

BRITISH COLONIAL POLICY: LAND, LABOUR
AND WHITE SETTLEMENT IN SOUTHERN
RHODESIA, 1890 - 1908

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It is impossible for anyone to grow rich except at the expense of someone else.

--John Locke, Essays on the Law of Nature, ed. W. von Leyden (1954), p. 211

The history of law must be treated eclectically and with particular political questions in mind.

--G. R. Elton, Political History: Principles and Practice (New York & London: Basic Books, 1970), p. 43

The history of Rhodesia from 1891 to the present day is very largely the record of the blocking, by white men on the spot (from Cecil Rhodes to Ian Smith), of the spirit and the substance of policies laid down in London.

--L. M. Thompson, "Historical Perspectives of Pluralism in Africa", Pluralism in Africa, eds. Leo Kuper and M. G. Smith (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969), p. 353

They must not forget that this was a white man's country, and so long as there was gold in the ground the white man would want labour to get the gold out.

--Chief Native Commissioner H. J. Taylor, in an address to Ndebele chiefs, 5th August 1899, Cd. 1200 of 1902, p. 6

For Jacquelyn Cecile

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the interplay of white settler power, Chartered Company rule and Colonial Office authority vis-à-vis issues of "native policy". Particularly land, labour and taxation formed the most pressing problems of the period under review. The Colonial Office's policies seemed liberal and humanitarian on these issues; however its protective attitude towards tribal organization had the curious result of tying Africans to segregated reserves and of building up a migratory labour system. Expansion of the economy was initially sought by forced mine labour but, as this was combatted by the Colonial Office, the white settlers found an alternative way of developing the economy on the basis of capitalist agriculture, while blocking African participation in the cash economy.

The imperial factor was an inadequate vehicle for implementing an effective "native policy". While condoning the violation of African interests, the Colonial Office approved of much coercive legislation to be passed and the Company's administration did little to alleviate the lot of the Africans.

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PREFACE

While the era of white self-government in Southern Rhodesia, from 1923 to 1965, has been well documented,¹ the preceding years of British South Africa Company rule from 1890 to 1923, particularly the interim period between 1896 and 1908, have been scantily researched. Most recently, attention has been given to this crucial period, from the viewpoint of British imperial policy, by John MacDonald MacKenzie as to labour² and Robin Henry Palmer as to land,³ but neither of them specifically studied the interplay of the two policies in order to demonstrate the existence of recurring patterns within the fragmented social system of Southern Rhodesia; nor the extent to which these patterns can be consistently correlated through this period of time. They, and others for that matter, have made no attempt, as MacKenzie has admitted elsewhere:

¹ Notably Richard Gray, The Two Nations: Aspects of the Development of Race Relations in the Rhodesias and Nyasaland (London: Oxford University Press, 1960); Philip Mason, Year of Decision: Rhodesia and Nyasaland in 1960 (London: Oxford University Press, for Institute of Race Relations, 1960); Colin Leys, European Politics in Southern Rhodesia (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959); and a number of biographical works on settler politicians, such as Drummond Chaplin, Charles Coghlan and Godfrey Huggins.

² John MacDonald MacKenzie, "African Labour in South Central Africa, 1890-1914 and Nineteenth Century Colonial Labour Theory" (Ph.D. thesis, University of British Columbia, 1969).

³ Robin Henry Palmer, "The Making and Implementation of Land Policy in Rhodesia, 1890-1936" (Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1968).

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...to examine in general terms the tripartite relationship among settlers, Company and Colonial Office in "native policy" over a range of issues....¹

The nearest equivalent to this might have been Peter Duignan's 1961 doctoral dissertation on native policy² but it is seriously lacking in scope and perception, and espouses the Company's viewpoint throughout, to the point of annoyance. He imposes a perspective on the whole matter which makes it appear as if Southern Rhodesia has gradually been blooming into an integrationist plural society, whereas his crystal-gazing has been demolished by recent events since the break-up of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland in 1963. This is not merely the view of a present day "radical pessimist": a careful study of the earlier period of white settlement, on its own terms, would reveal that Africans did not happily accept--as Duignan thought they did or morally ought to--the imposition of the wage labour system which was substituted for the prior exposure to tribute-raiding tactics amongst the tribes. White overrule was not necessarily perceived by Africans as better than that of tribal paramount chiefs and spirit media; during their massive assaults on white civilization

¹ John MacKenzie, "Chartered Africans: Colonial Office, Settlers and BSA Co., Rhodesia, 1890-1923", The Societies of Southern Africa in the 19th and 20th Centuries, Institute of Commonwealth Studies Seminar Paper, University of London, 1973, mimeo.

² Peter Duignan, "Native Policy in Southern Rhodesia, 1890-1923" (Ph.D. dissertation, Stanford University, 1961).

in 1896-7,¹ secular and religious authorities were in fact invoked as symbols of para-national aspirations, in response to the "equal opportunities' employment" offered them by the encroaching social, economic and political system of white entrepreneurs. Their craving for a fuller life did not confine itself to the labour front only, but comprised a variety of issues, the main item being land; the Rhodesian Africans of to-day are very conscious of the fact that they have been robbed of their land.

Time and again Europeans have deluded themselves with the belief that European premises of justice, law and order and private property can be applied to African society, only to find that the strong determination of a united community defies all controlling efforts of a propertied society raising class-colour barriers. Insofar as legislative obstacles have been laid in the way of the Africans' developmental powers, and their unlimited access to a fully human life and to the means of labour, I would like to quote Canada's distinguished political theorist C.B. Macpherson of Toronto who wrote that:

Denial or limitation of access is a means of maintaining class-divided societies, with a class domination which thwarts the humanity of the subordinate and perverts that of the dominant class.²

¹For the classic treatment, see T.O. Ranger, Revolt in Southern Rhodesia, 1896-7 (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1967).

²C.B. Macpherson, Democratic Theory: Essays in Retrieval (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973).

It is with this thought in mind that a study of the period 1890 to 1908 is rewarding. This was the crucial era for Rhodesia in which settler opinion was reformulated along lines not dissimilar from the South African experience, and in which white attitudes sunk deeply into the settler psyche and hardened to powerful tools in an oppressive master-servant relationship between white and black. The white Rhodesians' current social anxieties can be traced to the early beginnings of a voracious land development program and an insidious labour system managed by the British South Africa Company under the auspices of a conniving Colonial Office. The "social welfare system" for the Africans administered by the Native Department tempered exploitation somewhat. Its operation was aided by the pressure of humanitarians and missionaries on the Colonial Office, but in the long run the protective bulwark thus erected was not effective against the powerful blasts of settler opposition. The settlers became extremely vociferous by 1912 and challenged Company rule to the bewilderment of Colonial Office officials who, having been impotent to deal with native affairs in South Africa before, could not long endure the challenges of restive Rhodesian settlers who demanded self-rule and who got it in 1923. They inherited a legacy from the Company: viz. complete control over the virtually disenfranchised Africans.

The first part of the paper sets the stage: it puts the Rhodesian situation in historical perspective, both in theory and in practice. The South African influence has been far more powerful than the impact of the British imperial factor, the spirit of fair play and justice, and the habit of Africans drinking tea with Europeans. The Africans were far worse off when South Africa gained Dominion status in 1910 than at the time the Boer War started.¹ This should remind us of the fact that the first decade of the twentieth century was also the period when Rhodesian Africans were passing into a state of 'legarthy'.

In the second part of the paper I shall examine the pioneer period from 1890 to 1896 and relate events insofar as they have a bearing on the period 1896-1908. From the outset it should be clear that I am in general agreement with Philip Mason's and Terence O. Ranger's observations regarding the conquest and settlement of Rhodesia and the 1896 revolts, and that in view of this, there is little one can do to improve on their observations.

In the post-bellum period that followed, from 1896 to 1908, which will form the subject of the third part of the paper, the settlers consolidated their gains. I think much

¹For a cogent account on this matter, see H.J. and R.E. Simons, Class and Colour in South Africa, 1850-1950 (Harmondsworth, Eng.: Penguin Books, 1969), chap. 3.

profit can be gained from a review of colonial policy on land, labour and taxation in the face of local white power, within the context of a growing hostility between Colonial Office, settlers and the Company after Rhodes' death in 1902.

My conclusion will make up part IV and will indicate the complexity and perplexity of the colonial administration, compounded by the existence of competing interest groups. It will seek, briefly, to evaluate the net result of the implementation of official policies, to understand why they failed, and ultimately where they left the African masses on the one hand, and the mandarin policy-makers on the other.

This paper attempts to contrast various viewpoints held on white settlement and race relations, and is basically a critique of a "liberal" view of the subject. I believe, since historical research is essentially a practical activity, that there are views which merit discussion, yet demand refutation, otherwise the erroneous perspective they throw on the whole of Southern African history will continue to shape misoriented minds which are capable only of cant and sham concern.

PART ONE: INTRODUCTION

THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN CONTEXT

Mid-nineteenth century thought advanced the popular notion of the "tropical indolence" of the coloured races. This view was still widely held in the twentieth century by colonial officials; for example Alfred Milner, High Commissioner for South Africa from 1897 to 1905, intimated to his Colonial Secretary in London that "the black man is naturally inclined, much more than the white, to do nothing at all".¹

Though lacking any precise "native policy", he was devoted to the development of a mining economy run by his big business friends,² and it comes as no surprise that he was in favour of forced labour for public works. Although slavery could not be condoned, moral and even physical compulsion was brought to bear to impress upon the natives that the loathsome practice of idleness ought to be abandoned; as the Zambesi traveller James Stewart observed, "...anything that compels them to work is rather a blessing

¹ Milner/Chamberlain, 4/11/01, CO 417/321.

² Among which were P. Lyttelton Gell and Henry Birchenough, Directors of the BSAC from 1899, who were his study friends at Oxford. Birchenough also became President of the Company and was Chairman of Rhodesia and Mashonaland Railway Companies from 1925.

than a curse".¹

In order to achieve results, colonial labour policies envisaged a strict control over "racially inferior people", a design fed on ignorance and fear. Lest the management of the coloured races would get out of hand, they had to be supervised. But in practice, the farthest the Colonial Office was prepared to go in holding the colonies in leash, was government by indirect rule: an inexpensive method of administering African affairs through the traditional "native authorities".

Colonial labour theory was thus infested by a strong streak of paternalism which reached its culmination in the practice of indirect rule. It also found its muted application in Southern Africa, where there was a strong belief in the efficacy of "divide and rule" as a technique of control. In Natal and Rhodesia it was paralleled by a deliberate land policy of scattered tribal reserves calculated to break Zulu power and foster weakness and division.²

A related aspect of paternalism is the view of Africans as "childlike". In the eyes of Frederick Lugard they held the position of a "late born child".³ In Rhodes' view they were mere "piccaninnies", considering his class-colour

¹ J.P.R. Wallis (ed.), The Zambezi Journal of James Stewart, 1862-1863 (London: Chatto & Windus, 1952), p. 104.

² See David Welsh, The Roots of Segregation: Native Policy in Colonial Natal, 1845-1910 (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 22; Ranger, Revolt, p. 370.

³ Frederick D. Lugard, The Rise of Our East African Empire (Edinburgh & London, 1893), vol. I, p. 74.

legislation in the Cape. His successors would drive the lesson home to non-whites that it was futile to place their hopes on Rhodes' controversial dictum of 1900: "equal rights for every civilised man south of the Zambesi".¹ This principle has always been debased, since equal means to obtain these rights have been aborted. It has clearly worked against the Africans: all the same, white people are more equal!

Whites were also thought to be smarter, according to contemporary opinion. Witness the view of Africans as children as expounded by High Commissioner Selborne when he visited Bulawayo in October 1906, where he met 250 "loyal" Ndebele chiefs, headmen and followers at Government House. They complained to him that since their great paramount chief Lobengula had died they had nobody to speak for them, while they hinted at a possible recall of Njube, his son, at the time in exile in South Africa. Selborne quickly dispelled any notion of his returning from the Cape as "Paramount Chief of the Matabele"; now King Edward was their Chief and this could not be questioned. Grasping the nettle, Selborne intimated he was pleased with their behaviour as subjects of the King:

I shall tell the great King and he will be well pleased. Although the great

¹ In making this pledge Rhodes may well have had in mind the moral duty to work as the mark of civilization, but there is no indication that he seriously meant equal rights to apply to Africans whom he expressly regarded as indiscriminate "loafers".

King lives so far away and is so far above you all, he cares for you as his children....He is wiser than all Chiefs. He rules over as many white men as there are locusts and as many black men as the most locusts you have ever seen. Of his wisdom and his experience he decides for you, and his wisdom and experience being great, he decides that Njube shall remain where he is. You who have children, decide what is best for your children, although they do not always understand, and you, the children of the King, must obey him.

A further notion was valid in the colonial territories --a notion which was embraced by the Colonial Office, viz. that the colonized races ought to be taxed for the responsibilities of Empire. Direct taxation was the cornerstone of a policy of stimulants. It was the motivation for labour, and was supposed to serve as a stimulant to drag the natives out of their "instinctive idleness". Hence the Colonial Secretary, Earl Grey, during the creation of Theophilus Shepstone's native administration in Natal after the British takeover in 1843, was impressed by the efficiency of the hut tax imposed on Africans, as it appeared to "supply all that is necessary for their improvement",² with no cost to Treasury's

¹ Proceedings at the Presentation of Matabele Chiefs to the High Commissioner, Bulawayo, 8/10/06, in Selborne/Elgin, 19/11/06, CO 879/802. On 12th November 1909 he made another speech, in which Selborne impatiently reiterated: "They have said to me again and again that there is one thing that they particularly desire, but they must learn to know me. When I say No, I mean No. The son of Lobengula is well and being well looked after in Cape Colony, but he is not coming back here" (quoted in T.O. Ranger, The African Voice in Southern Rhodesia, 1898-1930 (London: Heinemann, 1970), p. 35.

² Welsh, p. 23, quoting Grey in 1849.

parsimony. The debate on taxation took place within the larger framework of a policy of "amalgamation": it was the responsibility of the Empire to see to it that mixed races contributed their labour to the advance of civilization. Colonial theories, up until the discovery of diamond and gold deposits in South Africa, held the proposition that it was a gross error to commit indigenous people to a stagnant life in tribal reserves, as permitted in North America. Amalgamation was supposed to mean: no land, a sufficient "motive to exertion", and hence much, much labour. After all, taxation as the "motive to exertion" had the commendable effect of creating an abundant labour supply. It naturally led to the road of an "amalgamation of the races".

To accomplish this result in Natal, the policy-makers envisaged a gradual erosion of the reserves, under the aegis of the Colonial Office. Consonant with the aims of Cape liberalism, it thought it was possible to carry this out. However, the provisional reserves set up by Shepstone were turned over to a local native administration of white officials determined to preserve a system which would disenfranchise the Africans in 1865 and develop a white supremacist state as intolerant as any of the Boer republics.¹

The dependence of labour on taxation was not made fully explicit until the 1894 Glen Grey Act of the Cape imposed a labour tax of 10 s. on those not working; one of the main features was that those who laboured for three consecutive

¹See Simons, p. 20.

months were exempted. Rhodes, who, as prime minister of the Cape introduced the Bill, expected miracles to happen in the labour supply. The Bill tended to encourage peasants to migrate to the mines as a result of the enforcement of individual tenure by an exorbitantly high quit-rent. The Act, which influenced Rhodesian labour policy, was repealed in 1905 because its tax clauses remained by and large inoperative.¹ Thus we have come to a most peculiar conclusion: the African was unreliable as regards continuous employment; he was regarded as a child and yet he was expected to pay taxes. Moreover, he was taxed although he had no title to any land whatsoever!²

The institution of indentured labour, which survived that of slavery, was another factor in shaping white attitudes towards colonial labour. In its nineteenth-century connotation it reappeared as the substitute for slavery and the continuation of an age-old migration pattern of imported labour. The generally prevailing attitude towards the traffic in Indian and Chinese coolies was abetted by a callous unconcern for the human suffering involved. Labour could be withdrawn and returned at will from an enormous tractable reservoir. But the cost of repatriation was almost always found to be too high by the maturing colonies, so that Indians and some Chinese were to remain in the West Indies, South Africa³ and

¹ MacKenzie, "African Labour", p. 65.

² H.R. Fox-Bourne, Sec. APS / CO, 28/7/97, CO 879/552.

³ Indentured Indians, introduced in the 1860's and 1870's were there to stay. However the 43,000 Chinese, introduced into South Africa under Milner's regime in 1904, were for the greater part repatriated in 1908.

other parts of the world.

Indentured labour with its credit-ticket system produced a form of quasi-slavery, which was not finally discredited until after the First World War. Meantime it had already afforded pernicious results in instilling racial envies between "black, brown and beige" in the West Indies and South Africa, which shaped the events that would rock future generations.

In the next chapter, we will briefly examine the land and labour situation in South Africa prior to the formation of Southern Rhodesia, and concentrate for this purpose on Natal. Says MacKenzie:

It is impossible to understand the Rhodesian experience without reference to South Africa. Rhodesia's ordinances were largely based on those of the Cape and of Natal, her administrators were from South Africa, the native commissioners were invariably from the Natal native administration.

¹MacKenzie, "African Labour", p. 67.

THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONNECTION

Escalating Anglo-Boer confrontation finally exploded after the fiasco of the Jameson Raid on Transvaal in 1896. When the conflict had resolved itself into a peace settlement in 1902, John Tengo Jabavu, the great leader of Cape Africans, had only one basic comment to make upon the whole issue: he simply said in 1903, that the Native Question was now substituted for the Dutch Question.¹ To him British rule was not going to give the non-whites a new deal. On the contrary, under High Commissioner Milner new colour bars were erected; Chinese indentured labour arrived in 1904 because Africans refused altogether to work at wages reduced by thirty percent at the end of the war. And free movement of Indians was fettered, in the interests of white self-preservation.²

But imperial responsibility was stifled while public pressure in Britain was at a low ebb: the Colonial Office turned a blind eye on all these measures, and Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain reacted too feebly against his aggressive High Commissioner, Alfred Milner, who had made common cause with big business. Chamberlain's promise of

¹ Simons, p. 50.

² Ibid., pp. 78; 81-2; 68-9.

1900, "equal laws, equal liberty", meant no relief for the non-whites, particularly for the Africans. Seven years of British authority, in which the material welfare of Africans deteriorated, saw the passing of laws in respect of colour bar, labour tax, passes, municipal segregation and a host of other discriminatory laws irrespective of a political change-over in Britain from Unionist to Liberal government in December 1905. In 1910 a bigoted England left native policy in the hands of local white masters "of European descent" and as such the South African Union formed the most important single precedent for the political future of Southern Rhodesia.

Meantime the drive to devolution of powers to a federation of South African states had obscured the evolution of a "native policy", not along Cape liberalist lines but based upon the Natal experience. The Cape Masters and Servants Act of 1856 provided a working model for similar laws elsewhere: making breach of civil contracts a criminal offence, it was at least nominally "colour blind", but responsible government in the Cape in 1872 brought a stiffening of racism and, under the domination of premier Cecil Rhodes, the Africans were disenfranchised in two phases, in 1887 and 1892.¹ In Natal this had already happened in 1865.

Natal and the Cape differed in important ways: Natal was thinly populated with whites and had a fledgling economy compared with the Cape. There was no substantial "coloured", i.e. mulatto population as in the Cape, and Africans lived

¹ Ibid., p. 24, 31.

scattered but at close proximity to the sea ports. The frontier mentality still prevailed with the fresh memory of Zulu wars and such experiences were hardly conducive to a "rational treatment of the native". For the Natal colonist the "native problem" was tantamount to the labour problem² which, later on in history, was corroborated by the Rhodesian experience. This view was not only of overriding importance for the framing of the franchise laws,³ but was also apparent in a host of economic legislation between 1845 and 1910.⁴

The Locations Commission of 1847 had shuffled the Africans into reserves and, in 1852, land thus appropriated contained two-thirds of the population. By 1882, this proportion was diminished to forty-five percent, and no significant increase in reserve land, of which maybe ten percent was cultivable, can be shown for the period 1864 to 1913: in other words the reserves stagnated.⁵ The land shortage was such that Lieutenant-Governor R. W. Keate commented in 1869:

To the colonists have been assigned the richer and more cultivatable portions,

¹ In this respect, Southern Rhodesia had much more in common with Natal than with the Cape. Whilst the Cape connection was essential in the realm of business interests and legislation, evolvment of Cape Colonial enactments, between 1872 and 1891--the break-off point of Southern Rhodesian statute law--had been clearly directed at keeping the "kaffir" out, and was thus consonant with the aims of Natal policies.

² Welsh, pp. 29-31.

³ Ibid., chap. 4.

⁴ Ibid., chap. 10.

⁵ Ibid., p. 19, 179.

and much of which still remains uncultivated and unoccupied; to the natives the more broken tracts, which are fully occupied.

Regarding the labour problem, this was resolved by 1880, although the settlers continued to complain. The influx of Indian labour had eased the labour shortage and so had increasing lobolo requirements due to inflation.² The flow of labour was also appreciably aided by the widespread tenancy system in use by 1875. A peculiar situation arose when land shortage became so acute that the trend was reversed and many people were forced to move from the reserves onto private farms. The landlords seized the opportunity to crack down on squatting, on which the Government, insofar as Crown land was concerned, had turned a blind eye. Tenants, who now occupied about five-sixths of all private land, were obliged to make an agreement with the proviso that an obligation for labour was waived upon payment of cash rent. So overwhelming was their number that, in the majority of cases, no labour clause was inserted, as there were enough farm hands to pick and choose from. Of course there were appreciable differences in crop cultivation, land usage and land holding between the various regions, which may account for the fact that a number of landlords still continued to insist upon labour without payment of rent.

A precarious balance was struck from 1880 onwards by raising the rent, which again offset the movement from the

¹ Keate/Granville, Col. Sec., 20/11/69, quoted in ibid, p. 178.

² Welsh, p. 223. (Lobolo means dowry payments).

reserves. Hence the reserves, as a lever, were to stay permanently, as a refuge for those fallen victims of ejection. This became particularly pernicious when Crown land, where at least ten percent of all black Natalians were residing, became available for sale. The Colonial Office did not want to take the brunt: legislation harmful to the interests of Africans would be disallowed, warned Colonial Secretary Knutsford on the eve of responsible government. He specifically mentioned:

Exaction of compulsory labour;
 Restriction of freedom;
 Further pass law restrictions;
 Abolition of customary law;
 Reduction of reserves;
 Further increase in hut tax.¹

These were nothing but pious hopes. In the excitement of negotiations, Knutsford had come to admire Shepstonian native policy and dropped his objections.

Declining productivity and increasing poverty was reported by observers who noted the soil erosion, primitive methods of cultivation, and poor transport facilities. After 1896, the year of the locusts and the rinderpest epidemic which also plagued Rhodesia, Africans were readily available to enter the labour market. In 1896-7 almost any adult male Natalian participated in some form of migrant labour for longer or shorter periods of time.² And so another test round of provenance for a genuine native policy was lost on both the imperial authorities and the settlers; Southern

¹ Ibid., p. 226. Responsible government came in 1893.

² Ibid., p. 193.

Rhodesia was going to experience a repetition of many of the issues raised by Knutsford in a familiar fashion.

PART TWO: 1890-6

THE IMPERIAL FACTOR, 1890-1893

For most African peoples direct colonial experience, which began with the partition era of the last quarter of the nineteenth century, is a thing of the past. The "scramble for Africa" was followed by a strained period of accommodation with the white colonial masters who were only marking time. The Africans were gradually initiated in the art of survival in non-liberal democracy as a system of power, and law and government ultimately devolved into African hands: colonial rule declared itself bankrupt and was practically past by 1960.

But not so for the Southern Bantu in Southern Africa-- there, white minority governments pursue a malicious course of keeping the lid on a closed society territorially segregated by class-colour bars. White Southern Africans like to call themselves "liberal" maintaining an optimistic kind of rationalism, viz. that the political economy embraces representative institutions, a liberal political tradition and the rule of law. But whether these are significant cannot be proved, as a number of other factors mitigate social and political change: for example the presence of an internal security system, the practice of discriminatory legislation or the circumstance of income disparity between the races. But above all it is labour migration that delays the process

of narrowing the cultural gap between Africans and whites, which would be necessary, but perhaps not sufficient, to create the conditions for an open, non-racial society:

The domestication of migratory labour as a system of exploitation is a device solely devoted to perpetually rotating Africans under strict police surveillance. In its employment of coercive measures, such as pass laws, it is indissolubly connected with a host of other discriminatory practices denying Africans liberty and property, and sometimes life as well. But the perversion of humanity reaches even far deeper than that: bad faith, guilt and fear render policies, with their psychological, symbolic and mythical dimensions, immune to empirical evidence and rational argumentation.¹ And it is in this context, viz. that of white attitudes and white power, that the tragic fate of the Shona and Ndebele peoples of Southern Rhodesia must be seen.

The scramble for South Africa did not begin in earnest until 1884-5 when Bechuanaland was contested by Cecil Rhodes, the British Government and the Boers.² The northward expansion into Zambesia, at that time the current term for Rhodesia,

¹For full details on the horrors perpetrated by the whites in South Africa, see Brian Bunting, The Rise of the South African Reich (Harmondsworth, Eng.: Penguin Books, 1964).

²For complete coverage see Anthony Sillery, Founding a Protectorate: History of Bechuanaland, 1885-95 (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1965), chap. 91.

immediately followed suit, for the Boers and Rhodes' men desired minerals, land and labour, with "golddigging" having a clear edge over the other two highly coveted commodities. For the British it was a question of checking German, Portuguese or Boer expansion. British diplomats did not appear very eager to make a "leap in the dark": the Earl of Kimberley retained throughout his career as Colonial Secretary¹ a deep suspicion of territorial acquisition. Yet he did not hesitate to authorize the annexation of the disputed South African diamond fields in 1871 to permit British concessionists to gain control over the incipient industry which had sprung up around the place named after him in 1867.²

But it was only with the discovery of the Transvaal gold deposits in 1886 that the political situation in the southern hemisphere was dramatically altered. The British now took a good second look at explorers' tales and Rhodes' imperial inclination to rush the British to the "Mashona goldfields".³ The 1880's was a period in which travellers, hunters and trea-

¹He held the position twice: from 1870 to 1874, and from 1880 to 1882.

²Brian L. Blakeley, The Colonial Office, 1868-92 (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1972). The story of capital and labour that follows upon the discovery of diamonds can be read in Simons, pp. 26-97.

³R. H. Palmer, Aspects of Rhodesian Land Policy, 1890-1936 (Salisbury: Central African Historical Association, Local Series 22, 1968), p. 6. This pamphlet represents an abridged version of his 1968 Ph.D. thesis.

sure seekers swarmed the interior of South Central Africa and it was they who disseminated the tale of an "Eldorado of the North", which fostered in the minds of adventurers and money-makers the expectation of finding a "second Rand".¹

Before the coming of the Europeans, the history of South Central Africa was essentially the history of the Shona-speaking peoples.² The patterns of Shona life in the early nineteenth century were derived from the great heritage of the Rozwi empire, a complex, dynastic culture of confederate kingdoms, which reached its golden age at around 1700 A.D. Its political history until the early nineteenth century is largely unknown, except for the tradition of political authority based on the chiefs' organization and control of the religious institutions. For the Shona, the stone buildings at Zimbabwe, which now lie in ruins, represented the spiritual centre of divine worship and was the nucleus of political and social integration of their culture.

The economic activities of the Shona were concentrated on agriculture rather than cattle-breeding although cattle;

¹R.H. Palmer, "War and Land in Rhodesia", Social Science Council Conference, Proceedings of Fifth Annual Conference, University of East Africa, Nairobi, vol. I, 1969, mimeo, p. 90. This article reappeared in Transafrican Journal of History, I, 2 (1971) and in War and Society in Africa: Ten Studies, ed. Bethwell A. Ogot (London: Frank Cass, 1972).

²The following sections are based on T.O. Ranger (ed.), Aspects of Central African History (London, etc.: Heinemann, 1968), passim.

sheep and goats were herded in considerable numbers. They successfully cultivated a wide variety of crops, among which were several types of corn, millet and beans. Groundnuts, cabbages, peas, sweet potatoes, tobacco and various fruits were grown in abundance, and when the whites settled in Rhodesia after 1890, the demand for food by the early settlers could easily be met. All Shona, male and female alike, engaged in the communal labour of cultivation, with the exception of political and religious dignitaries. Craftsmanship in cloth weaving, ivory carving, pottery, iron making and the use of gold had also achieved a high level of sophistication.

The economic basis for the Shona states was the chiefs' control of the production of copper and gold and the long-distance trading in these minerals and ivory with the Arabs and the Portuguese on the east coast of Africa. However, internecine rivalries and continuous migration of Bantu-speaking peoples from the Congo area prevented the emergence of a centralized state system. On the other hand, the limited conventional warfare among the various peoples and the movements of new groups into the high plateau country of Mashonaland did not account for political instability either, as they all accepted Rozwi over-rule by the ruling successor of the dynastic line. Nevertheless, it is pure speculation to assume that the Shona-speaking peoples, also known as Karanga, would

have achieved modern statehood if they had not been shaken up by a series of destructive invasions of Nguni-speaking peoples from the Natal area in the 1830's.

The cattle-raising Ngoni and Ndebele had trekked north of the Limpopo, away from their homelands in Zululand, just north of Natal, as a result of the great Mfecane, i.e. "Time of Troubles" of the late 1820's, which was essentially a military expansion of Bantu people reaching out for more grazing land in and around Zululand and Natal. Territorial expansion, of course, could only take place at the expense of other peoples, and the havoc created by the victorious Zulu regiments swept aside thousands of refugees who emptied the larger part of present-day Natal, Orange Free State and Transvaal, leaving the area "open" for Boer settlement. The Ngoni were one of the displaced groups who evacuated the area. They forced their way through the Rozwi empire while absorbing Shona captives into their hordes, and came to live in what are now Zambia, Malawi and Tanzania. The former prosperity of Shona society was gone; the Shona's material culture was sacked and their cattle were looted. The extensive tributary paramount system was not destroyed but badly shaken.

The Ndebele invasion following upon the brief Ngoni incursion was the last wave of intrusions by Nguni-speaking peoples. The Ndebele, who had broken away from the bulk of the Zulu army, first raided the Transvaal area, but were de-

feated by Boer commandos in 1837. They subsequently moved north into the centre of the Rozwi confederacy, where they built up a powerful military state. The Ndebele under the leadership of Mzilikazi were enabled to regroup and recoup their strength, once Rozwi power was broken by the Ngoni hordes.

The Ndebele formed by far the minority and could therefore not physically absorb the Shona; there were an estimated 200,000 Ndebele and 500,000 Shona in the 1890's. Moreover they were organized on different principles: their large military compounds were concentrated in a compact area located around the king's kraal. They depended upon raiding and the caste system. Military parties exacted tribute in livestock, grain and captives from among the Shona people at the periphery. The Shona settlements closer to the military kraals paid tribute in agricultural produce on an agreed basis, whilst many Shona captives were incorporated in the lower caste of the Ndebele to perform menial tasks.

Shona tribes continued to occupy parts of Matabeleland, particularly in the eastern and southern parts, and with the Rozwi political power being extinct, the religious institutions shifted their centres to the Matopos hills south-east of Bulawayo, Lobengula's permanent capital, from

where they continued to exercise an influence on both the Shona and the Ndebele.¹

Such was the situation when the whites set eyes on the land over which Lobengula, Mzilikazi's successor after 1868, claimed sovereignty. A treaty of friendship produced for concession hunters the desired result of securing for the British an exclusive sphere of influence in 1888. But this was patently not enough for Rhodes and his partners, who together practically owned the South African diamond industry and who had acquired powerful interests in the newly discovered gold mines on the Rand.

Rhodes looked north of the Limpopo: he was determined to do gold prospecting north of Transvaal, and his agents successfully obtained the necessary exclusive rights from Lobengula, known as the Rudd concession of 1889. This laid the basis for the formation of a new corporation by Rhodes. By forcing other rivals to sell out a monopoly company was formed under the name of British South Africa Company, with a London Board but with Rhodes as Chairman of the South African Board. This move was enough to impress British investors and the press, and a gullible British Government, in the belief

¹The priests of the shrines retained contact with spirit media throughout western Mashonaland and thus were able to play a remarkable role in the organization of the 1896 rebellions against the whites.

that private enterprise should lay the foundation of British spheres of influence, followed it up by granting a Royal Charter¹ to the strongest commercial branch of Cape Colony imperialism, without incurring any financial charges or administrative responsibility whatsoever. Tied to a stringent Treasury budget, they allowed Rhodes and Company to go to Mashonaland and do the digging themselves, lest the territory should fall into alien hands. Harry Hamilton Johnston, the next year's Commissioner and Consul-General of British Central Africa,² recalled in connection with the Company's intended operation in the sphere north of the Zambesi that:

To obtain this end [i.e. the extension of Empire from the Cape to Cairo], I little cared whether it was done in British Central Africa under the guise of a Chartered Company or under that of an Imperial Protectorate, so long as the country was made British and the work was entrusted to myself at any rate to initiate.³

But Rhodes himself could also afford to act quite independently; besides he had an inclination to act first and report afterwards. By the same token he was on good terms with Henry Brougham Loch, South Africa's new High Commissioner (1889-95), and this cordiality stood him in good stead in dealing with the Colonial Office. Early in 1890, after having

¹ Signed by the Queen in Council, 29/10/89, duly incorporating the Company.

² Now Malawi.

³ Johnston, Zomba/Rhodes, 8/10/93, quoted in Roland Oliver, Sir Harry Johnston & the Scramble for Africa (London: Chatto & Windus, 1964), p. 176.

consulted missionaries and hunters, he and Loch worked out a plan to advance into Mashonaland and leave Matabeleland undisturbed meantime. Initially, the Colonial Office was apprehensive, but when they got wind of the Boers' plans to move further north of Transvaal, Colonial Secretary Knutsford, on Foreign Office advice, "gave Loch discretion to authorize the advance".¹ Although the Ndebele state was formidable and stable, it could not have resisted an all-out attack by Europeans. Yet there was reason for Rhodes to avoid Matabeleland. For capitalist development with its railways and telegraph cables could make headway just the same by ignoring Ndebele society, which was patently uninterested in an "age of improvement". If the Ndebele would make conditions for the whites intolerable, they could always be reduced in power. The London Board of the BSAC, in dealing with the Foreign Office, came to an agreement to approve Rhodes' scheme for occupation of Mashonaland in order to connect Katanga with Witwatersrand and to assent to his settlement policy, in reward of pioneer services, to grant land.²

The Royal Charter had actually the stated object of encouraging white emigration and colonization, and "to carry into effect...concessions, agreements, grants and treaties...with the view of promoting trade, commerce, civilization and good government".³ Thus it granted a monopoly to secure all min-

¹Sillery, p. 138.

²They remained adamantly uninterested in the Cape to Cairo route, or the acquisition of territories further north or east to squeeze the Portuguese out (Oliver, pp. 174-5).

³C. 8773 of 1898, p. 3.

eral rights in the area of operations. The BSAC had its field of operations loosely defined as all South Africa north of the Crown Colony of Bechuanaland and the Transvaal, and west of the Portuguese possessions in East Africa. Northward there was a temporary restriction laid down: the Zambesi, but the way was left open for further expansion insofar as the Company was able to achieve "effective occupation". However the BSAC was unwilling to spend more than necessary, just enough to maintain this claim. More out of inclination than of necessity-- he could not draw upon the administrative machinery of the Colonial Office--Rhodes was obliged to resort to speculators and fortune seekers. Meanwhile Leander Starr Jameson, Rhodes' associate and his alter ego, was cajoling Lobengula at his capital Bulawayo, with gifts and sweet talk in anticipation of the coming of the pioneer column into Mashonaland.

The Pioneer Corps of some 200 men¹ accompanied by a police force of 500 men, was at face value a respectable lot of middle class Victorians: it contained a cross section of a variety of occupations from baker to lawyer.² But curiously enough many pioneers did not see themselves as worthy settlers at all: they were there only temporarily in order to make a

¹Sources are conflicting and no one seems to know exactly how many there were. It seems likely that more were recruited but only 180 participated, supplemented by 78 "Cape boys" for domestic services.

²For a complete description of the membership of the column, see L.H. Gann, A History of Southern Rhodesia: Early Days to 1934 (London: Chatto & Windus, 1965), pp. 88-95.

bundle and quit at the earliest opportunity! They were overcome by "...the jolly reckless spirit of adventure, which aimed at making a million in half an hour and then clearing home...."¹

In fact, the prime motive behind the occupation of Mashonaland was gold, and land and labour were its corollary. Jameson, Rhodes' personal representative, accompanied the trek in order to see to it that the conditions fixed for land occupation were carried out. Upon arrival at a place called Salisbury, the Company issued a mining law or charter, and the pioneers were disbanded so that each could take possession of a free farm of 1500 morgen (3175 acres) and the fifteen mining claims promised by contract. However, many had already disposed of these rights to unscrupulous land speculators and mineral prospectors even before they raised the British flag at Salisbury on 12th September 1890. Irresponsible schemers and speculators, connected with exploration syndicates, formed part of the troops trekking north, and they easily bought up quite a number of grants and claims because there was no stipulation in the loosely termed agreements which made it obligatory to occupy the land. Small individual parties had also independently found their way to the kopjes of Mashonaland and within a fortnight of the commencement of the mining charter, there were as many as 300 land prospectors seeking their luck.²

¹According to Albert Grey, Southern Rhodesia's third Administrator from 1896 to 1898, quoted in Ranger, Revolt, p. 103.

²Palmer, Aspects, p. 7.

Two months later their number had grown to 400,¹ but the expected gold rush failed to come: "hardly any of them managed to make any money and most of them later left the country."²

The first three years were a period of consolidation for the settlers and the Company. A limited number of intending settlers were lured to Rhodesia by unreliable tales of plenty of soil riches. What they found, however, during the first year, was a harsh life of hunger and disease. The newcomers experienced torrential rains which destroyed their crops and, worst of all, there was a liquor shortage. Several men perished of blackwater fever, and everybody suffered.³ The farms they marked out, in contradistinction with those of the original pioneers, were subject to "beneficial occupation" and many forfeited their rights because they could not meet their obligations within the prescribed time limit. Rhodes and Jameson were singularly interested in the big money game, not in fledgling diggers merely scratching the surface. The first year the number of farms remained small in proportion to the total area: land alienation to individuals and syndicates still left plenty of room for the shifting soil cultivators, the Shona.

The biggest worry of every grantee was the insecure nature of his "land title" based on the inadequate Rudd concession.

¹ Loch/Knutsford, 20/11/90, CO 879/414.

² Gann, p. 106.

³ Gann, pp. 95-6, Duignan, p. 76.

The Company, facing financial difficulties, was given a new lease of life by acquiring the Lippert concession of 1891, which was wrested from Lobengula in his belief that E.A. Lippert was a rival claimant of Rhodes. But playing off one against the other proved a losing battle, as Lippert happened to be a cousin of Rhodes' partner, Alfred Beit.¹ The concession conferred on the possessor the sole right to grant titles to land.² The legal fiction that the Ndebele, who were raiding the Shona for tribute, had complete sovereignty over them was now fallen to pieces. The Company's "legal" claim to ownership of all the land seemed sufficiently safeguarded despite the protest of the Ndebele king who insisted he had been tricked into a fraud, which of course it was.

But there was a further problem to be settled as regards legal and administrative control. The peculiar situation had arisen whereby the Colonial Office had disallowed jurisdictional supervision by the Company over the settler community, let alone the Shona. Loch pointed out to Colonial Secretary Knutsford that if the miners learnt that "they are not subject to any lawful authority" they would become a law unto themselves and he also made it clear and for the BSAC to understand that it was unlikely that Lobengula would grant any "concession of jurisdiction" to the settlers the king accused

¹ Duignan, p. 81.

² Mason, p. 161.

of interfering with African customary law.¹ He actually advocated Crown power in all the land south of the Zambesi which would involve the declaration of a British protectorate over these territories. Alas, the British Government pursued a fast and loose policy; it declared a protectorate, indeed, but this was more form than substance:² it had no scruples as to protecting native land rights nor any desire to involve itself in the administration over the whites.

A land settlement bringing African interests under the Crown's protection was highly desirable, Loch continued to argue. This view was rebutted by Edward Wingfield, Assistant Under-Secretary for Colonial Affairs, who was of the opinion that the Royal Charter provided adequate protection and that the risk of annexation should be avoided at all cost.³ The Company indeed was pledged to respect native rights by the terms of the Charter: section 14 read in part:

...in the administration of justice to the said peoples or inhabitants, careful regard shall always be had to the customs and laws of the class or tribe or nation to which the parties respectively belong, especially with respect to the holding, possession, transfer and disposition of lands....⁴

¹Loch/Knutsford, 20/11/90, CO 879/414. See also Ranger, Revolt, p. 54.

²Under Order in Council, 9/5/91. For the legal obfuscation surrounding the whole matter, see Claire Palley, The Constitutional History and Law of Southern Rhodesia, 1888-1965, with Special Reference to Imperial Control (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), pp. 75-83, 87-9.

³Palmer, "War and Land", p. 91.

⁴C. 8773 of 1898, p. 5.

White settlement inexorably branched out as farms were pushed into tribal lands, and thus it was impossible to disregard inter-tribal disputes which threatened the lives and property of the gold-seekers. The respect for native laws and customs as asserted in the Charter was incompatible with the exercise of the "white man's authority". Moreover, the settlers were just one tribe too many and were greeted by the Shona with plunderings of their belongings. They were either held in contempt or were "enticed" to mediate in disputes over cattle at great risks. No wonder that now and then law and order clashed with inter-tribal jealousies and that the whites, who furthermore had no stuff to barter with the Shona, got caught up in, and even provoked, tribal animosity which, in 1892, began to involve Ndebele raids into Mashonaland as well, thus seriously complicating relationships. This precarious situation was compounded by the fact that the whites were cutting off the trade route for alluvial gold to Portuguese East Africa and instead the intruders drafted labour, made the Africans work and had them build townsites, mine shafts or roads.¹

With the "ambitions and interests" of adventurers paramount, no persistent native policy was to flourish in the early period, 1890-8, because it was never assumed that the Shona or for that matter even the more martial Ndebele were a

¹For an account of white/Shona relations during the first years, see Mason, pp. 152-62.

factor to reckon with in the opening up of Zambesia. For the "man on the spot" the "native question" did not exist, although his sharp practice with regard to African labour and his arbitrary action in the realm of private "justice" would appear to testify to the contrary. For example when a certain Hudson who worked for an exploration company, was robbed of his material in storage, he went up to the kraal of the alleged thieves, burnt it down and collected five head of cattle as a fine. He told A.R. Colquhoun, Mashonaland's first Administrator:

I think when you come to consider the numerous thefts that have been committed in this country by the Mashonas upon white men I am sure you will agree with me that I was only doing my duty to my syndicate.¹

White occupation therefore patently violated African interests even if they entered seemingly "empty" spaces. The Shona people thus became "chartered" Africans and would soon find themselves penalized--within a span of two years of unfettered Company activity--by a number of Native Rules and Regulations which in essence enforced a pass system, a curfew and the registration of African labour contracts.²

Some form of law enforcement and exercise of administrative powers to make such Company activity possible was a direct

¹Hudson/Colquhoun, 21/3/91, quoted in Ranger, Revolt, p. 57.

²Palley, p. 106.

result of the big stir created in the Colonial Office by the High Commissioner's Proclamation of 10th June 1891, which sought to underpin the protectorate status of Lobengula's territories. It virtually proposed an imperial takeover of the government of the country under the executive control of the High Commissioner. But Loch had evidently jumped the gun: his Proclamation caused a storm in a tea-cup in White-hall because the British Government did not want to assume any more fresh responsibilities; their overriding concern was to safeguard the British taxpayers from the heavy demands of direct involvement. The most they were prepared to do was to establish law courts to deal with "pressing cases" amongst whites in an attempt to make an end to the lawlessness of the frontier.¹ Loch threatened to resign if his authority was going to be deprecated. The Office, however, was able to restrain him, and whilst deciding not to weaken his position, withdrew imperial support under cover of an ill-designed smokescreen which left the third party to take the spoil, viz. the Company.²

The original Proclamation was intended to legislate for a far greater discharge of imperial control than was to have been deemed desirable. In forcing Loch to abdicate his "executive powers", the Colonial Office showed itself most inconsistent.

¹ Knutsford/Loch, tel., 11/7/91, CO 879/414.

² For a full account of the disagreement between London and Cape Town and the ensuing legalistic skirmishes between them, see Palley, chap. 5.

Loch was discreetly informed that he had exceeded his authority; no imperial officer vested with "authority over the administrative service" of a "politically irresponsible Company",¹ to use Loch's own terms, was to be appointed. Nor was his advice taken that the Company had no legislative powers whatsoever over whites and blacks alike except by the grace of Lobengula. Instead, the Colonial Office conferred capacity, if not complete power, on the Company to have legislative authority and the prerogative of taxation. Imperial guarantees of protection of native rights were thrown to the wind: the Office did a volte face in condoning ultra vires jurisdiction over the African population by the BSAC. Moreover there was a complete unconcern on their part with the administrative detail of the Company's operations. The British strategy of retaining imperial supremacy in South Africa only and extending Cape Colony interests to Southern Rhodesia under the aegis of Chartered Company rule would spell disaster for the African inhabitants, who now came in contact with the menace of local white power. For to throw the country wide open to white settlement, with a minimum of imperial responsibility and a maximum licence to Company autocracy, would imply a policy which ran into white involvement in Shona and Ndebelé life far beyond the occasional punitive action against theft, labour desertion or disorder.

¹ Loch/Knutsford, 25/5/91, and idem, 29/6/91, CO 879/414.

In fact, the whole ethos of the "civil" regime now taking shape in 1891 under Jameson, Colquhoun's successor, was guided by a rapid development of economic resources and geared to an extensive European settlement. Conflicts with African societies were seen as unfortunate but perhaps necessary, and the sooner the better, in respect of demand for labour:

The driving force behind the whole venture was Rhodes, and the Company's shareholders were the ultimate assurance that considerations of philanthropy did not exceed those of profit.¹

Jameson who was later described as simply a "beneficent despot"² and who was popularly known by the settlers as "Dr. Jim", was in many respects the ideal man on the spot. He dispensed rough and ready justice in supporting white settlement by often misdirected, locally recruited, police patrols, owing to a lack of Company men and money.³ Chartered government, understaffed and abandoned by imperial supervision, could not but hand over to the settlers the right to administer their own private "justice" in which the colonial secretariat acquiesced. Incidents with grumbling Shona chiefs could not help but reinforce an already negative attitude towards the "servile, lazy race" of Shona.⁴

¹Palmer, Aspects, p. 7.

²Minute, 17/6/97, CO 417/231.

³Ranger, Revolt, pp. 64-6, and R.H. Palmer, "Johnston and Jameson: A Comparative Study in the Imposition of Colonial Rule", The Early History of Malawi, ed. Bridgial Pachai (London: Longman, 1972), p. 302.

⁴Percy F. Hone, Southern Rhodesia (London: 1909), p. 39.

By 1893, just before the outbreak of the Ndebele War, we find the following situation as regards land, labour and taxation. Let us first single out the question of land which is perhaps the most illuminating for the pattern of white settlement. As we have seen, land management under Colquhoun was confined to a relatively uninhabited stretch of land between present day Hartley and Salisbury, i.e. within a 75 mile range west of Salisbury. Grants were on a provisional basis and quite a number of them lapsed because many settlers were not able to effectively occupy their holdings. During Jameson's administration, little regard was paid to African interests: once the occupation clause was waived in 1891, land grabbing became more pronounced and settlers, including missionaries, preferred to start their "drillings" at nearby scattered kraals in order to convert the villagers more easily to the "gospel of labour". And although Jameson discouraged settlers not to move too close to Matabeleland, in an attempt to maintain a buffer in the old Boer/Bantu tradition, it was unavoidable that the Victoria township, forging ahead of Salisbury, was going to be the centre of decisive conflict.¹

Turning now to taxation we find that this had been disallowed by the British Government on the grounds that the

¹By October 1892, there were only 300 farms in the whole of Mashonaland, with very little active farming. The main centres of white concentration were Salisbury, Umtali and Victoria, whilst Enkeldoorn accommodated quite a number of Afrikaner families (Palmer, "Johnston and Jameson", pp. 310-1).

Africans cannot be "charged for the occupation of their own lands".¹ To uphold such a view amounted to little but cant, considering the prudent adherence to the legal fiction that Lobengula was the Shona's "native sovereign". The Company more crudely contended that occupation was in fact an act of conquest, but could not press ahead until 1894, after they had inflicted a military defeat on the Ndebele.

As to the connected problem of labour, the Shona universally showed no deference to the white man's employment of repressive measures in drafting labour. Jameson and his gang actually allowed informal privateering by individual claimants to farm rights in search of labour. The settlers were relatively unsuccessful, at least until new native commissioners were engaged in 1894 to assist the prospective employers.

Furthermore the menial life in the townships was also degrading. The informal arrangements the settlers made with the local villagers for paid labour were supported by Company Ordinances under scrutiny of the Colonial Office, and supplemented by extra-legal modi operandi borrowed from the Cape entailing municipal segregation of the townsites. Salisbury's Native Rules and Regulations, 1892, for example, were clearly for the protection of the whites: the pass system and the curfew were designed to provide security for the whites and to prevent theft and mugging. But it was also claimed that they

¹ Imp. Sec./BSAC, 29/8/92, CO 879/441.

protected the "servants": they laid down provisions for the suppression of vagrancy, for finding employment and for protection of the labourer against exploitation. A Vagrancy Ordinance along Cape lines was also promulgated in 1893, and passed over by the Colonial Office despite their declared attitude that legislation regarding Africans was supposed to be disallowed. It laid down the appointment of inspectors of native locations at the nascent townsites.¹ By then there was already a post of Registrar of Natives, essentially a pass officer, who would endorse the stay of an African for a limited number of days to find suitable work in Salisbury. If found, thereafter, without a labour contract, which was also to be registered at the office, he was liable to a fine, a jail term, or hard labour, or a possible combination of all three, sometimes preceded by flogging if no funds were available to bail him out. After work he had to retire to the native location. Outside it, again another pass was required during the curfew hours, from dusk to dawn.

All these disabilities, compounded by a high rate of casualties in the poorly constructed, ill-equipped mines, were not the only causes for resistance to labour. The imposition of labour was also resented because it was regarded as a form of tribute which for all intents and purposes involved tribal loyalties. The Shona saw no reason to make compacts with a

¹Palley, p. 120 n.

white foreign element that, to a large extent, had only "delivered" them from the Ndebele incursions and exactions, in order that they might find themselves being drafted into a crude wage-labour system.

Labour was to some extent paid for; it was exchanged for cloth or blankets and several chiefs could see its value. But this did not mean an acceptance of white rule by the chiefs. Even though the power of the Shona chiefs had decreased under Ndebele pressures, the chiefs retained much of their importance and continued to command respect from the members of the tribe. He was the custodian of tribal land and property, and as the wealthiest man he dispensed patronage, and also directed communal labour through the village headmen. His prestige was further enhanced by his special relationship to the rituals inherited from the great Rozwi past.¹

The whites were in process of eroding these traditional patterns. The whites did not understand the culture of the Shona who surrounded them, and they believed implicitly in the superiority of their own culture and thought that the Shona could be easily moulded. The whites supposed that the Shona would give up their trade in alluvial gold and ivory and readily submit to an economy controlled by the whites, with many increased opportunities. They deluded themselves with the belief that the relatively settled ways of life of

¹This and subsequent paragraphs are based on Ranger, Aspects, pp. 112-53.

the Shona would be conducive to the "Christian" ways of the whites. Little did the settlers and particularly the missionaries who entered Mashonaland in the wake of white settlement, understand that the Shona were not a physical and moral wreck, bullied by the "tyrannical" Ndebele; Shona chiefs in eastern Mashonaland did not recognize Ndebele over-rule, and many chiefs of the central districts had a reputation of openly defying Lobengula. Such independent chiefs could therefore not accept the fact that the whites meant to stay. They would lose their personal and moral authority if they submitted to the demands of the whites for land, labour and taxation.

The chiefs were losing their prerogatives as the whites took land away without consulting them. The long-distance trade with the Portuguese agents also came to a halt, which was the basis of the chiefs' wealth and patronage. Taxation implemented in 1894, was universally resisted as it undermined the political independence of the chiefs. A two-year long history of refusal to pay taxes which was carefully kept away from press and public, goes a long way in explaining the rebellion, when it occurred in 1896.

WAR, LAND AND CATTLE, 1893-6

The origins of the Ndebele War are complex. There were many pressures at work to render a clash between settlers at Victoria and the Ndebele inevitable.¹ With the number of incidents with Ndebele impi² growing as the year 1892 drew to a close, the settlers became intolerant of the raids on their labour supply which they considered as their property. Jameson, taking stock of the situation, cabled Rutherford Harris, the Company's Secretary in Cape Town, that:

The serious part is that every native has deserted from mines and farms....
The labour question is the serious one.³

The modus vivendi between Jameson and Lobengula was on the verge of collapse.

Even though the lives of whites were not at stake, the fact that Shona were killed in front of their white "masters", pointed to a potential threat. A methodical propaganda effort by the Company, which had at first played down Ndebele aggression

¹For a full up-to-date account of the origins of the war and its aftermath refer to Stafford Glass, The Matabele War (London: Longmans, 1968), which contains an excellent bibliography of primary sources. This has partly been rewritten from "The Background of the Matabele War" (M.A. thesis, University of Natal, 1959).

²These are raiding parties to exact tribute.

³Jameson/Harris, 17/7/93, quoted in Ranger, Revolt, p. 93.

in order not to shake the confidence of the shareholders in a Company in financial straits, now probed British public opinion for support of armed intervention which would produce permanent pacification with an element of protection for the "unfortunate" Shona.¹ But Rhodes and Jameson had a grander design, the motives of which had to be kept secret from the British Government, which deprecated aggressive action.¹ As Jameson explained: "...the getting [of] Matabeleland would give us a tremendous lift in shares and everything else".² The Company Board got the message and promised Jameson unstinting support in whatever was involved in finding an "excuse for a row over murdered women and children now".³

Previously there had been certain obstacles to a forthright conquest. In 1889 Rhodes had brushed aside the idea of a surprise attack on Lobengula's capital. He considered the plan as plain suicide, and indeed most people rightly feared the formidable Ndebele military system.⁴ The attention throughout the early 1890's was therefore directed to a hoped-for disintegration of Ndebele society. The missionaries in particular, who had a vested interest in the Christianizing of the

¹ See Palley, p. 109.

² Jameson/Harris, 19/7/93, quoted in Ranger, Revolt, p. 94.

³ Ibid.

⁴ As early as 1890, the pioneers wanted to crush the Ndebele and were waiting for a suitable occasion (J. Colenbrander/Jameson, 23/12/90, cited by Duignan, p. 83).

Ndebele, believed that an internal war which would result in the "deliverance" of the Shona, was imminent.¹

As far as the settlers were concerned, Lobengula stood clearly in the way of the development of commerce and civilization. He was not co-operative enough in sending his young men, who went as far as Kimberley, to work for the whites in Mashonaland, and consequently was blamed for want of a constant supply of Shona recruits whom he still regarded as his vassals. Moreover it was thought that because of their martial spirit, Ndebele labourers would be more industrious than the Shona. There was no end to the appetite of the settlers for labour, but what they were not able to perceive was that the scarcity of it was artificially created by the low wages and bad working conditions they offered. Also, the small workings of indebted settlers militated against any permanent interest of the Ndebele in a "second Rand": a fluke of alluvial gold here and there did not produce the Eldorado expected. Matabeleland, bordering on the Witwatersrand gold belt, was thought to contain more gold-reef formation than the "Mashona goldfields". But Mashonaland clearly lacked the economic basis for a powerful counterforce against the Germans, Boers and Portuguese, and the only way British supremacy could be guaranteed was by crushing the Ndebele military strength.

¹ Ranger, *Revolt*, p. 36-8. Missionaries had not been allowed to enter Mashonaland by Lobengula who scorned them. Their first pastoral care was for the pioneers; after 1890 they tried to turn themselves to the Shona but only from stations "set up on land granted by the company without reference to the local Shona authorities". Missionary penetration was practically without success and it was hoped that progress would be made once the Ndebele system was destroyed. Thus missionaries were committed to Company policy to obliterate Ndebele military strength, which accounts for much to explain Colonial Office condonation of the conquest. (Ranger, *Aspects*, p. 141).

We have seen how the settlers were hard pressed by setbacks; many of them had returned in the face of hardship. The shares of the BSAC had rapidly fallen from a peak of £3 15s. in 1890 to 12s. by the end of 1892,¹ all the more reason to reverse the misfortunes of the Company. Land, labour and revenue were "good" motives for going to war. Both settlers and Company had set their eyes on Matabeleland where red and black soils were rich in minerals by reputation, and where cattle were in abundance.

Settler action was a direct consequence of the Ndebele raiding their labour supply. The raiding parties were performing their plunderings so successfully that this time the impi continued to linger in Mashonaland, to the great nuisance of the Victorian settlers. Shooting affrays to expel the Victorian impi did not fail to come, and the Victoria incident of July 1893 which killed thirty Ndebele warriors, triggered the thought of further white intervention in Matabeleland. It made Jameson immediately look for manpower to enlist in his "raid" on Bulawayo.² Hardly had the pioneer column made any progress, when they went on strike, refusing to proceed further unless the terms of the "lot" were put in writing. Jameson was forced to agree and signed a secret compact, whose terms did not become known to the Colonial Office until the end of 1907!

¹Patrick Keatley, The Politics of Partnership (Harmondsworth, Eng.: Penguin Books, 1963), p. 167.

²Glass, chaps. 9, 10, 13.

The future of Matabeleland was predetermined; the 414 "volunteers" participating were entitled to 3000 morgen (6350 acres) each, twice as much as promised to the Salisbury force.

The document also stipulated that:

No occupation is required, but a quit rent will be charged on each farm of ten shillings per annum.¹

In addition, the members were entitled to twenty gold mining claims and, most revealing for the nature of the "gamble", the Victoria Agreement also included the curious clause that:

The "loot" shall be divided: one half to the British South Africa Company and the remainder to officers and men in equal shares.²

Once the undeclared war was under way, the Volunteer Force, within a month's time, swiftly routed the Ndebele impi which were already weakened by a smallpox epidemic. Old-fashioned Zulu tactics resulted in such slaughter that Frank Johnson, the organizer of the 1890 Pioneer Column later recalled:

We have excellent labourers in the Matabele, and from the mining and commercial point of view, I regret the loss of 2000 odd Matabele killed in the late war very much.³

High Commissioner Loch, who had connived with Jameson in allowing Bechuanaland Border Police to participate in the conquest, demanded that he be put in charge of post-war negotiations.

¹Copy of Victoria Agreement, (Jameson/Captain Allan Wilson), 14/8/93, in Selborne/Elgin, 11/11/07, CO 879/872.

²Ibid.

³A.R. Colquhoun, "Matabeleland", Proceedings of the Royal Colonial Institute, XXV (1893-4), p. 98.

and although Colonial Secretary Ripon feebly reminded him that an adequate subsistence for the defeated Ndebele should be ensured,¹ the Imperial Government was not able to speak from a position of strength. Rather than taking a firm stand in protecting native rights and losing ground altogether, they bowed to South African press opinion regarding any interruption of Company rule,

...[which might] impose terms distasteful to a community which has sent two thirds of its manhood as volunteers to the front.²

Negotiations for a compromise got under way and concluded with the dubious result that African interests in Matabeleland were to be "safeguarded" by the establishment of a Land Commission whose purpose was to assign "suitable" agricultural and grazing lands "sufficient for their occupation" and to redistribute the cattle expropriated as war booty.³ But these two protective provisions in the 1894 Agreement between the Crown and the BSAC were to be "flouted and evaded".⁴ The Jameson administration could easily tamper with land, labour and taxation policies, as we shall see, and they were in this facilitated by the 1894 arrangement which was formally enacted in the Matabeleland Order in Council and provided for the "legality" of an amalgamation of the two provinces, Mashonaland and

¹Palmer, "Land Policy", p. 47.

²Cape Times, n.d., quoted in Ranger, Revolt, pp. 99-100.

³C. 8130 of 1896.

⁴Ranger, Revolt, p. 101.

Matabeleland under one administration and a uniform legal system. Described by the Privy Council in 1918 as being of "capital importance", it contained all the essential powers conferred upon the BSAC which left them largely to their own devices with regard to legislative and administrative control.

This strong legalistic position did not, however, discourage officials of the Colonial Office from giving formal assistance to the Company's operations: the same year the inchoate native "administration"--for so far there was one--was brought into alignment with the Cape Colony and Natal with the promulgation of a Hut Tax Ordinance, 1894, drafted, nota bene, by Under-Secretary Edward Fairfield, who was an intimate friend of the Company's solicitor, Bouchier Hawksley.¹ Taxation, contemplated in 1892, was only introduced two years later because of the intercession of the Ndebele War. The Colonial Office was not to be rushed at all: they insisted that the tax was not to be collected until after a settlement for native reserves had been finalized. But Rhodes went ahead and urged Jameson not to wait but to act meantime on Fairfield's draft ordinance. Tax was collected "six months before he was legally empowered to do so",² but since questions in Parliament were not raised, the Colonial Office passed over Rhodes' illegal action. Edward Fairfield thought this might be just

¹Palley, pp. 102-3.

²Palmer, "Johnston and Jameson", p. 304.

as well, as:

Rhodes' argument that the necessity of paying the tax will compel the Mashonas to work for the Mining Companies is all well enough in a Stock Exchange luncheon room, but is hardly a Parliamentary argument.¹

The hut tax of 10 s. was not collected in Matabeleland until 1898, partly because the cattle loot more than compensated for any imposition of cash contributions. Taxation in the form of confiscation of cattle, sheep and goats proved to be a bonus because tax collection in Mashonaland was not an unqualified success at all; in 1894 hardly anything was collected by the bevy of incompetents selected by Jameson, and in 1895 the fresh Native Department scraped a mere £5000 together² against an estimated minimum of £20 to £25,000³--a shortfall which was partially compensated for by taking livestock, often by force.⁴

With the military regiments in Matabeleland disarmed, Ndebele military power was systematically broken up. The cattle kraals were thus an easy prey for the "loot committees" whose proceedings were not publicized. After Lobengula's defeat--he died while seeking refuge--all the cattle were seized

¹Fairfield/Hawksley, private letter, 29/7/93, quoted in Palley, p. 103.

²Palmer, "Johnston and Jameson", p. 305.

³This is based on an estimated population of approximately 300,000 Shona, with one out of six or seven being a male adult who qualified for hut tax payment.

⁴For the application of coercion under the Jameson regime see chap. 5.

and claimed as the king's cattle. While a great share was undeniably owned by Lobengula himself, many chiefs and headmen owned cattle and were permitted to enjoy the fruits of power which possessions brought along, for as long as their position did not threaten that of the king. The Land Commission, hastily convened, brushed away any such consideration and ruled that there was no distinction between king's and private cattle since property was deemed to reside in the king according to popular knowledge. The cattle, after having been expropriated in toto were partly restituted to the Ndebele, under the terms of the Land Commission, in the form of "absolute property": i.e. instead of having only milking privileges, a "sufficient" number was returned to each kraal as individual belongings. Thus a small-scale capitalist market society was created, based on scarcity of cattle and land, for they were allowed to exercise the right to individual appropriation only within severe limitations.

The first limitation was one of cattle. In order to refurbish the native cattle, a mere 40,000 head of cattle, or 20% of the original royal herds, were restituted as private property to "deserving" indunas, i.e. chiefs, and village headmen, which was, in the words of Percy G. Smith, Resident Magistrate at Bulawayo, "in some cases considerably more than was necessary [to live on]".¹ This must be contrasted with the 30% of the total loot, split up between Company and settlers,

¹ Encl. d.d. 29/9/96, in Rosmead/Chamberlain, 9/2/97, C0 879/517.

and a further 10% which went to the white security forces.

Whilst 60% was thus divided up, another 40% was curiously left unaccounted for: it simply "disappeared", which says as much about the lawlessness under Jameson as anything else.¹

The seizure of cattle was only part of the story. It is important to realize what happened immediately after the conquest. The members of the Victoria Volunteer Force staked out individual farms twice as big as those of the Salisbury columnists. They were allowed to mark out their farms and have them registered within four months. Early in 1894, agents of land development and exploration companies poured into Matabeleland and went into partnership with the pioneers on the basis of the Victoria Agreement with Jameson who had been forced—or was it out of generosity?—to insert another clause stipulating that:

After expiration of four months...members can peg for a further 12 months in any vacant land not reserved by British South Africa Company.²

Land grabbing, having become a regular feature under Jameson, now received an enormous impetus: with the effects of the Ndebele War, land policy or rather the lack of it, began in earnest. Within a couple of months valuable land portions were privately or corporately owned: "before many

¹For a complete story on the forfeiture of the "king's" cattle, see Ranger, Revolt, pp. 106-13.

²Copy of Victoria Agreement, 14/8/93, in Selborne/Elgin, 11/11/07, CO 879/872.

weeks had passed the country for sixty miles and more around Bulawayo was located as farms".¹ A distasteful atmosphere of speculation and prospecting pervaded the country, reminisced A.R. Colquhoun.² A reckless class of volunteers and syndicates had descended upon Matabeleland eager to embark upon a get-quick-rich scheme and then pull out before long. There was an indescribable scramble for land on the red and black loams (sibovu), the so-called gold-belt formation, precisely where the Ndebele herded their cattle. As the selection of large blocks of land for future development of mining or ranching had to be exercised within twelve months, the Ndebele felt the pressure immediately:

By the middle of 1894 practically the whole of the gold belt areas of Matabeleland had been alienated to companies or individuals.³

Missionaries were among the most prominent of land grabbers. By 1900 they possessed almost one third of a million acres, while Catholic priests owned almost half this area.⁴ Alienation in Mashonaland had not been as widespread as in Matabeleland after the conquest. By 1893 not more than ten percent of the Shona could be found living on alienated land, whereas the

¹ A. Boggie, From Ox-Wagon to Railway (Bulawayo: 1897), p. 26, quoted in Palmer, "War and Land", pp. 91-2.

² A.R. Colquhoun, Dan to Beersheba (London: 1908), p. 294.

³ Interim Report, Southern Rhodesia Native Reserves Commission (addressed to Buxton, HC, Pretoria), in Buxton/Harcourt, 9/12/14, CO 879/1034.

⁴ Palmer, "Land Policy", p. 57.

Ndebele grazing areas were expropriated in toto. By August 1894, 5.4 million acres had already been expropriated out of a total 96 million acres in the whole of Southern Rhodesia, which was largely made possible because the conditions of beneficial occupation were waived in most instances.

But the real fly in the ointment for the Africans was that the Colonial Office had insisted on a reserves policy, arising from a fumbling quid pro quo of the Company's taxation policy.¹ As the Company was anxious to formalize its taxation policy by levying 10 s. per hut the Colonial Office was duly placated by the hurried demarcation of two outlying reserves, Shangani and Gwaai. By that time the Colonial Office had the view, under the influence of the Aborigines' Protection Society, that African institutions ought to be respected, power retained by the traditional chiefs and protection extended to all Africans not willing to share the vices of the whites, to their disadvantage.

The Land Commission was faced with a fait accompli: as the highveld was already crowded with pegging rights, the Commission had no choice but to make haste in salvaging two reserves which were profoundly inadequate except for game.²

¹ See p. 47.

² Grey admitted that the Ndebele regarded the reserves as "cemeteries not Homes" (Rhodes Papers, Grey/Rhodes, 26/5/97, quoted in Palmer, "Johnston and Jameson", p. 310).

The Shangani reserve (2,240,00 acres) and Gwaai reserve (1,920,000 acres) were apparently set aside on the principle that it was desirable "...to find a suitable outlet for them in case the tide of European immigration should force them to seek new ground".¹ The reserves were approved by Colonial Secretary Ripon on 25th January 1895 with the full knowledge of the opinion of Chief Native Commissioner J.W. Colenbrander that the reserves were overestimated in terms of their capabilities. They were practically uninhabited at the time they were assigned whilst traditional land occupation patterns of the Ndebele were not heeded.²

That the "locations" were not populated merely pointed to the fact that "the districts in question are not looked upon as desirable places for settlement by the Natives".

Worse was that the Land Commission did not even bother to visit the places, except at the proposed border where there happened to be a river. The commissioners simply listened to testimonies given by Africans and then fabricated the "evidence" by twisting the facts supplied by the natives who had more favourable things to say about lands outside the reserves than inside.³ Thus in fact there was little permanent water in the reserves,

¹Interim Report..., in Buxton/Harcourt, 9/12/14, CO 879/1034.

²Ibid.

³Richard Martin, Report, 12/4/97, in Goodenough, Act. HC/Chamberlain, 3/5/97, CO 879/517.

particularly in the Gwaai, and what there was, was swamp. One observer noted that the Shangani district was malaria infested and that it was "unsuitable for people to go and live there who have been born in the high plateau".¹ No wonder that the Ndebele, who were not nomadic, were averse to moving from their traditional kraals to an outlying district of "thickly wooded country, not well watered, granite formation with sandy soil".² Nor did the Government induce them to leave for the reserves, in order not to lose sight of a valuable labour force. Thus the Ndebele remained in close contact with white settlement, severely limited by the regulations imposed upon them.

While the British Government after the Ndebele War had more reservations than hitherto about the actions of the Company in regard to the rights and protection of the natives--the inglorious outcome of which was the Land Commission--Company paramountcy continued to climb. This is eminently illustrated by the fact that in 1895 alone twenty-five new regulations--now in force for the whole of Southern Rhodesia--were put through which, even though they were discriminatory to Africans, were assented to by the Colonial Office without difficulty. Thus the Registration of Natives Regulations³

¹Rev. D. Carnegie/Martin, 21/3/97, in Goodenough/Chamberlain, 3/5/97, CO 879/517.

²J.W. Durand, Report, n.d., in Goodenough/Chamberlain, 3/5/97, CO 879/517.

³These were based upon the 1892 Salisbury "regulations" discussed earlier.

was passed over, which obliged an African to obtain a pass in order to seek work. He had to produce the pass in town whenever requested and could not remain in town unless he stayed at night in the nearby native location.¹

It is easy to see what happened, but less easy to excuse it. The BSAC was delegated the task of governing and this represented a virtual commitment to minimum government interference with, as only link, the Cape Town High Commissioner, 1600 miles away. Colonial Office diffidence, guided by a policy of indirect rule, was of necessity imposed by a lack of men and money. The imperial fear of becoming involved and of antagonizing South African opinion had led to fraudulent practices, first the BSAC's Lippert concession, and then the "border incidents" concocted as an excuse for war to invade Matabeleland.

The occupation of Mashonaland, the Ndebele War and its immediate aftermath had created a situation which could not be reversed. Of the 15 million acres expropriated in 1897, out of a total of 96 million acres, about sixty percent was in the hands of companies rather than individuals. This initial period of Chartered Company rule was crucial for the shaping of a future land policy. Colquhoun, the neat bureaucrat, had been able to stem the tide of ruthless speculation, but the Jameson era had become notorious for its complete

¹Palley, p. 122.

unconcern for the Africans occupying the land. H.W. Milton, who came up to Salisbury to assist Jameson's successor, noted the damage with a view to white settlement when he said:

Jameson has given nearly the whole country away...so that there is absolutely no land left which is of any value at all for settlement of Immigrants by Government. ¹

The Imperial Government had allowed Jameson a free hand: land was parcelled out to all and sundry, and bona fide settlers as well as adventurers and young rascals, all enjoyed the fruits of Jameson's liberality, or informal methods of administration. Jameson had transformed Matabeleland into one huge European reserve within a year's time, 1893-4, and turned de jure the Ndebele out from the highveld into the virtually uninhabited areas, Gwaai and Shangani. It was "an open secret that the Commission were not at pains to allot the very best land as Native Reserves".³ When the Colonial Office woke up to this reality in the aftermath of the rebellion, it was too late to stem the tide. The Imperial Government's record as guardian of African interests, from 1890 to 1896, was a farce; at least one official admitted as much in jotting down: "the proceedings of the Land Commission were a farce".⁴ With the exception of the Gwaai and Shangani reserves, Africans did not possess land sufficiently secure from possible expropriation

¹ Quoted in T.O. Ranger, "The Last Word on Rhodes?" Past and Present, XXVIII (1964), p. 121.

² Palmer, Aspects, p. 8.

³ Hartmann Just, minute, 25/11/96, CO 417/168.

⁴ Frederick Graham, minute, 26/6/97, CO 417/219.

by whites. This was the reason why they put up a fight to obtain it, whilst drawing their strength from the ancient Mlimo cult in the Matopos hills east of Bulawayo. The cult which in the end preached war, kept close contact with spirit media in western Mashonaland who operated from the sacred shrines of prominent ancestors and who communicated to the Ndebele chieftains a spirit of rebellion. The 1896 rebellion was essentially a struggle for land. It had become clear to the blacks that the Europeans were not prepared to depart. The only way open to them was violence, to secure possession of the traditional highveld, and because of a total lack of a native policy.

Land in Matabeleland was alienated to a degree unprecedented in the history of white settlement: whereas private property in Mashonaland amounted to not more than two to three million acres in 1893, the total area of white settlement was doubled within a year from the outbreak of the Ndebele War. Many pioneers left Mashonaland for greener pastures in Matabeleland. By January 1894 more than nine hundred farm rights had been issued, as compared to the three hundred farms in occupation in Mashonaland.

The effect this had on the Ndebele was markedly different from that on the Shona who tended to live in small, scattered groups with little division of labour. The Shona were agri-

¹ There was in actual fact little land pressure because the Europeans were as yet not engaged in active farming due to lack of equipment and labour, to such an extent that they frequently bought food from their African neighbours.

culturalists rather than pastoralists. When the whites began to peg farm rights, the Shona tended to avoid the estates and could do so as they were traditionally not interested in the heavier red and black soils. They preferred the sandy soils which were ideal for their staple crop rapoko, i.e. finger millet, and carried out a form of shifting soil cultivation, moving away for a couple of miles every third or fourth season to rebuild their kraals. This loose pattern clearly worked to their advantage as in this way they were able to retain their lifestyle for a much longer period than the Ndebele who lost almost all their land to alienation, dependent as they were on the heavy red soils on which they herded their cattle. This land problem was compounded by the fact that once the Ndebele had settled on the highveld, they clung to it because it was free of the tsetse fly. The Ndebele lived in a compact area on the highveld which was now coveted by the European invaders for the mineral content of its soils. They clustered in large regimental towns and their economy depended on cattle keeping as well as on concentrated man-power. Political authority depended on control of cattle and captives.

The Ndebele caste system with its division of labour and its military townships sharply contrasted with the social organization of the Shona. This apparently accounted for the much larger turnout of Ndebele compared with Shona working for the whites: once Matabeleland was pacified, the military lifestyle destroyed, and the regimental kraals broken up, the

Ndebele more readily entered the labour market than the Shona were prepared to do.¹ White attitudes towards Africans were shaped by the idea that the whites could draw from an unlimited supply of labour. They held, however, the misconception that a subsistence economy necessarily entailed disguised unemployment. In the opinion of a contemporary, Percy F. Hone:

The Matabele men were accustomed to leave the agricultural work to their women, and, being themselves used to a lazy, indolent life except in time of war, resented the demands for labour made upon them by the white population.²

Nothing could be further from the mark; the Shona and the lower-caste Ndebele were engaged in communal labour which involved land cultivation as well as a number of crafts, and if not performing physical tasks, they were most likely engaged in some other, socially useful activity.³ Yet, the fact that about four times as many Ndebele turned out for work, as compared with the Shona,⁴ was largely due to the possibility the Shona had in retaining their way of life which was steeped in

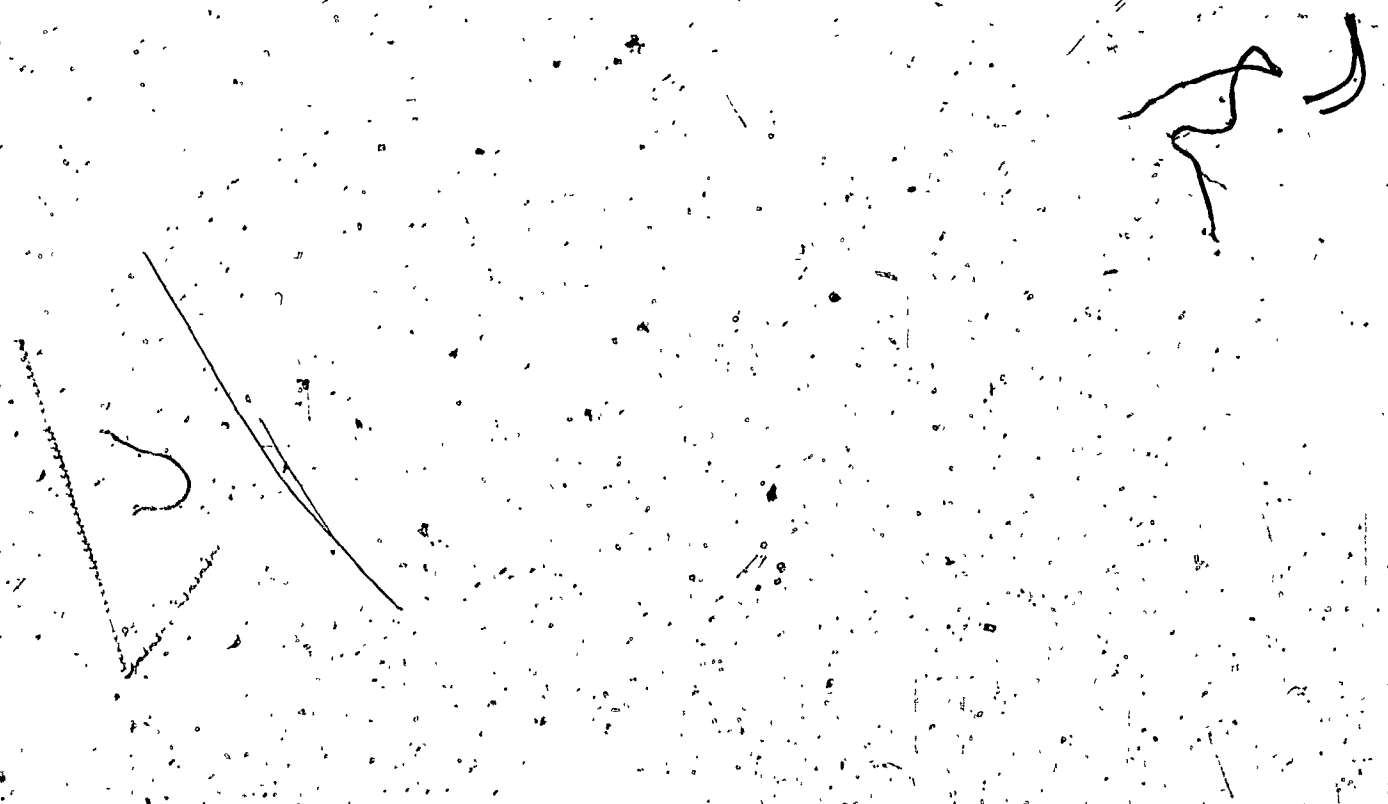
¹G. Arrighi, "Labour Supplies in Historical Perspective: A Study of the Proletarianization of the African Peasantry in Rhodesia", Journal of Development Studies, VI, 3 (April 1970), p. 203.

²Hone, p. 41.

³Arrighi, pp. 201-2.

⁴The Annual Reports of the CNC's, 1902 quote a figure of 48% for able-bodied Ndebele spending three months or more in wage employment against a proportion of 13% among the Shona (cited in Arrighi, p. 229, n. 31).

the cultivation of sandy soils, whilst that of the Ndebele had been destroyed by the effects of conquest, rinderpest and continuous white pressure, which made for a population constantly on the move. The distribution of cattle to loyal, subsidized chiefs seems to have perpetuated the pre-colonial aristocratic caste system where a few people owned most of the livestock, whilst the masses were employed in the military system. But the military system was destroyed in the aftermath of the Ndebele War, and the coming of the white controlled economy essentially provided an opportunity for the ex-military segment of the Ndebele people to escape "structural unemployment" under new conditions of a dismantled military state and shrinking homelands.



THE NATIVE ADMINISTRATION, 1894-6

Any native policy in the Jameson era which would have had the general affairs of Africans at heart, was conspicuous by its absence. The Martin Commission of 1897 which was appointed to investigate the causes of the 1896 rebellions, conceded as much in saying that:

The only possible chance that the Government had in preventing this attempt to regain their lost position was the establishment of a strong and able Native administration and one which should have considered the conciliation and welfare of the Natives as the all important object to aim at.

But Rhodes was not the kind of man to have regard for Africans.² He had no particular desire to set up a costly native administration, neither had Jameson, Southern Rhodesia's second Administrator from 1891-6, any inclination to establish a system except for the collection of hut tax which, Rhodes claimed, was badly needed for revenue.³ Jameson was the very man Rhodes needed for the job: the

¹C. 8547 of 1897 (printed in Ranger, Revolt, p. 49)

²His indaba in the Matopos for example, to conciliate the rebels, was not a test of his ability to sympathize with them, but was purely motivated by financial considerations to stop prolonged guerrilla activity. (Indaba means conference).

³Ranger, Revolt, p. 51; Palley, p. 102.

leader of the subsequent Jameson Raid did not believe in red tape, had no concern for "departmental detail", and ignored rules and regulations. "Dr. Jim" was also popular amongst the settlers because, depending as he was on them for land development, he never asked nasty questions about the treatment of Africans.¹ In 1892 Rhodes had directed Jameson to "run the show as a civil administration pure and simple",² in order to economize. Instead of military police, locally recruited police patrols now conducted "native affairs" in a characteristically rough-and-ready way.³

By 1894 white power, with great show of strength, had pretty well succeeded in alienating the Shona who were unwilling to work for any white farmer or prospector that might seek to exact labour from the nearest village. As one prospector commented on the situation:

The only way we can do it is to go and catch them at dawn and compel them to work...we pay them a blanket and a shirt a month.⁴

The position around Umtali, for example, had so deteriorated that an artificial labour shortage for the mines had been created purely because of settler practice of going out to the kraals and virtually catching the "boys...under the pretext of being government officials":

¹Ranger, Revolt, pp. 52-3, 59.

²Sec. BSAC, Cape Town/Jameson, 18/12/91, quoted in Ranger, Revolt, p. 60.

³Ranger discusses the Jameson "gang" in Revolt, pp. 60-8.

⁴Mallet Papers, 3/7/92, quoted in Duignan, p. 118.

Having got the boys they bring them to Umtali and then before their month is up so ill treat them that the boys bolt and consequently get no payment....

As a result they hid away from their kraals at the first sign of any white man approaching. One could observe that "...it is now almost impossible to get boys from the kraals to work...."² The Administration strongly urged a district mining commissioner "...not [to] raid the natives either for Hut Tax or labour for prospectors". It gave the following reason:

...it is constantly leading the Company into troubles because once begun the thing has to be carried to a conclusion which involves shooting the natives, etc.³

Collection of hut tax, in fact, was not assented to by the Colonial Office until 1894.⁴ This job, initially assigned to civil or mining commissioners, or otherwise the local farmer, led to little tax being gathered and was impeded by direct confrontations with the Shona, not least because these collectors combined their duties with procuring "boys" for the mines who invariably deserted in great numbers. If the settlers did not take the law into their own hands, which they frequently did to impose fines in kind on those who abandoned their chores,

¹ Res. Magistrate, Umtali/Public Prosecutor, Salisbury, 23/10/94, quoted in Ranger, Revolt, p. 68.

² Ibid.

³ Sec. to Act. Admin., Salisbury/Mining Commissioner, Lomagundi, 6/9/94, quoted in Ranger, Revolt, p. 72.

⁴ Palley, pp. 120-3, 121 n. 2, and Gann, pp. 122-3.

there was always the police patrol who made no ceremony with them: flogging was to be administered without exception. Other more severe punishments of burning, looting or kidnapping might be inflicted, depending upon the prevailing mood of the punitive expedition. Thus there were strong arguments in favour of the creation of a separate Native Department solely dealing with the collecting of hut tax "which they [the Shona] might obtain from the whites for whom they were expected to work".¹

The existence of a new department in the whole of Southern Rhodesia was made possible by the Company's enjoyment of "real legislative power based on authorization by the Crown after British conquest of the country".² The Native Departments of Mashonaland and Matabeleland were not erected out of any particular love for the Africans, certainly not by Jameson. As fiscal considerations had an overriding importance, the departments had to prove they paid their way!³ The work of the newly installed native commissioners was of a semi-political nature. They were supposed to become the nearest thing to an expert on "their natives". No white police would be employed to assist in hut tax collection or the raising of labour, in order to appease British public opinion in general, placate an

¹According to the job interview of Weale, NC, in the office of the Acting Administrator, quoted in Ranger, Revolt, p. 73.

²Palley, p. 115.

³See Gann, p. 122; also Ranger, Revolt, p. 70.

inquisitive Parliament and keep the share market bullish in the absence of panicky reports.

The native commissioners were not greatly inspired men: they lacked administrative experience¹ and knowledge of law, but not of order. They coerced the Shona into a false work ethos by offering taxation as the incentive to work outside the experience of their own community. As this could never be a permanent incentive, the Africans tended to turn inwards, sticking to their traditional mode of life. In maintaining their customary life, the Shona were more successful than the Ndebele as they were less interfered with: for one thing they were never disarmed until after the rebellion, whereas in the case of the Ndebele the military system of regimental kraals was deliberately broken up by Jameson's white British South Africa police, and within months from the end of the Ndebele War, 800 Ndebele were working on the brickfields in Bulawayo.²

During the first year the native commissioners in Mashonaland accepted mealies and other grains for payment, but in November 1895 they all received the following circular from their chief:

You are to make a point of instilling into the minds of Natives the idea that the Government are not anxious to take their cattle as payment for hut tax; but it would be for the good of the

¹Their English in handwritten reports was poor. Some of them were ex-soldiers or -traders.

²Mackenzie, "African Labour", p. 116.

Natives themselves, and of their districts, that they should earn by labour the money with which to pay their tax.

In Matabeleland cattle were traded in against current market prices. This left the Africans with some profit and by doing this they could evade working. The result was that the native commissioners in Matabeleland received an injunction from their superior in 1895 that any profits derived from the sale of stock should accrue to the Department itself in order to "encourage Natives to earn their Tax by labour".² This system was gradually extended to the outlying districts: effective control was still impossible in many areas even after the rebellions. The Wankie district was the last to be contained, in 1903.³ Taxation and labour so preoccupied the minds of the fresh native commissioners that there was very little in the way of an evolving "native policy". They had no time to study their districts, as they were frequently moved around,⁴ or to do statistics on huts or livestock. Moreover, in Matabeleland, native commissioners were kept busy sharing out the forfeited cattle, with the Company brand on them, first to whites and then to blacks.⁵

Native administration under the new conditions was as

¹C. 8547 of 1897, p. 35.

²CNC, circular, 19/4/95, quoted in Gann, p. 123.

³MacKenzie, "African Labour", p. 151.

⁴Gann, p. 127.

⁵See for a full account of the task of the native commissioners, Ranger, Revolt, pp. 112-6.

arbitrary as before. The native commissioners in Mashonaland were instructed to recruit their own "police boys" and messengers which they usually got from the colonizing blacks, Fingoes from South Africa, who had followed in the trail of "progressive civilization". The Department, short-staffed and lacking experience, but anxious to prove their efficiency in avoiding the need for settler or white police action, raised more money and labour than under the private regime. But this was attended with an increasing element of compulsion on the part of the native commissioners. They invariably used their own discretion in raiding the kraals with the use of their armed Native Police, of which there seemed to be never enough, and as they were great believers in corporal punishment,¹ villagers, threatened with the burning down of their kraals if they resisted the payment of hut tax, were frequently flogged before they could witness the smoke rising from their huts. Likewise chiefs and headmen were bullied into supplying "raw natives". If they did not live up to this expectation, as they evidently did not understand "the new order of things", they were served the usual method of intimidation: their cattle, sheep or goats were seized and held hostage "until all the boys who have deserted have come back and been punished".² The Native Department earnestly supported forced labour: a departmental circular issued to

¹The practice of flogging by the native commissioners was not revoked until after 1905 (Duignan, p. 112 n.).

²Quarterly Report, NC Hartley, 30/12/94, quoted in Ranger, Revolt, p. 78.

the native commissioners of Mashonaland in 1895 received six replies out of eleven which stressed the need for it. Some of them were in favour of a shuttle service taking out registered labour quotas for three months at a time. One native commissioner claimed he was already attempting to do precisely that.¹

But after 1894 and until 1898, when reforms were being made, contact and communications between Africans and Company rule remained incidental despite a regular system of administrative control. The young, inexperienced and over-confident native commissioners frequently used the rule of thumb and relied too much upon their African hirelings who, after getting drunk while on mission, sometimes assaulted women, or looted and burned down the village at their whim.² Dependence on African constables was more unfailing in Matabeleland than in Mashonaland where "colonial boys" were recruited. The much more organized Matabeleland Native Police was carefully handpicked from amongst the disbanded Ndebele regiments. They made themselves rapidly hated by their own fellow-folk for their rude methods in procuring hidden cattle for taxation, collection labour and arresting deserters. As F. C. Selous, the famous explorer, hunter and pioneer remarked:

These police men, I fear, sometimes exceeded their duties, and used their

¹CNC Mashonaland, circular, n.d., cited by MacKenzie, "African Labour", p. 121.

²Duignan, p. 113.

position to tyrannise over the people.¹

The measures of these inadequately supervised police naturally raised an odd situation for the BSAC during the hearings on the causes of the 1896-7 risings, when its spokesmen were asked to explain why they were given such a free hand in brutalizing the country. It is evident that the black police force, in their conduct, made themselves guilty of "many acts of cruelty and extortion".² In fact, they were the only Matabele not forced into labour: they were the collectors of labour. As in Mashonaland, private press gangs and white police harassment had stopped. But now the Native Police were forcing the Ndebele into labour and did this with such a frankness that Jameson had no misgivings in leaving the duties of police and detective work to them, which provided him with an opportunity to withdraw his own troops to Bechuanaland in October 1895.

The general make-up of the Native Department called forth grave consequences for the spirit of a proud and conquered people who were not used to taking to menial tasks which customarily fell to the womenfolk. As one missionary put it:

...[they] cannot be turned in a month, or a year, into a useful servant by kicks, sjambok, and blows. ...The whole question of native policy has been left since the

¹F. C. Selous, Sunshine and Storm in Rhodesia, (London: 1896), preface.

²Martin, Report, 16/1/97, in Rosmead Chamberlain, 9/2/97, CO 879/517; see also C. 8547 of 1897, p. 8.

war in an unsettled and, therefore, most unsatisfactory condition.

Some chiefs, after the defeat in 1893, had agreed to supply labour in exchange for bribes, but for unknown reasons they soon abandoned this practice. One can only surmise that the working conditions under quarrelsome employers, cursing and flogging them and in the labourer's opinion "treating them like dogs", led the chiefs to forbid their young men to go out.² Understandably, they resented having their men learn the "advantages from industrial habits" if the kind of labour was only degrading and injurious to their self-respect, and they dissociated themselves from the administration by showing passive hostility as an act of solidarity with the recruited. Such a universal defiance nevertheless encouraged the Government to find ways and means of enforcing labour, once cut off from "voluntary labour". The manner in which labour was recruited undeniably evoked a spirit of labour enforcement. Percy G. Smith, Resident Magistrate at Bulawayo, although not admitting that compulsory labour, by which he meant the use of physical force, was involved, said in reply to a questionnaire that:

Inspectors of police were sent to the different kraals of the district to

¹ Rev. D. Carnegie (missionary in Matabeleland, London Missionary Society), giving evidence before the Martin Commission, C. 8547 of 1897 (printed in Ranger, Revolt, p. 120).

² No doubt the language barrier also made the African appear intractable which infuriated their white bosses so much that they resorted to beatings (H. C. Thomson, Rhodesia and Its Government (London: 1898), pp. 82-3).

obtain labour in proportion to the number of male adults of each kraal. The various inspectors assure me that no difficulty whatever was experienced in obtaining boys... many coming quite voluntary [sic].

All the same, an element of compulsion was there. The 1897 Martin Report, the result of a Royal Commission Enquiry into the BSAC's native administration, insisted that compulsory labour nevertheless existed in Matabeleland, and quite probably in Mashonaland also. It condemned the labour procurement of this nature by the native commissioners who, failing persuasion through the employment of subsidized indunas, managed to obtain results by the use of force. The Report criticized the Government for having had the erroneous impression that after the conquest they were now at liberty to exact whatever they deemed necessary.²

¹ Percy G. Smith, Resident Magistrate, Bulawayo, 29/9/96, in Rosmead/Chamberlain, 9/2/97, CO 879/517.

² Martin, Report, 16/1/97, in Rosmead/Chamberlain, 9/2/97, CO 879/517.

PART THREE: 1896-1908

ADMINISTRATIVE REFORM, 1896-8

As we have seen in the preceding chapters, the Colonial Office had adopted a most inconsistent attitude to the powers of the Company, and had acquiesced in its exercise of jurisdiction over and taxation of natives. This came to what seemed an abrupt end when Rhodes' daring Administrator of Mashonaland and Matabeleland, the popular "Dr. Jim", committed the unpardonable sin of invading the Transvaal in an attempt to force the Boers into a South African commercial federation. Peaceful negotiations to achieve this minimum objective had exhausted all avenues by 1895, except for the impulsive Leander Starr Jameson who, watching events from Bechuanaland with virtually all the BSAC forces from Southern Rhodesia at hand, decided on his own volition to deal with the issue by force. He did not get far: the coup failed miserably and he surrendered within days on 2nd January 1896. Not only was the raid a complete fiasco; it had irreparably damaged the British imperial cause in Southern Africa. It permanently severed Britain's relationship with the Afrikaner segment which drifted into a situation in which the Colonial Office "lost command" and finally got entangled in a disastrous militant policy far beyond its capability.¹ Moreover

¹With reference to the South African War, 1899-1902.

the Company's creditability had suffered by the marauding incident. It ruined Rhodes' career as a Cape politician; he resigned as premier of the Cape and withdrew to Rhodesia. At the time a commission of enquiry in Britain could not prove any conclusive evidence for the complicity of the Colonial Office, but modern research has shown that vital documents, which could show the involvement of the Office in the shady politics of Rhodes and Jameson, have been destroyed.¹ Joseph Chamberlain sought to whitewash Rhodes in the House of Commons, but otherwise dismissed the Company's claims of administrative control in Bechuanaland, and curbed its activity in Northern Rhodesia.²

The irresponsible action of Jameson had also grave consequences for Southern Rhodesia. The Imperial Government took over military control of the country³ and supervised the establishment of proper governmental forms. These measures put a stop to the license and despotism which was facilitated by "...the great latitude given at first by the Board of Directors to their officers in South Africa".⁴ Yet a new era of Company administrative and legislative action began. It

¹ See for an excellent discussion of Chamberlain's complicity in the Jameson scheme, Robert V. Kubicsek, The Administration of Imperialism: Joseph Chamberlain at the Colonial Office (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1969), pp. 92-8.

² The decision to treat Northern Rhodesia as a tropical dependency is of historical importance: it marks the division between a free Zambia and a yet unliberated Zimbabwe.

³ Ranger, Revolt, p. 165; Gann, p. 141.

⁴ CO memo, n.d., CO 879/559, quoted in Palley, p. 127.

would have been extremely difficult for the Imperial Government to revoke the Charter for Southern Rhodesia. The financial arguments in favour of Company rule remained as strong as ever; for as long as the risky development of the country fell on the shoulders of individual shareholders, the imperial authorities would not be brought to book by the British taxpayer for the activities of the corporation. Throughout the period of reconstitution, 1896-8, the Colonial Office was bound to hold the view that "treasury principles would starve Rhodesia--that is one great reason for keeping the Company up".¹ The power of the purse influenced the administrative policy of practically all departments of government, and the Colonial Office was no exception to the Treasury, which clearly prohibited an imperial takeover in Southern Rhodesia. Chamberlain lamented that:

... [the] Treasury would never give me the money that would be required to place the administration on a proper footing and at the same time to develop the estate.²

The Colonial Office therefore had to work within the limitations imposed by the financial control of the British public at large.

But there were other considerations for the Colonial

¹ Milner/Chamberlain, 1/12/97, in The Milner Papers, 1897-1905, ed. Cecil Headlam (London: Cassell, 1931, 1933), vol. I, p. 140.

² Chamberlain/Herbert, 10/6/97, quoted in Kubicek, pp. 90-1 (Robert Herbert held the post of permanent under-secretary, until his retirement in 1892.)

Office which decided the future administration of Southern Rhodesia.. Imperial complicity in the Jameson intrigue in a sense "saved" the Charter from being revoked; Rhodes had a strong bargaining weapon in an eventual disclosure of all the facts once the Company's interests were terminated. A major political embarrassment to the Colonial Office had to be avoided¹--and so the Company administration continued, but not without the control of imperial officers on the spot. Immediately after the Jameson Raid Chamberlain cabled Hercules Robinson, the High Commissioner for South Africa, that he needed a representative "to act as the eyes and ears of the High Commissioner and Imperial Government"² having veto power on all BSAC decisions.

When Richard Martin was appointed as Resident Commissioner in April 1896, the country was already involved in a major uprising of the African people against the colonists. A month before, the Company Board had replaced Jameson by the more pliable Albert Grey who would do what Rhodes told him but who was nevertheless acceptable to the Colonial Office.³ When he arrived, the organized revolt of the Ndebele broke out. It turned Bulawayo into a laager. The whites were ill-prepared, because the country was denuded of Company troops whilst the undisciplined rabble of white

¹ See Palley, pp. 130-1.

² Chamberlain/Robinson, tel., 17/1/96, CO 879/498.

³ Milner thought Lord Grey was a "reasonable and conciliatory creature" (Milner/Selborne, 15/6/97, Headlam, vol. 1, p. 111); see also Ranger, Revolt, p. 173.

volunteers lacked ammunition and they were not good shots either.¹

The Board of Directors in London was fairly complacent; they had more regard for the share market than for the safety of the white people. Grey himself had sleepless nights over the staggering costs that would be involved in bringing in relief troops and was glad that the situation warranted imperial intervention even though he had to foot the bill which Rhodes, to his great relief, endorsed. And so the Colonial Office bailed the Company out. A military officer was nominated by the War Office to direct the operations of the imperial troops and volunteer settler forces.² His lack of imagination produced a stalemate in the Matopos hills and furthermore, to everyone's surprise, provoked a second stage in the rebellion: the outbreak of the Shona rising in mid-year, which was only put down with great loss of life by November 1897.³ The whole black/white conflict was a blemish on the Company's reputation and the situation warranted some deep soul-searching on the part of the Directors and the Colonial Office staff, whilst Parliament demanded the inevitable papers related to the native risings and general affairs in Rhodesia.

The new Chief Secretary, William Henry Milton, arriving

¹Ranger, Revolt, pp. 171-2.

²Ranger, Revolt, pp. 168-74.

³Ranger discusses this significant rebellion in its continental context of primary resistance movements.

from the Cape in September 1896, found the small bureaucracy in a pretty mess; "everything official here is in an absolutely rotten condition", he said:

The country has been very nearly ruined by them already under the wing of Jameson, and if it is to continue the Imperial Government will be quite justified in stepping in.

The Colonial Office had already jerked to action immediately after the Jameson Raid, but now Milton had come up precisely to minimize such intervention as much as possible and cast the governmental structure in a different mould. This ex-civil servant from the Cape, who was sent up by Rhodes to reorganize the administration, masterminded the constitutional reforms of 1897-8 and in doing so he rapidly outshone Albert Grey, the third Administrator in succession, whom he followed up in 1898. With High Commissioner Milner he agreed on a "complete system of administration departmentally organized", which machinery was described by Milner as "dispos[ing] absolutely of the charge that it is running Rhodesia as a mere commercial concern".²

When the risings were finally put down, the Company had to submit to a larger measure of imperial control than before, at least in theory: the Southern Rhodesia Order in Council, 20th October 1898, revoked the Matabele Order in Council, 18th July 1894, while preserving many of its stipulations. The

¹ Milton/his wife, 18/9/96, quoted in Ranger, Revolt, p. 104.

² Milner/Chamberlain, 28/7/97, CO 879/552.

Company remained responsible for the general administration of affairs. It continued to be represented by its own Administrator subject to approval of the Imperial Government. The Secretary of State however appointed a Resident Commissioner in the person of Marshall Clarke,¹ next in rank to the Administrator, and who was an ex-officio member of the Executive and Legislative Councils. He reported to the High Commissioner for South Africa in general on all aspects of administration, but in particular upon the conduct of native affairs. Resident commissioners from now on received copies of monthly reports of the native commissioners, which they passed on to the High Commissioner, and about whose contents they corresponded with Administrator Milton. But they were almost ineffective:

...as is evidenced by the fashion in which the Administrator and High Commissioner invariably operated over their heads and by the High Commissioner's complaints of their incompetence. In addition, the High Commissioner was remote and far too intimately connected with South African affairs.²

Remote control from London and Cape Town (later Johannesburg, Pretoria and Cape Town again)³ was to prove a paper

¹ Marshall Clarke, an "enlightened" official, held several civil service commissions among which posts as resident commissioner, Basutoland, 1884-93; acting administrator, Zululand, 1893-8; first resident commissioner, Southern Rhodesia, 1898-1905.

² Mackenzie, "African Labour", p. 365.

³ High Commissioner's Office in Johannesburg from 1901 till 1910, in Pretoria from 1910 to 1913, thereafter in Cape Town.

reality, or even worse: a farce. At first, it seemed as if the Imperial Government was going to get really tough with the Company since the revelations of the Martin Report.

Nothing could be more wrong, for he had, Milner explained:

...to walk with extreme caution, for nothing is more certain than if the Imperial Government were to be seen taking a strong line against the Company for the protection of the blacks, the whole of Dutch opinion in South Africa would swing round to the side of the Company and the bulk of...British Colonial opinion would go with it....¹

Moreover, the Colonial Office, which apparently had tightened up on the Company in dictating a political settlement, could not stretch parsimony any further than an Imperial Army officer and a single Resident Commissioner who had to pay his own private secretary. Indirect rule, as a policy, was nothing but a series of good intentions, since colonial officials were constrained by lack of men and money, imposed on them by Treasury control of the purse strings. The Office reduced "forced labour" to a minimum, diminished the impact of the hut tax by a reduction in the proposed raise, supervised the appointments of native commissioners, who were all subject to a law examination in Cape Town, and opposed a dwindling of the reserves as contemplated by the Administration.

Yet all these rather weak victories during the first decade of the twentieth century, did not outweigh the success by which the Administration could set itself up as a separate

¹Milner/Asquith, 18/11/97, quoted in Headlam, vol. I, p. 178.

state apparatus reproducing the British pattern. It had an Administrator, with the powers of a governor elsewhere in the Dominions, who was aided by an Executive Council acting as a government cabinet. A single "House" was formed out of partly elected "British" settlers and partly senior Company officials,¹ and was dubbed Legislative Council, standard for any colony.

In acceding to settler representation, hardly avoidable as we shall see, colonial policy sowed the seeds of its own destruction. If British imperialism deluded itself with the myth that it was the protector of native rights, and that reserves were a safeguard for the native interests, it had not grown up to the idea that the settler problem could be much more onerous to solve than the so-called Native Question. For the main point may be lost altogether: viz. that it was the Colonial Office itself that insisted upon a representative body to replace the 1894 Council of Company nominees, and when a petition to Chamberlain, signed by 169 pioneers, pointed out that representation would materially assist in solving the problem of the errant ways of the Company, it fell on fertile soil.² Milner commented that, as a first step towards a Rhodesia as a self-governing colony, the administration would be "greatly altered by the contemplated introduction of a representative element": "the time has come to lay the

¹Gann, p. 144.

²Encl. in Milner/Chamberlain, 28/8/97, CO 839/552.

foundation of future self-government".¹ He further disclosed how it struck him that the system of government had become so very costly due to the rebellions, the rinderpest and the drought.² But the truth of the matter is that the commercial machinations of the Company itself, and the unfettered speculative ventures of floating companies who had bought up large tracts of land, militated against any effort to more settled ways of occupation, at the expense of security, health and education.³

The settlers resented the highhanded manner in which the Company had operated. They even accused the Company of actually causing the native uprisings, a view they shared with the Aborigines' Protection Society, but for different reasons. Whereas the settlers contended that the Company did not identify itself with the aims of the settlers for better mining laws and secure land titles, the APS asserted their interests were indistinguishable from those of the Company insofar as the settlers had fallen victim of Company malpractice.⁴ The BSAC fell foul of the APS for their adventurist spirit, rash attitude on native questions, and their hostility towards Africans, which in turn backfired upon the settlers. The

¹ Milner/Chamberlain, 15/12/97, CO 879/559.

² Ibid.

³ Encl. in Milner/Chamberlain, 28/8/97, CO 879/552.

⁴ The APS attacked the BSAC on account of five charges: 1. the charter was a spurious concession; 2. the war with Lobengula was provoked; 3. maladministration which resulted in rebellion; 4. expropriation of land and cattle; and 5. imposition of forced labour.

settlers, however, did not interpret it quite that way. Although they full well realized that the BSAC had depended upon them for the return of tranquility and peace and also, like the APS, accepted the view that the "small man" was menaced by the BSAC monopoly, they had a different outlook on African rights. The rebellions confirmed them in their opinion that Africans were unpredictable and that:

They must be made to work within the white economy and not allowed to idle away time on the land provided for them.

The APS advocated the view that Africans had a "birthright" to ownership of the land and to a "fair" price for their labour, and that ultimately they would achieve social equality with the whites. But they discounted the fact that settler attitudes were motivated by fear. In settler circles it was regretted that the natives were not completely subjugated--a firmer grasp on them in the way of control would have prevented the disturbance. They felt the Company had not been tough enough with the Africans. Their allegation was that the Colonial Office tried to keep tabs on the BSAC which prevented the Company from going to an extreme. It was precisely the exercise of this kind of moderation which was equated by the settlers as "mismanagement of the natives".²

¹ Rachel Whitehead, "The Aborigines' Protection Society and White Settlers, 1889-1930", The Societies of Southern Africa in the 19th and 20th Centuries, Institute of Commonwealth Studies Seminar Paper, University of London, 1972, mimeo, p. 3.

² Witness C. L. Norris-Newman, journalist and land developer, C. 8547 of 1897, p. 115.

And this vindication of white power was completely overlooked by the APS, who thought that only aliens such as Boers or Portuguese were unfit to safeguard African interests. How wrong they were is proven by the activities of the settlers afterwards who, after getting a minority vote in the Legislative Council from 1898, and achieving parity in 1903, were unbending in their views of native policy. The debate on the hut tax, an issue in 1901-3, is a case in point: the APS turned so hostile to the settlers that Milner rebuked them for their malignance, as it was plain that native affairs would ultimately pass under local control without the benefits of imperial supervision.¹

The settlers were indeed the great benefactor of the Colonial Office's insistence on a Legislative Council for the pioneers in 1898. At first, between 1896 and 1898, they were so divided amongst themselves that their negative bickerings overruled any possibility of arriving at a coherent reform policy. There was only one issue they all agreed on:

They were unanimous...in their antagonism to the administration of the British South Africa Company.

When it looked as if the Imperial Government was going to step in, which might even restrict them more than the Company did, they adopted a more conciliatory tone in an attempt to obtain representation within the existing arrangements. The Company on their part, particularly Rhodes, also tended to swing more

¹Witehead, pp. 2-4.

²Hone, p. 136.

in favour of support for an elective element, so that the British public, as Rhodes conceded, would "funk to interfere" with them.¹

Milner, who arbitrated the "case", had no misgivings about the illiberal attitude of the settlers: white supremacy would take the form of increasing settler power. The period 1898 to 1923 would prove to be in many ways a study in imperial futility. In the final analysis, the achievement of imperial rule was to be rather negative: not always what the Colonial Office intended to do but what the settlers deemed necessary to undertake, was the result.

¹ Ranger, Revolt, pp. 331-6.

NATIVE POLICY, LABOUR AND TAXATION, 1896-1908

The Martin Commission, as we discussed earlier,¹ was important because it brought to light the abusive practices of the native administration prior to 1896. As High Commissioner Alfred Milner commented:

The blacks have been scandalously used
.... A lot of unfit people were allowed
to exercise power... especially with
regard to the natives, in a manner
which cannot be defended.²

Grey, new to the country, contested the findings, but his rebuttal merely reflected his own naive view on what had been going on, as he relied entirely upon Company officials on the spot, of longer standing.³

The debate on forced labour was something of a red herring. In the eyes of many, including Colonial Office staff, it was a matter of semantics. It depended a lot on whether forced labour was defined as physical compulsion or not. Some were convinced there were other indirect forms of compulsion, notably taxation and intimidation. Persuasion of some kind, it was thought, was exercised by the administration

¹ See pp. 61, 69, 71, 77, 80.

² Headlam, vol. I, pp. 178, 140-1.

³ For example H. Marshall Hole who later wrote The Making of Rhodesia (London: MacMillan & Co. Ltd., 1926), which is now out of date.

to procure labour for government, mining companies, and private persons. At any rate, the subject was large enough to arouse emotive passions amongst the philanthropists, particularly since the whole question was investigated in relation to the recent uprisings, whilst forced labour was considered a contributing factor leading up to the liberation movement.

Meanwhile, the native commissioners continued to wield their big "stick" assisted by their native "police" applying the "subtleties" of a policy of intimidation, as otherwise learning "the advantage of regular employment" might take too long. The African auxiliaries of the native commissioners were called "messengers" after August 1897 when the term "detectives" was dropped, whereas the only actual police detachment of Africans was incorporated in the BSA Police in 1899.¹ When the Native Departments in both provinces were about to be re-organized in 1898, Chamberlain felt that the "number of native messengers should be limited"; he doubted "...as to their power of arrest and carrying arms. They must not assume the functions of police".² Milton agreed, but it was for strictly budgetary reasons that he reduced them from twelve to six.³

¹Gann, p. 150.

²Chamberlain/Milner, tel., 14/1/98, quoted in Clarke/Milner, 14/1/01, encl. in Milner/Chamberlain, 3/4/01, CO 879/659.

³Milton/Milner, 15/4/98, in Milner/Chamberlain, 11/5/98, CO 879/559.

The single most important change in the Southern Rhodesian administration introduced by Chief Secretary William Henry Milton, was the establishment of the Native Affairs Department in 1898.² A High Commission's Proclamation--called 'The Southern Rhodesia Native Regulations'³--empowered the Administration to appoint native commissioners and defined their powers and duties in dealing with Africans. It was very necessary to prescribe the role of native commissioners as well as that of native messengers, chiefs and headmen. The Native Regulations of 1898, by which the Southern Rhodesia Native Department was set up, sharply distinguished between a native constabulary and native messengers. Only the former, consisting of district headmen assisting the chiefs, had power to arrest, collected the hut tax and were allowed to carry arms.⁴ In addition, the complete reorganization of the Native Department had extended the powers of the native commissioners. They received certain judicial powers and other discretionary powers such as the right to assign land for cultivation, grazing grounds and rural settlement. The departmental structure was supposed to be headed by a Secretary

¹ This office was abolished in 1908, it being officially BSAC's Salisbury Office. When it became an open secret that commercial interests in the administration predominated, the separate post was dropped. This post was held e.g. by H. H. Castens, Chairman of the Native Labour Committee in 1906.

² Palley, p. 138.

³ Reprinted in C. 9138 of 1899.

⁴ Milner/Chamberlain, 11/5/98, CO 879/559; encl. in Milner/Chamberlain, 3/4/01, CO 879/659.

for Native Affairs, but none was appointed for years, first of all because the post was entirely the creation of the BSAC and not even suggested by the Colonial Office¹ and secondly, why bother, Clarke explained, because if the post, upon, recommendation of the BSAC, was going to be taken by the newly appointed Administrator himself, W. H. Milton, it would become a dead letter!² So the Administrator was virtually in charge of the native administration, but he was closely supervised in this task by the Colonial Office which kept full control over appointments and duties in the administration headed by two Chief Native Commissioners, one in each province. They delegated their task to the individual native commissioners, each controlling the African district population through salaried chiefs and headmen. The chiefs were appointed by the Administrator in Council and the district headmen by the Secretary for Native Affairs, ipso jure the Administrator.

Whereas the headmen were specifically charged with responsibility for the payment of hut tax and for assisting the native commissioners and their messengers in this task, the chiefs were called upon by the native commissioners to supply men for labour. It was the blunt method of recruitment which made Chamberlain increasingly suspicious that native regulations were not being properly carried out. Out of distrust of the true intentions of the Native Department as to

¹ Milner/Chamberlain, tel., 10/5/99, CO 879/574.

² BSAC/CO, 12/4/99, CO 879/574; Clarke/Milner, 28/11/00, in Milner/Chamberlain, 13/2/01, CO 879/659.

the role of messengers, chiefs and native commissioners, the Colonial Office pressed for amendment of the regulations in the light of recent developments, involving a reformulation of labour recruiting policy in 1901.

It seemed as if the British Government had had a change of heart since 1896, at least in the field of public relations. They had reassured the African Association¹ that the interests of the native inhabitants by Order of Council, 1898 would prove to be fully safeguarded,² and they had promised the Manchester Society for the Protection of Native Races that the subject of forced labour would be covered by a Proclamation³ regarding Native Regulations, which, as we have seen, were almost entirely confined to labour and taxation. Let us first devote ourselves to the labour problem.

Even before the Boer war, which literally dried up supplies of imported labour, there was an artificial shortage: the levying of labour was hindered by low wages. Aside from this the "labour problem" was compounded by the fact that families could not locate in white settlements, but had to be segregated even if in close proximity to places of white concentration.

In the 1870's when labour migration to the Rand had started, many Africans came with the sole purpose of earning £6 for a gun "to protect their land and cattle against

¹The Association was formed in 1788 to promote interest in Africa.

²CO/AA, 19/11/98, CO 879/559.

³CO/MS, 19/12/98, CO 879/559.

invading colonists".¹ Once established in the 1890's, the white settlers exacted labour from the villages in return for the right of continued occupation of the land by the Africans. The practice of the indunas and headmen of sending their men out to work in the mines seemed at first to have been based on informal arrangements, as we have noted earlier, but later formed part of the conditions of Jameson's military "law" after the Ndebele War.² It was not formally enacted until 1896 by way of High Commissioner's Proclamation no. 14, which considered a settlement a "private location" if, no less than seven families formed part of it. Only then was the nearby white farmer permitted to levy a ground rent. This arrangement envisaged a double benefit; the settler became a farmer of "kafirs" and at the same time was an employer of labour extracted from the tiny labour reservoirs amidst the scattered land claims.³ Mining was usually carried out on a small scale as the "Eldorado of the North" proved to be a fiction. The small miner was usually also a farmer, as the claims he obtained were tied to land grants or purchases.

The number of black families making use of "private

¹ Simons, p. 35.

² This is testified by F. C. Selous, p. x and borne out by Hone, p. 41.

³ This system was considered most productive at the time and did not take into account future events which would see the increase in African stock and wealth, the creation of reserves and the function of a growing migrant labour market.

locations" was disappointingly low even after Rhodes' peace settlement with the Ndebele rebels in the Matopos. It enabled them to have a two-year security of tenure if they left the Matopos, where they were difficult to dislodge, and went home. The flood of immigrants, mainly from South Africa, continued and the settlers, in need of labour for the developing industry, encouraged the returning Ndebele to settle on the farms at what they considered reasonable labour and rental conditions. But many refused to enjoy "undisturbed possession of their old village sites" under tenant conditions. Neither did they move to the reserves, the Shangani being declared unhealthy and the Gwaai waterless.¹

Rhodes' daring evacuation scheme was of course not particularly charitable, as return to their ancestral grazing areas invariably meant that they found themselves living on either alienated land or Company "property". It envisaged a growing pattern of locations on private farms based on the assumptions, which proved false, that the reserves which were contemplated² were an expedient measure on a temporary basis and that Africans would not be plagued by ejection from the land. Milner himself was also of the opinion that the private method of settlement was more beneficial for white and black than the reserve system, both from an economic point of view in terms of land development and in terms of effective

¹ Interim Report..., in Buxton/Harcourt, 9/12/14, CO 879/1034.

² Some native commissioners had suggested in 1896 the establishment of additional tribal land.

policing. How beneficial it was for the whites can be seen from the Native Regulations, 1898 and amended 1901. Let me amplify this further.

When the 1898 regulations were drafted they were contrived to "lay the foundations of a system which will tend to promote industry and contentment among the [natives]",¹ in a way not contravening the Order in Council, 1898, which stipulated among other things that:

No conditions, disabilities or restrictions shall...be imposed upon natives by Ordinance which do not equally apply to persons of European descent, save in the supply of arms, ammunition and liquor (art. 80).²

However, infringement of this article of "bad faith", which was an exact copy of a similar clause in the 1894 Matabeleland Order in Council, was already implied in the existing Registration of Natives Regulations, 1895 still in force, which essentially governed pass and labour contract regulations stipulating term of service, wage rate and pay day. That these regulations were made for the "better protection" of the "servants" is beside the point: the fact is Africans were restricted in their movements. As the APS quite convincingly demonstrated to the Colonial Office, the natives were not at liberty to choose their occupation or employer.³ The regulations inflicted serious disabilities upon persons of non-European descent, according to the authoritative opinion upheld by M. W. Searle, legal adviser to the High

¹ Milner/Chamberlain, 13/10/97, CO 879/552.

² Quoted in APS/CO, 26/3/01, CO 879/659.

³ Ibid.

Commissioner.¹ Freedom for the Africans was not considered a desirable good as they could not be effectively controlled that way. They had no business to wander about town. It was not only dangerous but wasteful: they must be put to work at once!² This argument had been convincing enough to put the 1895 regulations through--Chamberlain agreed to them on 24th January 1896--but the negotiations for the Native Regulations, 1898 proceeded with more caution after the recent debates on the revolts and the forced labour issue.

The Martin Report had borne out APS' misgivings about the "fair treatment of the natives" so applauded by Grey. It found the native regulations in force at the time not particularly conciliatory and considered them "a mild form of compulsory labour".³ Also, the system of registration of contracts which had fallen into the hands of the native commissioners' office, was calculated to hinder the natives in hiring themselves out privately, rather than "to ensure equitable treatment".⁴ Despite these warnings, it was nonetheless proposed to insert a compulsory labour clause in the 1898 regulations, which were concocted by Grey and praised by Milner, who regarded it as healthy to consider, in view of the austere employment situation, that "some pressure upon

¹ Searle/Graham Bower, Imp. Sec., 23/7/95, CO 879/517.

² H. W. Fox, Public Prosecutor, memo, encl. in Robinson/Chamberlain, 9/12/95, CO 879/517.

³ Martin, Report, 16/1/97, in Rosmead/Chamberlain, 9/2/97, CO 879/517.

⁴ Ibid.

the natives to induce them to work [was found] necessary under existing circumstances".¹

The Company Board being rather cagey about the "meddling" of the APS, whom Rhodes called the Aborigines' Destruction Society, notified the Office that they would not accept the drafted clause outright, which stated in outspoken terms that the Government was empowered "to call upon Natives to supply labour for public works or for the general needs of the territory at fair wages".² To soften the blow the clause was further watered down and modified by Chamberlain to apply to tribes dwelling in reservations only, which naturally created an outcry amongst the settlers who considered that the Grey/Milner labour clause:

...would, with careful administration, have proved of the utmost value in assisting them in their endeavours to wean natives from the state of savagery in which they have hitherto existed and to make them useful members of the community [sic].

But the harshness of the clause was still further whittled down when compulsion for public works was dropped upon insistence of the Colonial Office staff.⁴ This posture went entirely against the grain of Milner who had advocated "a still wider

¹ Milner/Chamberlain, 13/10/97, CO 879/552.

² BSAC/CO, 17/7/97, CO 879/552.

³ Milton, Act. Admin./Milner, 15/4/98, in Milner/Chamberlain, 11/5/98, CO 879/559.

⁴ Bertram Cox/Chamberlain, memo, 29/11/98, CO 879/559.

extension of the principle of compulsory labour".¹

This controversy had brought four parties to the fore: The Colonial Office, the BSAC, the philanthropists and the settlers. The arguments back and forth were to be carried over into the twentieth century when the topic broadened into a general enquiry into the treatment of Africans in Southern Africa, including the Rhodesias. Both Company and settlers were denounced by a variety of "negrophilists" notably missionaries and humanitarians, backed up by press and parliament. The Colonial Office, having been jerked out of its inaction, was in general sympathy with them, particularly since the APS' premonitions had by and large been verified by the fact-finding mission of Martin.

The APS had essentially a benevolent view of Africans and had caught the missionary fever to civilize and to protect them from exploitation. In this the APS was linked up with the "Exeter Hall factor", which pressure groups held a much more tenuous influence upon policymakers by the 1890's than in the middle of the nineteenth century. Its origin dates from the 1830's when, in the heyday of religious emotion, various non-conformists came together. These evangelists held their annual meeting in a building on the Strand called Exeter Hall, where they sentimentalized over foreign missions:

Empire, to the crowds at Exeter Hall,
was an opportunity for civilising and
converting the savage and the slave,

¹Milner/Chamberlain, 11/5/98, CO 879/559.

and under that flag the Colonial Office marched for many years.

As long as the APS was dominated by the evangelists, at least until the 1920's, they advocated direct imperial control. They had been behind the annexation of Natal, Transvaal and Orange Free State and now clearly wanted Southern Rhodesia to be liberated from Chartered Company rule "in the interest of the Natives".² But by this time their political influence was so modest that the Colonial Office was in a position to adopt a policy of withdrawal without facing a public outcry. Although the Exeter Hall philanthropists retained their reputation for calling attention to the abusive treatment of Africans in the southern hemisphere, they were no longer able to muster any appreciable weight of public opinion.

The APS claimed that the system of compulsory labour enforced by native commissioners and native police, was expressly organized for the purpose of labour extraction, and it condemned the "arbitrary proceedings" of the settler community in aiding this scheme of terror,³ which was particularly rampant because of the employment of indunas, i.e. chiefs who invariably acted as intermediaries between the Government and the African people. Grey, soon after the Ndebele rising was over, in late 1896, had, on advice of Rhodes,

¹ C. E. Carrington, The British Overseas: Exploits of a Nation of Shopkeepers (Cambridge University Press, 1950), p. 299.

² H. R. Fox-Bourne, Sec. APS/CO, 28/7/97, CO 879/552.

³ Ibid.

worked out an arrangement for placing subsidized indunas in "positions of authority"¹ with the declared purposes "to secure a considerable revenue in the future in the shape of hut tax and to obtain a fair supply of labour for the mines".²

The APS harped on the labour and tax issues even before the Martin Report had come out. They denounced the Grey plan of labour relations as a system equal to forced labour³ and, in December 1896, even Chamberlain was convinced by them. The implementation of indunas as government props was, to say the least, suspect, and Chamberlain intimated that he had:

...grave doubts as to the wisdom of a direct inducement being offered to the chiefs to supply native labour, as it might lead to something like compulsory labour, which cannot be permitted.⁴

The Company on the other hand remained adamant in its claim that the indunas were merely induced to supply voluntary labour.⁵ When the Martin Report came out, basing itself on the evidence given by five magistrates, fourteen native commissioners and a number of others, the Company expressed self-righteous shock at the allegations made. The Directors were "astounded" to hear that compulsory labour existed as the Report suggested, and disclaimed any knowledge of it.⁵ Jameson, whom the Board

¹They were to receive a Government stipend from January 1897, but receipt of salaries took effect only in April that year (Milner/Chamberlain, tel., 10/5/97, CO 879/517).

²Grey/BSAC, 16/10/96, CO 879/517.

³Fox-Bourne/CO, 2/12/96, CO 879/517.

⁴Cd. 1200 of 1902, p. 26.

⁵BSAC/CO, 24/3/97, CO 417/231.

had appointed as Administrator and who had been recalled on account of his attempted coup in Transvaal, was able to testify that during his tenure he had never sanctioned the application of forceful measures--a view which heavily compromised him in the eyes of the royal commissioners because it was based on the simple fact that he, who continued to feel no compunction about his negligence, had never called any official to account for malpractice! It is no wonder that the Company's opinion was essentially corroborated by that of the settlers. As Hone recalled, the native commissioners had not found any evidence "that the settlers ill-treated the natives", but held that the major recurring complaint was the tyranny of the Ndebele native police.¹

The issue of employment of native "police" came to a head when the Colonial Office received the reports of indabas held by the Chief Native Commissioners in the districts of their province in 1899. H. J. Taylor, CNC of Matabeleland, not only went beyond his authority when he explained to the chiefs that they were expected to supply native labour on the basis of payment as an inducement,² but also exceeded his duty in introducing the newly appointed labour agents for the mines as if these persons were looking after their true interests, and the chiefs would be sorry if they would not cooperate. He was not merely bluffing when he addressed himself to them as follows:

¹Hone, p. 43.

²CO/BSAC, 23/12/99, CO 879/574.

How would they like it if he were to send the Police and messengers round to their kraals to turn the people out to work.

Chamberlain, who had been favorably disposed to Grey's view on Martin's findings;² now strongly objected to the employment of language which gave the chiefs to understand that some form of police effort might have to be undertaken. That the forced labour issue was not a matter "now merely of academic interest"³ was borne out by the fact that in 1900 a subsidized chief had to be suspended from his position as a result of his arrest "on a charge of organizing a bogus police force" to exact tribute from natives.⁴

The Colonial Office as well as the Company administration were both confused on the matter of labour recruitment. All along since 1894 the Colonial Office had felt that the native commissioners should not be involved in it. However, the independent labour bureaux, which sprang up in 1899 and which got their instructions from the mineowners, were wholly unsuccessful in the long run. When they ran out of supply, they went to great expense to bring down labour from Ngoniland and elsewhere, as it was an idle hope that the Africans, particularly Shona, would want to work for the longer periods which

¹ Cd. 1200 of 1902, p. 3.

² MacKenzie, "African Labour", p. 124.

³ Frederick Graham, minute, attached to Chamberlain/Graham, memo, n.d., CO 417/232 (1897).

⁴ Milton/Milner, 18/7/00, in Milner/Chamberlain, 6/8/00, CO 879/656.

were so "absolutely necessary for the welfare of the country".¹ The cause of the refusal to utilize the facilities of the bureaux was a simple one: the best labourers avoided them and the worst employers used them. Compulsion would be all the more necessary, as chiefs stated during the indabas with Taberer and Taylor, in that they did not want their men to work in unhealthy mines and places where accidents occurred frequently. Taylor first tried to intimidate them and said that, if they would not work, other tribes would be brought in and that the whites would be unrelenting for as long as there was gold because "the white men intended to stay".² Next he cajoled them by promising nice compounds near the mines, good treatment, food and tobacco, but the chiefs remained unimpressed and insisted there were not enough men; besides, "they, the natives, had equal rights with any white man in the country", and they were not prepared to be "humbugged".³ It was then clear that the labour agents would have to resort to uncalled for pressure to replenish the labour deficiency at the mines. A mine manager even suggested that recruits who deserted should be brought back by the police if he had his way.⁴ The question then remained, who would "protect the natives from coercion whilst giving every facility to the

¹ Milton/Milner, 20/6/99, in Milner/Chamberlain, 10/1/00, CO 879/656.

² Cd. 1200 of 1902, p. 2.

³ Ibid., p. 4.

⁴ Encl. in Dr. Calder, Bulawayo/CO, 27/12/99, CO 879/656.

employer to induce them to work".¹ The obvious answer was the native commissioner, precisely the one whose role in the labour supply was deprecated!

While the Colonial Office had misgivings about labour recruitment, the Company Board had none. They claimed that:

A system more judicious, more humane in intention, and better guarded against the evils of forced labour on the one hand and uncontrolled competition on the other could scarcely be conceived.

But the Company was too optimistic. Within a year from their inauguration, the two labour bureaux, one in each province, were defunct because of lack of organization and capital. In Mashonaland there were no recruiting agents at all, the moral and legal pressure being exercised by the native commissioners, and the Salisbury Bureau merely doing the distributing.³ In Matabeleland, where Taylor explained to the chiefs that the labour agents had their own messengers distinct from his own and that there were in fact two departments, one chief sulked and complained that "the Government was always changing".⁴ Ironically enough, the bureaux at first turned up more labour than was required, because of blackmail by the native commissioners, who insisted on the hut tax being paid promptly without the customary period of grace!⁵ This resulted in a

¹ Clarke/CO, 26/2/02, CO 879/702.

² J. F. Jones, Sec. BSAC, London/CO, 22/2/00, CO 879/656.

³ Encl. in Kitchener/Chamberlain, 31/5/01, CO 417/320.

⁴ Cd. 1200 of 1902, p. 12.

⁵ Clarke's report on this irregularity did not arrive at the CO until April 1901, encl. in Milner/Chamberlain, 12/4/01, CO 417/319.

temporary peak, and supply sagged after the glut to an extreme low within a few months' time. In 1900 the mines were feeling the pinch so much that Milton instructed the Chief Native Commissioners to secure workers,¹ whilst Clarke reassuringly reported that the Administration denied having any intention of becoming a state agency of labour recruiters,² which situation would have played straight into the hands of Company enemies such as the APS.

A larger Southern Rhodesian Labour Board replaced the bureaux in 1900. However similar abuses occurred; Clarke lashed out against the use of physical compulsion and threats, accusing the native commissioners of applying "pressure little short of force".³ The APS pointed out to the Colonial Office that Taberer found nothing wrong with bringing pressure to bear on Africans "to teach them work and the advantages thereof". They could not accept his view that the advantages were mutual, when protection against exploitation was inadequate to meet the "challenge" to secure black labour.⁴ The Colonial Office was happy to see the Labour Board abolished in 1901.

Any pressure on the native commissioners to supply labour was deprecated by the Office which, since the native commissioners were exerting their direct influence to obtain labour instead

¹ Letter, 3/8/00, cited by Duignan, p. 171.

² Clarke/Kitchener, 9/7/01, in Kitchener/Chamberlain, 26/7/01, CO 879/694.

³ Cited by Milner/Chamberlain, 4/10/01, CO 879/694.

⁴ APS/CO, 26/3/01, CO 879/659.

of being neutral, "threatened" that either the native commissioners would be appointed as imperial officers or otherwise they would be confined to supervising labour agents in their conduct and to seeing to it that the natives got fair conditions.¹ The Colonial Office, then, developed guidelines for a new labour recruiting policy in 1901 which boiled down to the dictum that the local government should not be engaged in the recruiting of labour but should only lay down the conditions of labour contracts and secure justice for the Africans. The British Government was definitely averse to a "system of state compulsion" and decided that "all native labour must be voluntary". It changed the law relating to native administration and specified that a chief was only "responsible for the general good conduct of the natives under his charge", deleting any reference to a possible involvement in labour recruitment amongst his wards.² Instead of the compulsory labour clause they proposed to eliminate from the Native Regulations, the Administration was invited to put forward proposals for some form of "indirect inducement" to labour, on the lines of the Glen Grey Act, but this was simply ignored.³ Chamberlain informed Milner that he thought imperial control was slipping⁴

¹BSAC/Milton, Salisbury, tel., 7/10/01, encl. in BSAC min./CO, 17/10/01, CO 879/694.

²Milton/Milner, 8/1/01, in Milner/Chamberlain, 3/4/01, CO 879/659.

³Cd. 1200 of 1902, p. 26-7.

⁴Chamberlain/Milner, 22/3/01, CO 879/659.

and feared that the native administration might slide into the hands of the Administrator instead of being controlled by the Colonial Office as hitherto. The APS pointed out that the British Government would have "to retain and exercise full powers of control" for as long as the BSAC administered the country, since the interests of the natives "may often be in apparent conflict with the interests of white residents and officials".¹

Native policy, in the minds of Company officials including the native commissioners, previously being tantamount to labour (recruiting) policy, underwent a shift from 1901 onwards with an emphasis on labour protection, aiming at keeping Africans "peaceable and co-operative".² It was not an "age of improvement" however; because the Company did practically nothing for the Africans. In these early years the Colonial Office pressed through an additional allocation of reserves and successfully applied a moderation of hut tax. These efforts, however laudatory they may seem, did nothing to alleviate the true nature of the wage-labour system: to exercise coercion in order to ensure that Africans entered the labour exchange market. The native commissioners were now bound by the 1901 amendments in the Native Regulations: no longer had they any business to act as labour agents. However, in a compromise reached by the Company, through Grey with Chamberlain, the Office agreed to tide the Rhodesian

¹APS/CO, 26/3/01, CO 879/659.

²Duignan, p. 157.

economy over by allowing native commissioners to legitimately advertise the need for labour and register volunteers in the absence of a labour agency.¹ Milton immediately received word that native commissioners were free to "explain" to the natives the "advantage" and the "duty" of labour, and Clarke was glad to report, two months later, that owing to the instructions issued by the Administration and the dissolution of the Labour Board, the "irregularities" appeared to have lessened.²

This arrangement seemed to have been to the liking of the Colonial Office, the Company and even the APS: they were against government interference, yet they felt that procurement should not fall to private enterprise altogether, but that the traffic should somehow be controlled, and that control should go further than just being restricted to the prevention of abuses.³ For different reasons the Chamber of Mines also wanted stricter government control.⁴ The means of control were reasonable enough: in order to curb the operation of private labour "touts" only interested in numbers and capitation fees, an independent body called the Rhodesia Native Labour Bureau was inaugurated in 1903 with the express purpose of recruiting labour from the Company's "estate" in

¹Grey/Chamberlain, private letter, 28/11/01, in Chamberlain/Ommanney, 29/11/01, CO 417/321.

²Clarke/CO, 26/2/02, CO 879/702.

³APS/CO, 26/3/01, CO 879/659.

⁴Encl. in Milner/Chamberlain, 20/6/02, CO 417/344.

the north, where it actively sought labour until 1921, by which time labour moved independently into Southern Rhodesia.¹

But had government involvement in labour recruitment really ended? Of course not--this is just the whole irony.

In the early labour bureaux and the Labour Board, and even the new RNLB, labour agents and managers were often ex-native commissioners. Five agents were recruited from the Native Department in 1899 and, for example, the manager of the bureau in Matabeleland willingly exchanged his low-paying job for a more lucrative one.² Four out of twelve members of the Labour Board were government officials, and the general manager of the 1903 Bureau, Val Gielgud, was also a former native commissioner. Therefore there was a lively connection with the administration. When the Administration appointed a committee to enquire into the labour problem it recommended, not surprisingly, that the Native Department should be more actively engaged in recruiting labour--which incidentally was not heeded because Milton advisedly scotched the idea in order to placate the Colonial Office.³ Moreover the new RNLB's catching area was a natural one; it helped the coordinating function of the RNLB in a tremendous way: it was Company "property". The RNLB was financed by share capital but it operated as if it was a government department, not only

¹ Duignan, p. 177.

² Cd. 1200 of 1902, p. 13.

³ Milton, minute, 21/2/06, attached to Clarke/Selborne, 16/3/06, in Selborne/Elgin, 9/4/06, CO 879/802.

because of the many familiar faces but also in terms of policy control¹ and division of labour. For example, agents were delegated in some instances the task of issuing work permits. Two examples of how closely native commissioners overtly collaborated with the labour agents may suffice in order to demonstrate that the Bureau's independence was a fiction.

One native commissioner had explained, during a number of meetings with chiefs, that wages were subject to the laws of supply and demand. Having grasped the idea, they concluded amongst themselves, according to his report, that it would be better to work now than later on in the slack season when wages were reduced, often by fifty percent. Of course, it was impressed upon them that the question of labour was a matter brought up in their own interests, and that no one should be forced. The native commissioner was proud to report an "exodus of large gangs of natives in search of employment and the immediate relief of the pressure on the mines". The Acting CNC of Matabeleland called upon all native commissioners to adopt a similar course of action, as it "might be productive of good results to industries and benefit to the natives".²

Whilst this kind of inducement may be questioned--as it was indeed by Milton--the case of Native Commissioner H.C.K.

¹ Mackenzie, "African Labour", p. 137.

² C. L. Carbutt, for CNC, minute re. Native Labour, 27/12/05, CO 879/802.

Fynn of Gutu district (Mashonaland) could not be condoned. Fynn was suspended from his duties for his involvement in rounding up Shona for mine labour. He was charged with:

...yielding to the persuasion of a labour agent to adopt unlawful measures to compel the tax defaulters in his district to go out to work and earn some money to pay their arrears with.¹

The native commissioner had a few dozen messengers engaged-- he was supposed to have only half a dozen engaged--to bring in natives. When the first batch of 150-200 arrived, two agents of the RNLB were present, one of them a certain MacDonald. The natives were addressed by the agents but universally rejected working, with the exception of a few who had back taxes to pay. On the next occasion MacDonald had the field all to himself: all those brought down this time who had arrears of taxes were first flogged by Fynn's native messengers before they were led off to the East Gwanda mines. Those who had cattle stayed behind, and were not flogged, but were forced to "sell" their cattle to MacDonald. As a result the labour agent got 250 "boys", and 130 head of cattle, and Fynn the necessary kickbacks. Some of the pressed labourers died; those who did not, deserted.²

Such are the consequences of pressed labour and the imperial imperative to teach the Africans to regard work as "a necessity and a duty". Public opinion in the daily press

¹Chester-Master/Selborne, 12/7/07, in Selborne/Elgin, 22/7/07, CO 879/872.

²Statement of H. C. Rolleston, clerk to Fynn, 7/3/07, in ibid.

did nothing to mitigate the dictum that:

The natives cannot become useful members of the community without active interference on the part of the government.

However, the Rhodesian Government had not been able to devise a market model where every transaction would be strictly voluntary and non-coercive. The pass laws alone militated against any "free contract". There was little choice for the Africans, because they were severely limited in seeking work freely: where there is no choice, there is coercion.

Labour recruiting has been an excellent example of how tenuous Colonial Office control really was over the substance of policies. Apparently successful in laying down labour regulations, labour conditions and measures of control for the protection and good treatment of Africans, the Colonial Office was unable to restrain the Native Department. In 1907, in some districts of Mashonaland, native commissioners acted as forwarding agents of the RNLB.² The Colonial Office expressed its disapproval of "the character of the persons employed"³ by the RNLB in the absence of a licencing system, whilst private agents who were only allowed to operate in Southern Rhodesia continued to practice without a licence. The Government could not condone the practice of private recruitment: private agents had to take out a licence as

¹ Lionel Philips in reply to W. Harcourt, in The Times, Letter to the Editor, reproduced in Rhodesia Herald, 28/2/03.

² MacKenzie, "African Labour", p. 146.

³ Elgin/Selborne, 17/8/07, CO 879/872.

from 1911 but competition with the RNLB continued as sharp as before.¹ Meanwhile the native commissioners persevered in "preaching the gospel of labour" and they especially felt it incumbent upon them to do so in 1911 when labour was scarce. Private recruiting, as a result, was also on the upsurge the same year, and forced labour was brought into question again. Missionaries and the Resident Commissioner urged reforms. To put a stop to the continuous allegations of the use of coercive measures, the Native Labour Registration Ordinance, 1911, was enacted, and the worst abuses seemed to be over after that time. From then on Africans were finding their way to the better mines without having to be reminded. Labour became more and more plentiful and the only problem now was to keep labour in Rhodesia without it flowing to the Rand.

Let us now consider the related problem of taxation. We have noted earlier that the Colonial Office would not give its assent to a hut tax increase unless additional reserves were allocated in each district. A land survey to this end by the native commissioners, starting in 1897-8, was completed in 1902. Meanwhile the Company was anxious to have the Natives' Taxation Ordinance, drafted in 1901, approved. The BSAC reminded the Colonial Office that delay in approval of the Ordinance, which proposed to repeal the Hut Tax Ordinance of 1894, was most inappropriate, particularly since the labour supply situation was rendered urgent.

¹ MacKenzie, "African Labour", p. 146.

by the refusal of the Portuguese authorities to ship labourers for export. Acceptance of the tax increase would materially assist to induce the natives of Southern Rhodesia to work: "the interests of the white population of Rhodesia...cannot be disregarded".¹ All other attempts at trying to bring in import labour from India and the Arabian Gulf states had failed. The Office was unperturbed, however, and in no hurry: it had, in August 1898, requested that the BSAC submit tax proposals, and now found it most peculiar they had not come forward until February 1901.² Chamberlain at the time had told the BSAC to consider any suitable scheme of indirect inducement for labour, in adaptation of the Glen Grey Act of the Cape, but that this was conditional upon the absence of any reference to compulsory labour. The Company administration had ignored this--until 1901. Now they proposed a combined hut and labour tax. Since the Glen Grey Act provided "a gentle stimulant" at the rate of 10 s., instead of the £2 as proposed by the Administration, and the work term was specified as three months, not four as provided by the draft ordinance, there was little left for the Colonial Office to do but criticize it.

Chamberlain challenged Milton on the ground that, despite the presence of 80,000 able-bodied native adults in Southern Rhodesia--Milton quibbled there were only 60,000-- , farming and industry were obliged to seek labour elsewhere and now

¹ BSAC/CO, 30/3/01, CO 879/659.

² CO/BSAC, 12/4/01, CO 879/659.

needed legislation for a compulsory work term to cut down on expensive import labour. He informed Milner he could not possibly justify this in front of a critical Parliament. Milner had no objection to hut tax on its own. Obviously he fell in with South African opinion.¹ But Chamberlain had to deal with the APS, which was dead set against any raise of the hut tax if it were going to be used as a mere incentive to work:

The idea in the minds of all the white men in South Africa is how best the natives could be employed merely as cheap labour.²

The Company was adamant that this taxation for those who failed to perform labour was "absolutely necessary in the interests of the natives themselves". If they would "render efficient work in connection with mines", they could invest their earnings in livestock and the Administration proposed to set up term credit facilities as a further "incentive to labour".³

To produce the greatest labour incentive, it was necessary to crack down on tax evasion. Under existing law it was possible for groups of young men to huddle together in one hut and almost escape the tax payment. The poll tax was aimed at "the class that it is most desirable to reach",⁴

¹ Milner/Chamberlain, tel., 23/3/01, CO 879/659.

² Speech of W. Brampton Gorden, M.P., Annual Meeting, Aborigines' Friend, 1901, quoted in Whitehead, p. 3.

³ BSAC/CO, 5/2/01, and Milton/BSAC, 5/2/01, CO 879/659.

⁴ Milton/BSAC, 19/11/00, in BSAC/CO, 5/2/01, CO 879/659.

as elderly men were offering themselves for work in undue proportion in view of the fact that:

The younger men no longer consider themselves responsible for assisting their elders, who consequently find difficulty in paying.

Chamberlain remained unconvinced and conjured up figures to prove that a £ 2. raise was out of all proportion. He quoted the BSAC administrative report of 1897-8 for Matabeleland, which showed a yield in hut tax of £20,846 per 20,000 adult males estimated, and placed this performance against Basutoland, with a comparable number of huts, which had been paying tax for over a decade. The count reached £ 22,000 on 50,000 adult males at the same rate of 10 s. per hut. This fact destroyed any ground for the view that the poll tax measure was intended to prevent tax evasion.²

Every male native "fit for and capable of labour" was required to pay £ 2 per annum, but would be exempted from payment for each three months worked. With this proposition went a number of coercive measures: there would be a fine of £1 maximum for non-payment, with a grace period of three months, compared with six months in the Bechuanaland Protectorate. If in default, the taxpayer could be imprisoned, with or without hard labour, for a period up to three months. Then there was also the absurd regulation that if tax was not paid someone's goods and chattels might be confiscated:

¹ Elgin/Selborne, 27/3/07, CO 879/872.

² Chamberlain/Milner, 30/3/01, CO 879/659.

Should the proceeds of such sale not be sufficient to meet the amount due, or should the person in default not be in possession of any property, he shall, if found at any time in any place within the territory, be deemed and taken to be an idle and disorderly person,

and should therefore be placed under the laws governing such persons.

The Colonial Office did not seem to take exception to these punitive clauses. There were, however, other, equally questionable features attached to the proposed Natives' Taxation Ordinance. Chamberlain was inclined to think that such legislation, imposing a poll tax on all adult male Natives of 16 years and older, might create a precedent for Transvaal.² Southern Rhodesia was thus considered a "policy frontier", a test ground for taxation policy in the whole of Southern Africa. Chamberlain was also of the opinion, precisely because the proposed hut tax in combination with the labour tax departed so much from the Glen Grey Act, that the Administration had had in mind the Transvaal poll tax, governed by Law no. 24 of 1895. However, tax in the Transvaal was paid by males over 21 years of age, not 16 as proposed by the BSAC.³

Moreover, it had been the declared aim of the hut tax imposition to provide "a revenue for carrying out the effective

¹ Draft, Natives' Taxation Ordinance, attached to Milner/BSAC, 19/11/00, in BSAC/CO, 5/2/01, CO 879/659.

² Chamberlain/Milner, tel., 16/3/01, CO 879/659.

³ Chamberlain/Milner, 30/3/01, CO 879/659.

administration of affairs",¹ even though Africans were not supposed to be subject to "any conditions, disabilities, or restrictions which do not equally apply to persons of European descent".² The proceeds of the newly proposed poll tax were to be used towards loan purchase of cattle, ploughs for sale, plantation of trees, water conservation projects and education in trade and industry. This seems to be a commendable effort on the part of the Government considering that most of the "advances" customarily went to pay for the upkeep of a Native Department concerned only with the preservation of "peace and good order".³ Clarke was unfavorably impressed with these lofty aims, however, and claimed that the levy would not contribute to the benefit of the natives at all. Its aims were much more capricious:

The Native Commissioners are largely occupied in supplying labour to the mines or collecting taxes, and very little is done towards education or otherwise advancing the best interest of the natives.

Chamberlain also took exception to the tax proposal, as not all proceeds were guaranteed to be used for the amelioration of the conditions of the Africans. He concluded that what was an indirect inducement in terms of the Glen Grey Act, was now embodied as a direct inducement by means of a poll tax.⁵

¹C. 8773 of 1898, p. 16.

²Ibid.

³Milner/Chamberlain, 15/11/01, CO 879/694.

⁴Clarke/Milner, in Milner/Chamberlain, 15/11/01, CO 879/694.

⁵Chamberlain/Milner, 30/3/01, CO 879/659.

Since the Glen Grey Act also embodied the principle of African tenure on the basis of quit rent, which was not included in the draft ordinance, the Company proposals were not acceptable because the provisions only involved remission of tax for work done without this being tied in with a land occupation clause.

That Colonial officials held different opinions can be easily demonstrated by the fact that Milner did not consider the £2 hut tax to involve any hardship, whereas Clarke, who found it excessive, sided with missionary opinion, notably of Father Richartz and Rev. John White, that it would incite native unrest and produce economic hardship for the small employer. Milner was embarrassed by Clarke's opinion and privately and confidentially informed Milton that he would support the Ordinance. The Colonial Office had no choice but to support Clarke in order to uphold his position.¹ The end result of the bickering between Company and Colonial officials on taxation was that the quadruplication proposed by the Legislative Council was halved upon Colonial Office insistence. Generally, local white opinion went for more. Clarke, in 1901, had reported that the elected members of the Legislative Council urged a quadruplication of the rate, i.e. £ 2, but when Milner received a small delegation in Johannesburg, in January 1903, representing the Chamber of Mines, the Rhodesian Farmers' and Land-owners' Association, the Bulawayo

¹Milner/Milton, conf., 16/6/03, CO 417/373.

Chamber of Commerce and the Legislative Council, they demanded a tax of £ 4.¹ To Hone's mind £ 2 would have been a "just share" in administrative expenses, even though a £ 2 poll tax device in itself offered no particular stimulus to work. Instead, he said, a fixed rebate of 5 s. should have been given for each three months of work completed in the service of whites, thus the Africans would have to pay only £ 1 at the end of twelve months' work [sic].²

His view that £ 2 was not an unfair burden is not borne out by all settlers. Mining and farming interests were still wide apart, as is evident from an appeal of the Gazaland Farmers' Association to Clarke not to raise the tax too suddenly; they claimed that "the earning power of the farm-labourers [in Mashonaland] has not increased in proportion to the increase in taxation".³ In a curious mixture of philanthropy and self-interest they stated that the Tax Ordinance "will be oppressive to the natives, detrimental to the farming industry at large, and ruinous to the district of Melsetter".⁴

The Melsetter district was peculiar in the sense that it ran along the Portuguese border and supported the densest white farming population in Southern Rhodesia. The natives were freely moving across the border and as soon as the tax

¹Milner/Chamberlain, 12/1/03, CO 417/371.

²Hone, pp. 67-8.

³Encl. in Lawley/Chamberlain, 14/9/03, CO 879/717.

⁴Ibid.

was raised, it was expected there would be an exodus of good farm labour. Those who stayed behind would have to earn their tax, while their own crops might fail again. Moreover many would try their luck in the mines if in want of money, rather than receive the low wages to be obtained on the farm. The Association therefore proposed that taxation should only be applied against the "idle element amongst the natives"¹ giving further tax rebates to farm labourers alone.

Aside from the plain fact, true or not, that "the farmers cannot...afford to raise wages to any great extent", they really scared the Colonial Office stiff when they expressed the fear that as a result of the new tax a native rising was a possible contingency:

The Ordinance as it stands, is likely to cause more discontent amongst the natives than even a direct compulsory labour law, as it is in effect, itself a compulsory labour law.²

Clarke observed that a tax increase might cause discontent rather than violence. Nevertheless, the Colonial Office's overriding concern was not to risk another native disturbance on account of a tax raise. Lyttelton, the new Colonial Secretary, enquired whether the native commissioners had explained the 1902 provisions to the natives and asked what their reaction to it was. Clarke reported that they had done nothing at all,³ simply because the relative

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid.

³ Lyttelton/Lawley, tel., 7/11/03, and Lawley/Lyttelton, tel., 12/11/03, CO 879/717.

Proclamation was only gazetted but not promulgated because of an administrative error.¹

This was hastily done, with the effect that Taylor held an indaba before 400 natives in February 1904 explaining the increase in tax. After having elucidated all the benefits derived from government services such as peace and prosperity, rule of justice, allocation of reserves and other advantages, he told them that they were now expected to pay more in proportion as services increased. Most chiefs however felt that:

They were bound to enter some formal protest against the increased tax... in order to justify their position in the eyes of their people.

Chief Sikombo of Insiza district, for example, objected that his men did not earn enough in the mines, but Taylor said that they had never really tried hard, leaving this work entirely to immigrant labour.³

Anyhow, no disturbance broke out and Milton rather smugly concluded:

It is, I submit, generally recognised that the only really effective stimulus to natives when first emerging from barbarism to advance in civilisation, is that of taxation, and that it is legitimate and in the interests of the native race to adopt that means....⁴

¹ Encl. in Milner/Lyttelton, 31/10/04, CO 879/746.

² Taylor, Report of Announcement of Native Tax Ordinance, 1904, encl. in BSAC min./CO, 8/4/04, CO 879/746.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Milton/Chester-Master, 20/4/06, in Selborne/Elgin, 11/6/06, CO 879/802.

The higher tax, indeed, seemed to have solved the labour problems, as surpluses were from time to time reported. Skilled labour was in demand, but the Bureau could not satisfy requests simply because the more experienced workers moved independently to the centres of employment, if possible going to the Rand. Consequently, the Company rent on unalienated land in 1908 was more directed at producing revenue from farming "kafirs" than at serving as a labour stimulant.

Two corrections in the tax law were made later on: natives not living in a separate hut, had only to pay 10 s. instead of the proposed £ 1, which was presumably the result of the Administration's poor case for tax evasion.¹ The second amendment involved a debate on what was considered "taxable age". The Colonial Office had already objected to an age limit of 16, but it was really upset when it learned that boys of 14, who apparently qualified for the Pass Registry which issued travel passes and work permits, were legally considered old and capable enough to work and therefore liable to tax payments. Exclaimed W. E. Thomas, Native Commissioner of Tégwani: "I consider such taxation nothing short of iniquitous".² Apparently this was a minority view only shared by a few others, as most of his colleagues felt that wage earning capacity was a fair basis and that boys of

¹Milner/Lyttelton, tel., 4/6/04, CO 879/746.

²Encl. in Selborne/Elgin, 15/1/06, CO 879/802.

14 were capable of "adult's" work. Milton agreed with Acting Attorney-General J. D. MacKenzie that:

Persons who do not understand the conditions of this country, and the wage-earning capacity of the natives, will consider the imposition of a tax on natives of 14 years of age as an unfair and unequal burden.

High Commissioner Selborne's legal adviser ventured the opinion that "advantage would be taken of it to tax native boys of 14 years of age",² but Selborne did not press too hard. He advised Milton that the Ordinance need not be changed if it were administered "in a reasonable spirit",³ and suggested that "adult male native" may be construed to mean "a male native who is physically capable of earning his livelihood", trusting that the interpretation of it could be left to the discretion of the native commissioners. This in practice meant that tax could be collected within two years of eligible age of registration.

Thus imperial policy, taking the stance that native commissioners would not "take advantage of the latitude allowed to them",⁴ clearly failed to protect youngsters from dying at an early age in the mines. Moreover, the cautious tax reduction insisted upon by the Colonial Office was not just a matter of humanitarian concern: the moderation applied

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid.

³ Encl. in Selborne/Elgin, 11/6/06, CO 879/802.

⁴ Selborne/Elgin, 11/6/06, CO 879/802.

was inspired by fear for a possible outbreak of unrest. This was not merely a rumour, because throughout the decade "plots" were uncovered which implicated the Mlimo in inciting a spirit of rebellion. In 1904, shortly after the announcement of the tax increase to the Africans, there appears to have been hardly any unrest in Matabeleland, but in Mashonaland rumours abounded that the Shona were preparing for revolt. In most districts native commissioners were apprehensive of trouble ahead, without being able to give definite grounds for their suspicion. White security forces were increased nevertheless, and the Commandant of the BSA Police reported that the "white population are getting alarmed"¹ at the nearing of the hut tax collection in July, which elicited the remark from Clarke that the situation "bears the character of a scare experienced by local officials, some farmers".² However a few weeks later the Rhodesia Herald published an official announcement from Milton who considered the investigations into the alleged native unrest as closed. He said that the reports emanating from white settlers were exaggerated, unfounded and unreliable:

The behaviour of the natives is satisfactory and they are seeking work in unusual numbers.

The Colonial Office seems to have been totally oblivious

¹ Encl. d.d. 21/3/04, in BSAC min./CO, 3/5/04, CO 879/746.

² Clarke/Milner, tel., 5/4/04, in Milner/Lyttelton, 11/4/04, CO 879/746.

³ Rhodesia Herald, 13/4/04.

to other elements surrounding the tax issue. The Natives' Marriages Ordinance, 1901, is a case in point. As in Natal, lobolo was made mandatory, but, as it was more universal in Mashonaland than in Matabeleland, enforcement had to be used with caution. This regulation was justified as aiming at avoiding endless litigation, which was taking up too much time of the native commissioners. It overruled missionary opinion who labelled lobolo a "pernicious custom" which made it possible to exchange the vices of the city for the haven of the mission. The primary objective, though, was to direct and channel labour. The native commissioners encouraged the chiefs to insist on lobolo and their persuasion was manipulated as to stimulate labour for as long as required.¹

¹Milton/Clarke, 18/3/01, in John Perry, Imp. Sec./CO, 8/5/01, CO 417/320.

-VIII-

THE LAND QUESTION, 1896 - 1908 A

The cornerstone of the new imperial land policy after 1897 was the dual aim of providing adequate native reserves and of protecting Africans in and near European settlements. The latter involved the establishment of private locations to which a large number of natives were allowed to go as part of the resettlement scheme in the post-rebellion years. As we have seen, the ancestral lands had turned into private farms and Ndebele making use of the provisions under the Proclamation of 1896 found themselves forced to sign leases. A typical two year lease demanded a 5 s. rent per hut the first year and a double fee the next. It left the terms open to abuse as the natives were not entirely free to roam around. The landlord might require portions of the estate "for other reasonable purposes" than having tenants dwelling upon it.¹ Yet numerous applications of farm owners for entering into tenant agreements with natives were received by the Government, subject to approval of the Chief Native Commissioner,² with the result that by 1899 40,000 natives occupied private land under lease, which number had grown to 70,000 by 1902.

¹ Encl. in A. Lawley, Admin. Bulawayo/Claarke, 1/2/99, in Milner/Lyttelton, 30/7/04, CO, 879/746.

² Lawley/Claarke, 1/2/99, in ibid.

There appears to have been enough arable land available for them. Large tracts of land were owned by individuals or companies but unoccupied, and quite a number of African families were allowed to stay on without a lease. As far as the Colonial Office was concerned, they agreed with the rule of thumb that the natives might as well be left undisturbed as squatters until such time as the owners claimed possession,¹ a directive which left the door wide open to a total sacrifice of native rights for settler occupation in the immediate future. Milner was privately in complete agreement with the dictum that the interests of white settlement were to be made paramount: for instance he advised that conversion into native reserves was only the last thing to do with land not yet appropriated by the Company in the form of grants to individual owners.² But the Colonial Office in London had a more "responsible" outlook on the matter and prescribed, by Order in Council, 1898, certain safeguards. It expressly stated, for example, that "natives are [not] allowed to move or to be moved, from land in their occupation".³

The system of private locations did, to some extent, produce a land occupation pattern of scattered kraals, similar to the existing ones in Mashonaland. It was reinforced by

¹ Memo on Native Regulations, in Milner/Milton, 10/2/98, encl. in Milner/Chamberlain, 2/5/98, CO 879/559.

² Ibid.

³ Quoted in Clarke/Milner, 9/11/01, encl. in Milner/Chamberlain, 22/11/01, CO 879/694.

the widespread refusal of the Ndebele to move to the designated reserve areas established in 1894, and it was thought therefore, that land had to be set aside in each district, a situation which by 1898 was considered urgent because of the high incidence of land alienation:

It is desirable as soon as possible to settle the natives...within certain defined areas, adequate for their wants and suitable for habitation.¹

The APS condemned the wholesale land alienation and "after the rebellion, they pressed the British Government to require the Company to make a more generous land settlement".² Luckily the Administration gave this their support, though in a lackadaisical way. The view of the Society on the land issue was confused, and this in turn reflected badly on Colonial Office policy. On the one hand, the APS felt that the settlements of 1894 and 1896 "render it inexpedient or impracticable now to set apart...extensive areas now preserved for the exclusive use of the natives".³ On the other hand, the fact that they lived primarily in close proximity to white settlers required effective protection against restrictions imposed by "civilization and British rule", which involved measures such as the taking away of the most profitable parts of the country.

¹ Milner/Chamberlain, 15/12/97, CO 879/559.

² Whitehead, p.3.

³ APS/CO, 26/3/01, CO 879/659.

As this was the case, the remainder, according to the APS, should be left undisturbed; in other words the African should have:

...a right to quiet occupation of the less valuable parts, and to immunity from attempts to force upon it uncongenial pursuits.¹

This was understood by the Company. Partly out of fear of losing the Charter and partly out of fear of further costly risings, the Administration instructed the native commissioners to make a beginning with a demarcation of reserves in 1897. The work in Mashonaland was not undertaken until the next year because of continuing rebel activity. The task of surveying was painfully slow and was delayed by the South African war. When the Executive Council passed the recommendations for the allotment of reserves in 1902, it was not until 1908 that they were provisionally approved by the Colonial Office, being subject to further consideration.²

The whole issue had been dealt with in a very clumsy way. The 1898 Order in Council had authorized the native commissioners to set aside land as was deemed necessary for the natives of their district. A "confused and heterogeneous policy" was the result.³ Already in 1897 W.E. Thomas, Acting Chief Native Commissioner of Matabeleland, advanced a scheme which was considered an improvement upon the results of the

¹ Ibid.

² Crewe/Selborne, 11/7/08, CO 417/451.

³ MacKenzie, "African Labour", p. 140.

1894 Land Commission as the areas seemed to be more suitable. How this was possible is difficult to see. Thomas's report stated that it was unlikely that major movements were necessary to relocate natives, as they were already living in the proposed demarcated areas, but the total area was only a mere twenty-five percent larger than the Gwaai and Shangani reserves, and the additional space allocated was in relatively small, scattered patches. The aggregate 5,455,000 acres were in Thomas's opinion, more than sufficient "for twenty years to come".¹ However when new lists of reserves were submitted to the Colonial Office in June 1901, Clarke observed that certain reserves had disappeared or been reduced from previous lists. Some which were considered "good" were now found to be "unsuitable", whilst generally the description and the surveying of the areas were inadequate.²

The peace negotiations for ending the South African War so occupied the High Commissioner's Office that the revised results of the surveys endorsed by the Executive Council in 1902 were not brought to the attention of Downing Street until July 1904. The papers sent by Clarke for furtherance to London were mislaid, to the "regret and annoyance" of Milner,³ who had reason to be irked because it was the Colonial

¹W.E. Thomas, Report, 24/7/97, in Milner/Chamberlain, 31/12/97, CO 879/559.

²Kitchener/Chamberlain, 14/6/01, CO 417/320.

³Milner/Clarke, 29/7/04, in Milner/Lyttelton, 30/7/04, CO 879/746.

Office in 1902 which, finding that the Administration was dragging its feet, pressed it for the framing of new native regulations dealing with the reserves, as there was no longer an excuse for delay.¹ Hardly could he foresee that it would take the Office four more years to scrutinize the 1902 recommendations before they were approved by Colonial Secretary Crewe. The land settlement approved by Crewe severely prejudiced white/black relations for the future, because it overruled Rhodes' promise at the Matopos peace conference that the Ndebele would be allowed full security of tribal lands, i.e. undisturbed possession of ancestral grazing grounds. However, the land had been sold without their consultation and if in 1898 they had been informed of an eventual land division severe discontent might have been broken out.²

The white settlers all along disagreed strongly with the Government policy of setting aside land for the African people. As Taylor explained to subsidized indunas, "the natives had too much land already", and this had an averse effect on the labour supply.³ Settlers were dead set against more land for the Africans, before and after the 1902 settlement, as they were in direct competition with the tribes in producing

¹Clarke/Milton, 13/8/02, in ibid.

²Palmer, Aspects, p. 17.

³Cd. 1200 of 1902, p. 6. According to Taylor already fifty percent of the Ndebele adult males were performing labour services.

agricultural products for the new town settlements. The farming settlers pressed the Company Administration to hire a Secretary for Labour and to increase the hut tax so the Africans would have to work.

It is important to understand that the reserves were not intended to be the Africans' share of the land at all, but intended to provide a temporary shelter from the exactions of Europeans. Deliberate segregation as a policy came only officially into effect at a much later date, with the territorial assessment begun by the Morris Carter Commission in 1925. At this time, from 1896 to 1908, the majority of Africans were needed on European farms, and a reserves policy was only carried out half-heartedly; Milton informed Milner that only a minority of Africans would qualify for occupying the reserves.¹ Milner essentially voiced the policy view of both settlers and the Company in saying that:

I do not think we need trouble much about the distant future. The reserve system is essentially a transitional one.²

Imperial land policy was guided by two false assumptions. The first was, as aforementioned, that the establishment of reserves, to the mind of the settlers and the Company, was a temporary expedient, in order to give a ~~breather~~ to those

¹ Milton/Milner, 10/9/98, CO 417/320.

² Milner/Martin, tel., 24/8/97, in Milner/Chamberlain, 31/12/97, CO 879/559.

natives who wanted to live within the old tribal organization. The second hypothesis was equally false, as no widespread eviction of Africans from European owned land was to be expected. The prevailing view among native commissioners and the Administration was that:

The number of natives for whom land will have to be found in reserves will probably be very small, land-owners, as a rule, being desirous of keeping natives on their land and making fair terms with them.

It was conceded, though, that if natives living on private farms failed to come to an agreement regarding the terms of tenancy occupation, there would be more than enough land on the reserves for their free occupation.²

The land survey carried out between 1898 and 1902 had dubious results. After 1902 over half of the African population still lived outside the allocated land areas.³ Africans remained very unwilling to move into reserves, and desired to remain in areas suitable to their methods of cultivation. When some African tribes which did move to the reserves found that the land was unsuitable, they requested an exchange against farms adjoining the reserves, and this was acceded to in

¹Milton/Milner, 10/9/98, in Kitchener/Chamberlain, 14/6/01, CO 879/694.

²Clarke/Milner, 9/11/01, in Milner/Chamberlain, 22/11/01, CO 879/694; Clarke/Milner 2/12/02, in Milner/Lyttelton, 30/6/04, CO 879/746.

³According to the Matabeleland census report of 1898, 60,000 Africans lived on proposed reserves and unpegged ground, whereas 62,000 either lived under tenancy agreements or were otherwise left undisturbed (Milton/Milner, 10/9/98, in Kitchener/Chamberlain, 14/6/01, CO 879/694.

several instances.¹ After the reserves had been more or less defined, Milner claimed that "the interests of the natives are now definitely safe-guarded".²

No precise instructions were issued to the native commissioners as to the principles to be followed in selecting areas for reserves. There was no uniform basis for calculating how much land was needed for each tribe. In Matabeleland most native commissioners were under the impression that the Glen Grey Act of the Cape Colony had to be followed, i.e. nine acres of arable land to each family, but lack of any precise knowledge of their districts did not enable them to follow this rule to the letter. In Mashonaland the principle of an average of fifteen to twenty acres of arable land to each hut was followed, basically because the greater part was unfit for cultivation. This left the selection of land open to the discretion of the individual native commissioner in charge. They proceeded without a uniform policy and the criteria used were left to personal inclinations. In some cases almost the whole district was declared a reserve because of the absence of European settlement, while others made the reserves "as small as possible".³

¹Encl. in Selborne/Elgin, 21/1/07, CO 879/872.

²Milner/Lyttelton, 30/7/04, CO 879/746.

³Interim Report..., in Buxton/Harcourt, 9/12/14, CO 879/1034.

In a number of cases native commissioners were indeed prompted by the need of making provision for future increase of population, but not with a view to ultimate segregation, because an exodus of natives from European farms was not generally envisaged. The result was that the "survey" ended up with some one hundred reserves, most of which were small patches of a few thousand acres, sandwiched in between European farms to provide for settlement of small clans or tribes. This situation was compounded by the fact that suitable land not yet alienated was hard to come by. As Clarke pointed out:

In some parts a difficulty in finding suitable land has been experienced... owing to the large portions of the territory alienated to Companies and individuals.¹

The parsimony of many native commissioners was facilitated because lots of land was "taboo", not only land alienated, but also land near the gold belt and railways, whether existing or merely projected. The only really contiguous, big reserves, aside from Gwaai and Shangani, were Belingwe, no.2 (1,002,102 acres), Sabi (1,548,735 acres) and Matibi (3,475,170 acres).²

There was a further drawback in the absence of a proper survey, as contemplated in 1897: money was lacking to support the enormous cost of proper selection and demarcation of reserve limits. A final survey to delimit accurately the

Clarke/Milner, 2/12/02, in Milner/Lyttelton, 30/7/04, CO 879/746.

²Interim Report..., in Buxton/Harcourt, 9/12/14, CO 879/1034.

selected areas could not be made because of high costs.¹ The enthusiasm of the Native Department was not great either, as the reserves were thought to be a provisional protection, at any rate. The Administration persuaded itself that:

No hardship would appear to be inflicted upon natives in respect of reserves not having been formally constituted, as in the majority of cases they are now residing upon land which will ultimately be set apart as such. ²

But this assumption was grossly inaccurate, as land had been alienated left and right and continued to be appropriated, even in areas provisionally set aside as reserves. Drastic alterations were therefore necessary and, although changes were made from time to time, land apportionment was not rushed in order not to upset the tenuous private location system.³ Not until the end of 1902 did proposals to the Administration reach a more concrete form and the recommendations and descriptions differed substantially from the ones carried out in 1899.

What is most evident from the land survey is the utter confusion amongst the native commissioners themselves. This was not only apparent in the manner in which they proceeded, as discussed above, but also in their different outlook. One

¹ Milton/Clarke, 8/2/99, in Kitchener/Chamberlain, 14/6/01, CO 879/694.

² Ibid.

³ Taylor, Report on Native Reserves, Matabeleland, 22/7/98, in Kitchener/Chamberlain, 14/6/01, CO 879/684.

was not aware of the fact that the survey could involve removal of natives when prodded to give an estimate of the number of evacuees. Another could not give any information because he did not even know the private farms. According to the native commissioner of Belingwe "there must be hundreds of unoccupied farms on which natives are, at present, living".¹ What was even worse, the topographical survey was so poorly carried out that "some of the areas selected by the Native Commissioners cannot be satisfactorily located".² The survey reports bespeak a general attitude of making some half-hearted attempts at serving African interests. Some reports merely listed the number of reserves and their respective names, or only population and the boundaries of reserves, whilst the area covered by them was not always indicated. In the Melssetter district, but also in Hartley and N'danga, where the survey was meticulously carried out as to the boundaries of the minuscule reserves, there was not a speck of information on the quality of the land. Several other reports were more descriptive. In the Inyangā district, for example, where "the land is very badly watered" and "the soil is poor and unsuitable for native cultivation", the native commissioner had "no option but to suggest that [Company land] be set aside for a reserve".³

¹ Ibid.

² Interim Report..., in Buxton/Harcourt, 9/12/14, CO 879/1034.

³ Reports of native commissioners re. surveys of native reserves, attached to Clarke/Milner, 27/12/02, in Milner/Lyttelton, 30/7/04; CO 879/746.

At one end of the scale we have native commissioners who, finding it difficult to assess boundaries of estates and concessions, were only able to recommend the allocation of small strips consisting "mostly of granite rocks and...suitable for natives only". In one case the small reserve was only good for "camps", in another almost "totally unfit for habitation". On the other tip of the scale, several native commissioners were more generous with "waterless and uninhabitable" land, as for example the native commissioner of Chibi district who apologized:

The extra land could be used when population increases later on and besides it can be used as a game reserve.¹

Not all native commissioners took a future population increase into account. In the Victoria district and elsewhere reserves were often a fraction of the traditional ancestral lands, giving only two acres per capita, whereas the native commissioner of the Gutu district assigned half of the country for a reserve:

Probably there is more land in it than is really required....If the reserve is found to be too large later on, parts of it can easily be thrown open [to white settlement].²

In the Hartley district the reserves were made large enough, as it would be easier to reduce them than increase them at

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid.

some later date. And in the absence of white farming and mining, the native commissioner of the M'toko district felt that the whole area should be made one huge reserve because it was "absolutely useless and unprofitable".¹

Selborne generally was convinced that the acreage set apart was "obviously in excess of the needs of the natives", and that shrinkage should be made possible by changing already existing reserves, not by adding additional ones.² Colonial Office policy envisaged a shrinking of reserves in terms of "the needs of the native population",³ and when the whole raison d'être of the reserves policy came under review, it was concluded that any finality as to the distribution of reserves could not be reached in the near future. If it ever came to a final settlement, it should be borne in mind that it must not result in "economic waste arising from the unnecessary separation of the labour supply from its markets".⁴

The task of land surveying had not been undertaken to provide a final land settlement. The Government simply could not do this, because of its failure to crack down on landlord absenteeism. The land survey was designed in a way to attack absenteeism; it connoted a policy of "beneficial occupation", and ordinances of 1899 and 1900 to effect changes imposing

¹ Ibid.

² Selborne/Chester-Master, 13/7/07, in Selborne/Elgin 30/3/08, CO 879/899.

³ Selborne/Elgin, 30/3/08, CO 879/899.

⁴ Chester-Master/Selborne, 13/10/05, in Selborne/Elgin, 30/3/08, CO 879/899.

beneficial occupation were successfully blocked by the settlers in the Legislative Council.¹ As we have seen in chapter 6, settler representation had been introduced as part of a compromise between imperial influence and Chartered Company power, but now the settlers turned their back on both. In 1903, a settlement was reached which boiled down to surrendering one third of any holdings against full title of free occupancy of the remainder. This had the result that by 1914 almost one million acres had surrendered. However, in 1912, one out of a total of eight million acres owned by companies was still lying idle.

It is essential to recognize that the reserves were originally selected as land between certain points within each district. The native commissioners followed the arbitrary administrative boundaries without cooperating with their colleagues in adjacent districts. When the extent of unsurveyed farms became known due to the cutdown in absenteeism, the boundaries were found to be irregular in shape, and an "amended definition" was proposed. The Chikwanda reserve is a case in point: the original acreage assessed by the Native Department in 1899 was cut by more than forty percent in 1902, and the acreage for this reserve was further diminished in 1905.² Despite the contraction of the projected reserves in

¹ Palmer, Aspects, p. 15.

² Encl. in Selborne/Elgin, 30/3/08, CO 879/899.

was generally thought that:

The provision of land in Southern Rhodesia for native reserves continues to be not only sufficient but liberal, and will prove to be ample for the requirements of the native inhabitants for many years to come.¹

Initially the native commissioners were hindered in their thankless task to survey the land, because no one seemed to know what land had been alienated and to whom, if it was not occupied. This severely prejudiced the case for the Africans in terms of the quality of the land, as they could not get reserves taken from appropriated land. This problem was compounded by the fact that in the absence of suitable reserves, they were obliged to dwell on private land and pay rent. As they saw no reason for paying double, i.e. poll tax and rent at the same time, some 1000 families had already crossed the Portuguese border by 1906 in order to evade the residence fee.² A widespread exodus was feared in the absence of adequate reserves--one more reason for approving the reserves as recommended. The way the system of private locations operated tended to necessitate a reserve system. Although Secretary of State Crewe, in 1908, agreed with his imperial officers in

¹ Chester-Master/Selborne, 13/10/05, in Selborne/Elgin, 30/3/08, CO.879/899.

² Milton/Chester-Master, 14/11/06, in Selborne/Elgin, 30/3/08, CO.879/899.

Southern Africa that a final land settlement would require a commission of enquiry,¹ the suggestion was not entertained until R.T. Coryndon presided over a land commission in 1915-6.

In 1908 white settlement had vastly expanded, compared with 1896. No longer did the white community rely on African produce for their food supply and the white economy had shifted its base from mining to agriculture. How did this come about?

From the start Rhodesian mining ventures were speculative and operated with a high cost and low profitability. But the speculative boom in floating companies collapsed in 1903 and new paths had to be found to give the struggling industry a chance of survival. The new economy drive sought to effect changes in the labour market as African response to the opportunities of wage employment was lacking. The reason for this was not "unfamiliarity", but a complete rational reaction to the presence of the white controlled economy. With European farming insignificant, it was the African peasantry who supplied the food-stuffs for the mines.

The Africans showed a remarkable tendency to adjust themselves to the internal barter and cash market encouraged by white demand for mealies (indigenously grown maize), monkey nuts and beans, bought by the mines which had to comply with the dietary regulations imposed by the Government. More remote districts though had less opportunity of buying and selling and clearly showed a higher proportion of labour turnout in order

¹Crewe/Selborne, 11/07/08, CO 879/899.

to meet rental and tax obligations. The Africans, and this applied equally to Shona and Ndebele, preferred to barter with white middlemen rather than earn wages on the land and in the mines. The European preference for seeking lucrative job opportunities in trading, transport, construction or land speculation was also a perfectly natural inclination as capitalist farming was a very risky enterprise.¹

The great scarcity in cheap wage labour, the relatively small market and the highly fluctuating prices of African produce determined by African surpluses, worked against building up a competitive capitalist agriculture. Moreover much land suitable for "white" farming was locked up in the hands of land development companies which made it difficult for the BSAC to attract individual farmers. When the Government, in 1900, proposed a land occupation scheme by levying a special premium on non-effective occupation, there was an outcry from the land development syndicates.² The railway link between Bulawayo and Salisbury, completed in 1902, made communications with the outside world easier but the high railway rates drove up the cost of living. Under such adverse conditions capitalist farming could not flourish. For as long as Africans were allowed to participate in the cash economy, the white man would not turn to agriculture.

¹Arrighi, p. 209.

²Milner/Chamberlain, 31/10/00, CO 879/656.

It was the 1903 crisis on the London share market which precipitated a rapid growth in co-operative farming eliminating the need for middlemen. The Africans were found very willing to sell livestock which they had built up to sufficient numbers

a result of the Government's restocking policy in 1900 to replenish the denuded herds at cost price since the outbreak of the rinderpest in 1897.¹ Timing of the new emphasis on farming was auspicious because the increased native taxation in 1904 shifted the onus of Rhodesian development on the Africans; in the tax year ending 31st March, 1905 they contributed 41.4% to public revenue, whereas white residents paid 27.1% of the budget.²

In 1907 a BSAC party of Directors toured Southern Rhodesia.³ They came back convinced that it was essential to encourage European immigration to make the country self-sufficient and to enhance the estate's assets. A new orientation in white agricultural policy did occur in 1908: an Estates Department was established to deal with land applications and a commercial branch separated itself from the Administration which was no longer responsible for the commercial policy of the Company. This could not prevent however the growing distrust of the settler community of Chartered government which, since the death of Rhodes in 1902, was accused of not being in touch with affairs which held the public interest.

¹ FO/CO, 1/1/01, CO 879/659; Gann, p. 190.

² Arrighi, p. 210.

³ Gann, p. 166.

The Administration was indeed underdeveloped and without adequate funds to run an experimental farm for agriculture, horticulture and forestry.¹ It made an attempt to try another tack in encouraging ranching and hired a Ranching Manager from Texas to help build up an export market for beef and hides.

African interests were sacrificed to the new white agricultural policy. The Company promoted land sales near railways, but as these had been constructed without regard for good quality land, very little could be offered. Instead of attacking absentee landlordism, it resolved upon attacking the native reserves, particularly since a compromise had been reached regarding the surrender of land in 1903. Numerous applications for exchanges of land were handled by the commercial branch of the Company so that even the reserves could not be looked upon by the Africans as a form of security. Competition for grazing areas became more acute after 1908. Repeated droughts during the period 1902-12 had diminished the value of the reserves. On the other hand, the livestock increase necessitated a search for additional reserves, and previous assumptions of land sufficiency were seriously doubted by 1914, when a royal land commission was appointed to make a final land settlement which had been anathema to the Company.

The Company was unwilling "to agree to any final settlement which will for all time to come prevent European settlement in

¹Milton/Chester-Master, 8/1/07, in Selborne/Elgin, 21/1/07, CO 879/872.

areas which are suitable for white occupation".¹ A Company memorandum of 16th July 1908 recounted in glowing terms the tribute the BSAC paid to the advance of Empire. It noted that the country was practically self-supporting and that prospects in agriculture, stock-raising and mineral production was excellent: "Southern Rhodesia is a white man's country",² and as such was in great need for additional white people. But in the entire period 1908 to March 1905 only 4737 immigrants were settled on the land.³

This had one major reason: the Company was alarmed at the velocity with which land had been alienated at low prices. In order to recoup earlier heavy outlays in capital, they now made white settlement conditional upon making "as much money as possible for the shareholders out of the Company's land".⁴ Furthermore a rapid increase in the settler population would provoke demands for "good government", and additional expenditure and involvement ought to be avoided. This point was readily conceded by the British Government: they both agreed--"go slow" with white settlement.

¹ H. Wilson-Fox, Manager BSAC/Milton, 29/4/10, quoted in Palmer, "Land Policy", p. 129.

² CO 879/899.

³ Palmer, "Land Policy", p. 124.

⁴ H. Wilson-Fox, Memorandum Containing Notes & Information Concerning Land Policy..., London [for the personal use of the Directors], 1912, p. 27.

PART FOUR

LAND AND LABOUR: CONCLUSIONS

The Colonial Office was "inadequate as a vehicle for changing European attitudes towards indigenous people".¹ It was entangled in the clichés of social Darwinism and humanitarian reform, and never articulated an effective "native policy" in Chamberlain's time. The native population of Southern Rhodesia where Chartered Company rule had followed the Natal line, was insufficiently safeguarded against oppressive policies despite token imperial control over colonial legislation. The black Southern Rhodesian population was a dominated group; it did not participate in the making of policy although their anticipated reactions were taken into account. Colonial Office officials had resigned themselves to the fact that "the native question in the new colonies can only be dealt with on the same general lines as in the Cape and Natal".² This view was borne out by Chamberlain who thought that a Company ordinance such as that proposed in relation to hut and labour tax might create a precedent. Its principles may equally apply elsewhere, thereby necessitating the modification of legislation adopted in

¹ Kubicek, p. 34.

² Ommanney, minute, 12/1/01, quoted in ibid., p. 37.

other areas under imperial control. Rhodesia, in a sense, was a policy frontier: "the native question is one for South Africa as a whole".¹ Therefore, before implementation, policies in Southern Rhodesia throughout the period 1890-1923 were carefully scrutinized in terms of their connection with laws applicable in territories south of the border. A bureaucratic concern vis-à-vis native policy permeated all Colonial Office decision making, and imperial influence often expressed itself in the alignment of Southern Rhodesian native legislation and administration with the South African pattern. Thus there was a strong South African bias in Colonial Office control over Southern Rhodesian affairs.

From 1890 to 1896, imperial policy was a policy of neglect of the Africans. British Government activities were severely limited by the tightness of its Treasury's purse-strings. The Colonial Office had no intention to involve itself in annexation policies and when, in 1891, it declared a protectorate over the territories claimed sovereign by Lobengula, it retired behind a smokescreen of legal niceties, conferring on the British South Africa Company the capacity of having de facto jurisdiction over the African population in terms of its Royal Charter of 1889. Having once delegated the administration of Mashonaland to the BSAC, the Colonial Office "was

¹Chamberlain/Milner, 30/3/01, CO 879/659.

virtually committed to a policy of minimal interference".¹ It could not assert itself even if it wished to intervene in the realm of African interests. It was not able to dictate the post-war settlement in the aftermath of the 1893 Ndebele War. Only the armed revolts of 1896, precipitated by the Jameson Raid, provided the Colonial Office with an opportunity to expose the Company's malpractices discovered in its land and labour policies, although this did not lead to the revocation of the 1889 Charter. Instead it worked out a compromise with the BSAC, which involved close surveillance of the Company's native administration by Downing Street and its local representative, the Resident Commissioner.

The reserves and labour question were now given a more serious look than in 1894. Alfred Milner was no doubt right when he wrote Chamberlain:

The two most pressing questions as far as the natives are concerned, are the reserve question and the labour question.²

The vexed question of land and labour unmistakably stood in direct relation to native administration. Thus native policy was tied in with the land/labour nexus during the crucial years from 1896 to 1908 when the stage was set for the later discriminatory acts and institutions under responsible government after 1923.

¹ Palmer, Transafrican Journal, p. 44.

² Milner/Chamberlain, 15/12/97, CO 879/559.

Imperial land policy after the uprisings had two basic aims: to provide adequate land areas for Africans, and to protect those Africans who found themselves living outside the reserves, on private property or on Company land. The reserves were formally passed by the Executive Council in 1902 and finally approved by the Imperial Government in 1908. But under the aegis of imperial awakening, the reserves remained a paper settlement, as Africans stayed on European farms, and no one in his right mind was thinking of ousting them, since such action would not enhance their availability as labour. It is essential to realize that both settlers, Company and many in the Colonial Office assumed, though falsely, that the reserves were a temporary makeshift and that Africans would not be evicted from the farms in the future. However, increased pressure on the land because of failing mineral exploitation, the ensuing shift in policy which altered the economic basis of the country, i.e. the development of a white agricultural policy, and the unwillingness of the Africans to enter the wage labour economy, all worked together in coming to accept the existence of reserves as being permanent, by both whites and blacks.

Africans were not aware, by and large, that they were either living on reserves or on unalienated or unoccupied land. By 1908 they found this out when the fear for native uprisings had subsided. The Company felt sufficiently secure to charge rent on their unalienated estates. It was a direct

result of the decision of the Administration, in 1907, to make land settlement attractive to white immigrants. It found its counterpart in the Private Locations Ordinance of the same year fixing the conditions for the eviction of Africans who were not considered a mere nuisance; they were more than that: they had become active competitors of the whites in the search for a diversified market. The economic success of the Africans as traders in agricultural surplus and livestock was evident in their reluctance to hire themselves out to the whites as farm and mine labourers, so that "imported" labour became the norm.

The land/labour nexus reached its dramatic turning point with the additional exaction of grazing fees in 1912 which proved to be intolerable, and it was from then on that the trek to the reserves began in earnest. The earlier trend was now reversed: whereas greater cash demands had initially stimulated paid labour, the exact opposite was produced as Africans were steadily heading to the reserves.

The movement to the reserves was aided by three factors:

1. The levy of Company rent on unalienated land in 1908 was intended to raise revenue under cover of labour promotion, which argument was swallowed by the Colonial Office. The Company rent scheme was a dismal failure: it collected only £3,619 in Mashonaland during 1909.¹
2. The implementation of the Private Locations Ordinance, 1908, under uncompromising settler pressure, had the ambiguous aim of removing "tenants" if their presence was no longer desired, and was contingent upon conditions of labour and rental agreements which the Colonial Office thought were not causing any undue hardship.
3. The imposition of grazing and dipping fees in 1912 complemented the first two elements. These three components formed a solid tripartite pact which was carefully manipulated to evict the Africans from the land, if not in intention, at least in result.

These formidable administrative, legal and economic instruments, seen in combination, were enough to design an intolerable situation where some Africans indeed did contribute paid labour, but where the majority of them "elected" to move into the reserves, away from opportunities of employment, trading and good quality land: "as a result, the proportion of the African population residing on Reserves rose from 54 per cent in 1909 to 59 per cent in 1914 and 64 percent in 1922".²

¹CNC Mashonaland, Report, 1909, quoted in Mackenzie, "African Labour", p. 234.

²Arrighi, p. 213.

Generalizing, one might say that the Africans got the worst of the bargain; only some reserves had fine land but in most cases tribesmen had to shuttle back and forth out of the reserves because of overcrowding and lack of vegetation.

The Coryndon Reserves Commission, appointed in 1914, worked within the terms of reference set by the South African example of the Native Lands Act of 1913 which adopted segregation as the official land policy of the Union. African opinion was disregarded, and this is indicative of the manner in which the Commission discharged its duties. The commissioners recommended a contraction of the reserves in which the Africans were slowly but surely being reduced to poverty, migrant labour, and diffidence. The period was marked by an African movement from private and unalienated land to the reserves, away from marketing, employment and communication opportunities.

Twenty years of company rule had made the Colonial Office conditioned to the possibility of reducing reserves. Tacit approval of the 1908 rental and occupation agreements and endorsement of the Coryndon Land Commission in 1916 revealed how tenuous Colonial Office control really was. Being implicated in native policy from the beginning, the Colonial Office was incapable of resolving the internal contradictions between safeguarding native rights and satisfying settler demands. Because of its inconsistent policy, the Colonial Office played into the hands of the settlers who became more and more vocal about their growing distrust of the BSAC. It was an open secret that its paramount interest since 1912 was commercial rather than administrative.

After 1916 the drift to segregation went ahead at an ever greater pace. By the early 1920's the remote reserves had already become overpopulated and overstocked, and despite some economic assistance from the Administration, the African people sank slowly but steadily into economic stagnation. This forced the Africans to enter the Southern African cash economy as paid labour instead of as active participants. A fluctuating labour supply, precariously held in balance by imported labour, was now abundant, with the result that the Rhodesian Native Labour Bureau, which had little to do after 1921,¹ folded in 1933 owing to saturation of the labour market. The reserves, which had proved to be poor labour reservoirs in the beginning, became in the 1920's paradoxically the only assurance for legitimate entry of the Africans into the white economy.

The Privy Council decision of 1918 on the status of unalienated land was a shattering defeat for the BSAC. It rejected Company ownership based on the Lippert concession acquired in 1891. Lobengula had repudiated it and now belatedly the Privy Council ruled that indeed the commercial title was invalid: the unalienated land belonged to the Crown by right of conquest, which also cancelled out any hope for an African case for ownership. On this basis the settlers pressed their luck. The case against the BSAC quickly gave them a lead to responsible government, but the "leap in the dark" of settler rule was a sad premonition of what was in store for the African people.

¹ Report of the Native Labour Commission of Enquiry, 1921 (Salisbury, 1922) suggested to discontinue its activities.

The Morris Carter Commission of 1925 did nothing to alleviate the land grievances and fell far short of African demands. The resulting enactment in 1930 of the Land Apportionment Bill carried with it a territorial segregation for whites only, and it likewise upheld the migratory labour system. The Labour Colonial Secretary at the time, Sydney Webb, wrote H.U. Moffat, the Southern Rhodesian prime minister, that "he fully recognize[d] the sincerity of your aim, namely to improve the condition of the native under the Bill".¹ But the prevailing liberal, humanitarian position throughout the early decades of the twentieth century was based on a huge misconception of future political developments which is reflected in Colonial Office support for the Land Commission and its ill-fated Bill. The Act was endorsed by the Imperial Government despite the traditional imperial reservation of native affairs. Government at the hands of settlers had already at a very early stage proven to be less amenable to Colonial Office control than Chartered Company rule.

British liberal and humanitarian thought between 1896 and 1908, trying to moderate the effect of a wage earning economy by pressing for communal, tribal reserves, had really worked towards the achievement of a migrant labour economy on the basis of an evolving land segregation policy. The Colonial Office, in executing and channelling both obdurate settler and

¹Palley, p. 266.

British "negrophile" opinion from 1908 to 1916, thought it had created a haven for the African population in the form of separate reserves, whereas in fact it had done them a disservice in creating a pernicious form of outdoor relief, mortgaging the future lives of millions of Africans to a cheap migrant labour system as a form of domestic colonialism. It was and is a system of forcibly controlled labour: the pass laws determine the flow of traffic and employment is funneled through agents of the Pass Registry and the Labour Bureau. Combined with the reserves system, this helps to save the Government and employers from paying for pensions, sick benefits, hospitalization, welfare, and fringe benefits. It should be realized that the phenomenon of rural impoverishment cannot be separated from the system of cheap migrant labour; the working force is therefore part peasant, part proletariat. Apartheid is not merely the separation of races: it is a bonus, a financial bonanza to industry with a bonded labour force.

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5

APPENDICES

TABLE OF SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS

BSAC	British South Africa Company
CO	Colonial Office
FO	Foreign Office
HC	High Commissioner
RC	Resident Commissioner
NC	Native Commissioner
CNC	Chief Native Commissioner
RNLB	Rhodesia Native Labour Bureau
WNLA	Witwatersrand Native Labour Association
APS	Aborigines' Protection Society
Sec.	Secretary
Col. Sec.	Secretary of State for the Colonies
Imp. Sec.	Imperial Secretary
Admin.	Administrator
Sen.	Senior ... (Admin., <u>et al.</u>)
Dép.	Deputy ... (Commissioner, <u>et al.</u>)
Act.	Acting ... (HC, <u>et al.</u>)

anx.	annex(ure)
app.	appendix
C.	Command Papers (to 1900)
Cd.	Command Papers (from 1900 to 1919)
conf.	confidential
encl.	enclosure(s)
min.	minute(s)
s.	shilling
tel.	telegram

LIST OF OFFICE BEARERS

Colonial Office Bearers; Secretaries of State for the Colonies

1887	Jan. 14	H.T. Holland (later Lord Knutsford)
1892	Aug. 17	Marquess of Ripon
1895	June 28	J. Chamberlain
1903	Oct. 9	A. Lyttelton
1905	Dec. 11	Earl of Elgin
1908	Apr. 16	Earl of Crewe
1910	Nov. 7	L. Harcourt
1915	May 27	A. Bonar Law

High Commissioners for South Africa

1889	Dec. 13	H.B. Loch
1895	May 30	H.G.R. Robinson (later Lord Rosmead)
1897	May 5	A. Milner
1905	May 23	Earl of Selborne
1910	May 19	Lord Gladstone
1914	Sept. 8	Viscount Buxton (till 1920)

Resident Commissioners In Southern Rhodesia

1898	Dec.	5	M. Clarke	
1905	Apr.	1	R. Chester-Master	} all three with the rank of lieut. colonel.
1908	Apr.	1	J.G. Fair	
1911	Apr.	1	C. Burns-Begg	
1915	Apr.	1	H.J. Stanley	
1918	July	25	C. Douglas-Jones	(till 1923)

BSAC Administrators in Southern Rhodesia

1890	Oct.	1	A.R. Colquhoun	
1891	Sept.	10	Dr. L.S. Jameson	
1896	Apr.	2	Earl Grey	
1898	Dec.	5	W.H. Milton	
1914	Nov.	1	F.D.P. Chaplin	(till 1923).

NATIVE DISTRICTS (1906)

MASHONALAND

Charter

Chibi

Gutu

Chilimanzi

Hartley

Inyanga

Lomagundi

Makoni

Marandella

North Mazoe

South Mazoe

Melsetter

M'rewa

Mitoko

Salisbury

Umtali

Victoria

MATABELELAND

Belingwe

Inyati

Tegwani

Bulawayo

Gwanda

Gwelo

Insiza

Mzingwane

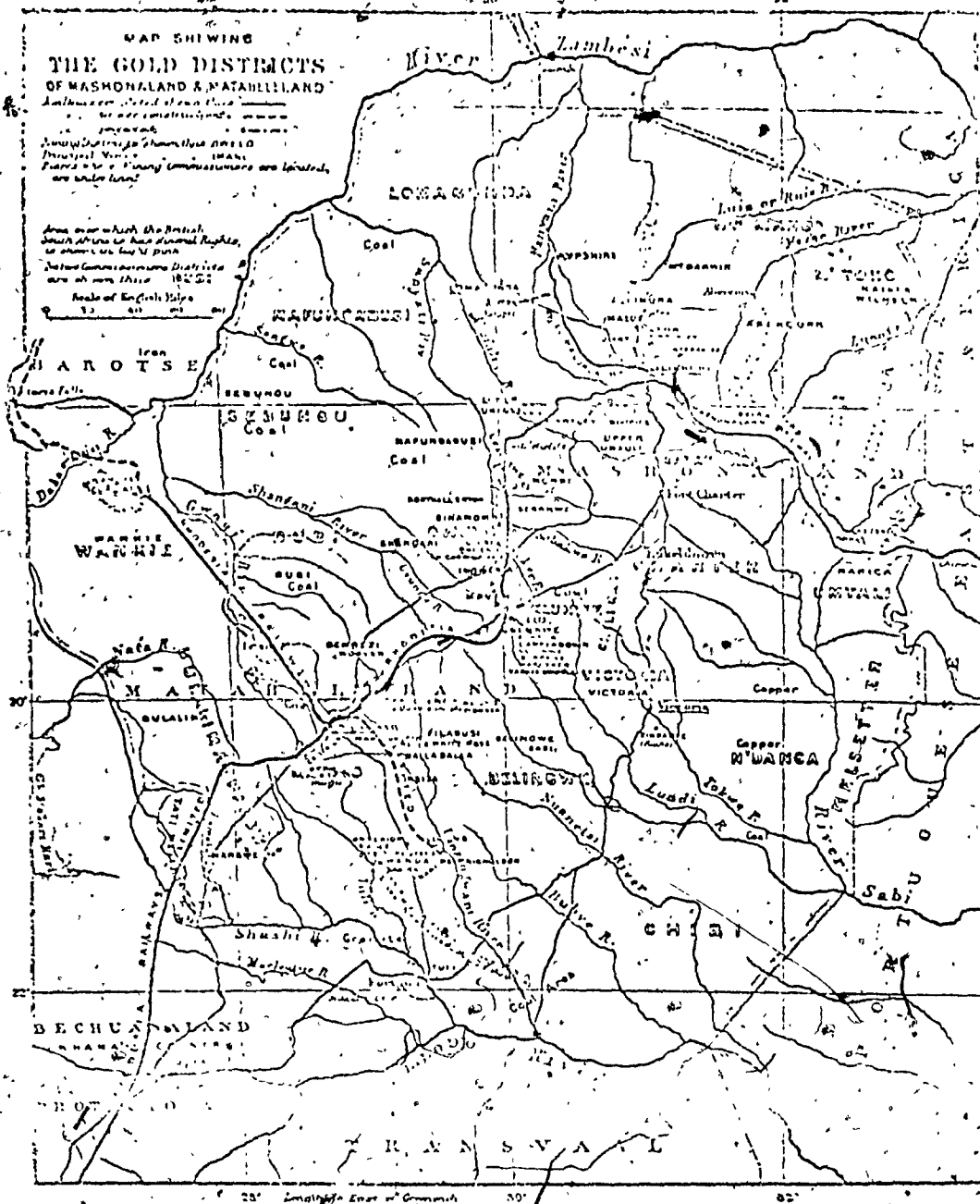
Fort Usher

Sebungwe-Mafungabusi

Selukwe

Wankie

Fingo Location



SOUTHERN RHODESIA: DISTRICTS AND MINES

from the British South Africa Company's
Director's Report, 1902