightened sense of the truth that the poverty of Africa remains the great limiting factor.

### (iii) AGRICULTURE

Agricultural production is the chief hope of improved African revenues and, unlike education, a settled routine of African life. The setting up of so many local N.A.s should help the con-



tinuity of effort, besides making it easier for agricultural officers to get into touch with the people and devolve work which under 'direct' rule would have depended entirely on themselves. Agricultural and veterinary officers like those of the medical services may, however, find their usefulness impaired if they are too strictly limited to 'advising'. Little permanent good can come of any policy forced through without African understanding and consent, but there are occasions when technical measures promptly enforced are the only way of winning that approval in the long run. Delay may make advice futile, for example, in the control of plant or animal disease.

In agricultural policy, as in matters of health, British policy is already less positive than that of the French and Belgians who have sometimes been readier to help Africans to help themselves. When, for example, the French authorities thought it advisable to have cocoa introduced into the Cameroons they acted, according to a writer in the *Revue des deux mondes*, on the belief that 'orders alone are effective with a primitive people'. In this case they were justified by the event; the people 'soon realized where their true interest lay', and there was no need to use penal powers; the output of cocoa rose from 100 tons in 1915 and 1000 in 1920, to 20,000 tons in 1930. In the French colonies the number of officials available to direct and supervise is usually greater. The common British alternative of persuading chosen families here and there to experiment is desperately slow and by no means sure. A new crop may fail without being fully tried out because production is on such a small scale that the profits never equal the trouble and expense of marketing. The experiment then becomes much more difficult to repeat. The fluctuations of the external market have more than once made Africans abandon a promising trade because of a temporary fall in prices. There are obvious objections to trusting or encouraging chiefs to enforce innovations by disciplinary measures of their own. Yet two of the crops pointed to as evidence of the capacity of Africans to

organize and carry out production for themselves are classic examples of how direct suasion has been justified by results. Cotton-growing, which has been the making of Uganda, owed much to enlightened or ambitious chiefs. The coffee of the Wachagga of Kilimanjaro got a start – local tradition among European settlers leaves no doubt – because the enthusiastic ‘advice’ of a keen British officer was interpreted as an order.

It is a real danger that encouraging peasantry to produce an export crop may lead to serious neglect of food crops. In fact in many parts pressure may be desirable or even necessary to ensure an adequate supply of food. In Tanganyika in the early heyday of Indirect Rule the alarm caused by locust devastations round about 1930 prompted strong measures to get chiefs to extend the planting of cassava as an alternative food crop. Anything like ‘hastening’ was then very much out of fashion, but this was an occasion when mere *laissez-faire* would have meant shirking responsibility. It is questionable, in short, how far a trustee Power is justified in leaving the development of agricultural production wholly to the initiative and resource of Africans, to the growth of co-operative enterprise, to the maturing of N.A. Native Uganda, no less than the Union and Kenya, has in practice been obliged to legislate for the regulation of cotton-growing, or for the better control of plant disease. Statutory enactments and boards are indispensable in these days.

The basis of life in the essential tribal Africa is small-scale subsistence agriculture. Direction and supervision, so far as attempted, rest with the central department of agriculture. These departments are built on the research conducted and the training provided by the Imperial College of Tropical Agriculture in Trinidad. The qualifications of the staff are of the highest – only financial considerations may unduly limit their numbers; their work is twofold, to investigate local conditions and to convey their findings to the cultivators. These stand in great need of instruction and guidance. If the strenuously scientific training of the officers makes a few of

'them a little shy of their more humane duties, experience of dealing with Africans usually mellows their sympathies.

It is an advantage that the population is, as a rule, firmly settled on its own land – a disadvantage that there is little to make the people feel a compelling need to get better results than in the past. Many N.A.s have played their part with interest and enthusiasm, maintaining demonstrators and demonstration plots out of their own funds, or seed-supply stations or stock farms. Certain N.A.s have even made the beginnings of an attack on the baffling problem of furnishing native peasant cultivators with credit if not with capital – wanting these, agriculturists anywhere in the world fall into the clutches of traders and moneylenders. N.A.s, or the cultivators themselves with more or less official backing, have built up such organizations as the Wachagga Native Coffee Planters' Association and, less successfully, various co-operative combinations of cocoa-growers on the West Coast. The success of 'mixed' farming in Northern Nigeria has owed something to self-help. The aim being to bring a bigger acreage under tillage by the excellent Hausa agriculturists who had been in the habit of leaving all dealings in stock to the nomadic Fulani herdsmen, small advances, for bullocks and a cheap plough, were made from the reserve funds of the native treasury. The testimony was that the first advances were punctually repaid. Intimate knowledge of one another, and the watchfulness of neighbours over money which belongs to all, are effective safeguards. The risks were eminently well worth taking – Africans could hardly practise responsibility to better advantage than in managing local funds to promote more profitable agricultural production.

Peasant agriculture, however well directed, cannot by itself suffice. Small-holdings can never reap the full benefit of the technical developments of scientific agriculture. Economic efficiency demands the use of estate methods, at least in some parts, to broaden the whole economic basis; but there is room for the combination of the two systems. By West Indian ana-

logy, Barbados is still almost wholly estate-managed, Jamaica more considerably peasant-cultivated, and the contrast is rooted in local geography; the great level stretches of Barbados lend themselves naturally to large-scale cultivation, no less certainly than many fertile but inaccessible corners of Jamaican valleys could be intensively worked only by the concentrated labour of individuals. In Trinidad and elsewhere there are hilly corners of the canefields which lend themselves to individual treatment; the Trinidad sugar industry has found it wise, partly in the interests of stability, to encourage peasant 'cane-farmers'. The success of the experiment is enough to suggest that there is merit in a system which may thus give peasant cultivators some of the benefits of estate supervision, and possibly the occasional help of machinery. In Africa the plantation is the exception, rarely in the old fashion the normal agent of production. Grants of land to capitalists have often been subject to some variant of the Tanganyika rule that the objective of land policy is 'to protect existing customary rights and to preserve native customs' (Ordinance 3 of 1923). In West Africa as a whole, 'concessions' are virtually barred, but the occasional large-scale plantation may be an essential aid to agricultural development. Even in 1932, a year of acute depression, the sisal planters of Tanganyika were responsible for practically half the country's exports, £700,000 out of a total of just over £1,400,000. It is a disadvantage in this instance that labour is supplied by men who have to tramp hundreds of miles to plantations which offer them no permanent home, but that is due to the deliberate choice of thinly populated country for the concessions.

It is the disservice of the history of white settlement that so much of native Africa distrusts plantation settlement, particularly on the West Coast. The settler countries have, in fact, too much ignored the experience of their own West Indian predecessors. Many good judges hold that the future lies (as some have put it) with the capitalist in his frock-coat and the peasant in his loin-cloth - that there is actually more to be

hoped of good peasant cultivation than of the kind of European estate that is too small to make use of the best technique, yet on too large a scale for cheap running. The small-holding can be worked by the owner and his family with the close personal supervision that can be a fair substitute for science. But the successful whole-time peasants are a small class. Peasant crops do not, as a rule, attain the very highest quality even in the Jamaica banana industry, though help and direction from trained demonstrators are usually welcomed. To get the best results the peasant must have sufficient land to grow food enough to live on, and a reasonable surplus; the successful peasant who uses his gains to add acre to acre may so disperse his efforts that he ceases to be a peasant at all and becomes merely a specially indifferent farmer. The half-acre plots of Jamaica yield no more than a measure of 'home subsistence' (the American phrase) supplementary to wage-earning; but a great many part-time agriculturists, sometimes tenants, have been very successful where the head of the house or members of the family supplement their income by following other occupations. This is especially true where extra earnings help them to improve their farming equipment. In the West Indies, with their huge proletariat, secure small-holdings make for contentment and stability if not necessarily for prosperity, and are much too few. In the African settler colonies such guidance and control as resident European owners exercise might make African tenants, or even tenant-labourers, a stable element in the population – not, like the South African 'farm-natives' or 'labour-tenants', the most backward and unsettled. Nothing could so much help to promote the economic well-being of all classes in the settler colonies, including unemployed 'poor whites' and industrialists hampered now by the limitations of African markets.

· Even as things are, the peculiar troubles of Nyasaland, for instance, cannot be ascribed to the presence of European settlers, in spite of heavy alienation of native land; Nyasalanders actually asked for European development in the bare

north of that territory. An old note records my own initial surprise that even in Swaziland, two-thirds of which is European-owned, there was still about 1932 no concerted native effort, hardly even a demand, for the recovery of any part of the alienated land. The reason was, I suspect, that under Protectorate rule there was no 1913 Native Land Act, therefore no pressure on tenants to make the Swazis seriously aware of any but the economic benefits of European enterprise. Well-managed estates on land leased and not permanently alienated need not extrude the native population. A higher standard in production is essential, and cannot but be beneficial, both to the revenues and as an object-lesson in efficiency. For the want of good European example West Africa unquestionably misses advantages enjoyed by Natives in the Union. Without capital equipment, which necessitates some use of plantation methods, African agriculture can never reach its full stature.

Modern needs cannot be fully met on the tribal basis postulated by Indirect Rule. The control of plantations is something beyond the scope of any conceivable N.A. Nor can the D.O., man of all work as he is, be further burdened with supervision of the large-scale economic enterprise even of a semi-public corporation, and of the relations of its management with African workers. The political officer, not wholly without reason, fears for his own authority with the N.A. which already has advice pressed on it from so many different quarters. Indirect Rule is no formula to conjure order out of chaos. It leaves the onus for the work of the three great reconstructive services firmly on the central government.

## **THE BIRTH OF AFRICAN POLITICS**

### **(i) THE IDEA AND PRACTICE OF REPRESENTATION**

TILL very recently the government of Crown colonies was by a Governor with whom there was usually associated a Legislative Council consisting of non-official members – some popularly elected, some nominated – and a bare majority of government officials who might, on occasion, vote in a body as the Governor directed them. The Council controlled supply, Governor and Council had conjoint powers of law-making, but the Governor alone was answerable for administration, not to the Council but to the Secretary of State in London.

This uneasy divorce between power and responsibility has been described as carrying into the twentieth century the British parliamentary practice of pre-Cabinet days. The example of the Dominions established the theory that the so-called 'representative' system is a temporary expedient designed to give the governed some voice in the management of affairs till self-government is practicable. No purely native colony had, in fact, before the war been brought near the maturity sufficient to earn promotion to the next stage, and this theory lost sight of a vital nineteenth-century step in the evolution of the 'Crown' colony. The special 'reserve' power of the Governor, developed partly from experience of the confusion caused by Councils refusing supply, originated also partly from a calculated attempt to safeguard the unprivileged masses against the 'plantocracy'-dominated legislatures of the older West Indian islands. Useful or even indispensable at the early stage of a colony's growth this constitution, which gave the Council a definite share in the making of laws but none in carrying them out, was liable to retard rather than

foster the growth of political sense. Anywhere from eighteenth-century America to twentieth-century Kenya the obvious resource of a perpetual opposition which had no hope, or chastening fear, of being called on to carry out its policy was spectacular prowess in debate. Governors, in practice, seldom used the official majority to enforce a policy against a solid non-official opposition. Downing Street was likely to be uneasy and ask for explanations. Some non-official *blocs*, for their part, chiefly hitherto in settler colonies, kept their right to challenge a division for exceptional occasions, knowing that Governors would make concessions rather than be forced to call on the 'steam roller'. The position was rapidly being reached where a purely African opposition might be quite as assertive, not to say factious, as those of British or other origin have often been in the past. Any move to strengthen the popularly elected element in the Council had to reckon with the increased probability of friction between Governors and those emboldened to speak in the name of the people.

From the very nature of colonial society it was hard to make the Legislative Council fully representative of all sections. Often its functions extended to something less than the whole; Ashanti and the northern territories of the Gold Coast, for example, were outside the sphere of the pre-1945 Gold Coast Council, the northern provinces of Nigeria under the sole authority of the Governor of Nigeria. In Kenya or Northern Rhodesia only the white community elected its representatives, African spokesmen if any being nominated Europeans. In West Africa the relatively advanced towns of Accra and Cape Coast, Lagos and Calabar, elected their members; business and mining interests had only nominated representatives. It thus fell to the official members to keep a fair balance and to watch the interests of the unrepresented who are the vast majority. In such conditions the voice of the elected members must at times be overborne by an exercise of *imperium*.

Crown colony government was originally an advance on the older tradition that a handful of British emigrants to the



colonies could claim for themselves a virtually exclusive parliament, besides complete freedom of speech. The earliest colonies, as a rule, included either religious dissidents or a sprinkling of members of the ruling classes who were given to demanding a good deal of their own way. Colonists of other races, including Africans, have readily learnt the lesson. In smooth water even an irresponsible and inexperienced Council can be led to act with due responsibility, for example by a discreet revelation of the difficulties of administration made here to a finance committee, there to elected members serving on an executive council. But the anomalies of the position were well calculated to cause storms. It has come to be the essence of our own constitutional monarchy that the Crown is outside and above all disputes. In the colonies the Governor as His Majesty's representative will open the Legislative Council with a speech, as it were from the throne; except so far as he can devolve on his Colonial Secretary he will proceed to answer questions or to introduce new proposals virtually in the capacity of Prime Minister; all the time, however high the debate may run about his own past administration or future policy, he must maintain the dignity of the house and enforce its rules – as Speaker. Of the Governor's three roles his royal functions inevitably dominate those of Prime Minister and Speaker. It adds perhaps to the irritation often manifested by white settlers today, as by Americans in the eighteenth century, that the Governor's royal position makes him socially aloof. The more effective their representation the more they will resent domination by the executive. Africans may accept the manifestations of *majestas* more philosophically, but they have reason to feel the dependence of their fortunes on the personality of a Governor who may be here today and changed tomorrow \

In the event of a real clash between Governor and colonists the effective authority wielded by the Governor has never matched the dignity he enjoys as the representative of His Majesty and of the might of the imperial power. When it

comes to a contest with public opinion, or even with a dominant local interest, the Governor has been worsted again and again, repeatedly failing, for example, to enforce British views of native policy on the Cape or Natal even when these old colonies were completely dependent on British troops for the defence of their frontiers. No doubt from experience of the greater colonies, which are now Dominions, it has become an unwritten rule of the Colonial Office to avoid such contests even in the weaker Crown colonies. The imperial authority is, therefore, far from being as dominating in fact as it is uncontrolled and despotic in theory. The earliest colonial administrators may often have been soldiers but they rarely or never had effective military force at their disposal.

Downing Street, distant and preoccupied, must do the best it can to strike a fair balance between clashing interests in dozens of scattered colonies, all of which need whole-time care and attention. In theory, every detail of administration may be subject to imperial discretion; in practice, he controls who has the initiative. The natural line of development among colonists of European origin has been towards democracy – but it is democracy of the American frontier type, every man for himself, rather than of the British type which depends for its smooth working on a long tradition of compromise. Ultimately, where Africans and Europeans meet, the only remedy short of dictatorship – for which the white colonists would be difficult material – is the advancement of the African people to become a community capable of sharing as an effective whole in their own government.

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In South Africa, till 1936, some thousands of Africans enjoyed the franchise on a common roll with Europeans. The reasonably successful Transkeian system is based on parliamentary principles. It was said that the so-called 'blanket' voters, typically those of Herschel, learning to look for political favours from the member they supported, lost the art of self-help. The economic state of Cape native areas is evidence

against the suggestion that the favours they received were substantial. The chief benefit of the vote was that it freed the Cape from the restrictions suffered by the other Provinces, typically 'passes', and the full rigours of the 1913 Land Act. The onus is on those who reject parliamentarianism for Africans to show how freedom can be safeguarded except by giving the government political reason to pay regard to the opinion of all classes. In Natal and the old Boer republics, for example, governments acutely sensitive to the opinion of the electorate were completely cut off from and inaccessible to any expression of opinion from the natives with whose interests those of the enfranchised were frequently in the sharpest antagonism. In a typical debate in the Union Parliament, on a Bill designed to tighten up farmers' control of squatters in the Transvaal and Natal, strenuous opposition was led by a small band of Cape members – certain Transvaal representatives whose sympathies were known to be against the measure spoke little or not at all. The explanation was that Transvaal members felt their electors likely on the whole to welcome the Bill, those sitting for Cape constituencies knew theirs included Natives who were certain to resent it. A year earlier an official Native Conference, as set up by an Act of 1920, had been summoned by the Government to consult at Pretoria and insisted on recording a unanimous condemnation of this same Bill in draft – (for its refractory conduct on this occasion the Conference was thereafter allowed to lapse). In spite of this the Minister's repeated claims that he had Native support went uncontradicted in Parliament till an outsider reminded him of the happenings at this Conference.<sup>1</sup> The opposition, drawn from Cape districts, lacked the intimate local knowledge to counter incorrect details, or even to contradict such inaccuracies.

Law-making by a Parliament which thus excludes people whose most vital interests it absolutely controls was then tersely described as 'government by ignorance'. Its perpetuation must, in the last resort, undermine the foundations of

1. Professor E. H. Brookes in *Rand Daily Mail*, 15th May 1932.

democracy itself. Not the linking together of black and white, but the virtual exclusion of all the natives of South Africa from a share in its government, has already encouraged an almost habitual resort to repression, even against European dissidents. Any serious industrial dispute at once gives rise to a demand for firm handling of 'agitators', lest their teaching spread disaffection among rightless Africans.

To suggest that enfranchising some Africans sets race against race is flatly against the facts of history. The Cis-Kei where I lived years ago was then the chief centre of the Native vote, but 'race relations' were no problem. The African masses were poor and backward: their voting élite took sides with the existing political parties, the late Mr J. W. Sauer, a leading member of the Afrikaner Bond, being one of many who won their steady support. Till natives were forced into solidarity by measures like the Land Act<sup>1</sup> the Native vote was never the monopoly of any one party. The Cape members showed by their attitude at the National Convention that its abolition was regarded as unthinkable. At the last stage of all, its foremost defenders in the Union Parliament were Cape-born Afrikaners, the Rt. Hon. J. H. Hofmeyr, and the late Senator the Hon. F. S. Malan.

The South African drive against an equal franchise for Africans has been led throughout by men who never had any direct experience of African voters – men avowedly professing loyalty to the political ideas of the Voortrekkers, others from British Natal which had completely circumvented constitutional safeguards for the political rights of natives by devices comparable only to some practised in the American South. The high standard of civilization unmistakably attained by a few Africans no doubt evoked some European antagonism by raising the bogey of black dominating white. The franchise in the Cape must, it was feared, prove unsettling to the unenfranchised elsewhere. The truth is that race feeling in South Africa – especially resentment cherished by black against

1. See chapter in Appendix.

white – increased immeasurably, if it did not originate, in the twenty years after 1913 during which the political rights of Africans became the object of direct attack and ultimate overthrow. It began to be said that the Cape franchise was a small thing and ineffective; the total number of voters in the end was barely 11,000. Till about 1929 it was, in fact, very slowly but steadily growing: the fateful result, according to estimates freely made by its opponents, was that the Native vote might hold the balance in a dozen or more constituencies. After that year the number enrolled was ruthlessly scaled down by a severe and arbitrary interpretation of the education test and other administrative devices. The result of a long campaign was that instead of having all rights in the Cape province and none elsewhere, natives were divided into two groups: in the Cape qualified voters on a separate register elect directly three members of the House of Assembly; natives in general elect four Senators, two for the Cape, one for the Orange Free State and Transvaal jointly, one for Natal, through a complicated system of electoral colleges. That those in the Cape are still better represented is partly due to their numbers, and partly a compensation for what they have lost. This leaves some three millions, including the urban workers of Johannesburg and the numerous farm natives of the Transvaal and Free State, with one Senator between them. The old constitutional safeguard of the Cape franchise, that any change requires a two-thirds majority of the two Houses sitting together, now stands in the way of any increase in the number of Native representatives.

One small compensation claimed for the new constitution is that whereas the Cape Native vote was distributed among the normal political parties, the new members, being responsible only to Natives, represent purely Native interests. It is very doubtful how in a system normally operating through party organizations a handful of members who are outside the ordinary run of politics can pull their weight, unless by their personal distinction. The rule stands that these 'native' repre-

representatives must be Europeans. It was claimed that, freed from the haunting fear of black domination, the South African Parliament might rise above the invariable rule that members are attentive first and only to their own constituents – that it might even be expected to show an entirely new spirit of generosity. Liberalism, it is true, is a growing force, especially among the younger generation at the universities. Scientific groups at the universities have certainly helped by giving undergraduates the opportunity, rare in earlier days, of hearing what educated Africans can say for themselves. At such meetings, or from the vantage ground of the chair at meetings of the Johannesburg Joint Council of Europeans and Natives, I have many times watched European youths and other visitors undergo this experience for the first time. Their expression, beginning in blank astonishment, visibly passes to rapt interest, and normally ends in sympathy. Parliament has now indefinitely screened itself from such enlightenment.

The Union has chosen its path not by applied reasoning but to satisfy the feelings of its white rulers. Granted the difficulty of securing just and equal representation in Parliament or Legislative Council of different and unequal sections of a mixed community, there is no reason to commend the untested South African experiment for adoption elsewhere. There is room for agreed differences in practice, but on the face of it there is no improvement on the old-fashioned Cape policy which aimed slowly and gradually to make white and black citizens of a common country.

#### (II) POLITICS IN THE UNMIXED AFRICA

It remains a question how to secure African co-operation in the unmixed areas where there is no rival European interest. If Indirect Rule succeeds in building up an effective system of local government it should serve also to lay the foundations for a healthier system of central control. In England itself Parliament grew out of the shire; in the struggle for rights and

privileges its greatest leaders were men brought up on and experienced in local affairs. Much of the actual work of government is vested in Councils conducted on parliamentary principles, warranting the view that institutions to be successful must become the people's own, centre and parts working in a natural harmony. In Africa the Legislative Council, the so called representative assembly at the centre, is a quasi-parliament, the constituent parts it ought to represent are tribal councils. The elected members of the Council will not, as a rule, have had experience in the administration of their province so long as the composition of the N.A. is largely determined by heredity and custom. The wealthier N.A.s for their part still fail to see why they should surrender a share of 'their own' revenue to be spent by the central government on their more backward neighbours. The fostering of local loyalties does nothing of itself to strengthen the unity of the colony as a whole. The necessary harmony between the whole and the parts demands some vigorous effort to fit the local machinery for work essential to modern government lying quite outside the tribal routine.

The equally necessary refashioning of the central government was long neglected as no more than a remote and ultimate part of the too engrossing programme of Indirect Rule. Government by council and debate is, in fact, the normal African method of settling affairs, but many consider the plan of selecting representatives by vote unsuitable. The late Lord Lugard, who spoke with unequalled authority, more than once pronounced the parliamentary form of government 'unsuited to the mentality of the African'. There are difficulties in setting an illiterate people to elect a government by vote, but there has yet to be demonstrated an alternative way of checking the intrigue and nepotism which are already a danger to N.A. A college of chiefs is unlikely to be acceptable as an executive in ultimate control of revenues and public affairs.

British policy since the war has returned a good deal to the old ways, and the avowed aim is once again to foster demo-

cratic self-government in Africa. The question is ultimately whether Africans can do by themselves all that is necessary for ordering and directing the reconstruction of Africa. Immediately, so long as European governments are in fact in control, smoother and more effective co-operation is needed between rulers and ruled not only in day-to-day local administration, as in many N.A.s, but in shaping the policy carried out by N.A.s in the country as a whole. The phase has finally passed in which the government of the backward ranked as 'Native Affairs', when Africans were directed and controlled as far as possible by one department staffed by experts versed in 'Native' matters. The welfare of Africa appeared to very many in those days to depend, above all, on keeping the old society unbroken. Today the stress must be on building anew.

Political maturity is yet a long way off. Local politics on the West Coast rage less over issues of life and well-being than over 'places' or office. The more successful N.A.s still rely very largely on European inspiration and direction, and their achievement is relative only. Another note made in my first enthusiasm, years ago now, still holds good: 'the most advanced of them are after all desperately backward'. Today the most vigorous part of the population has visibly outgrown the old conditions. An almost typical problem is to settle migrants seeking economic betterment in surroundings where, tribally, they are strangers. Within tribes there is an increasing degree of such 'social stratification' as is always the foster-mother of political growth. Everywhere tribes find themselves bound up in a new and larger non-tribal whole - fortunate if different parts of the tribe do not owe allegiance to different Empires. It rests on every efficient N.A. to undertake activities in a wide field that was never touched before. It is a laudable object to preserve the older institutions, but even more urgent to foster and develop a sense of social justice and a civic morality appropriate to membership of a society more complete than that of any tribe.

It is by the success with which these needs are met that our



administration will stand or fall. The well-educated, barely one in a hundred, are often outside the tribal bond, and perhaps always better able than the masses to defend their own interests and to make their discontents felt. An indefinitely large number of the very partially educated have made new homes where their work takes them. These are a certain cause of friction. The jurisdiction of the tribe being personal not territorial, mixed peoples do not lend themselves to the normal forms of N.A.; not only where there is a dominant European minority but even in essentially native towns like Lagos, councils on some European model are the only possible resort. The 'mushroom' townships sprung up round West African and other mines are on tribal soil, but quite unmanageable by any tribal chief. These seem suitable material for some form of municipal government, which however might not fit a case like the *Sabon Gari*, a very considerable township of aliens outside the walls of Kano; yet its people, 'progressives' from the south, cannot with safety or propriety be subjected without further parley to the well-ordered N.A. of the Emir of Kano. Even in a remote corner of the country, the Usukuma Confederacy of Tanganyika, I remember in 1930 a Cave of Adullam – a little group of twenty-five or thirty detribalized Swahili or Somalis. Having no share in the tribal organization these caused some stir by overtly repudiating its authority when ordered to take their part in a collective campaign against the common enemy, the tsetse-fly. In any such clash the central authority must inevitably intervene; it may feel bound to uphold the authority of its local agent – in which case it will almost certainly have to mitigate the severity with which the N.A. may be disposed to visit the rightless outsiders. However benevolent the central authority's exercise of its own functions it must constantly be reminding N.A.s of the existence of a superior authority outside themselves, increasingly disposing them, therefore, either to cherish resentment, or else to demand, as is their right, some effective voice in its counsels.

Always room and scope must be found for the class which did not and could not exist in the primitive society. Much as their services are needed there is as yet little outlet for their talent in the small affairs of local districts, and they may not be welcomed nor easily fit in where they do not belong. Nor must it be forgotten that chiefs are often reactionary and illiterate. It will be courting disaster for the central administration to be regarded as bolstering up the old order against the new. The claims of the educated are not sufficiently met when the D.O. or a higher official has succeeded in persuading the chief to accept the nomination of one or more of their number to membership of the local Council. The new N.A. is often both popular and progressive among unorganized and formerly backward peoples just because, in the absence of any strong chief or set tradition of authority, the new men are able to pull their weight and to have a real share in government.

Whatever the future may hold the trend is nowhere back to 'bush'. Nor, surveying the whole field, is it even probable that those who have so far shown themselves most amenable to N.A. are the most active and influential African peoples. The hard Islamic shell of Northern Nigeria must always prove in-adaptable to the new influences which are now inevitable, and such Islamic areas may very well be left behind by some of their hitherto more backward neighbours. Education makes far less progress in the Muslim Emirates than in Southern Nigeria. While the northern authorities gently urge better and more modern methods on the old Koran teachers, those of the south and of the Gold Coast are unable to keep up with the vigorous demand for more schools.

In the past the most formidable resistance, for example to the impost of new taxation, has often come from the banding together of scores of 'backward' but sturdily independent family heads - even, as in the Aba riots of 1929, from the spontaneous action of the women. Such 'backward' peoples, unused to control by Emirs or lesser potentates, and accus-

tomed to manage their own affairs, however trivial, are likely as they learn new ways to be the more intractable.<sup>1</sup> They are much more likely than the great Emirates to throw up educated popular leaders, not only for their own localities, but with an appeal to common African opinion. In the experience of the 'directly' ruled parts of Africa the broken Fingo tribes have produced more effective individuals than the still solid and homogeneous Zulus. There is more to be expected of the weak and overcrowded but agriculturally efficient Kikuyu, who are also, even troublesomely, of a political turn of mind, than of the warrior Masai.

Africa clearly is in upheaval. But there is no possibility of improvising measures from without to guide social change into distinctively African channels. The influence of education is so slow to change old use and wont that old custom will continue to dominate social life and institutions. The circumstances which necessitate change, not always directly our making, are yet firmly associated in African minds with European government. The established N.A.s are already asking questions enough about the share they contribute to common funds. Increasingly they demand to know why and wherefore. Nor are they politically mature enough always to accept the right answer when it seems to affect adversely their own local rights, to the control of land or, for example, in newly discovered payable minerals. An older generation did not solve the problem when it generously safeguarded 'native' rights to Gold Coast gold or diamonds, leaving it to the local chief to make his own bargain and appropriate the rent for his own purposes. Till such time as the State and 'the natives' shall be one, only the existing central government is competent to control in the natives' interest both mining enterprise and the new revenues it brings. The common interest demands that such new sources of wealth be tapped and fully exploited in

1. The history of the Ibo of South-eastern Nigeria in the ten years since these sentences were first drafted affords some examples of such rather undisciplined energy and leadership.

the best possible way. Neither government nor critics reached any more satisfactory solution in the later Kenya episode arising from the discovery of gold in the Kavirondo Reserve. In unreasonable despair the critics would have stopped the exploitation of minerals altogether. The Secretary of State was content to pronounce that it was the convenient function of a Native Authority to receive a full explanation of what the State had already settled over its head.<sup>1</sup>

Sir Donald Cameron was on stronger ground when he reminded over-zealous enthusiasts for the claims of local N.A.s that 'there is only one Nigeria' – anywhere only *one* government. Even the educated Africans of Lagos or Cape Coast, or of advanced N.A.s like Abeokuta, have little or no feeling for anything beyond their own local horizons. None the less, not only the educated but more and more of the commonalty are learning to observe and to pass judgment on what is forward. A leading African governor has put it that 'the submissive savage' is a thing of the past. We are witnessing what our own rule has brought to life, the struggle of Africans towards self-expression. The ceaseless questioning of the methods and purposes of government is the birth of African politics – our trusteeship is arriving at the point where it must stand and answer: '*Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?*'. Our aim and hope should be that Africa will continue on the lines our own experience has taught and proved, its ultimate goal self-government in the best Western tradition. In British circles it is philosophically accepted that progress towards African self-government will be worth the immediate sacrifice of some efficiency in the execution of programmes of development. Responsible Africans must be aware that the honest and on the whole just administration we now provide are good things. It will be calamitous to allow any indiscriminating sacrifice to the natural impatience, let alone to the self-seeking ambition, of their less responsible fellows.

1. Sir P. Cunliffe-Lister (Lord Swinton) in Kenya debate, February 1933.

## *Chapter 15*

### **POST-WAR AFRICA**

THE direct effect of the war on the African situation is easily exaggerated. Some three or four hundred thousands of African troops saw front-line service in East Africa or Burma and at least widened their mental horizon by travel. Many more wrought and delved in the total war effort, even the many thousands of conscripts, as a rule with ready good will. Some acquired new skill, a little of it serviceable, some of a kind not easily applied in the present state of African development. Very little of British Africa was a scene of actual conflict, and African soldiers were like others in being chiefly eager to get back to their homes, probably even readier than most to fall back into their old ways. The skill acquired under military discipline and direction, in at most three or four years, will not of itself go far to raise the general level or remedy the old lack of experience. Of course a small but appreciable number returned with new ideas of their proper place in the world, some of them ready and better able than before to assert themselves.

The most important change, accordingly, is in the mental atmosphere. The growth of political opinion is marked, more especially among the stay-at-homes. The Press was fed as never before with material but it often formed its own opinions, which are reflected among its readers and in the Legislative Councils. It is a common weakness of the political approach that its champions are wont to be more eloquent about rights and alleged wrongs than helpful about ways and means of coping with the intractable facts of African reconstruction. Rights and wrongs make livelier newspaper copy, and much more palatable reading, than the need of higher local rates as a means to better towns or more and better schools. The newspaper readers may be only a small section, but the most active often hold key positions; normal administration may thus

have to counter the suspicious questionings of those on whose goodwill it has usually been safe to rely. It is all in the natural process of emergence. There is at last a growing body of African opinion to work with. How shall it be put on the right road and kept there? Since our help is indispensable, how is it to be made and kept acceptable?

A will to return the spontaneous help that flowed in from the colonies worked a favourable change in the British attitude, assuring active support for proposals to help them. Between the wars the value placed on the right to an electoral vote was coming to be thought old-fashioned. Enthusiastic Indirect Rulers agreed with the South African majority that the machinery of the ballot-box was in some way unsuited to the African mentality; at the same time visible economic stress, above all in the West Indies, inclined Labour and Liberal champions of African rights to defer to the practical view that economic rehabilitation was in any case a prior need. The later war years, on the contrary, saw the beginnings of the first sustained attempt to reform and revivify the Legislative Council system. Certain of the West Indies gave the lead. The Gold Coast in 1945 was the first colony to achieve a wholly African unofficial majority; the local Provincial Councils in this old colony show a promising and perhaps unexpected vitality as a basis. In Nigeria the reforms of 1946 set up a new constitution by which three Regional Councils help to elect a central Legislative Council with an unofficial African majority. The new system has had some success in the plan of distributing the unofficial members over committees where much of the Council's work is virtually predigested; these members normally emerge with detailed knowledge and understanding which enables them to take the responsibility of commending agreed findings in full Council. In East and Central Africa native representation is still wholly indirect. Kenya is pioneering a venture designed to relieve the 'bottle-neck' at the Secretariat. Already at least one unofficial member has become Chairman of an inter-

departmental Committee, virtually a Minister.

It is one clear and healthy outcome of the fresh approach to government in its political aspect that Indirect Rule is falling back into perspective. No longer a slogan or an end in itself, N.A. gets the place and function proper to it as a beginning of African local government. It is even learning to overstep its tribal limitations where these are no longer appropriate. In Kenya and elsewhere local councils are elected. N.A. has been none the worse for losing the limelight. The war focused attention on policy as a whole – not only the politics of the legislature but on regional policy. War needs brought into being an active and successful Middle Eastern Supply Council – now the East African Governors' Conference is being developed in a stronger form as an East African Central Assembly with full local representation. The common interests of the Rhodesias and Nyasaland, and in part the pressure in some quarters for their complete amalgamation, have produced a Central African Council which effectively begins to 'promote contact and co-operation'. Supply, again, gave the West African colonies a Resident Minister – who made little headway as a unifying influence against the force of separatist tradition. The advantages of co-ordinated action have led, however, to the transformation of the old Governors' Conference into a West African Council presided over periodically by the Secretary of State in person. The revolution in air transport and the important use made of West African airports left an established habit of air travel by those at the head of affairs, and this brings London and the colonies into far closer touch than ever before. Britain's desperate need of supplies, and the forcible realization that the African peoples could not be left outside a world conflict, swept away in a moment the 'go slow' habit of mind. The advancement of the African peoples became an end in itself as it never had been before. Truths which had been preached against the stream of current opinion suddenly became accepted principles.

It is the irony of this situation that the blows and burdens of

the war have made a grave difference to us, impairing our resources and limiting our power to contribute to the work just when we have at last attained a much clearer vision of its nature and scope. The man in the street has little excuse today for failing to see the problem of Africa as the exciting business of helping its backward peoples to help themselves. This is a surprisingly new and recent reading. Ever since the Emancipators' fight against slavery concern had manifested itself chiefly in spasmodic efforts to right the wrongs of exploited African tribes or labourers. Always the critics have been negative, governments defensive. The habit of reading Colonial history as a small episode in our own development is in part responsible. If the Empire is what we ourselves have made it, critics at home and abroad are within their rights in making flaws and weaknesses the measure of our failure, in effect our fault. Critics, almost without exception, have spent their zeal on such fault-finding, ignoring the natural physical and economic disabilities of the colonial peoples. There are in truth habits of life and ways of thought to be changed, also moral limitations to be overcome, if they are ever to fare better.

The unheroic years between the wars had seen some advance to a more realistic appreciation of the issues. For the first time the part to be played by Africans themselves got real attention. The early missionaries dismissed all native custom as heathenish barbarism to be superseded, thus oversimplifying as much as the nineteenth-century optimists, to whom progress was a self-propelling, irresistible process in which Africa must presently be engulfed with all the rest of slow-moving humanity. Indirect Rule was certainly a break with such inevitableness. But its age was in the main still *negative*, rather than active and positive. In my own experience I know how negatively I first launched into the tropical colonies looking for ways and means of escape from the mistakes perpetrated in South Africa. It was throughout an age of disillusionment. The first war had destroyed our faith in ourselves and left us in no mood to thrust our



standards and our way of life on other peoples – even those who had no standards of their own, and none but us to teach them. In the academic world the lessons of our own history were rejected as irrelevant – the fashionable African study came to be the ‘clash of cultures’, usually by-passing the fundamental truth that the cultures ‘clashed’ just because they were not equal, the weakness of one of the partners in ‘contact’ being this lack of standards of value.

None the less there was appreciable progress as the work of many more students began to make the facts of the situation clearer. Anthropological field-workers contributed, for example, to the epoch-making 1939 *Report on Nutrition in the Colonial Empire*; this demonstrated at once the debilitating effect and the universality of diet deficiencies, and thus the futility of making either ‘contact’ or imperialist rule the general scapegoat for the sins of the tropical climate. The widely felt need to know better how to proceed had meantime been canalized by the *Round Table* group influences which played perhaps the decisive part in the project that resulted in Lord Hailey’s *African Survey*. This monumental work grew with what it fed on. Leading sponsors were looking originally for a unified picture of the African scene as it presented itself to the brilliant mind of an administrator widely experienced in the different complexities of India. The voluminous evidence that poured in from the many capable investigators detailed to act as staff to the *Survey* caused a change of plan and in 1938 there emerged, instead of a commentary, a draft encyclopaedia of African affairs. ‘Draft’ is the appropriate term – the measured pronouncement on present trends which might have been looked for was overlaid; the emphasis was on the need for more accurate knowledge, on the research needed to determine even the facts of the changing African scene. The *Survey* sketched the broad lines of research, bringing out especially its need to be *continuous* if policy was to keep abreast. It also materially helped many hesitant experts to

turn a mental corner. Students of 'contact' still normally assumed that its effects must be demoralizing to the weaker race – the weight of evidence was at last conclusively showing change to be not only inevitable but desirable and necessary.

By 1939 the stage was thus set for a new and more constructive approach to African questions. The crisis of world war did not originate ideas, but it gave force and the validity of circumstances to those present and ready to crystallize. In the first months of the war the Royal Commission, appointed in 1938 to examine the situation responsible for recent disturbances in the West Indies, was ready with a report on the parlous social and economic plight of our oldest and once proudest colonies. The Cabinet of the day, faithful to the old belief that the defects revealed must be our fault, decided against releasing such dangerous evidence at such a critical moment. This holding back made it more necessary at least to take positive action about it.

It is an oft-told tale how the pressing needs of the West Indies thus became the occasion for a radical new departure in policy for the Colonial Empire as a whole, and how, at our darkest hour in 1940, the first Colonial Development and Welfare Act appeared. The basic *laissez-faire* rule of self-help, the principle that each little colony must, like the old kings, 'live of its own', dropped out overnight. The free grant of up to £5,000,000 a year for ten years was to be devoted, so far as it might avail, not only to finance 'the research and survey work, the schemes of major capital enterprise, and the expansion of administrative or technical staffs which are necessary for the Colonies' full and vigorous development', but also to promote a more 'adequate standard of health and education services': the one was at last recognized to be impossible without the other. For the first time, in effect, it was conceded that the allocation of the fund must be determined by a colony's need, not by its financial solvency. By the same Act Lord Hailey's *Survey* bore fruit – £500,000 a year was set apart for

the organization of colonial research. Shortage of man-power and materials necessarily hampered the preparation and execution of any considerable programme during the war. While the African colonies got little beyond the preliminary drafting of five- or ten-year plans, Sir Frank Stockdale, as Comptroller General, backed by an expert Development and Welfare staff, made a more effective beginning in the West Indies – to such effect, at least, that by 1945 the principle of the new venture was completely vindicated and generally accepted. That year a second and stronger Act raised the Development and Welfare grant to a total of £120,000,000, spread over ten years, that for research to £1,000,000 a year.

It was newly acquired West Indian experience that now guided the final allocation of 'C.D.W.' expenditure, Sir Frank Stockdale coming to preside as Planning Adviser to the Colonial Office. There is, however, no *gleichgestaltung* of the colonies' development – the sound tradition persists that each unit best knows its own local needs and initiates its own proposals. The stronger colonies are able also to bring in local reserve funds; or to raise their own loans, so that the ten-year plans thus far published show great diversity of scope and emphasis. Grants to Nigeria and Kenya are virtually doubled from local resources, the Seychelles or Bechuanaland must make do with what comes to them from without. Kenya, sharply aware of soil denudation and erosion, puts first a variety of agricultural services; Tanganyika, even more isolated than most others, asks for improved communications and means of transport; Nigeria needs these also; the Gold Coast proposes to spend proportionately more on education. Most colonies, Nigeria conspicuously, have plans for improved medical services and water supplies, the latter almost equally important for health and agriculture. Smaller categories normally include 'social services', an elastic term for anything from health visiting to youth clubs, and apparently also broadcasting. Forestry, a Cinderella of colonial services, gets some welcome attention. A very small item sometimes

makes a bow to the desirability of industrial development, meaning, as a rule, home activities of some kind.

On any showing the development net is cast usefully wide, even if it is only working experience that can test these promising projects. The horse taken to the water may drink or he may not. Agricultural services cannot of themselves transform African agricultural practices rooted in immemorial custom. Admirable schemes for 'mixed' farming can succeed only if the peasants will take care of their beasts: there is evidence that unthinking cruelty to animals is a not uncommon African failing, and even the regular cattle-keepers among them have to learn, for example, the importance and the sanctity of regular milking hours. Education similarly needs more than £ s.d. to make it live. The will to learn is widespread but not universal, and success in getting anything like mass literacy calls not only for a will to learn but for teachers willing to do the work of teaching and get very little pay for it. The Gold Coast and other planners are doubtless right to give pride of place to their campaign for teacher-training colleges. These in turn demand higher education for the equipment of their staff. The home Government guarantees support for university development both in East and West Africa, but the adequate staffing of African universities must depend for some time on the supply of willing and suitable recruits from the heavily taxed resources of the home country. The interest and the value of the work, the limitless scope for original research in an immense variety of fields, ought even today to attract good men prepared at least to serve for some years on secondment. Arrangements are being made for such secondment, with continuity of prospects and pensions. A newly established Council of the British Universities stands by to sponsor these plans; the substantially endowed grants committee ensures help as well as advice for the advancement of higher education. But the upshot depends immediately on the colonial peoples, on a great many more turning their backs on the glittering prizes of the law and commerce, or even the

tinsel-show of politics, and coming forward to serve in the building up of their people.

The large sums of C.D.W. money are small when measured by the need. Their allocation and spending, therefore, give rise to tricky points of policy. The original Government Statement of Policy, the White Paper of 1940, distinguished broadly between development and welfare even while it embraced both. Early experience in the West Indies of the over-sanguine hopes aroused led to a right and proper attempt to balance services offered against works of development likely to enable the local revenues presently to carry their own burdens. Sir Frank Stockdale's West Indian Reports are insistent from the beginning that the best social services need not only enlightened public opinion behind them but a basis of self-help, this, in turn, requiring that they be 'planned within the means of the communities concerned'. African politicians are inclined to expect social security on the British model, but might 'bring the roof down' if asked to contribute to their cost by paying taxes at the rates ruling in Britain. There manifestly are very modest limits to the social services practicable in any of the colonies, and sound reasons for balancing additions by economic development likely to pay their cost. Yet in colonial conditions the distinction between development and welfare is often rather artificial. Agricultural and veterinary services, which will rank as development, may in time pay for themselves. They have not yet done so, for example in the Union of South Africa where mining revenues have been drawn on to give the farming community outstandingly good services; the leeway to be made up in tropical agriculture may make much simpler aids than these a costly burden for years to come. On the other hand, better health certainly, education possibly, and other measures strictly definable only as social welfare, may very well bring in an indirect but immediate return. The C.D.W. contribution is to be looked on as the means to an attempt at last to break the 'vicious circle'; as such, it will properly be used to attack poverty and backward-

ness at as many points on as wide a front as the funds will allow.

The modern emphasis, in reaction from long neglect of the human side, has perhaps swung towards social service and welfare, much precious staff as well as funds being allocated to these activities. It is sometimes said that their training predisposes British officials to lean rather to minor measures of social reform or social welfare than to experiment in the thornier field of economics – but officials do as they are directed by the prepossessions of their political superiors. Governments in the past trusted almost wholly to development by private enterprise and got unimpressive results; they also failed sufficiently to insist on the strict control of enterprise in the interests of the colonial revenues and of the backward workers. It is one consequence that the drive for social welfare in the colonies perhaps remains more imbued with a negative spirit of social reform than is usual where industrial democracy is better established. The originally laudable and necessary determination to watch for and check abuses may actually hinder in the colonies the effort to build anew – to adapt, for example, what is helpful in the old family system. Trades unions are difficult to maintain among uneducated illiterates; social or even accident insurance is all but impossible so long as the workers themselves, and their dependants, are as often as not unidentifiable. It makes no material difference that any colony failing to put satisfactory trade union laws on its statute book debar itself from sharing in C.D.W. benefits. The protection of labour is essential; the working out of the appropriate machinery calls perhaps for more adaptability than British prefabricated models have always allowed for. The minimum standard of working conditions enforced in great government departments is, in fact, not so good as that in the best-run private industries. There are peculiar difficulties in the way of new Labour Departments trying to bring steadiness and order into the relations of employers with the growing body of African industrial employees.

The Labour Departments may have got their start, I have often suspected, as an office-inspired sop to persistent Labour questioners in the House. One incidental step in their evolution has borne significant fruit. The plan to recruit experienced British trade-unionists, mooted on the eve of the war, got a fillip from the Labour Under-Secretary in the Coalition Government of 1940. The men eventually sent out not only made themselves generally welcome in the colonies, where they helped to broaden the basis of the administration: being British trade unionists they were also good tradesmen, able to judge the quality of a good day's work when they met it. The result has been a growing awareness of the inefficient costliness of most African labour, except perhaps for the roughest work. Not for lack of sympathy, these new men are perhaps more critical of the quality of the work done than their administrative predecessors were apt to be, and less disposed than they themselves may have been at the beginning to lay all the blame on 'exploiting' employers. It thus becomes more and more widely appreciated that an improvement in general efficiency, as well as in pay and conditions, is vital if the wheels of the development programme are ever to revolve to the best purpose.

Investigation is still needed to determine natural resources more fully, and how far their working is economic. Having been so determined the possibilities have then to be exploited. It is first of all necessary to supply capital, or to attract it in sufficient volume, to a field in which apart from isolated mines, and a few still more scattered industries like sisal, there are no considerable enterprises except the State-owned and -managed public utilities — railways, the post office, and public works (the ever-present P.W.D.). These often large-scale undertakings serve their purposes reasonably well. But their presence makes no difference to the almost wholly rural environment, and there is little or nothing else to take over as it stands and 'nationalize'. Nor is it probable that the very 'official' administration will make the most of

African labour, or cure it of its preference for a civil service status in employment.

The experience of the age points strongly to 'totalitarian' attack on the model of the American T.V.A. which has transformed both economic and social conditions in the Tennessee Valley. A Nigerian Government-sponsored corporation, accordingly, takes over the formerly German-owned and already developed 250,000-acre plantations in the Cameroons for the public benefit. An East African venture is more spectacular. There more than three million acres of sparsely populated tsetse-bush, chiefly in Tanganyika, are to be broken in for the production of groundnuts. For the present the services of the Lever Group United Africa Company – with whom the idea, originated – are called in to set going a socially planned enterprise which will ultimately pass to another publicly controlled corporation. Both its originators and the Government which sponsored this project deserve credit for the most imaginative piece of constructive work that has been put in hand since Mr Rhodes was dreaming his much vaguer 'big ideas' fifty years ago. Large scale, scientific agricultural production has an essential part to play in African reconstruction none the less that it must tax the ingenuity of the best of planners to get it going. There is no reason to doubt that, in time, zeal and energy will win through, but early hopes of immediate results were dashed, only in part by world shortage of materials. Even the great experience of those directing this undertaking seem to have under-rated the obstacle of intractable African physical conditions, and the limiting effect of their necessary dependence on African labour. There is the further consideration that while a venture on this scale, might have been put in hand and accepted without question if it had been tried long ago, it has now to face a good deal of African criticism. African suspicions, and traditional West African land policy, make it much more difficult to look for a repetition of this hopeful enterprise anywhere in West Africa, where much land now ineffectively worked by



peasants calls for similarly large-scale exploitation. It is in fact true it was the world-shortage of fats that prompted and gave substantial prospects to this East African venture. Many more such enterprises are required to set the rest of Africa on the road to better economic and social well-being, but it does not follow that either State corporations or private enterprise will be equally ready to find the necessary capital except with such special inducements.

A not altogether hopeful capital policy pronouncement appeared lately in a White Paper whose publication followed hard on a rich strike of diamonds in Tanganyika. It rightly comes out in favour of nationalizing mineral rights, where these are not already reserved to the Crown. It also hints – perhaps ‘threatens’ – that mining enterprise may be a suitable field for the State. This proposition, especially dubious if it involves venturing into the fickle diamond market, shows that the significance of South African mining experience is still very imperfectly appreciated, especially the possibilities of the profit-sharing lease of the State’s mining rights to specialist mining groups. The complications of the taxation formula worked out in the Union may have been a deterrent to an imperfectly equipped Colonial Office – the White Paper fails to grasp and act on the outstanding lesson that the Colonial Office needs at least its own Mining Adviser, preferably the strongest possible Mining Engineering Department, to handle such leases. There is danger, in short, of falling between two stools. Either the State provides and directs the capital itself, or it does not. If it does not and wants private enterprise to find the capital it will have to pay the market price for capital. There is no longer any question of the price including capital’s right to do as it likes with ‘its’ labour, or to dictate the policy of the State. But any capitalist fulfilling an approved function is entitled to be sure of his place in the national economy, and to be able to plan ahead over a good term of years. He will inevitably also look for at least the possibility of something more than a Treasury  $2\frac{1}{2}$  per cent return on his outlay. The

uncertainties of productive enterprise in Africa are already so great that the State, wanting to get things done, must not add to these uncertainties any unnecessary doubts about the benevolence of its attitude when and so long as the help of private enterprise is still wanted.

There are other elements in the preparation needed for a successful development drive. Not so long ago one of the first notes I made in the more advanced West Indian colonies was of the dearth of reliable statistics to go to work on. It raises some delicate considerations that unaided Africans cannot yet undertake the necessary preliminary work, such as map-making and census-taking, any more than the basic research. All well-governed countries have evolved their own census machinery in the course of years and built up their vital statistics. It is impossible to plan the school requirements of a country where the actual and prospective number of children to be provided for is hardly even to be guessed at, and futile to hope for actuarially sound social insurance. Land settlement in Africa, particularly the change over from shifting cultivation to the intensive use of some defined holding, demands land survey. Steep uneconomic gradients hamper the work of railways, and hairpin bends multiply the dangers of driving on the roads, because both have been planned with only rudimentary maps and locally improvised surveying. Vital statistics will necessarily be slow of growth and, says the committee in control, the taking of a census, even on the simplest basis, 'constitutes a considerable administrative undertaking'. Much thought and attention have gone, therefore, and appreciable sums of C.D.W. money are ear-marked, for geodetic and topographical surveys, and for demography and census. Land tenure now has an advisory panel to itself.

In this field, and over the much wider field of pure research, the impetus from Lord Hailey's *Survey* continued. A central Colonial Research Committee began work about 1942 and from it there have emanated independent specialist research

bodies – for colonial products, for social science, for medical research, and one for the study of agriculture, animal health and forestry. Grants already made include a six-figure allocation for a Cinchona Research and Development Organization based on Amani (Tanganyika), for a Fishery Research Institute at Jinja, a Cotton Research Station and an Institute of Social Research at Makerere, all in Uganda, as well as large sums for experiments with D.D.T. and other insecticides – ranging from these down to relatively modest sums to enable individual students to pursue research of their own originating. British colonial study is thus, at last, systematically planned and organized as an end in itself; responsible students are no longer wholly dependent on the ready generosity of the Carnegie Trust or other more exclusively American and otherwise preoccupied research Foundations.

All this adds to the tragedy it is that our powers are so much impaired just at this moment when even Imperialists need to be reminded that our responsibilities have to be shouldered at some sacrifice, especially of men whom we can ill spare. The point of view of those to be practised on has also to be better appreciated. It is common ground that long-term African development can be carried through only by the work of Africans. It is not so well appreciated how galling it is for them, or for the few among them who understand what is afoot, to be called on to receive with gratitude the fruits of abstract and sometimes portentous research showered down on them from Olympian heights to which they themselves can have little access. It is the crux of the problem to bring down to African earth the broad general ideas which spread so far and fast – to make the beginnings of accurate social measurement, and to persuade enthusiasts to accept the limitations imposed by the facts once these have been verified. Hence it is that research workers must beware of letting the official's habit of secrecy intensify the native gloom of their academic seclusion. Soon East and West African universities may become the natural headquarters of research, and it

will help that some Africans will then be better placed to share in the work and popularize the results. That they cannot so soon be ready to take the leading part makes it the more imperative to find new ways of winning African co-operation.

It is something to the good that at this turning-point in the relations of Britain and the African colonies there is a great fund of mutual goodwill to ease any rubs that may come. The attitude of the colonies in the war years was never in doubt. The English language is their medium of access to the ideas of the great world outside, and almost all their leaders owe at least the beginnings of their education to the teaching of missionaries, as a rule British, whose disinterested motives none can question. Africans themselves have helped to make the work of their administrative and technical officers no less a labour of love. The best Africans know also that this service, for all the satisfaction it gives these immigrants, exacts its price – broken health often, normally the sacrifice of family life – and yet that Africa had been worse off without it. The new and much more varied work now called for can succeed only if it springs from, or develops in the new body of recruits, something of the same old sense of mission – if the research worker, for example, is always conscious that his work in the laboratory or on blue-books may closely touch the everyday life or the future of whole communities, and needs *their* acceptance. Our young men and women will not themselves be backward in answering the new call for help in Africa. The universities, however, are far ahead; some education authorities, harassed by the shortage of teachers for their own purposes, refuse to release volunteers, even by way of secondment which would return many of them better equipped by stimulating experience in a new environment. Post-war Britain needs to make all the friends she can and must still grow by giving. On the narrowest and most realist of grounds the development of Africa – long ago advocated as a field for ‘philanthropy at 5 per cent’ – promises in the long run a pre-

ponderant share in a potentially very great market. This demands that we do our full part of the unremunerative work at this stage. In the process we need to strive to retain and develop the goodwill with which we began.

The task of government is manifestly far more complex than it was when a handful of officials kept the peace, and scattered missionaries did anything else that was done. A once uncritical people begin some of them even to question the benevolence of our intentions. Publicity, a modern need, has been a weakness in the armoury of most colonial governments, as of the Colonial Office itself. The committees of the new Legislative Councils may help by receiving and sifting expert evidence which it is beyond the power of their Press to cope with. The Gold Coast affords a leading instance of the value of semi-official standing committees, which have more than once thrashed out agreed reports, thus winning a broad basis of support; for example, for the programme of educational reform. The Gold Coast is unusually well placed in, having at or associated with Achimota both a group of unofficial European experts and a strong body of African professional men to be drawn into exchanges with the government departments. The pattern is the essential point. Medical and agricultural departments everywhere would do well to follow Education in bringing into counsel all the unofficial talent they can. This includes many more unofficial Europeans, especially in the business community, than even the Gold Coast makes full use of; many of these have long and intimate experience and whole-hearted devotion to the countries of their adoption; they themselves deserve to be kept informed, or if need be instructed, as agents of publicity in scattered centres of African opinion not otherwise easily reached.

It is inevitable to think in terms of 'African opinion' but this opinion is far from coherent or united. Not long ago British teaching at least spoke with one steadily liberal voice, and virtually all British African leaders knew and spoke only

the language of Western parliamentary democracy. So, with rare exceptions, they still do, save for the undertones that come from a new acquaintance with the more impatient philosophy of Marx. It is very much at second hand, almost by echo, that Marxism touches the economics of colonial countries, but its jargon is catching, even when it is still less appropriate to their conditions than the older slogan 'peace, retrenchment and reform' might be. A new aggressiveness is to be expected when so many at home and abroad have all the ills of colonial life ready labelled as the inevitable result of capitalist exploitation and imperialist aggression. Aggressiveness is, in fact, most marked in a sphere of 'contact' where economic considerations are only indirectly involved. A few tropical Africans have been caught up in the wave of emotionalism, originating naturally enough in mixed America and lately evident at the Assembly of the United Nations, which fiercely asserts the rights of 'colour', and the wrongs it suffers in the world of today. The intrusion of an inflamed colour consciousness is no less a misfortune for being a 'red herring' completely irrelevant to the present and future fortunes of tropical Africa. The Union of South Africa can only be left to dree its own hard weird. Its people are even now learning that its industrial colour bar, for example, is a waste of precious man-power, as foolish as it is unjust, undoing the benefits of the valuable education afforded by the example of civilized living no less than by direct precept. Elsewhere in the African continent a colour bar has little present validity, and no possible future.

Colour consciousness tends too often to take a form as reprehensibly anti-white as its older manifestations were unjustly contemptuous of the black man. Its roots are in the inequality the development drive is at last struggling to remedy, with hope of success only if the races will work in harmony as in the African colonies they normally do. Social rubs are inevitable for want of the common outlook and mutually shared interests which are the natural basis of close

social intercourse; clubs in any society elect their members from circles with some restricted common interest. Those who would none the less make the social wrongs suffered by colour a main issue are behind the times most of them would ardently wish to be abreast of – they are victims of the negative fallacy I have insisted on, and living in a dead past. Slight and grievances call only for a sympathy that is indistinguishable from condescension – which is totally inadmissible. The battle for African ‘rights’ is over and done with – no one any longer seeks or expects to hold Africa down; even reactionaries in South Africa ask plaintively only for what they call ‘separateness’. Africans themselves rightly ask for equality and equal treatment; which requires that we act by them as we do among ourselves in speech and thought. Plain speech allows us to speak our reasoned thought, that the first and major obstacle to the progress of Africans is not their colour but their backwardness. They alone can finally remedy this. We can bring help if they will accept it, first of all perhaps in clearing and verifying the basic facts, then in building on them. But help may be in vain unless African leaders show greater willingness to concentrate on their own intractable problems, refusing to be turned aside by every wind of the doctrinaire.

The only body of African opinion that can be assessed is still that of the very small class able to make themselves generally heard. The interests of the vast majority are bounded as ever by the limits of their own tribe or village. In the new phase of Indirect Rule, N.A. representatives on provincial or national Councils may in time take wider views and make their influence felt. Equally their opinion may fall in with and come to merge with the prevailing political fashions of the towns; these have the advantage of established and widely circulating newspapers to give them shape and voice. I would hazard a generalization that at least West African papers reflect, as a rule, more zeal for a vague African nationalism than for actual Nigerian or Gold Coast reconstruction, and most

for the class interests of their civil servant, trader, teacher readers and their claims to places in Africanized services. Their fellows in the native Press of South Africa have a decidedly better grasp of national essentials. The future depends on how soon a bigger proportion of Africans everywhere come to grips with the realities of backwardness, and then on the success of the enlightened minority in carrying their own people with them.

To end this book where it began, the question is of the spread of civilization in Africa. There is more to show for what is, for the most part, barely sixty years of British rule than we always get credit for. It is appropriate to point to the large class of well-set-up, forward-looking 'black-coats' of all kinds, 'clerks' in a medieval sense, who throng the towns. Such as these have broken the old East Indian monopoly of clerkships in East Africa and superseded Sierra Leone Creoles all over West Africa. It is at the same time a sobering thought, not merely that the country parts are less well served, but more especially that much devoted teaching has brought relatively few of these better pupils even up to school-certificate stage. The standard is gradually rising, but there is much evidence of how dangerous a little learning can be; the so-called 'intelligentsia', having no considerable body of intellectual superiors, have no standards to measure themselves by, and few to keep their claims in check. It is not all the fault of our officers that they find them difficult, the mere 'bushman' more congenial. Some thought and effort go to ministering to their need of 'further education' by way of lectures and discussion meetings, latterly by building up libraries for their use - (perhaps well-lighted reading-rooms are even a prior need for people whose own homes are still so ill adapted for serious study of any kind). Their own powers necessarily limit their reading; publishers and missionaries who co-operate enthusiastically in devising suitable new books for this class may not always realize their limitations. Their own preference tends to be for current newspapers devoted to their own



affairs or, at best, for elementary pamphlets.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps the utilitarian bias in education has still the upper hand, swamping the humane studies – as it is likely to do until, for example, the teaching of history is lifted out of its local and imperial rut and gives Africans a clearer idea of their place in the stream of world civilization.

Some war-time experience in West Africa, as pioneer on behalf of the British Council, suggested another much-neglected line of attack. There is, after all, an infinitely small but highly important handful of the really well-educated who should obviously have the leading part in African reconstruction. Certainly the guiding of the 'clerks' can hopefully be left only to those who are its natural leaders, the professional class, yet the social and intellectual isolation of this handful is at present devastating. After years at the best British universities there is too little in any of the tropical colonies to help their effort to maintain their intellectual freshness and vigour. Brilliant young men in our own services are in like case, lacking intellectual stimulus, especially humane interests of a kind to keep them fresh for their own work – besides being cut off from normal home life. Here is the weakness of the example set by the little white communities of the West Coast as the mirrors of civilization. Intellectual standards in the colonies of white settlement are notoriously low, but there the picture as a whole is fractionally better and always improving. While universities are building and finding their feet, the British Council machinery is adapted for a campaign that should at once serve our own men and help the little band of African intellectuals in their mission to give the merely literate the standards of measurement they so much require. A direct approach to the problem of the literate is baffling in magnitude, if not impossible. The great want is intellectual and artistic fare of a kind now sufficiently described as on the Third

1. A West African library book entitled *Black and White in Design* had a vogue among borrowers who manifestly failed to notice the artistic connotation of the phrase 'in design'!

Programme level. It is not only that the upper strata of society need to be strengthened. Even the social problem of mixing is most easily surmountable at these levels: an intellectual element in the cement is supremely necessary. The less qualified Africans can only learn their limitations as they discover (and they cannot now) how much there is for them yet to aspire after. Their advance in civilization depends on having at last brought into their view the best there is in our own Western heritage of history, art, drama, poetry, morals, religion.

It inevitably depends on themselves, or in the first instance on the leaders they follow, how the intellectual opportunities that come are used. A strengthened sense of spiritual values will carry the African peoples furthest in the long run. The most important of the steps now being taken – it is to be hoped not at the expense of one almost indigenous institution, Fourah Bay College – at last promises access at home, both in East and West Africa, to good university education. Immediately, however, most of the funds and energy must necessarily go to preparing the conditions in which alone any considerable numbers can hope to share in a fuller life. Work on the familiar programme comes first: the many cannot do better while health and nutrition remain as they still are, until better health and applied science give results, and more adequate transport distributes the increased production which has to pay the costs. In this field also Africans must sooner or later do the work and foot the bill, but for the present outside help, both directive and financial, is indispensable.

It is therefore a serious impediment that outside helpers have such a great, almost growing, measure of unreasoning suspicion to contend with on the African side. Some of it arises from a delusion that their continent is rich in resources, and that its people have been deprived of amenities and robbed of material wealth by outsiders, that it is incumbent on these outsiders now to conjure a new order out of nothing by the agency of aspiring Africans, and incidentally pay these

latter well even for the preliminary spadework. This new nationalism is not different in essence from the older variety that flourishes among the descendants of the South African Voortrekkers. Both brands of nationalists should stop to consider what the trekkers would have made of South Africa without the contribution of the Uitlanders of many kinds whose coming and presence they so much resented; where, indeed, would have been the variety of achievement and interests brought together in the end to make a great South African Union. But there is also an odd contrast. The South African Nationalists, true Sinn Feiners, resent the very mention of matters of South African concern save by their own circle; the newer Africans are wont to proclaim their rights and grievances to all the world, but show unwillingness to turn in upon themselves and to consider at all the preparatory work evidently necessary to make effective use of the national rights which no one grudges them.

This nationalism is inappropriate just because, equally in the Union and beyond, the only way out is for people to learn to work together. The African continent is, as the wiser South Africans often boast, the greatest laboratory in the modern world for practice in the racial co-operation which alone can harmonize the conflicting interests that make the modern plural society. Such experiment has, after all, had less than fifty years of serious consideration. It was only in the 'twenties that South Africa itself came alive to its peculiar 'native problem', and South Africans more than most overlook the progress already made, and the lessons to be learned from the experience of the past generation. Now that the conditions of material progress are manifestly clearer than they were some would go further and maintain, like at least one liberal South African expert, that just because of the mixing of the races there is more hope of a harmonious long-term settlement in East and even South than in all-black West Africa. This view gets much justification from an examination of the conditions of such progress as has

actually both the country building the solid foundations on which a future must rest. The facts, which are very imperfectly appreciated, emerge at once from even a superficial examination of the trade statistics. At the beginning of this century an annual trade turnover of about £2,000,000 sufficed to make the old emporium Zanzibar a more important centre than most of what are now major colonies. Any who care to make a graph of the figures will find that it brings out the phenomenal expansion of Gold Coast, Nigeria and Uganda trade between 1914 and the early 'twenties, when Kenya and Southern Rhodesia were still inconspicuous. The bewildering ups and downs of the inter-war years are really even more significant, since the 'downs' are manifestly much less violent in the mixed or 'settler' group. The new, purely African prosperity was too narrowly based on the one-crop economy of cocoa or groundnuts or cotton. Prices slumped notoriously for such primary products, as for forest-produced palm oil, and at the same time soil fertility and the yield of the agricultural crops may have been adversely affected. On the other hand, even in time of slump, the settler colonies' turnover was better maintained by a steadier volume of imports, which included a much more appreciable intake of capital goods. The settler foundations were, in fact, better and more broadly laid, with results manifest in and after the second war when both Kenya and Southern Rhodesia, besides growing more for their own sustenance, shot ahead as considerable exporters of a relatively wide variety of products. Both in East and West war expenditure precipitated the mischief of too much money chasing too few goods; the West African airports drew in particular a large share of American dollars – and the novelty of American ways of life and of spending may have accentuated unsettlement. The very active but narrowly based West African economy has at all events been even more seriously shaken by inflation, or shown less power of resistance, than that of either Kenya or Southern Rhodesia.

It is, of course, a sign of vigorous life that so many West Africans are ambitious and restive, and ill content to return to bush and do without the satisfaction of their demand for newer goods. They very properly ask questions, and when they question the shortage of goods, and the high prices, they are doing no more than our own people. But, in their natural impatience with still insufficiently shared direction from without, they are disinclined always to await answers, or to listen to them when they are reasonable. This nationalist suspicion cannot easily be eliminated. It evidently demands more co-operative understanding on the official side, much earlier and more open publicity for one thing. But effective co-operation for the common good of Africa in its present imperfect state of development calls also for more intelligent understanding on the part of African critics. On the purely material side, while the economic foundations are less secure in the all-African than in the mixed communities, appreciation of the essentials is also less sure — political leaders, for example, refuse to discourage peasant resistance to the drastic remedies necessitated by cocoa disease, obstruct the nationalization of mineral rights, and completely ignore questions like soil erosion, and malaria and tsetse control. Whatever their faults the settler colonies and the Union cannot be charged with such obscurantism. The dust of earlier battles has sufficiently died down to allow it to be said that the economic contribution of the white settlers to the permanent stability of Kenya and Southern Rhodesia, and the value of their experience as a guide to measures for the ultimate well-being of all the peoples of tropical Africa, are now beyond the possibility of question. On its positive side the work of the settler colonies points the way the others must somehow follow.

This is not to suggest that the necessary political adjustments have made anything like the same progress. But it is so much to the good to have this evidence of the kind of contribution to be looked for from Europeans who throw in

their lot with the countries of their adoption. There is work to do that needs all the goodwill and all the brains of all races, and African leaders would be wise to value more fully the necessarily more limited, if also more highly specialized, help available in their own predominantly African communities. The European settlers have brought with them, or by their energy attracted, relatively far more capital than has been available elsewhere. Their skill, their enterprise in risking capital on uncertain experiment, not least perhaps the continuing stimulus their presence has imparted to the slow-moving not to say bureaucratic governmental machine, have all played their part in making two blades of grass grow in difficult undeveloped country where before there was certainly no more than one. The African environment has also contributed materially to the exuberant self-confidence (a rare and precious survival in these days!) which has characterized their ventures – ‘the lure of the bush’ is modern English for the classical *ex Africa semper aliquid novi*. Settler talk is endlessly of large schemes for the development of coal, iron and steel, also of harnessing waterfalls for electric power to drive their industries, and if there is excessive optimism, at least the ambition to attain a broadly based economy is sound. Rhodesian newspapers, moreover, and Kenya Council debates, show the utmost realism and steadily concentrate on the vital topics, soil and water conservation, tsetse control, food production, as well no doubt as the efficiency of the labour required to obtain better results. When West African newspapers begin to treat such subjects seriously West Africans will be a long way nearer to managing their own affairs as they desire.

It is a fair conclusion that the future depends on co-operation, and on compromise, by both races in the interests of a greater whole. The average settler may be still too much immersed in his own struggles to do justice to the African demand to share in control, but he is rarely so foolish as to think that settlers can ignore the African majority and build

a separate and distinct white state. Africans for their part cannot get the most effective European help so long as they allow suspicion to stand in the way of really joint effort. It is a sign of the times that Kenya has led the way in establishing direct African representation on its traditionally active and influential Legislative Council, where manifestly the debates have lost nothing in realism as a consequence. The war years, in short, have done much to shake a former assumption, and to demonstrate that in a long view there is no fundamental clash of racial interests. The well-being of Africa is conceivable only as a sum of the well-being of all its component peoples. It is positively harder to see how the governmental machine is to be humanized in the unmixed colonies than in those others where there is a strong body of unofficial whites to help in the very necessary process of bringing it into vital touch with the feelings and opinion of all the governed.

Yet there is a word to be said too for the Colonial Office machine, not only as the link that alone binds so much of the African continent to other parts, but as giving all a share in the fair-minded direction that has gone to the building of the British Commonwealth, and in the experience gained in the process. It is as easy as it is common to mock at the number of Commissions that have toured the colonies – and there is indeed a danger of excess when too many expert specialists are called in, rather than well-trying general practitioners. But none can question the success of many of the 'G.P.s' in making reports that have helped the colonies out of some particular tangle, or guided them on their forward path. The settler colonies are conspicuously devoted to the Commonwealth connection; which is always a potent check if they are at any time inclined to over-play their hand in the interests of white sectionalism. The all-African colonies, for their part, can look for no more judicial and fair-minded guidance than they now draw on at will from the politically mature people of the United Kingdom. The young

Dominions, full of life and energy more to be feared than to be despised. There is especially useful experience to be gained from the African member of the group, who is not so much a victim of the Union's all-white aberrations as a witness to their growth. The growth of the Dominion is inevitably the model of those who now make full self-government the avowed aim of British colonial policy. The weight given to organs of local government is designed to make the present man-of-all-work, the District Officer, superfluous, as he has long been elsewhere. Typically, the Cape Civil Commissioner, still so named, was originally responsible like the D.O. for all the work of his district: he too once was answerable through the Colonial Secretary to a Governor controlled by the Colonial Office and appointed by the Crown. Today the C.C. & R.M. is the chief magistrate and the local agent of the Minister of the Interior, the heir to the domestic functions of the Colonial Secretary whose name actually survived till the Union of 1910: the other duties of this one-time D.O. have devolved on the officers of popularly elected municipal and Divisional Councils. The vital difference is that the changed status of the civil commissioners in the Cape and elsewhere is the result of a spontaneous internal growth which has hardly yet begun in the newer colonies. There there are many who aspire to take over, unchanged, the functions, powers, emoluments and pension rights of the tropical administrative officer, not so many who are ready to face the rubs and chances of a career of public service which would require them to work with and keep the support of their fellows.



## AFRICA

### THE VIOLENCE THAT KILLS SOUTH AFRICA

... the distinctiveness of the South African Union to be the one African State with a large and well-established European population. It is at the same time a peculiarity of South Africa to prefer to think of itself as a country of only 2,000,000 people, when the real total is nearly 11,000,000. Besides the Europeans there are about 8,000,000 Africans, and nearly another million made up of Asiatics (chiefly Indians) and 'coloured people' (Eur-Africans). Following the South African fashion, even Whitaker once gave the population of the city of Johannesburg as only 253,000; the real total was about 527,000, but then more than half were African and other people of colour, who did not 'count'. It was inevitable that the 2,000,000 Europeans should completely dominate.

The South African educational system is respectable. There are five universities, two or three of them of very good standing. One is a federation of six constituent colleges. These are scattered, so that higher education is easily available in every corner of the country, and one of them, Fort Hare College, turns out its annual quota of African and other coloured graduates with standard B.A. or B.Sc. degrees. Men and women born or nurtured in South Africa have, in proportion to their number, made at least as big a mark in literature and the arts as those of any of the sister Dominions. It is possible that citizens of young developing countries are always likely to be too much absorbed in practical affairs to shine in the field of creative art. But South African life and society at all events have an element of completeness strikingly testified to by a well-known West African, Dr Aggrey, who once gave the opinion that, in spite of disabilities, cultured Africans would find that

Johannesburg or Cape Town had more to offer their children than Salisbury or Nairobi, and much more than the free but severely limited society of Lagos or Accra. This cultural attainment is essentially the work of white South Africans.

Even in face of the great African majority the Europeans of the Union are far from being a united people. Nor are the Africans more than the indirect cause of European disagreements. In the past, it is true, British views of African rights, and more particularly the policy imposed at times by His Majesty's Government in Great Britain, were too 'liberal' for South Africans. 'Native Policy' undoubtedly was the original cause of strained relations, more especially with the Voortrekker founders of the Boer Republics. Memories of these old disputes are still lively; but they must not be over-emphasized, to the exclusion especially of differences about economic issues almost wholly due to the rise of mining. The Native policy followed by the Union today has the broad general support of a great majority of white people of all sections.

The white community is, of course, itself of diverse origin. The largest section is descended from the original seventeenth-century Dutch settlers, who had also an important leavening of French Huguenot blood. Most of the rest are of British descent, or actually British. It is significant that since the eighteenth century continental Europe has contributed so little to the population of South Africa. Because of its typically African poverty, South Africa in the nineteenth century attracted a very small share of the stream of European emigration that went at that time to swell the population of America and of the British Dominions.

The most considerable of other white racial groups is Jewish, the result of European stresses especially in Baltic lands in the twentieth century. The Jews are something over 4 per cent of the total white population, that is nearly 100,000 in all. They are particularly strong and influential in Johannesburg, which actually boasts the third largest Jewish

synagogue in the English-speaking world, after London and New York. Nazi propaganda never failed to take advantage of the presence of this Jewish community and was able to provoke a certain amount of anti-Semitic feeling. On the other hand, many leading South Africans, including General Smuts and his lieutenant, Mr J. H. Hofmeyr, take justifiable pride in maintaining the tradition that gave these people generous asylum in the Union.

The Dutch or Afrikaans-speaking community had attained a character all its own even before the end of the eighteenth century when the Cape first passed under British control. They are still a distinct majority, commonly reckoned to be at least 55 per cent of the total population. The Afrikaans-speaking people commonly have larger families and are even more than 55 per cent in the younger age groups of the population; so that the Afrikaner proportion is likely to grow unless offset by some new wave of immigration in the future. Such estimates, however, take no account of the very large and growing number of families of mixed Afrikaner and British stock who are first of all 'South Africans'. This, incidentally, is the flaw in the argument of a recent writer who has gone so far as to write a book on the theme, 'There are no South Africans' – meaning to say that all are either Afrikaners or 'British'. It is possibly true that the terms current forty years ago, 'Cape Colonists', 'Free Staters', 'Transvaalers', may have given a truer picture – and certainly after the Union of 1910, when these old names ceased to apply, all the Dutch or Boer population at once became 'Afrikaners': This name almost expressly excluded any but those of predominantly Dutch descent, and 'British South Africans' for their part commonly disclaim it. The term 'South African', therefore, just because it has to serve for all non-Afrikaners, seems superfluous to many Afrikaners and perhaps not entirely acceptable – which is unfortunate. The Afrikaners are the distinctive, not to say the most important, part of the white population. It is the Afrikaners who give the white community

its highly egotistic and essentially democratic, complacent and accessible in fact. High offices of Government are in the United States, and the political and economic life of the Union are nowhere of less account. But it matters a great deal – especially because divisions among the Afrikaners themselves prevent them pulling their united weight – that the economic power and influence of this great section of the people are by no means commensurate with their numbers. The wealth of the country is largely in other hands. This fact is vital. It arises ultimately from the influences of economic geography and the course followed by South African economic history.

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The climate, which helped to make white settlement relatively easy in this one fragment of the African continent, has not only profoundly influenced economic development; it has helped to mould the character of the people, perhaps especially of the Afrikaner section. South Africans feel an almost possessive pride in enjoying the best climate in the world. This prejudice is not without justification. The country is sunny, seldom either excessively hot or very cold for more than a few weeks on end. At the same time the variations of temperature are highly invigorating. Modern houses and public buildings are normally designed to provide against either extreme – not as for example in England, where they are poorly equipped to resist keen cold, and insufferably airless in anything like a 'heat wave'. At worst it is relatively easy to get the benefit of a radical change of climate by taking a short railway journey to a higher or lower altitude. The attractions of the African coast deserve mention. Bishop Heber in the famous hymn exaggerated when he wrote of 'Afric's sunny fountains', but he made no mistake in his allusion to the glory of the 'golden sand'. South Africa is in fact superbly healthy. Malaria, the scourge of Africa, is unknown except in the tropical low country on the extreme north-eastern borders. It is one of the

less fortunate results that black and white alike, in the world, after I services, for to tak neglected.

Life in South Africa, is lived a great deal in the open air. Every house has its stoep, which is often the living-room and the centre of family and social life. This is a wide pediment, usually now a covered verandah, raised a few steps from the ground and at least railed in. More often than not there is a 'front stoep' and a 'back stoep', and there may be side stoeps as well. In some better houses these may make screened sleeping-porches - though sleeping out is not the rule, the interior of a South African house has not quite the same importance as that of an English home. The sun takes the place of the 'home fire', and it is probable that South Africans read less than people in Britain for want of our long winter evenings. They may, however, spend a good deal of time listening to the wireless 'on the stoep'.

Sport, of course, holds a big place in this open-air life. Rugby football is the great national game both in town and country. As a social factor, tennis, played all the year round, is perhaps more important, and swimming, where swimming is possible. The annual seaside holiday is a habit with a very large number of families, even from far up country. Golf is, on the whole, an urban pastime, comparatively little played in the country districts, or by the Afrikaans-speaking people. In towns social life is apt to centre round the tennis courts or swimming pool or 'country club', with the result that society is apt to be an affair of cliques. People may live in Johannesburg for a lifetime and know the seaside, Cape Town, or Durban, but very little about the rest of the country. Those in Cape Town especially, or Durban, often know nothing whatever about the Free State or the Transvaal.

The gulf between the few large towns and the rest of the country is all the greater for the reason that nobody in South Africa walks. The few who do (though General Smuts is one of them) are looked on as almost odd. Women are definitely

discouraged from walking unescorted in lonely parts. The distances are, in fact, so great that a walk normally gets you nowhere, though there is some mountain climbing. A very large proportion of people have motor cars; the poorer farmers buggies or two-wheeled 'Cape' carts, or at least a horse to ride. Anything like a petrol shortage may cause real hardship as even the towns are scattered over extravagantly large areas, the vast majority of the houses being of bungalow type, often with considerable gardens. The standard of housing is poor on the whole, except in the gorgeous suburbs of the larger towns. It is true that there are a few remaining specimens near Cape Town of a very beautiful Dutch type of architecture; but in the interior building materials have always been scarce and costly. South Africa is generally a treeless country. Small, scattered plantations of Australian blue gum, or perhaps wattle, make very little impression in the vast landscape. The absence of timber has resulted in a very extensive use of corrugated iron, almost always for the roof and, in the hurriedly built quarters of new towns, even for the walls of houses.

It should be realized also that the country roads (and even 'main' roads are still of this type) are commonly very rough, suitable really only for high-powered American cars; full of deep ruts where the wet-season mud has been cut into and baked hard. There have been considerable improvements in recent years, since the day when, driving a light English car on a main road, I was reduced, in despair, to counting the number of forced gear changes and estimated twenty-three in a single mile! After rain the road may be a morass and often the only thing to do is to strike into the veld and make a new track. I have often counted seven such tracks running abreast, and there was nothing to choose between them. In wet weather the 'drifts' (shallow fords where the roads cross rivers) may be quite impassable, and it is not unusual for cars, and certainly for the farmers' ox-waggon, to be trapped by the sudden spate, when the river may 'come down' in a solid

wall of water 3 or 4 feet high. High veld thunder-storms can be memorable! For most of the time, however, the typical South African river is a hard, dry ditch with no more than occasional pools of stagnant water.

The day, in South Africa, tends to begin and end earlier than in Britain. Thanks to their coloured servants South African women usually have time on their hands. Having got through the household work very early – this may include the making of most excellent preserves, 'konfyt' – they very commonly meet socially in the morning for '11 o'clock tea'. This may be almost a meal (of sweet cakes), and is often a social 'occasion'.

Class distinctions in South Africa, very slight in theory, are perhaps more considerable in practice. All Europeans are 'middle' class, but there is among the Afrikaners in the towns a large section of the less well-to-do which lives a good deal by itself. Its manner of life is more closely akin to that of the farms, where its roots still are. No one will confuse South African farm life with 'country life' as understood in England. The normal farm is still at least 4000 acres and many are a great deal more. Though the farmer probably now has a motor car, he lives very much isolated from the great world. Life on the farms is, for the most part, simple, not to say austere; but at least the farms are practically self-supporting alike for meat, vegetables and fruit – though the last two are not always very plentiful.

There are really *no* 'villages'. The country 'dorps' are no more populous than many villages but normally have the character of small towns. Most of them are the seats of magistrates or civil commissioners and are, in fact, 'county' headquarters. They also cover a great area. Commonage is required for grazing the inhabitants' cows, and to provide an 'outspan' on which visitors may camp, and graze the oxen from the waggons that bring them. It mars any beauty the dorps might have had that the commonage also includes the 'location' – the scattered, roadless collection of squalid tin

well watered and relatively fertile, that the white artisans, who were engaged in farming; the sub-tropical coast had the very high standards of civilization – incidentally for its level of wages had to take account of the skill which was introduced by the original owners, but of the desperate risk-sugar plantations. In the mid-19th century

it was supposed that the warriors of the great tribes would never stoop to serve as agricultural labourers. But even before

The districts stretching from the borders of the old Cape Colony include areas of Pondoland and the Transkei. This area is overcrowded, if only because its development has been retarded by wartime, and a port facilities have been very much neglected. Lasting if not permanent mischief has been done by over-grazing, and there is much calamitous soil. It is still capable of better mixed agriculture, but it is still capable of better mixed agriculture. The Cape coast has one small and very beautiful bay. The real indigenous forest in the districts of George and Port Elizabeth and to a less extent at East London, were the two ports – there is some industrial development to defend the south coast has never quite recovered from the depletion of energy sixty years ago to the great mining areas.

Until these mineral discoveries South Africa was a very much poorer and even a backward country. Diamonds were discovered only in 1869, while the working of gold on a large scale came only after 1886. Until then agriculture in the interior, difficult in itself, was unprofitable for want of markets, and because transport of any kind was costly and very slow. Farming necessarily took the form of ranching rather than of intensive tillage, and the lonely existence thus forced on the Afrikaans-speaking mass of the rural population gave them their highly independent, individualistic character.

But it also left them ill-adapted to take any active part in mining, or indeed in any urban occupation. It is significant that South African towns are, even yet, few, scattered and



of the national rivalry and the constitutional issues deriving from the South African War. In 1906, it will be remembered, the old Republics became self-governing. Union was achieved in 1910, with General Botha, former leader of the Boer armies, as first Prime Minister. Botha and his lieutenant, General Smuts, in acknowledgment of the politically generous treatment their people had received, earnestly set themselves to work to wipe out old memories and to achieve a genuinely united South Africa. In this cause they and their followers have made great personal sacrifices; not least when in 1914 they put themselves once more at the head of Boer Commandos and repressed a formidable rebellion which they regarded as a breach of the treaty honourably carried out on her part by Great Britain. Not long afterwards the predominantly British political party, known first as 'Progressives' and later as 'Unionists', abandoned their separate existence and threw in their lot with that led by the two Boer leaders, to form the 'South African Party'. On the other side a party formed itself, asserting more and more strongly the view that straightforward unity with non-Afrikaners endangered what was peculiar and distinctive in the Afrikaner national tradition. As early as 1912 General Botha had broken with General Hertzog on the latter's 'two stream' policy—(demanding separate channels for English and Afrikaans 'cultures'). During the 1914–18 war Hertzog's party steadily gained in strength, and the labour discontents on the Rand gave the 'Nationalists' their opportunity. The Rand strike of 1922 was, to outward appearance, a rising of the extreme Left. Two or three of the more obscure but vocal leaders were known as 'Communists', and there was certainly much talk of a Republic—ostensibly a Workers' Republic. There is no doubt, however, that the Republic dreamt of by the men who actually took up arms was the Boer Republic of former times. The strike was crushed but now the workers turned in good earnest to political action.

The direct sequel, in 1924, was the collapse of the Smuts South African Party Government, and its supersession by an

administration, under General Hertzog, of which the Afrikaner Nationalist character was only slightly modified by the inclusion of two or three English members drawn from the small Labour Party. Much of the programme of the new Government turned out, in fact, to be useful and constructive. In the ensuing few years the Nationalist Government gave South African labour (provided it was of European stock) the protection of administrative machinery and of social services, embodied in a very respectable code of social and labour laws. This was a necessary accompaniment of a strong drive to promote local manufactures. It made for peace, too, in face of the always dangerous constitutional issue, that it fell to a Nationalist Government to watch South African interests at the Imperial Conference of 1926 which produced the Statute of Westminster. The responsible leaders showed themselves ready to accept full Dominion status, as then defined; thus protected in their sovereign and equal rights, and cherishing also South Africa's status as an independent member of the League of Nations, they were more disposed to let the full claim to 'sovereign national (republican) independence' lie quiescent. The weak point of Nationalist administration was in the sphere known as 'Native Policy' – or so it would appear to any impartial judge of their plan of 'segregation'.

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The project of driving all but the convenient minimum (or is it maximum?) of labourers to develop 'on their own lines' in the reserves had even then some history behind it. In 1908, two years before Union, the Transvaal Parliament began a campaign against squatters on European farms by introducing a discriminatory poll tax – £2 on their class, only £1 for regular labourers. This was a momentous departure from the practice (Chapter VI above) which had so long been the means of saving the situation for the landless, and was suggested by the pressure of local interest, certainly not by far-seeing statesmanship. It would be easy even yet to see just

what provoked it by walking to adjoining farms, say in the eastern High Veld of the Transvaal. On one the farmer is a man of the younger generation, well educated, progressive: his stock are grade beasts; to feed them he grows all the maize he has room for, and probably teff-grass; he has probably orchards as well as a good garden; any odd corners will be planted with trees, potential mine-prospects; and he will have a modern house with modern standards of comfort and convenience. This by no means universal display of enterprise is in part evidence of a severe struggle for survival. Land is dearer than it was, and the population more dense: it takes more work and planning to make a living off 1000 or 1500 morgen than it did on his father's 3000- or 4000-morgen burgher farm now divided among sons. For his varied activities he needs labour – actually more it may be than sufficed on 3000 morgen, and as he wants or feels he may want all his land for his own purposes he is reluctant to follow the old Boer practice, which was to maintain or attract labour by allowing squatters the use of land. There should have been little real difficulty about it. Even on 1000 morgen (over 2000 acres) a good many native families could be located without loss or inconvenience on such one- or two-acre lots as are supposed to suffice for all native purposes in many reserves.

This obvious means of relieving the pressure became suspect largely because farms of the older type are still so numerous. Here the farmer keeps a simpler style, fewer, poorer cattle, far less maize or teff and very few trees, a bare house, only a buggy or Cape cart instead of a motor car to carry him to the dorp for *Nagmaal*. This way of life, needing little tillage and less effort, was normal on the big old farms where a good deal of the maize needed was supplied by way of rent by squatters. But these latter also made a larger labour force than such farming called for or could use. These squatters, moreover, were under no stress compelling them to go to the help of the hard-working squatterless farmer next door. It seemed all too easy to seek a solution of the progressive farmer's

labour troubles by supplying that stress from without. This could be done with a plausible show of being inspired only by a high regard for the national interest. The future of the country must depend on the quality of its agriculture rather than on a wasting asset like mining: and such 'Kaffir farming' must therefore be discouraged. As for the squatters, it was the almost universal belief that they were lazy and needed a stimulus – and their methods were no doubt hard on the soil. Had South African statesmen had any knowledge of conditions in the reserves they might have stopped to consider that the ruin there is on a vastly greater scale than anywhere under the eye of white farmers. For there are many farms which come somewhere between the two we have described, where squatters provide the necessary labour, have their land ploughed for them, and get some care and attention in return. The dominant interests gave no thought even to the fact that in the old Republics at least there were few reserves for ejected squatters to fly to.

This development of modern Union policy had, in fact, begun soon after the Boer War. What is known as the South African Native Commission 1903–5<sup>1</sup> had been appointed by Lord Milner and – 'with an eye to the labour on which his policy of reconstruction depended'<sup>2</sup> – had recommended the abolition of squatting, together with other direct means of stimulating new Native needs and wants. The majority pronounced in favour of reducing direct contact and causes of friction between the races by limiting Native purchase of land to certain defined areas, proposing also to reconcile Republican opposition to a Native franchise on the Cape model by instituting a limited number of separate and distinct Native constituencies. This at once reflected and strengthened the trend of opinion in favour of what began to be canvassed henceforth as 'segregation'. But it was only in 1913 that the Government snatched a moment from the high constitutional

1. Cmd. 2399.

2. Eric Walker, *History of South Africa* p. 545.

questions, which so long absorbed the whole country, to press approval of this newly named principle in a hasty and ill-prepared measure, the Natives' Land Act, No. 27 of 1913.

The Land Act is best known for the clause prohibiting Natives from buying or acquiring land except in certain scheduled areas, which were in fact no more than those locations and reserves already secured to them by treaty or otherwise. The Act itself recognized that something more than the scheduled areas must be provided to meet reasonable Native requirements and appointed a Commission *ex post facto* to make that 'further provision', discreetly also giving the executive some power to sanction Native land purchase in exceptional cases. But an apparently minor clause was of really far more immediate importance. The Act also adopted the proposal to prohibit squatter contracts, making it illegal henceforth for Natives to rent or lease from Europeans except in return for labour service. There was to be no more question of Native tenant farmers. The Union now set up as the only goal for its huge population of 'farm natives' – something approaching 2,000,000 who have no other home – the anomalous status known as 'labour-tenancy'. In plain English, Natives of this class must henceforth abandon any hope of economic independence. To earn a roof for his head and the right to a prescribed minimum of garden and grazing land the individual must bind himself, and in practice the whole of his family as well, to do at least 90 days' work a year – before long it became 180 days – his tenancy of his home lasting only so long as he performs this service. No recognition was accorded to prescriptive rights of occupancy, and there being no vestige of control of labour conditions, the limited use of land allowed him often became the larger part, if not the whole, of his wages. The 90 days might, and often did, extend over the whole 365 – so that supplementary wage-earning away from home in the slack season might be barred on pain of eviction. The general effect of tightened control is that even the right to grow and market his own crops is

restricted, with the labour-tenant as it seldom was for the comparatively free old-time squatter.

Looking back from this distance of time it becomes perfectly clear that the South African Parliament had not the faintest idea of the dimensions of the upheaval this Act was bound to initiate. The Natives of the provinces chiefly affected were totally unrepresented, and since even Native Affairs Department officials were few and sparse in farming districts, there was none to speak on their behalf. It could not in any case help them that they were, some day, to be allowed to buy land for themselves in areas as yet unspecified. Few or none would be able to raise the cash. To penalize squatting was, in fact, to sit on the safety valve. Parliament was guilty of a further enormity. The one-sided prohibitions of the Act took effect immediately: the express promise to make 'further provision' of land remained unfulfilled for over twenty years. It is true that existing reserves were protected from the encroachments of Europeans - few of whom, in any case, had any ambition to go farming there. But it was not till 1936 that Parliament at last authorized a Native Land Trust to set about the slow process of acquiring land for Native purposes - to a maximum of 7,000,000 morgen. Inevitably there was an influx of farm natives which was highly disturbing to the economy of the reserves, so that this broken promise produced a sense of grievance acutely felt by all classes. Few realize how dear the country has paid for the Land Act; its long chain of effects, direct and indirect, has been at the root of most domestic discontents ever since 1913.

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The social and economic consequences of the First World War immediately following long effectually disguised those of the Land Act itself. Many farmers, either because they wanted a reserve of labour or merely from slackness, carried on very much as before. But this was now to defy the law, as well as the pressure of neighbours who for their own ends or

on principle objected to squatting. A good many more seized the opportunity of imposing stricter conditions on any labour-tenants they chose to retain, with the result that farm servants, including a stream of women and young girls, began drifting to villages and towns in quest of better conditions. This migration presently produced the Native Urban Areas Act of 1923, a typical piece of legislation of the new age – an attempt at once to keep ‘control’ of the influx and on the other hand, for the first time, to improve conditions in urban areas, even to the length of compelling inert local authorities to take steps to this end. But it was only a year later still that the Census Report at last revealed how between 1911 and the census of 1921 the urban Native population of the Orange Free State had increased by some 43 per cent, that of Natal by nearly 50 per cent,<sup>1</sup> a greatly exaggerated reflection of a similar drift of rural ‘poor whites’. It was also disclosed that the reserves, especially in progressive Natal, were suffering a greatly increased pressure of population on their poor resources.

Very naturally these years had produced at least a growing consciousness of a real Native ‘problem’. In 1913 an ‘African Congress’ came into being to fight the Land Act and during the war this new body sent a deputation on a vain errand to the Natives’ old protector, His Majesty’s Government in Great Britain. The war, however, far from bringing any understanding of the disastrous effect of the Land Act on the Natives’ welfare, became only a plausible excuse for deferring any further Native legislation. All the time, though prices soared, Native wages rose little if at all in sympathy. The Basuto and others got some relief by way of higher prices for produce. But it is evident that since there was no slackening in the South African demand for labour the chief reason for stagnating wages was the competition of landless and displaced rural natives for all the employment available. Elsewhere I have remarked on the evidence I met later of the depressing effect on the reserves of high wartime prices and

1. U.G. 40 of 1924.

inadequate wages,<sup>1</sup> all the worse for the influx of ex-squatters. As early as 1919 'native unrest' was real enough. Then it was that the first considerable trade union, the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union, began its career under the Nyasaland, Clements Kadalie; significantly it appealed more strongly to landless farm servants than to urban workers, and if neither Congress nor 'I.C.U.' has been very effective it was not for want of genuine grievances. In 1921 anxious Europeans began to take notice and inaugurated in Johannesburg the first of the Joint Councils of Europeans and Natives, on a model from the Southern States of America, to take stock of the situation and to establish touch between urban Natives and such members of the white community as could be persuaded to take an interest. By the silent generosity of the late Mr Howard Pim the Johannesburg Joint Council was able to publish a good many trenchant memoranda which were the means at least of keeping Government and public aware that later legislation had its critics. The drafting of these memoranda may have been the work of European members. At their best the substance was the Africans' contribution.



But it was not the Natives' sufferings that now made their 'problem' the dominant factor in South African politics. The concern of the Nationalist Government of 1924 was, naturally enough, the many thousands of their own race likewise fleeing from agriculture to the chances of urban industry. The education of Europeans in the better methods of agriculture so assiduously preached to overcrowded Natives had been fatally deferred by a century of expansion at Native expense. Forced now from their hold on the land the white overflow found itself in competition – for the unskilled work that was all they were fitted for – with still poorer but hardly less efficient Natives. For years it had been settled policy to persuade or induce these neglected and untrained tribesmen to leave their kraals and

1. Cf. W. M. Macmillan, *Complex South Africa*, p. 227.



take to wage-earning. The wheel had come full circle. The supply of Native labour was now a flood, adding immensely to the difficulty of placing the whites. While the war lasted the South African contingents drained off considerable numbers, including many rural Dutch, thus making room in local employment for many more: in particular the mines came to absorb Afrikaners to the extent of 80 to 90 per cent of a total of at least 10,000. European wage-rates, therefore, had been well maintained, till catastrophe came with the collapse of the revolutionary strike of 1922. Blended with wild hopes of restoring the Boer Republic the white workers in that upheaval betrayed a lively fear that the mine owners would seize any opportunity of replacing expensive white employees by cheap black labour. Till the next gold boom the years of abundant lucrative employment were ended.

The next year, in 1923, the Dutch Reformed Church, which so early as 1916 had begun a drive for the serious study of the 'poor white' problem, was responsible for the first National 'European-Bantu' Conference, a notable series of meetings held in Johannesburg, and at these for almost the first time representative African opinion found some expression. The lead, however, very soon passed to the politicians brought to the front as the aftermath of the 1922 strike. Anxiety about Native competition, and the responsibility widely felt for the poor whites (who also had votes), had long before this led the Nationalists to pledge themselves to 'do something about it'. The first steps were largely administrative. The 'civilized labour policy', for example, gave preference to white labour on the roads and in the public services, which include the State railways, at rates of pay artificially fixed at a level capable of supporting a normal 'European' standard of life. The country next awaited with expectancy General Hertzog's long-promised enunciation of Native policy and at last, at Smithfield in 1925, the Prime Minister pronounced for 'segregation', social, economic, and especially political. The dose was seasoned to taste by a slightly conflicting variety of

## THE UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA

qualifying adjectivessive; no longer suggesting  
resist a degree of virity and actively 'segregated' used to  
tendency to give i for *apartheid* - but only the  
as citizens. But even when we came to take their freedom  
economic systems more difficult. Two  
yet some saw segregation - tight compartments,  
doubts about trusting an 'apartheid' - there might be  
in a European town, but little objection to Africans having  
their own bishops or school principals. Many segregationists,  
however, more or less frankly conceived of segregation as  
'horizontal' - the higher posts reserved for Europeans, the  
lower as a rule left to Africans, though even in unskilled work  
room must be made for a proportion of 'civilized' labour. To  
be on the safe side the Government went on at once to make  
any but white labour illegal in anything approaching skilled  
work in the mining industry, where Africans readily pick up  
a good deal of skill; this was done by the only too well known  
Colour Bar Act of 1926. On the whole, however, it was  
accepted that in the economic sphere segregation can only be  
'partial'. Europeans cannot do without Africans altogether.  
But most are prepared to allow them latitude in 'their own'  
areas.

Realists in one respect at least, segregationists remain most  
convinced and ardent in their demand for complete and un-  
qualified 'political' segregation; so long as the ultimate control  
is secure details, they think, can be worked out at leisure. For  
years after the Smithfield speech the details of Native policy  
continued, in fact, to be thrashed out mostly in a Joint Select  
Committee, and as this was kept in being during a succession  
of parliamentary recesses as a commission, which reported  
only formally, there was little opportunity for informed public  
discussion. In the official view everything was to depend on  
first entrenching white political ascendancy by getting rid of  
the Cape Native franchise. I well remember spending three  
whole days with two colleagues giving evidence before this  
Select Committee, chiefly on land and labour matters. Its

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Government ~~take up to take~~ ~~of concern to~~ ~~to~~ ~~which~~ ~~on~~ ~~the~~ ~~political~~ ~~matter~~ ~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~franchise~~. That was in 1927. Soon afterwards the Opposition proved strong enough to prevent the enactment of the Franchise Bill, which required a two-thirds majority. Without this the Government refused to proceed with the rest of its programme, including the 'further provision' of land, and thereupon it belatedly thought of the economic aspects of the question and appointed another commission; this Economic Report, published in 1932, has perhaps succeeded in the end in persuading most South Africans of the danger of reaching 'desert conditions' in the old reserves.<sup>1</sup> When at last, in 1936, a not very radically revised version of the Hertzog Bills became law, it was sponsored by the all-party coalition brought together by the economic crisis of 1932-33 in the Hertzog-Smuts, so-called 'Fusion' cabinet, which lasted till the split on the war in 1939.

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Modern Union practice thus took shape in the end as the fully national policy. But undoubtedly the formative influence behind it has been predominantly Nationalist - there is reason to judge that in the 'Fusion' cabinet General Smuts was more often constrained in the interests of unity to compromise the more moderate view, than was General Hertzog to abate his party claims. Hope for the future inevitably depends a great deal on the Nationalists, and on the growth in their ranks of the spirit of sweet reasonableness which is ready to concede to others the freedom and the human rights they so vigorously claim for themselves. Restrained optimism is just possible. The *white* labour legislation of the post-1924 Nationalist Government achieved a good deal for the 'poor whites'. As this class, or its leaders, have come to feel more secure themselves they perhaps show signs of learning that a shibboleth like 'segregation' is not enough to 'solve the native problem'. At least they are uneasy about it and their later catchword is

1. Report of Economic Commission, U.G. 22 of 1932.

sensibly less aggressive; no longer suggesting that some one take the black majority and actively 'segregate' them, they ask almost plaintively for *apartheid*, separateness.

The future, however, is far from assured. South African Nationalism still inhabits a dream-world of its own — *apartheid* like segregation is the obverse of its demand to be left to itself and its own old way of life. It is a part-explanation of the situation that so many Afrikaners are themselves almost 'segregated': without being a clear majority of the enfranchised population the Nationalists are all but completely dominant in what is physically far the larger part of the area of the Union. Their effective parliamentary strength was assured by the fathers of the Union constitution, who saw to it that constituencies were so demarcated (one must not say 'rigged') as to give the rural vote a disproportionate weight — though even so, the non-Nationalist rural vote has always been appreciable and relatively few of their seats are quite 'safe'. In the towns, the Nationalists possibly suffer electorally for their exclusiveness and clannishness. It is their habit to segregate themselves in compact districts of their own — just as even at a Rugby match they will not feel they are getting full value unless crowded together on the same stand! In the towns, moreover, while Nationalists have a strong footing in the professions, and Afrikaners now predominate among the semi-skilled workers, they have never captured control of the skilled trades, nor ousted the Labour Party from the trade unions. In particular, Nationalists are still a negligible influence in the ranks of those who direct and control mining, commerce and industry. For such reasons Nationalism, like its bitter enemy Communism, appeals strongly to any who feel themselves under-privileged. The bitterness that so often comes uppermost in political campaigning is much of it to be ascribed, in the current jargon, to frustration.

The public manifestations of this state of mind often do grave hurt to many people's cherished ideas of what is best and once seemed typical of the South African spirit. I recall,

as an example, one of many memories that keep alive the confidence that in spite of divisions, and of a great deal of political wrong-headedness, South African life has a very sound core. Away back in 1906 the first 'Springbok' Rugby team to visit the United Kingdom well earned a rare compliment. The report in the *Westminster Gazette*, a famous Liberal daily of the standing of the *Manchester Guardian*, commented that in a keen match against Oxford University there was no attempt to snatch any advantage and that the game could quite well have been played without a referee. The South African team was drawn from all over the country but about half, including a famous line of three-quarters, came from Afrikaner Stellenbosch, – and that on the very morrow of the Boer War. The principle that 'the game's the thing' has not weighed in the same way with the Nationalist students who have latterly been refusing matches with college rivals whose 'colour' views they questioned. The rancour that has grown with the years has long driven some of the finest South Africans out of politics altogether – a grave loss. But it is wrong to suppose that all Afrikaners are embittered Nationalists, or that the Nationalists among them have quite lost the spirit of that old predominantly Afrikaner football team. In another sphere – even if in the years immediately following 1924 Native legislation became more repressive in tendency – it is mistaken to think that the African population goes about in a spiritual or bodily state of dejection. South Africa is greatly blessed with a fine legal tradition, based on the Roman-Dutch Common Law which concedes Africans all the rights of legal personality. Over and over again the Supreme Courts have intervened on behalf of those who might have fared badly had their fate depended only on the findings of local magistrates – and such is the standing of the Courts that these overruling decisions have never provoked the least breath of political clamour. One small section of the wartime Opposition – the Afrikaner Party under Mr Havenga – bravely took its stand in defence of the decencies of national conduct. An essential

kindliness is still a characteristic of South African life.

The present strained situation is unnatural, and only to be understood as the lamentable, may it be passing, outcome of certain cultural changes of the last fifty years. Throughout history the Dutch Reformed Church has been the one truly national Afrikaner institution. This Church, Calvinist and Presbyterian, has had the devoted adherence of the whole people. Two minor branches – one in particular, the ‘Dopper’ section based on Potchefstroom – differ chiefly in having been always rather stricter and more exclusive than the main body. In the nineteenth century this Dutch Reformed Church drew many leaders and teachers from the Scottish Churches with which it was in full Communion. Forty years ago probationers for its ministry, before becoming licentiates, were required to qualify by doing a ‘trial sermon’ not only in Dutch (Nederlands) but also in English. Many Dutch churches in town and country ministered to small bands of neighbours by providing an English (*videlicet* ‘Scotch’) service. The devotional works of at least one leading *predikant*, Dr Andrew Murray, were best-sellers, in English. All that has changed. English is no longer used. Nederlands has given way to the local form of Dutch – Afrikaans. Only the other day the Dutch Reformed Church representatives were formally withdrawn from local deliberative bodies like the Witwatersrand Church Council, the Dutch Church thus refusing co-operation even in matters of common interdenominational interest. The Church, in short, which has thrown up many *predikant* political leaders, including Dr Malan, has become the very embodiment of national aspirations. It has repudiated, in the process, all international obligations – except, indeed, in the mission-field, and, in spite of its missions, the Dutch Reformed Church broke with the other denominations on the express ground that it stood alone for the ‘Afrikaner’ attitude to coloured races. The highly charged political atmosphere has often been most uncomfortable for its own non-Nationalist adherents.

These manifestations reflect, in part, an important parallel development in the field of education. The older leaders grew up in the placid Cape Colony of the 'nineties. Almost all Hertzog's teachers, like those of Smuts and many of Dr Malan's, were Scotsmen - their medium of instruction English. This colonial status could not continue, but the transition happened abruptly and unhappily, under the influence of the feelings roused by the South African War. Up to that time the large body of bright young South Africans pursuing higher professional studies made naturally for British universities; a handful to Holland. Though an English education (sometimes a British wife!) has often made Nationalists feel constrained to show themselves more emphatic in their Nationalism, it is true at least that the ideas the older leaders absorbed in youth were those common to British and Dutch, and all their long political practice has been in a democratic community. But after 1902 the stream of Afrikaner students flowed more largely not to Britain but to Germany. Stellenbosch and some other South African universities thus came to draw more and more on their own German-trained product for their teaching staff. Many of those now prominent in the Nationalist movement are young men, unknown a dozen years ago, the pupils of the newer type of Afrikaner teachers, many of whom have been influenced, if not moulded, by German methods and ideas.

There is also a new factor. This last generation has seen a large and very desirable increase both of schools and of colleges. Being chiefly in Afrikaans-speaking districts, which were formerly distant and poorly served, they too are staffed with men of the new age. But the young men they have produced, especially those trained at the predominantly Afrikaans-speaking university colleges, have not yet quite found their level. Having no flair for commerce or industry, and perhaps neither the will nor the means to go back to the land, these have caused rather a glut in the Civil Service, in Education and in Law, the three callings to which they flock.

Here is more 'frustration'. Many of these are unfruitfully placed, constituting something dangerously like a black-coated proletariat, which, as elsewhere, proved fertile soil for Fascist doctrine. In the burst of emotionalism that marked the celebration of the Voortrekker centenary in 1938 there began to develop an Action Front, the notorious Ossewabrandwag or 'O.B.', *i.e.* literally, 'ox-waggon fire-guard'. The ox-waggon is, of course, the symbol of the Voortrekker.

All these influences, including the element of frustration, were reflected during the Second World War in the confused, and at times pernicious, political word-spinning that became an absorbing passion with too many Afrikaners. Politics may be in the Afrikaner blood, but Afrikaner grievances, like those of the Irish, have always been rooted in history – no doubt a Nationalist reading of history. The verbiage poured out in Nationalist speeches and writings was no longer in the natural Afrikaans but in the German idiom. The goal was the Afrikaner Republic; and, thanks to the Church, it was common ground that this should be a *Christian* National Republic (stalwarts at Potchefstroom, the centre of the 'Dopper' Church, would add or substitute the term Calvinist). Under German inspiration many came to repudiate democracy. By corollary, though the Liberal Party was once blessed for its attitude in and after the war of 1900, Liberalism, for its tolerance of Jews, Blacks and Bolsheviks, became a term of abuse. German influence, direct and indirect, also caused some contention: can, or should, National read '*National Socialist*'? If so, must Afrikaners subscribe to the *Führer-Prinzip*? The Afrikaner tradition certainly has been 'men not measures' – parties have ranged themselves behind Kruger, Hertzog, Malan, but the *Führer-Prinzip* is not easily reconciled with the extreme individualism of the national character. It is to the good that Dr Malan's official Nationalists on the whole stand firmly for parliamentarianism.

Certainly the rise of German power brought agitation to a climax. But the wartime situation remained essentially South



African. Anti-British feeling, strong as it often was, cannot explain the internal clash of parties. Nor were economic issues very prominent – except for some spasmodic attempts to develop Afrikaner (Nationalist) ‘business’. The war of 1900 had seemed to identify ‘British’ with ‘capitalist’ interests and feeling against ‘capitalist imperialism’ was fanned to a new degree of intensity. It counted for more that that war united Afrikaners, not only in the old Republics but in the Cape Colony, in their demand for the setting up of *one* Afrikaner Republic to replace the two that died. Given unity among them, it seemed possible they might even vote themselves constitutionally into a republic. But Afrikaners have not been united in their demand. Politics, in consequence, turned a great deal on the furious resentment felt by the Republican purists against the Afrikaner minority which stood out against this ideal. Twice over when outside (German) help seemed to offer a short cut to the goal – in 1914 and again in 1939 – the foremost anti-Republican was the same man, J. C. Smuts: and Nationalist fury raged most of all against General Smuts. This negative basis of unity had its defects, and for as long as the issue of the war was in doubt the Nationalists were split into as many contending factions as there were degrees of confidence and lack of confidence in the beneficence of the Nazi might as an emancipator.

This sorry history reflects the fundamental fact that the Afrikaners are after all a politically inexperienced people. Their own Republican governments had an almost totalitarian character. The nearest approach to a party division was an occasional clash between President and *Volksraad*, one side or other being supported possibly by protesting armed burghers from among the *Volk* itself. As General Hertzog once almost boasted, there certainly never was anything like ‘His Majesty’s Opposition’ in the *Volksraad* of his own Orange Free State. The Free State always had a small British minority, and though its members had little obvious influence on the administration, they were by all the evidence very loyal and

contented. There was no clash of interest – incidentally, therefore, no training of the burghers in political give and take. In the Transvaal Republic, on the other hand, the Uitlanders, mainly British, were before the end numerically almost equal to their Boer rulers; and it was not entirely the fault of the Uitlanders that the reluctance of the Republican Government to compromise ended in tragedy. In more recent times the Nationalists have been faithful to the tradition of the old Boer Republics and striven for an exclusively Afrikaner government, disdaining even to make the effort to convert non-Afrikaners to the Republican way of thinking. Their appeal has consistently been to Afrikaner national sentiment; hardly at all to political reason.

\*

The harmonious development of the Union's plural society is impossible without a full measure of Afrikaner co-operation. But harmony is equally unattainable by Nationalist dictation: so that much depends on a sufficient proportion of these over-sensitive politicians quickly learning political common sense. Even to maintain the unity of discordant elements within their own ranks the Nationalists have yet to reconcile the views of their old-fashioned agrarians with the interests of the growing class of urban industrial workers. They have somehow to reach a *modus vivendi* with their also predominantly urban English-speaking fellow-citizens. In face of this it is not certain that Nationalist trumpet-blowers have learned from the experience of their 1924 government – or even understood how much its earlier successes were due to an unearned share of luck. Constructive social legislation was relatively easy with a full treasury; and it so happened that, whereas the preceding Smuts cabinet had to fight depression, the Nationalists' first five years were the years of prosperity that ended only after the slump of 1929. Mr Havenga, the Treasurer, got many bouquets for producing annually a large surplus, that was little of his making – and fears widely felt in business quarters that Nationalist rule might mean financial

disaster were thus happily allayed. But as the slump developed, so did the troubles of the Government. Times and tempers were very bad. Throughout 1932 the fact that Great Britain had left the gold standard was felt by most Nationalists to be sufficient reason for staying *on* gold – if only to prove that South Africa's new independence was real. Yet the Government had impartial support for their unduly orthodox policy. Many saw danger ahead if the greatest gold producer in the world should seem to waver in its faith in gold as the international standard of values – certain university economists' manifesto on this theme earned for them the title of the 'seven foolish professors'! In spite of them, late in 1932 South Africa was forced off gold – with astoundingly beneficial results. It is perhaps of good augury that, even after depression had given place to 'boom' conditions, the sobering effect of the economic crisis brought the parties together in mid-1933 to form the 'Fusion' Government. What is more, the South African electorate plunged solidly for this respite from contention; the polling presently left Dr Malan with only a handful of pure or, as they came to call themselves, 'purified' Nationalist followers. Nationalism thrived originally on a concrete issue, the concern felt for the state of the 'poor whites' after 1922. Later its leaders turned altogether negative – anti-Capitalist, anti-Semitic, anti-Communist, perhaps it may be said also anti-Black, anti-Coloured, anti-Indian, and anti-British, – though they were often no less anti-one-another. A few allowed their wartime feelings to carry them to a 'near or altogether Nazi point of view. But the great majority honestly, and narrowly, put 'South Africa First'. It is Sinn Fein over again, ourselves alone, in a more complex society than that of Ireland. Such nationalism is a poor specific for the well-being of its own South Africa.

For example, the South African population includes 9,000,000 Africans and others. It is evident that the Nationalists, and some other white South Africans as well, think not in terms of the facts as they are but rather as they seemed to

the Voortrekkers. *Apartheid* would perhaps be conceivable if Africans really had compact homes of their own, and limitless opportunities of earning extras away from home at white men's convenience. Besides having it on authority that the reserves are coming in sight of 'desert conditions', we know that only a declining proportion of Africans have any place except as part of the South African economic system. More than ever since the speeding up of Union industry by the war, many, especially of the generation following that finally up-rooted by the Land Act, have consolidated their position within that system. They are not to be conjured out of it without grave political consequences, and not at all by waving a wand of words about them. The disabilities of their position are many. But there is a credit side to the account. Union rates of wages certainly attract African immigrants even from the tropical colonies, and these rates are maintained by a degree of productivity per worker which is reckoned to be higher than elsewhere. A growing number of these workers attain self-respect, and a degree of economic independence, by supplying needs and rendering services to the more prosperous members of their own race. Much of this depends, above all, on the quality and range of the education made available by South Africa to its Africans. The Union can and must do better justice than *apartheid* to its own considerable achievements as the pioneer of civilization in Africa.

Appendix II

POPULATION AND TRADE STATISTICS

	AREA IN SQUARE MILES	POPULATION *			EXPORTS				IMPORTS			
		Based on Earlier Census or on Estimates except where otherwise stated			1932	1935	1938	1945	1932	1935	1938	1945
		Africans	Euro-peans	Asiatic or mixed								
Basutoland <sup>1</sup>	11,716	624,605	1,678	885	308,278	331,145	401,512	501,269	455,111	588,331	749,126	1,624,734
Bechuanaland	275,000	260,064	1,899	3,793	159,870	260,204	375,719	695,807 <sup>(1943)</sup>	176,003	310,562	361,316	556,380 <sup>(1943)</sup>
Gambia	4,068	Total, 237,152			606,514	496,704	288,951	773,737	297,841	513,287	277,440	1,041,635
Gold Coast	91,843	3,959,510	Non-Africans, 3,182		7,892,519	9,971,133	15,425,496	15,743,607	5,605,219	7,956,780	10,380,323	10,954,187
(including Togoland)												
Kenya (and Uganda)	219,730	3,852,000	23,418	109,998	5,726,590†	8,473,261†	10,813,171	19,135,144	4,874,572†	5,726,590†	8,004,690	13,806,871
Nigeria (with British Cameroons)	372,674	Total over 22,000,000			9,628,944	12,049,643	9,701,084	17,225,690	7,245,943	8,299,297	8,632,292	15,746,814
Northern Rhodesia <sup>2</sup>	4,745	1,400,000	21,881	1,926	2,705,685	4,798,538	10,134,841	11,689,485	1,959,555	3,013,678	5,223,693	7,317,225
Nyasaland <sup>3</sup>	37,374	2,178,013	1,948	2,804	788,998	769,766	1,002,675	1,876,063	740,385	656,745	833,824	1,620,822
Sierra Leone	27,925	1,766,613	651	1,216	932,773	1,583,834	2,388,929	1,635,281	1,248,346	1,214,315	1,500,342	3,718,162
Somaliland	68,000	Estimated at between 500,000 and 700,000			164,867	226,759	207,548	231,155 <sup>(1944)</sup>	306,634	325,491	728,050	839,662 <sup>(1944)</sup>
Southern Rhodesia <sup>4</sup>	150,333	1,607,000	82,382	7,400	5,387,251	6,958,343	11,883,000 §	18,032,487	4,272,127	6,555,997	9,759,000	12,529,742
Swaziland	6,705	153,270	2,740	705	71,407	100,176			No Statistics Available			
Tanganyika	362,688	5,437,069	16,112	46,500	2,401,898	4,311,158	4,050,734	8,521,795	2,003,142	4,311,158	3,246,830	6,744,327
Uganda	93,981†	3,926,528	2,553	27,573					Included with Kenya			
Union of South Africa	..	..	..	..	..	..	102,892,610 §	77,454,060	32,812,724	75,345,271	95,886,917	112,385,005

<sup>1</sup> 1946 census

<sup>2</sup> 1946 census (Europeans only)

<sup>3</sup> 1945 census.

<sup>4</sup> 1946 census.

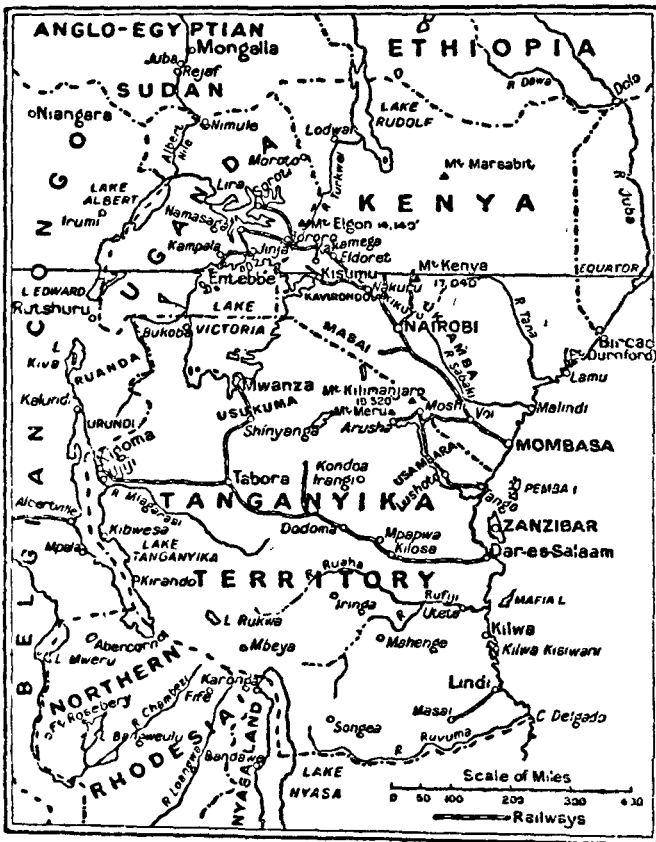
\* See also Tables and comment in R. Kuczynski, *Colonial Population* (O.U.P. 1937).

† These figures include Uganda

‡ Including 13,680 of lake

§ These figures include gold bullion

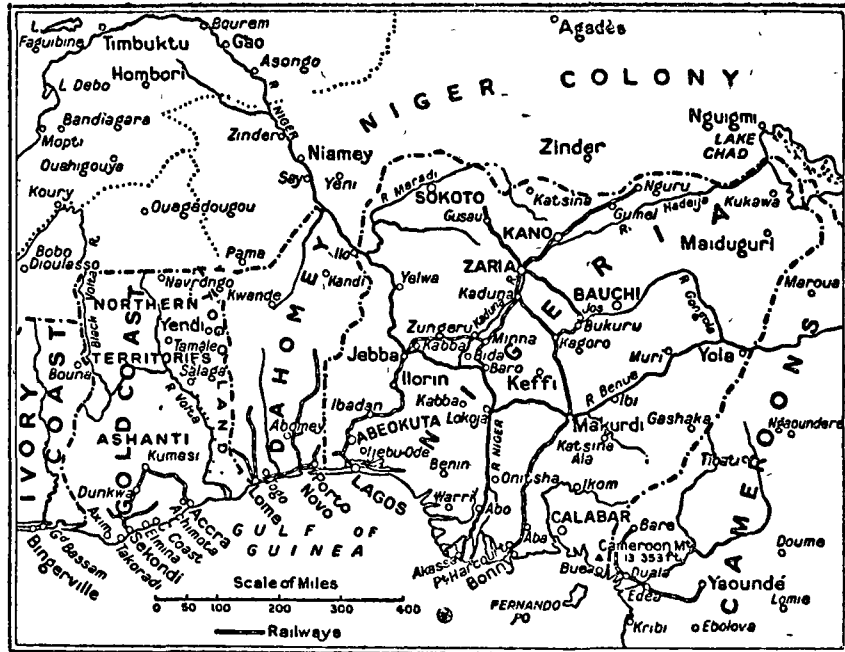
|| These figures exclude gold bullion.



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WEST  
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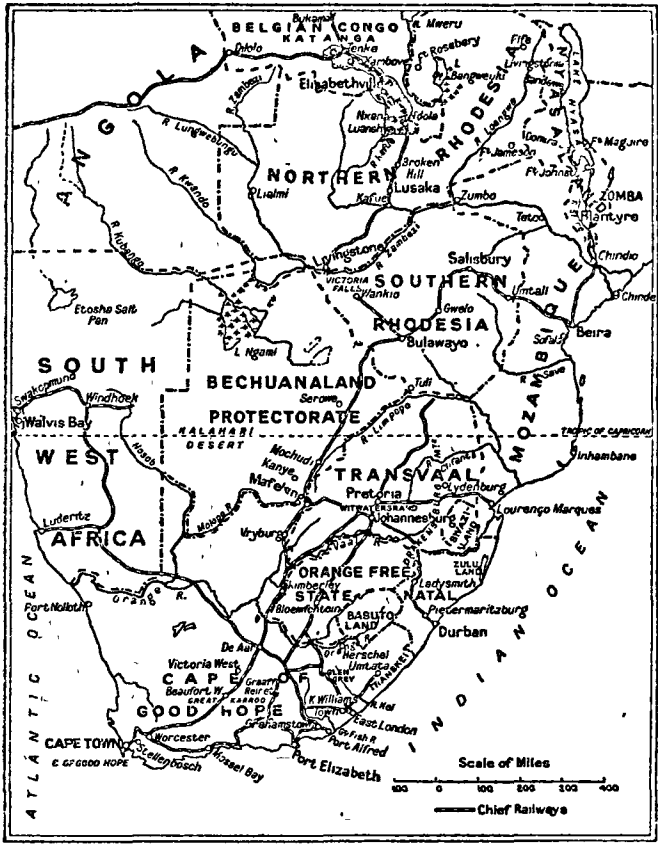


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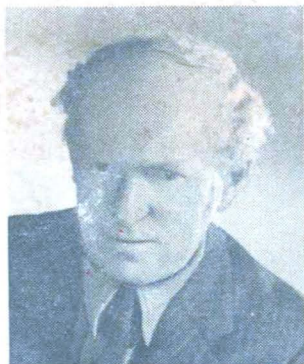
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In 1934 Professor Macmillan resigned his Johannesburg Chair to concentrate on the study of the tropical colonies. In 1936 he published what events proved to be an accurate and timely *Warning from the West Indies*. Fruits of a further visit to West Africa were collected in Heath Clark lectures published in 1940. During the War he served as Empire Intelligence Director for the B.B.C. (1941-3), afterwards pioneering as a senior British Council Representative in West Africa (1943-6). This latest experience is put to use in the present revision of *Africa Emergent*.