

UNDERDEVELOPMENT IN KENYA AND SOUTHERN RHODESIA  
1890-1923: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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Kenya and Rhodesia are two colonies on the African continent in which European settlers exploited the indigenous people with considerable intensity if not viciousness. In these two British colonies, land, labour and taxes came to be used as the major instruments of exploitation as was the case elsewhere in colonial Africa. Kenya and Rhodesia are suitable for a comparative study for a variety of reasons. Both were occupied by settlers, the bulk of whom came from South Africa, bringing with them fixed notions about land and the equality or inequality of races.<sup>1</sup> Equally important was the fact that these settlers regarded both Rhodesia and Kenya as areas suitable for permanent European settlement in the tradition of such settlement areas as Australia and New Zealand. Both colonies were initially occupied by British chartered companies namely, the British South Africa Company for Rhodesia and the Imperial British East Africa Company for Kenya.

These factors combined to make these colonies unique in many respects. The racist mentality prevalent among these settlers meant that "native" policies were based upon the South African model. The African came to be regarded as an object, and a source of cheap labour to work the lands and mines of the settler communities. Great economic hardships were created in the African sector and in many instances the dislocation of family life and the erosion of traditional values became characteristic features of the African communities. The expulsion of Africans from all alienated land and the imposition of heavy taxes on them in an effort to stimulate cheap labour was a source of many iniquities to the African in both colonies.

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It is my thesis that in both territories, the introduction of land segregation did not only keep the African people in a state of serfdom but also retarded the economic development of these countries by preventing the majority of their inhabitants from active participation in the exploitation of their resources. First, European settlers grabbed more land than they could utilize, so that while Africans were compelled to crowd in uncultivable reserves, a significant percentage of European-owned land remained unused, thus contributing nothing to the Gross National Product. Second, because of adverse environmental conditions in the reserves, Africans were unable to engage in profitable agriculture and so contributed little or nothing to the national economy. Finally, the policy of land segregation led to the creation of a cheap labour reservoir. Africans who lived in European areas and who were without adequate alternatives at the time of eviction were forced to accept small plots of land from European landlords in exchange for their labour. The conditions under which they worked were brutal and very often amounted to chattel labour in both territories. It was during this early period that the seeds of strife between the races were sown and the calamities of the succeeding years were merely postponed.

This essay will compare and contrast the implementation of land policy and the levying of exorbitant taxes in both Kenya and Southern Rhodesia and will examine the effects of land segregation on the labour situation in the two territories.

#### THE EARLY ALIENATION OF LAND IN RHODESIA, 1890-1925

Southern Rhodesia was occupied by the British South Africa Company in 1890 following the granting of a charter to Cecil John Rhodes, the famous British imperialist, by the British Government in 1889.<sup>2</sup> That the country was occupied by a commercial company fixed on making profit was a cause of innumerable economic, social and political hardships for the African people, whose efforts to overthrow the new order ended in ignominious defeat. Land segregation did not begin, however, until 1894 when two reserves, the Gwai and the Shangani were carved out from the occupation of the Matebele, who had been worsted in a war better known as "the war of dispossession" in 1893.<sup>3</sup> When the British

South Africa Company arrived in Rhodesia in 1890, its men had carefully avoided a head-on clash with the Matebele whose military might was well known, by moving to Mashonaland where the absence of a centralised authority and ignorance of the whiteman's ways among the Mashona made resistance less likely. But the gold which the European pioneers had hoped to find in Mashonaland was disappointingly scarce and the settlers soon turned their eyes to the tempting lands of Matebeleland. On 14 August 1893, Star Jameson, Rhodes' right-handman in Rhodesia, signed a secret agreement with would-be settlers at Fort Victoria for the invasion of Matebeleland.<sup>4</sup> One of the clauses of the agreement read that 'Each member of the attacking force will be entitled to mark out a farm of 3,000 morgen (6,000 acres) in any part of Matebeleland'.<sup>5</sup> The significance of this clause is that since the troopers who made up the invasion force numbered six hundred and seventy-two, about four million acres of Matebeleland were alienated in advance.

After the war of 1893, a Land Commission was appointed to "deal with all questions relating to the settlement of Africans in Matebeleland".<sup>6</sup> As a result of its work the two reserves already mentioned were created. Both were waterless, sandy and unfit for human settlement.<sup>7</sup> A young Ndebele scholar has described the Gwai Reserve as a "waterless desert", a view which is reinforced by the fact that a Government school called Tjolutjo which was opened in the area in the late twenties was forced to move to a place called Essexville on account of the endless drying up of boreholes, the only source of water in the area.<sup>8</sup>

The creation of the two reserves in Matebeleland marked the beginning of the implementation of land segregation in Rhodesia. One feature which made the origins of land segregation in Rhodesia different from that of Kenya was its vigour at the outset. The Rhodesian settlers pursued their objectives with determination and decisiveness from the start. Unlike the Rhodesians, the Kenya settlers vacillated and even doubted the viability of their new land as a settler colony until the turn of the century.<sup>9</sup> In Mashonaland, settlers alienated large tracts of land right from the start. These alienations, mostly on the highveld, often resulted in the eviction of Africans and in their resettlement in the lower

altitudes where environmental conditions were adverse and where they experienced a rapid deterioration of the soil and an increasing land shortage. Alternatively they could remain on European land where they were subjected to high rental charges. They could also pay for their residence on European farms with their labour. These circumstances created serious hardships as Africans came to be converted into chattel labourers. In both Rhodesia and Kenya, African farm labourers experienced some of the worst working conditions ever recorded in the history of European colonialism in Africa.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, Africans lost their immemorial rights to the ownership of land and the principle of land segregation, which perhaps started with Shepstone's locations in Natal around the middle of the nineteenth century,<sup>11</sup> came to be adopted as a necessary ingredient of "native" policy in Southern Rhodesia. Sir Sidney Olivier, a critic of the policies of the British South Africa Company commented:

The B.S.A.C. had a substantial and straightforward reason for ignoring any kind of Native rights in the lands whose ownership they had usurped. They were an encumbrance which deprecated the value of that land as an asset saleable in freehold to Europeans. The Colonial Office, neglecting its duty under the terms of the charter, for years winked at this scandal: if attention was called to it the defence usually was that at any rate the Mashonas were better off under such conditions than they had been under the rule of the Matebele and that the Matebele being themselves invaders could not claim any consideration.<sup>12</sup>

After the creation of the first reserves in 1894, many settlers took advantage of Cecil Rhodes' promise that after the allocation of those Reserves to the Matebele, the rest of the Matebeleland would be public land and that the pioneers would be allowed the first selection of farms.<sup>13</sup>

Land was lavishly given out to the settlers. Ranger has observed:

Within a few months of the European occupation, practically the whole of the Ndebele most valued lands ceased to be within their patrimony and passed into the private estates of individuals and the commercial property of companies.(14)

In fact the subsequent alienation of land was so extensive and detrimental to the interests of the African people that it compelled the British Government to issue an Order-in-Council in 1898 making it obligatory upon the B.S.A.C. to assign sufficient land for African use. Under article 81 of the Order-in-Council, the Company was required, from time to time, to "assign to the Africans inhabiting Southern Rhodesia, land sufficient for their occupation whether as tribes or as portions of tribes and suitable for their agricultural requirements".<sup>15</sup> Sufficient land for Africans seems to have been interpreted by the settlers to mean areas into which an overflow of Africans who could not be accommodated as labourers on European farms could be resettled.<sup>16</sup> The term reserve clearly carries such a connotation.

In 1902, Native Commissioners in Rhodesia were empowered to carve out land for the collective use of indigenous peoples. But it does not appear that any precise instructions were issued as to the principles to be followed in selecting areas for these Reserves, nor were they given any uniform basis upon which to calculate the amount of land necessary in proportion to the population it was intended to carry.<sup>17</sup> In Matebeleland, Native Commissioners based their recommendations on the Glen Grey Act of the Cape Province which allowed nine acres of arable land to each family.<sup>18</sup> In Mashonaland they allowed fifteen to twenty acres per family.<sup>19</sup> There was no uniform policy nor was there an attempt at impartiality. That this was done soon after a war (the Matebele war) which had left much bitterness and ill-feeling on both sides, was a factor unlikely to produce a fair policy to govern the interests of the vanquished. As a result, the African Reserves so created were placed far away from the railroad and from market centres which made the marketing of African produce impossible. Secondly, the majority of these Reserves were placed in the lowveld where the paucity of rainfall compounded by other adverse environmental factors has made existence precarious. By 1902, three quarters of all the land on the Rhodesian plateau had been expropriated<sup>20</sup> and African landlessness, which was to constitute the "sum total of all villainies" in subsequent years, had become a marked feature of Rhodesian society.

A characteristic feature of the Rhodesian settlers which draws a close analogy to that of the Kenya settlers was their South African origin. Most of the early Rhodesian settlers came from South Africa where men tended to think in terms of wide open expanses of land, adequate for grazing and for extensive farming.<sup>21</sup> The South Africans had a tradition in which a farm was thought of only in terms of several thousand morgen. Rhodes and Jameson were mindful of this fact when they recruited for the occupation in 1890.<sup>22</sup> It was for this reason that the recruits were each promised a farm of 1,500 morgen (3,000 acres). In the first few months of 1894, settlers poured into Matabeleland in considerable numbers many of them obtaining farms averaging 3,000 acres, twice the size of those pegged off in Mashonaland.<sup>23</sup> In the district of Masetter in the Eastern highlands, a settler named Dunbar Moodie with his brother Thomas, who led a number of Afrikaans trekkers from South Africa into the region pegged off large farms which they allocated to each of the members of their families including in fact their children, thus appropriating a total of 108,000 morgen.<sup>24</sup> This is reminiscent of Kenya's Lord Delamere who alienated 100,000 acres.

By 1902, the expropriation of most of the African lands in Rhodesia was complete. But various issues relating to the land question continued to provoke debate among the settlers. At this time the Africans lacked the leadership and the educational preparation with which to effectively articulate and challenge European justice. So it was the settlers who complained, adjusted and re-shaped land policies as they pleased leaving the African peasants to bear the burden of landlessness and cruel exploitation. For example, by 1911, there were approximately 23,730 European settlers in Rhodesia who owned some 19,032,320<sup>25</sup> acres of land while 752,000 Africans occupied only 21,390,080<sup>26</sup> acres. But European farmers complained that the extent of African land was too large.<sup>27</sup> For any shortcomings the settlers suffered, they saw the Africans as the cause of all their ills. The Native Affairs Committee of Inquiry which sat in Rhodesia between 1910 and 1911 shared the settler view that the land allocated to the Africans was excessive and should be reduced.<sup>28</sup> As a result of this and other issues,

a commission known as the Reserves Commission was appointed to look into the question of land in 1914 and to recommend a final delimitation.<sup>29</sup> No African served on that Commission. The three men who served on it were all either employees or ex-employees of the British South African Company and the chairman, Robert Thorne Coryndon, was actually one of those entitled by Jameson's infamous secret agreement of 1893 to take from the Matebele people, a share of 6,000 acres of land, his gold claims and the loot thereof.<sup>30</sup> In their interim report of 1915, the Commissioners wrote: "This Commission is of the opinion that it cannot be assumed that every unborn native is to enjoy an indefeasible right to live on the soil under tribal conditions and by the primitive and wasteful methods of cultivation practised by their forefathers".<sup>31</sup> They added that the Europeans had brought with them a civilization that would break down the "Old Tribal system" and eliminate the need for more land among the Africans.<sup>32</sup> It was not stated how the breaking down of the "tribal system" would replace the need for adequate land by Africans, or why, if civilization destroyed this need, European settlers, who indeed epitomized that civilization, displayed such an unquenchable appetite for land.

By 1914, when the Commission started its work, there were 5,002 surveyed European farms in Rhodesia. Of these 2,080 were unoccupied.<sup>33</sup> In spite of this startling fact, when the Commission released its final report in 1917, it recommended the reduction of African Reserves by 1,062,460 acres.<sup>34</sup> The Commission tended to reduce the number and area of Reserves in the settled parts and created new ones in the more remote parts where the population had been sparse on account of adverse environmental conditions. Interestingly enough, the Commissioners did not hesitate to point out the impartiality of their judgement, "if we err in degree at all, it is on the side of generosity to the people who lived in this country for generations before the white man came", they wrote.<sup>35</sup> By the Order-in-Council of 9 November 1920, the African Reserves were finally delimited as most of the recommendations of the Reserves Commission were adopted.<sup>36</sup> The land categories then stood as follows:

<u>Category</u>	<u>Acres</u>
Alienated Land	31,484,095
Native Reserves	21,203,498
Unalienated Land	43,529,880
<u>Total</u>	<u>96,000,000</u>

Thus by 1925, Africans in Rhodesia held less than 20 per cent of their country although they constituted the overwhelming majority. With the creation of the Native Purchase Area in Rhodesia in 1930, Africans came to control a total of 28,591,606 acres<sup>37</sup> almost exactly the same amount of land held by Africans in Kenya (29,977,300 acres).<sup>38</sup>

As has already been indicated, Kenya was initially occupied by the Imperial British East Africa Company at about the same time Rhodesia was being settled by the British South Africa Company. The British East Africa Company received its charter from the British Government on 3 September 1888,<sup>39</sup> only a year before the British South Africa Company was granted its charter. But as we have already pointed out, the occupation of Rhodesia was a well organized, premeditated affair, inspired by a conviction that there, on the African plateau, lay a "golden eldorado" similar to the one found on the Witwatersrand. There were no qualms about the climate for it was a well known fact that the area between the Zambezi and the Limpopo possessed a bracing and invigorating climate.<sup>40</sup> The vigour and decisiveness of the occupation of Rhodesia was also inspired by urgent strategic consideration. The need to preempt the Boers, the Germans and the Portuguese, who were encroaching into the veld beyond the Limpopo, was a significant factor in determining the speed with which the occupation was undertaken.<sup>41</sup> In the case of Kenya, the occupation was motivated by strategic consideration only. Dr. Sorrenson writes, "During the partition of East Africa the main object of British policy was to protect the Suez route to India".<sup>42</sup> This goal could not be accomplished without the controlling of Egypt, the Nile valley and the head-waters of the White Nile. There were no prospects for the discovery of mineral wealth in Kenya and the absence of any known commercial promise cast a dismal



picture on the economic prospects of the colony altogether.<sup>43</sup> The Imperial British East Africa Company suffered declining revenues for all the time it was administering the territory and ended in liquidation in 1895. The British Foreign Office took control of the territory which then became the East Africa Protectorate.<sup>44</sup> But up to this time there were very, very few European immigrants in the Protectorate, a situation which persisted for almost another decade. Up till the turn of the century, there was much uncertainty over what form of colonization would be most suitable and what type of economic development to undertake.<sup>45</sup> Fears about whether Europeans could settle permanently in a colony which lies right on the equator were raised. Unlike the Rhodesia settlement, the settlement policy of the Foreign Office in Kenya was vacillating and even haphazard, reflecting the uncertainty of commercial possibilities in the new Protectorate.

The only attempt made by the Company before it went into liquidation was the effort to settle a group of Austrian settlers who belonged to an organization known as the Freeland Association, and hoped to found a colony near Mt. Kenya.<sup>46</sup> At one time the Foreign Office even considered bringing in Indian settlers to occupy the Kenya highlands. This plan was frustrated by Elliot, who became High Commissioner in 1901 and urged that Indians be confined to the lowlands. Thus up till 1902, by which time most of the Rhodesian plateau had been alienated to European speculators, the land in Kenya was still owned and tilled by indigenous people. Only about half a dozen Europeans were cultivating land in Kenya.<sup>47</sup> It was the completion of the Uganda railway from Mombasa to Kisumu on Lake Victoria, together with a growing belief among settlers already in Kenya that the Kenya highlands were suitable for permanent European settlement which began to stimulate immigration around 1902.<sup>48</sup>

Once it was decided to encourage European settlement in Kenya, considerable energy was spent on attracting South African settlers. This action had serious repercussion upon the subsequent history of the young Protectorate for it made Kenya a microcosm of South Africa and set the races on a collision course. The decision to stimulate

European immigration coincided with the end of the South African Boer War. Many Boers resented being ruled by their victorious enemies while many Englishmen were disgusted by the political concessions made to the Afrikaans speaking community at Vereeniging. These factors precipitated an exodus of Boer and Briton around 1902. Many went to Rhodesia, others settled in Angola and still many went to try a new life in Kenya.<sup>49</sup> The arrival in South Africa of the East African Commissioner of Customs, Mr. A. Marsden, to publicise the opportunities offered in the Protectorate was received with much enthusiasm. But the task of recruiting would-be settlers soon fell upon two South African agents, R. Chamberlain and A.S. Flemmer.<sup>50</sup> It was these two men who scored so much success with the recruitment programme that by the middle of 1904 as many as one hundred and sixty-eight settlers had been sent to Kenya.<sup>51</sup> Other settlers poured in from Britain, Australia and New Zealand to strengthen the overwhelming South African element which undoubtedly considered the Protectorate a "white man's country", and even more significant, a white man's country created on South African models. Among the speculators were giant syndicates, the most notable being the East Africa Syndicate which alienated large tracts of land just as other syndicates had done in Rhodesia. The East Africa Syndicate alienated as much as 500 square miles (320,000 acres).<sup>52</sup> An examination of the shareholders of this giant company reveals that most of them also held shares in several South African companies, namely, the British South Africa Company which controlled the political and economic destiny of Rhodesia until 1923, the South Africa Gold Trust and the Consolidated Gold Fields of South Africa.<sup>53</sup> On the list of the shareholders of the East Africa Syndicate were such familiar and influential names as the Duke of Abercorn, Earl Grey, Mr. Rockfort Maguire who was one of Cecil Rhodes' emissaries to Lobengula in 1888 and Mr. O. Beit whose family is credited with financing the famous bridge on the Limpopo River known as Beit Bridge.<sup>54</sup> It may be added here that by 1913, nine per cent of the whole of Southern Rhodesia, over 9 million acres was held by commercial companies.<sup>55</sup> Thus the same men who held vast tracts of land in Rhodesia held equally vast expanses of land in Kenya.

These few controlled not only land but the overall economy of the two territories. A questionnaire sent to companies operating in the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland in 1960 revealed that of the total net profits earned in Southern Rhodesia, over 65 per cent of the companies were not domestically controlled.<sup>56</sup> The capitalist implications of European colonialism are obvious. One cannot but accept Chernyak's assertion that:

In the epoch of industrial capitalism, colonialism was primarily spurred on by the interests of exploiting the colonies as sales markets and for procuring raw material supplies. During capitalism's last imperialist stage of development, colonialism was and continues to be wholly dictated by monopoly capital which has supplemented the earlier means of draining the colonies of their natural wealth with new methods of plunder and exploitation. (57)

The involvement of South African based "tycoons" in major commercial enterprises in both Rhodesia and Kenya did not only mean that capitalism was at last spreading its tentacles across the African continent but also that the exploitation of the indigenous peoples was to be undertaken with a new viciousness and intensity, as it was to be based on South African precedents. The South African Glen Grey Act of 1894 had sought to stimulate cheap labour by creating a landless class of Africans who would be obliged by their economic status to work the lands and mines of the Europeans.<sup>58</sup> Likewise in the two new colonies of Rhodesia and Kenya, the pauperization of the African by depriving him of his lands came to be regarded as the highest wisdom in the quest to maximize profits. The creation of "artificial poverty", the imposition of heavy taxation on indigenous folk, and the introduction of pass laws, the Northey Circulars in Kenya,<sup>59</sup> and the Native Registration Act in Rhodesia,<sup>60</sup> were all reflections of the South African instruments of exploitation. Moreover, in Kenya as in Rhodesia, once it was decided to make the Protectorate a "whiteman's country", extensive alienation of land to European speculators continued to be made to the detriment of the indigenous people. Lord Delamere received 100,000 acres.<sup>61</sup> Lord Francis Scott - 350,000 acres while the East African Estates Ltd. got another 350,000 acres.<sup>62</sup> While these alienations were being

made, Africans in both territories were being made to carry passes in their own countries, with which to beg for employment paying just enough to enable the African to return to his master to sell more labour. These conditions imposed a stigma of serfdom upon the Africans, undermining their self-respect, creating distorted notions of their potential and entrenching false stereotypes in western minds about the ability or inability of the African to stand on his feet. The advent of colonial rule thus had far-reaching effects on the subsequent history of the colonized peoples as it created not only economic hardships on indigenous folk but also planted, in their minds, distortions which must be uprooted if meaningful and genuine freedom is ever to become a reality in Africa.

In Kenya, the first effort to make regulations on land was made in 1897 when the Foreign Office issued land regulations authorizing the Commissioner to grant land certificates for a term of twenty-one years.<sup>63</sup> A year later, the term of these certificates was extended to 99 years. In 1899 the Foreign Office sought a definitive legal opinion on the Crown's rights to land in the East Africa Protectorate. As a result, a Crown Lands Ordinance was issued in 1902. The Order-in-Council of 1902 defined Crown Lands as meaning "all public lands in East Africa which are subject to the control of His Majesty by virtue of any treaty, convention or agreement".<sup>64</sup> It went on to prohibit the alienation of any land actually occupied by Africans. But in spite of this provision, large alienations were made by the government without the consent of the Africans involved.<sup>65</sup> The Kenya settlers, with their unquenchable South African appetite for land found the 1902 Order-in-Council unsatisfactory on account of its "numerous restrictions", for example sales were not to exceed 1,000 acres without the consent of the Foreign Office and the Commissioner was given power to declare forfeiture if the purchaser failed to develop his land to a "considerable extent".<sup>66</sup> Amid these issues Kenya came under the Colonial Office in 1905. But the settlers continued to protest against various issues pertaining to land and particularly about the 99 years lease term which they considered unsatisfactory. It was this expression of settler discontent which necessitated the proclamation of the 1915 Crown Lands Ordinance which extended the definition of Crown Lands to include all

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lands occupied by African tribes in the Protectorate.<sup>67</sup> So through various ordinances the Crown made itself owner of all the land in Kenya as completely as any sovereign could.

In Rhodesia, we saw that the term "Reserve" was introduced as early as 1894. But in Kenya the term seems to have been avoided for a long time and if it was not, its definition was never clarified. As late as 1924 the Governor of Kenya wrote: "The term Native Reserve is one that has, I fear, been somewhat loosely used and has given rise to much confusion of thought. There seems to be an impression that no rights can exist over land unless it is a Native Reserve and that no land is a Native Reserve unless it has been the subject of a notice under section 54 of the Crown Lands Ordinance, 1915. Such is not the case at all. The expression Native Reserve does not occur anywhere in the Crown Lands Ordinance 1915 and Native rights in land are not derived from the enactment".<sup>68</sup> A year earlier, the Governor of Kenya in reply to a memorandum written by the virulent critic of settler policies E.D. Morel, wrote: "Prior to 1915, there were no Native Reserves since that term was only first used in the Crown Lands Ordinance 1915".<sup>69</sup> The confusion over semantics should not blind us as to the hardships created by the expropriations of land from the Africans in Kenya; the fact of the matter is that as from 1902 when the influx of settlers into Kenya began, Africans began their long experience in landlessness and poverty. The 1915 Ordinance extended the term of the leases for agricultural land to 999 years<sup>70</sup> but retained the town lot's lease at 99 years. By 1923 it was commonly felt by the settlers that Africans in Kenya had no legal right to land. This was demonstrated in 1921 during a hearing involving a Kikuyu land case. The judge ruled:

In my view, the effect of the Crown Lands Ordinance and the Kenya annexation Order-in-Council of 1920 by which no native rights were reserved and the Kenya Colony Order-in-Council 1921 is clearly *inter alia* to vest land reserved for the use of the Native Tribe in the Crown. If that be so then all Native rights in such reserved land whatever they were under the Githake system, disappeared and the Natives in occupation of such Crown land became tenants at will of the Crown.(71)

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The effect of this ruling was to deprive the Africans in Kenya of any legal rights to land and to confer ownership of all the land in the Protectorate upon the Crown. The African predicament was compounded by the fact that as late as 1925, about 50 African Reserves in the territory remained ungazetted. This led to the consequent excision of large areas of African land without their sanction. An example of these notorious excisions was the case of the Nandi Reserve out of which a large proportion was chipped off in 1919 as a result of the ex-soldiers settlement scheme.<sup>72</sup> Thus by 1925, the indigenous people in Kenya had been reduced to complete landlessness, to a state of virtual dependence upon "their masters" and to servitude and degradation. Walter Rodney has observed: "While Lord Delamere controlled 100,000 acres of Kenya's land, the Kenyan had to carry a kipande pass in his own country to beg for a wage of 15/= or 20/= per month".<sup>73</sup> E.D. Morel wrote: "But for an alien race to deprive African peoples of the land is to strike at the foundations of human liberties, to disrupt the whole conditions of life and to impose from outside a servitude only maintainable by the exercise of brute force".<sup>74</sup> By 1925, out of a total of 155,430,400 acres which constituted the protectorate of Kenya, African land amounted to only 29,977,300<sup>76</sup> acres, less than 25 per cent of the total. Thus the first thirty years of European contact with Africans in both Kenya and Rhodesia ended in a critical land shortage in the African sector. Settlers in Kenya based their land policy on both Rhodesian and South African precedents. In 1924, in a communication to the Colonial Office, the Governor of Kenya wrote: "The South African Native Affairs Commission of 1905, the strongest Commission which ever dealt with Native problems in that country, states its final opinion that  $8\frac{1}{2}$  acres plus a reasonable commonage area is sufficient for a native area. The Rhodesian Commission calculated that the full area required would be 14 to 15 acres. I should add that the Rhodesian Commission laid down two important principles which were accepted by the Colonial Office. The first was that a sufficiently generous estimate for a tribe's requirements today would be sufficient for its needs in say 50 years' time. In other words, if a tribe doubled its number, in 50 years it would double its capacity to win its livelihood off the

same acreage".<sup>77</sup>

The fallacy of these views is demonstrated by the fact that in 1923, Africans in Rhodesia produced more yields in grain, kept more sheep and almost as many cattle as they did in the 1930s when effects on land segregation became increasingly acute.<sup>78</sup> In 1923, for example, they yielded 3,485,650 bags of grain, but by 1939 they were yielding only 3,160,999 bags. By 1950 overcrowding in African Reserves in Kenya was the source of much bitterness and provided the fuel which sustained the political agitation that culminated in the Mau Mau rising.<sup>80</sup> The recommendations of the Morris Carter Commission which investigated the land question in Rhodesia in 1925 and in Kenya in 1932 led to the division of each of these two colonies into two along racial lines which did much to exacerbate race relations. In Kenya land segregation precipitated the formation of the Kikuyu Association as early as 1919<sup>81</sup> while in Rhodesia, it led directly to the formation of the Bantu Voters' Association in 1923.<sup>82</sup> Although these early political movements were hardly effective on account of the fact that their membership was unliberated from the shackles of colonial stereotypes and psychological servitude, they were modest beginnings providing the political experience without which the effective political movements of the fifties would not have been possible. In the light of settler political myopia, the wars of liberation which subsequently engulfed the two sister colonies were inevitable from the moment Africans came to be reduced to landlessness and degradation. To appreciate the manner by which this African proletarianization came about, we must examine the economic effects of landlessness on the African population during the period under consideration.

#### LABOUR AND TAXATION

It is our contention that the expropriation of thousands of Africans from cultivable lands by the settlers and the creation of "artificial poverty" among their ranks in both Rhodesia and Kenya was partly necessitated by the need for an inexhaustible supply of labour. The increasing shortage of land experienced by the African peasantry was accompanied by increasing needs such as school fees, clothes, western foods etc. Thus the landless peasant was compelled to seek employment in the mines or



on the European farms, where he received token wages, hardly sufficient to keep body and soul together. At this stage the "proletarianization" of the African was accomplished and the settler economy came to be assured of a lasting reservoir of cheap labour. By depriving the Africans of adequate lands, Cecil Rhodes hoped, in his own words, "to supply to the surplus population a gentle stimulant to go forth and find out something of the dignity of labour"<sup>83</sup>

In Rhodesia, during the early years of occupation, the British South Africa Company experienced an acute labour shortage and settlers resorted to brutal methods to procure such labour. In a report on the Native Administration of the British South Africa Company made in 1897, it was revealed that up to that year in Southern Rhodesia, compulsory labour did exist in both Mashonaland and in Matebeleland.<sup>84</sup> The shortage of labour also led to the imposition of countless taxes upon the Africans in Rhodesia. In 1894, Ordinance No. 5 of that year introduced a hut tax of 10 shillings per hut. In 1904, Ordinance No. 21 imposed upon each adult male a tax of £1 and of 10 shillings upon each wife in excess of one.<sup>85</sup> By 1910 about one third of the total revenue in Southern Rhodesia came from African Taxation.<sup>86</sup> The numerous taxes imposed upon the African were intended to induce him to seek employment from which he could derive the necessary income to meet his tax obligations. As long as Africans had sufficient land on which to raise cattle and grow crops successfully, they could derive such income without entering into employment contracts with European employers. In Rhodesia, labour shortage compelled the British South Africa Company to contemplate importing Chinese labourers in 1904.<sup>87</sup> In the following year, a South African Native Affairs Committee estimated that Rhodesia required about 25,000 labourers to meet her needs. Five years later the Native Affairs Committee reported that the colony needed up to 50 per cent of all the male population between the ages of 15 to 40.<sup>88</sup> It is no wonder therefore that the European witnesses to the Native Affairs Committee 1910-1911 complained that the existing measures to induce Africans to work were ineffective. The committee then recommended the following measures:

1. Progressive taxation of polygamous wives.
2. A marriage fee of 1-5 to be charged to the husband with 5/= remission for each month worked for a white man.
3. The introduction of a dog tax.
4. The taxation of all cattle.
5. Continuation of the poll tax.
6. Reduction of the size of the Reserves.<sup>89</sup>

It was with this background that the Reserves Commission of 1914 was appointed. The poverty of the African came to be regarded as the sure guarantee of stimulating labour supply.

Another method of securing labour was that of squatting. Upon the expropriation of land by a European speculator, the African occupants on it could either move into the Reserves or remain on it and pay rent or enter into labour contracts with the farmer. Labour contracts often involved the whole family, as men, women and children all worked for the farmer, duties ranging from working in the fields to house work. In some districts such as Chipinga, it was not uncommon to find labourers who were not paid even token wages.<sup>90</sup> In other areas, a practice borrowed from South America, known as "delayed payment" was commonly used in Rhodesia. Under this practice, farm labourers were not paid until after the harvest season, to discourage desertion and to ensure that labour was tied to the soil when it was most needed.<sup>91</sup> Delayed payment meant that the African families involved went without the means with which to buy the basic necessities of life for prolonged periods. The African was thus relegated to the status of a chattel labourer and almost to that of a slave.

In Rhodesia, squatting was popularly known as "kaffir farming". As a result of the Private Locations Ordinance of 1908, Africans could pay rent to a landowner in exchange for the right to remain on such land. After the occupation many companies acquired large estates of land for speculative purposes. Actually, it became a common practice for the speculator to judge the value of land largely by the number of

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Africans living on it from whom he could extort a handsome revenue in rent fees.<sup>92</sup> The landlords, who as a rule resided in the metropolis, rented these estates out to Africans at exorbitant rates.<sup>93</sup> In the Selukwe District, an estate charged £2 per annum for a five acre plot and £1 per annum for each head of stock in excess of five. Since there were an estimated 6,000<sup>94</sup> Africans living on the estate, the revenue thus collected by the landlord must have been considerable. Dr. R.H. Palmer has claimed that by 1908 absentee landlords were each extorting as much as £30,000 per annum from their Rhodesian estates.<sup>95</sup>

Settler rule brought to the indigenous peoples of Rhodesia and Kenya a system that envisaged the African as an object of abuse and exploitation. The phenomenon by which African labour and resources were exploited and wealth repatriated to the metropolis to fill the coffers of a handful of capitalist tycoons leaving the African in economic limbo, has been described by Walter Rodney as the "underdevelopment" of Africa by Europeans. The viciousness with which the underdevelopment of Rhodesia and Kenya was accomplished negates all the values supposedly endowed on Africa by "Europe's civilizing mission", and reflects rather an abandonment of the nobler values of enlightened humanity and of those fundamental principles of justice which are part of the common heritage of all mankind. European plunder in Rhodesia and Kenya was systematic and ferocious, constituting some of the darkest blots in the annals of colonial history. When African tenants were given notice of eviction from European land in Rhodesia, their failure to meet the deadline date often provoked cruel treatment. Their houses were burnt down. In 1934, the Superintendent for Africans boasted: "The method of clearing the commonages of unauthorized persons by burning their huts is undoubtedly very effective".<sup>96</sup>

A glance at labour and taxation in Kenya shows similar insensitivity to the African predicament and reveals some of the most iniquitous practices of the colonial era. In colonial Kenya as in Rhodesia, labour for European farms and public works was mainly procured by compulsion. A host of laws such as the Registration of Labourers Act,<sup>97</sup> the Masters and Servants Act of 1906,<sup>98</sup> the East Africa Police Ordinance of 1911

and the Resident Natives Ordinance of 1918<sup>99</sup> all fastened the stigma of serfdom on the African, besides being intensely humiliating and harassing. Compulsion developed out of the view held by the settler officials that the African was something less than human. Writing on this subject, the British Secretary of State for the Colonies quoted a passage in which the Kenya African was so portrayed:

...they say an African is most wisely treated like a dog to which one has the friendliest of feelings, wayward, quarrelsome but happy when fed, obedient under discipline, submissive to direction because he is incapable of self-direction. (101)

Holding this view was the Governor of Kenya, who felt that the native must be brought out to work for the good of the country and for his own welfare, and that power should be provided by legislation to prevent idleness.<sup>102</sup> As in Rhodesia, forced labour was recruited through the chiefs who were required by the magistrates to provide a fixed number of labourers to work for the settlers at the rate of 2 or 3 pence per day.<sup>103</sup> In one instance, a chief received an order to produce boys under 16 to pick coffee for a settler. He went to a nearby school and asked if since it was a holiday some of the school boys in the area might like to work. The school agreed but once the boys were recruited, they never returned.<sup>104</sup> Until 1920, repeated cases of girls being seized for government work were common in Kenya. In many cases chiefs were allocated to certain farms to supply labour, dealing directly with the farmers.<sup>105</sup> In 1920, a young man who had just completed six months of work in Nairobi reported that his flock of sheep had been seized by his chief who tried to recruit him to return to work for the other six months of the year.<sup>106</sup> Thus direct forced labour was the source of many hardships experienced by the Africans in Kenya.

Forced labour was accompanied by many other cruel practices perpetrated by the settler employers. Flogging was a widespread practice and in some cases the victims actually lost their lives in the process.<sup>107</sup> A case was recorded of a European farmer, R.R. Forrester, who flogged an African named Rumuruti to death following which he buried the body. When a doctor was sent to carry out a post mortem,

he claimed that the body had been eaten by wild animals. Although all evidence indicated that death was the direct result of flogging, the all-white jury treated the case as culpable homicide. The defendant was fined 100 florins (£10) the equivalent of about \$30, with no prison term.<sup>108</sup>

Another practice which undermined African life was that which prevailed on the plantations. African labourers working on plantations were not provided with separate accommodation for men and women.<sup>109</sup> Moreover, women were forced to sleep with their supervisors. The Colonial Office complained that this practice was prejudicing opinion against the Kenya settlers in Britain and would make the granting of self-government being demanded more difficult. In reply to this complaint, the Governor of Kenya, Mr. Northey, said:

As I informed you in my confidential despatch No. 278, October 31st, women have always been discouraged from sleeping on plantations but it is obviously impossible to prevent them from doing so. The standard of morality observed among African Native tribes can hardly be judged by comparison with the standard of morality observed among European races. I am opposed to any regulations as you suggested because they would not get to the heart of the trouble.(110)

Frantz Fanon has observed that the totalitarian character of colonial exploitation paints the native as a "sort of quintessence of evil;.... the native is declared insensitive to ethics; . . . . he is the deforming element disfiguring all that has to do with beauty or morality, the unconscious and irretrievable instrument of blind forces".<sup>111</sup> This was indeed the case in Kenya where the misdeeds of the poor were more readily perceived than their needs. Forced labour was condoned on the grounds that the African was inherently idle and therefore compulsion was a means of providing him with an education he badly needed. The failure to provide decent accommodation was defended with the argument that in any case, Africans lacked good morals and therefore did not deserve separate accommodation for their men and women. Africans who have lived in the western world fail to reconcile this with the brothels of 42nd Street in New York. The prostitution industry in America has

an estimated revenue of \$7,000,000 per year.<sup>112</sup> Those who have been to London may be familiar with the famous British prostitution centre "Soho Square". The absence of morals among African women which was so often alleged by European settlers seems to have existed only in their imagination as African societies strictly adhered to rigid moral precepts. While this has now been weakened by westernization, still one cannot plausibly contend that African women are morally any worse than women in western society.

In our study of Rhodesia, we found that taxation was used as an instrument with which to stimulate cheap labour. In Kenya, taxation played an equally important role in seeking to achieve the same goal. Between 1921 and 1922 Africans in Kenya contributed a total of £658,411 in taxes while non-Africans (Europeans and Indians) contributed only £25,542, about 4 per cent of the African figure.<sup>113</sup> The European population actually paid only £12,000 in that year.<sup>114</sup> As the size of the Reserves was steadily reduced during the first quarter of the twentieth century, by 1922 their total area amounted to only  $\frac{1}{3}$  of their 1904 acreage.<sup>115</sup> The imposition of heavy taxation was intended to compel the African peasants, who did not have sufficient land from which to derive any income, to go forth and sell the only commodity left in their possession, cheap labour.

Both the poll and hut taxes were imposed as unscrupulously as they were in Rhodesia. The hut tax first imposed upon the Masai and the Kikuyu sky-rocketed from 1 rupee in 1900 to 5 rupees (6/- 8d) in 1910.<sup>116</sup> In the same year the hut tax was made into a hut and poll tax so that all young unmarried men had to pay. It particularly created severe hardships on large families. For example, a man with three wives, an old mother, mother-in-law and may be wives of a deceased brother for whom he was responsible by custom, had as many as ten taxes to pay which under the 1920-1922 scale would amount to 160 shillings.<sup>117</sup> By 1920s, with the increasing labour shortage the poll and the hut tax was raised from 6/- 8d to 16/-. This meant that the estimated annual total tax collections from Africans amounted to 1,074,304 shillings.<sup>118</sup> Families that did not have able-bodied men to work

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them borrowed from those who were well-off at an annual interest rate of 100 per cent while others borrowed from European landlords, thus becoming bound to them for indefinite periods of time. By 1922 many were labouring under a burden of debt from which it was more and more difficult to become free.<sup>119</sup> How reminiscent this is of the share-cropping system in the American South!

In spite of the fact that the African contributed 80 per cent of the national revenue in taxes, only £20,000 or about 3 per cent of their total contribution was spent on African education and a few hundred pounds on medical services.<sup>120</sup> One settler warned, "The collection of taxes has given rise to frequent gatherings and discussions in Native Reserves causing the unrest which, from time to time of late, has become apparent".<sup>121</sup> Various other laws were instituted to achieve the "proletarianization" of the African which alone could guarantee the existence of cheap labour in Kenya. Having forced the African by impinging on his land, driving him off by taxation to labour in the plantation and farms, the next step in the process was to ensure against his successful desertion. Under the terms of the Registration of the Labourers Act, every African male in the colony was required to possess an identification paper containing ten finger prints, full particulars of tribe, village etc. Failure to carry it was a crime involving arrest and imprisonment. This law was directly imported from South Africa where today an average of 1,000 people per day are prosecuted under the pass law.<sup>123</sup> In Rhodesia, the law was introduced in 1895; by 1910 every adult male was required to carry a registration certificate.<sup>124</sup> It is interesting that this pass law was used even in the Portuguese colonies of Mozambique and Angola. There the pass document was known as the "Caderneta" and contained the tax and labour record of the bearer and names of the members of his family with photographs and finger print identification.<sup>125</sup> In all these countries the pass document served the same function: it controlled the mobility of the indigenous folk.

In Kenya as in Rhodesia, the Master's and Servants' Act, also imported directly from South Africa, completed the purpose of the Registration of Labour Act. It made desertion from a European planter a criminal offence cognizable by the police. The planter merely reported

the desertion to the police who hunted the "criminal" down, whatever the cause of his desertion, (flogging or other cruel treatment). In October 1922 an amendment aiming at making desertion no longer cognizable by the police was hotly opposed by the famous landowner, Lord Delamere and the proposed amendment was withdrawn.<sup>126</sup> Settlers still argued, as late as 1924 that, "It should be realised that it is to the advantage of the native to be brought into contact with Europeans. It is largely by this means that he will gradually be led to realise the value of western systems, western methods of hygiene and sanitation, of agriculture and pasturage, of housing and many other improvements".<sup>127</sup> Similar sentiments were shared by Rhodesian whites. About labour exploitation in Rhodesia, a contemporary Rhodesian writer remarked: "Contact with the whiteman and even oppression by him applies a stimulus to native energy".<sup>128</sup>

As a result of land segregation, the imposition of heavy taxes and other complementary laws in Kenya, life in the African sector came to be appalling by the end of the first quarter of the twentieth century. During those twenty-five years, African mortality increased by at least 20 per cent. Diseases such as consumption and kwashiorkor became rampant while the prolonged absences of males from their homes interfered with natural procreation. Less and less food was produced in the Reserves so that while the European sector flourished by the sweat and toil of the indigenous folk, the African sector experienced complete economic regression. The whole machinery by which artificial poverty was created in the African sector was aptly described by E.D. Morel who wrote, "It constitutes a system of shameless and unbridled exploitation akin to slavery of the old plantation type but worse in as much as it is more irresponsible".<sup>129</sup>

E.A. Brett has defined "underdevelopment" as "a condition of dependence, one in which the activities of a given society are subjected to the overriding control of an external power over which it can exert little direct influences".<sup>130</sup> Walter Rodney offers a similar definition when he says that underdevelopment "expresses a particular relationship of exploitation: namely, the exploitation of one country by another".<sup>131</sup>



He adds that the underdevelopment with which the world is now pre-occupied is a product of capitalist, imperialist and colonialist exploitation. From the foregoing it is abundantly clear that colonialism in Kenya and in Rhodesia must be accused of the development of underdevelopment. The impact of settler rule upon African society created a dependency complex on indigenous folk which nourished and even sustained the capitalist instruments of oppression and exploitation. African participation in the exploitation of the country's resources was confined to a range of subordinate tasks, all geared to swell their "master's coffers" and at the same time to inversely pauperize the indigenous peoples whose society was maintained in a state of total unmitigated dependence. In 1945 in Southern Rhodesia, for example, the Native Production and Trade Commission reported that as a result of land segregation, overpopulation in the African Reserves stood as follows:

- 9 Reserves were more than 150 per cent overpopulated
- 10 Reserves were 100 per cent to 150 per cent overpopulated
- 19 Reserves were 50 per cent to 100 per cent overpopulated
- 21 Reserves were 10 per cent to 50 per cent overpopulated
- 3 Reserves were 1 per cent to 10 per cent overpopulated.

The same Commission made the following estimates of arable land per capita in the Reserves:

- 10 Reserves had 1 to 5 acres per capita
- 34 Reserves had 3 to 5 acres per capita
- 17 Reserves had 7 to 9 acres per capita
- 8 Reserves had 12 to 15 acres per capita
- 12 Reserves had more than 15 acres per capita<sup>133</sup>

In many Reserves such as the Chiweshe Reserve, maize production fell to 1.91 bags per acre on the average.<sup>134</sup> Those Africans who went into the urban areas to seek employment experienced equally serious economic hardships. According to Government statistics of 1962, the average African wage was \$190.60 per year while that of the European was \$2,894.<sup>135</sup> In the same year, over half of the African labour force of 612,593 persons earned less than \$14 per month.<sup>136</sup> In spite of the fact that the African population in Rhodesia increased by 12 per cent

between 1956 and 1961, there was a drop of 1.2 per cent in the total number of Africans employed during the same period.<sup>137</sup> While landlessness caused acute economic problems in the African sector, wide expanses of land remained unused in the European sector. As late as 1962, it was disclosed that out of the 33,162,157 acres constituting European farmland in Rhodesia, only 1,002,910 acres were devoted to arable farming. The late Dr. Parirenyatwa estimated that there were actually 16 million acres of European farmland which was not being used at all.<sup>138</sup> In 1953 it was reported that the average European farmer in Rhodesia utilized approximately 2.7 per cent of his land.<sup>139</sup> Is it any wonder that in 1961 African agriculture contributed only 6.5 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product while European farmers contributed 14.5 per cent?<sup>140</sup> The underdevelopment of the African sector had a boomerang effect upon the national economy. As the African's impoverishment continued, his purchasing power was curtailed and his total contribution to the G.N.P. became insignificant.

In Kenya, by 1925 only 9 per cent of the total land occupied by European settlers was under cultivation.<sup>141</sup> In spite of the amplex of land in the European area, the population density in the African Reserves was alarming. As early as 1919, the population density in Kiambu district was about 400 per square mile; in Bunyore location in North Nyanza it had reached 1,000. The minimum amount of land required for each African family in Kenya was estimated to be 11.5 acres. But the actual acreage available for use in many Reserves was estimated at 3.35 acres in 1944 and 2.61 acres by 1955.<sup>142</sup> In 1934 Kenya's exports amounted to £2 million while Uganda's amounted to £3½ million. Of Uganda's exports more than £3 million came from African agriculture, mainly cotton while African agriculture in Kenya contributed only about £300,000 worth of exports.<sup>143</sup> The implications of underdevelopment in Kenya are obvious. The persistence of poverty in the African sector and the intensification of economic exploitation by the colonial oppressor made conflict an inescapable condition of change in both Rhodesia and in Kenya.

The underdevelopment of Kenya and Rhodesia was accompanied by some of the most grotesque atrocities ever to be recorded in British colonial history. Fanon would find in it "only a succession of negations

of man and an avalanche of murders".<sup>144</sup> Of all the British possessions in Africa, the ferocity with which these two colonies were plundered and exploited was surpassed only by that experienced in South Africa. The reasons for this are not difficult to diagnose. In the first place, as we saw earlier, these two colonies absorbed large numbers of white immigrants who brought with them attitudes and values, implementing policies based on South African models. Secondly, the South African origin of much of the investment capital which was poured into these colonies aggravated the intensity of capitalist exploitation, as all instruments by which the extraction of wealth was maximised were again based on South African precedents. It undermined the fabric of African traditional society converting the indigenous folk into chattel labourers and subjecting them to various forms of social, economic and political subordination. The total negation of African society without which complete subordination and dependency, twin variables necessary for the maximum extraction of profits could not have been possible, was accomplished by the introduction of a system of education that systematically derided African values and weakened the African sense of patriotism. Brett has correctly observed:

Whatever his past achievements, colonized man was made to learn the colonial culture, to study the histories of Europe because there was not history of Africa to teach: - only the history of Europeans in Africa. (146)

Chimweizu has lamented: "the minds processed in colonial schools were left in gaping ignorance of their separate past".<sup>146</sup> In this manner British colonialism in Rhodesia and in Kenya, more than in any other British colony in Africa, save South Africa, inflicted some of the most diabolical crimes upon indigenous folk, polluting their minds and distorting their identity to an unprecedented degree. Thus underdevelopment was not only a process by which economic growth was halted and compelled to regress, but also a system by which the mental, physical and cultural development of the African people was arrested and gravely hampered.

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