

The Black Man's Burden in South Africa

By George Padmore

This picture of British treatment of African natives is particularly timely in view of the world wide war "for democracy."

GERMANY and her Axis partners—Italy and Japan—are trying to impose their imperialistic aims upon the peoples of Europe, Asia and Africa, with tanks and dive bombers. These are all spectacular dramas. They engage the attention of the world to the exclusion of equally sinister plans of territorial expansion within the British Empire.

Imperialistic urges and fascist proclivities are not confined, however, to Hitler, Mussolini and the Japanese militarists. Not so dramatically manifested, they are, nevertheless, equally rampant among British crypto-fascists in Southern Africa. By paying lip-service to humanitarian ideals of democracy and self-determination, General Smuts (who once insulted Negroes in New York) is able to mask the real aims of the white ruling obligarchy. The mine-owners and big agrarians are interested in "the war for democracy" only in so far as it will enable them to advance their own imperialistic schemes, at the expense of the blacks.

About this, let us have no illusions. Even before the war white industrialists, mine and plantation owners, with the endorsement of General Hertzog and the ex-Minister of Defense, Oswald Pirow, who is now openly supporting Hitler's "New Order," were demanding territorial expansion. Having acquired the former German colony of South-West Africa as a mandate after the World War I, they were clamouring for the annexation of Bechuanaland, Basutoland and Swaziland—the last native territories in Southern Africa under British imperial protection. Their *lebensraum* now includes Abyssinia!

Abyssinia the Pawn

"This is a matter over which the Union is very closely concerned," writes the *Johannesburg Forum*. "Not only have our soldiers earned the right of a big say in the future of Abyssinia, but political and strategic considerations on the African continent demand that the Union Government should be consulted at every stage. . . ."

"Both the Union and Rhodesia are entitled to have their just say in the post-war reconstruction of this continent, and they certainly do not mean to be overlooked when a settlement has to be made in Abyssinia."

This is certainly an ambitious demand!

But if South Africa is going to base her territorial claims on the fact that a few thousand white men from the Union took part in the Abyssinian campaign against the Italians, then what about the colored troops that fought in East Africa? Surely the Indians, Nigerians, Gold Coasters, Kenyans, Nyasalanders, Somalis, Free French Senegalese, etc., have as much right to claim part of the loot as these negalomaniac South African freebooters—what a preposterous line of argument!

But what about the people most concerned in deciding their own future—the Abyssinians? It will be interesting to know how the white South Africans and Rhodesians intend to satisfy their territorial ambitions in the light of the Roosevelt-Churchill declaration, "*they respect the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live; and they wish to see sovereign rights and self-government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them.*"

In South Africa and Rhodesia, the black people have as much voice in their Governments as the Jews in that of the Third Reich. And the Abyssinians certainly have no desire to enjoy the blessings of the Union's "Native Policy." Never were so many oppressed so much by so few as in South Africa and Rhodesia.

Southern Rhodesia's Claims

Addressing a party rally of the United Congress (the Rhodesian Tories) in Salisbury on August 5, 1941, Sir Godfrey Huggins, Prime Minister of Southern Rhodesia, demanded more "living space" for the 60,000 white British settlers. This is to be satisfied not only at the expense of the natives of Southern Rhodesia, but the neighboring colonies of Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland.

The Prime Minister (who was knighted by King George VI a few months ago) expressed the hope that the Churchill government would allow him to annex these territories before the end of the war. The Africans have the same loathing for Huggins and his "Na-

tive Policy" as Jews have for Hitler and his "National Socialism."

Professor J. B. S. Haldane, the distinguished English scientist, recently asserted that he would rather be a Jew in Berlin than a Negro in South Africa. I can well believe him. It is no exaggeration to say that Hitler and his Gestapo sadists are merely applying, with the usual Germanic efficiency, in Poland and other conquered countries, colonial practices borrowed lock, stock and barrel from the British in Southern Africa.

An Economic Problem

Apart from the Union of South Africa, Southern Rhodesia is the only "self-governing" territory on the African continent. This country, which is more than three times the size of England, is exploited by 60,000 settlers predominantly Anglo-Saxon stock. The reason I emphasize this point at the outset is because it is the practice of apologists for British Imperialism to assert that the fascist conditions under which the native races in Southern Africa live are due entirely to the predominant Boer or Dutch elements in the Union. Nonsense!

As I have always maintained, the problems of imperialism may be complicated by racial and religious factors, but they remain fundamentally economic. To blame the Dutch settlers alone is not only stupid, but dishonest. Are the Dutch responsible for the "native policy" in Kenya? And the color bar practices in other parts of the Empire, and even in Great Britain? These Dutch or Boers have absolutely nothing to do with the government of Southern Rhodesia, which is entirely under Englishmen. Moreover, all legislation affecting Africans enacted by the Rhodesian Parliament must first receive the endorsement of the British Parliament before it becomes law.

Unfortunately, the vast majority of British Socialists, Liberals, and other so-called progressives, give so little attention to colonial affairs that "foreigners" are inclined to consider them hypocritical when they protest against the behavior of the fascist dictators. Honestly, how can white folk, for example, denounce Japanese imperialism in China and Indo-China and at the same time justify, and even defend, British imperialism in India and Dutch imperialism in the East Indies?

No! We must be honest with ourselves. If imperialism is bad for a yellow power to practice, then it must equally be bad for white ones. We must either be imperialists or anti-imperialists. We cannot be one thing when it serves the interest of "our" rulers and the opposite when it does not. This kind of political dishonesty, however, is widespread among the intellectuals on both sides of the Atlantic.

The Conquest of Rhodesia

The story of the conquest of Rhodesia by Cecil Rhodes and the British South African Company at the close of the last century is one of the blackest pages in the dark history of British imperialism. The treachery and deception practiced by Rhodes and his factotums, Rudd, Maguire, Thompson, and the missionary, J. S. Moffat, in their dealings with the Matabeles, and their chief, Lo Bengula, if paralleled, have never been surpassed.

After the Matabele war of 1893, Rhodesia was administered by the South Africa Company till 1923, when it was formally taken over by the Imperial Government and authority vested in the British settlers—mine owners farmers and traders.

For ceding its sovereignty, the South Africa Company received £3,750,000 compensation and was allowed to retain ownership of 10,195,000 acres of land, including mineral rights. At that time the assets of the company were over seven million pounds. In addition, it holds 1,599,051 one-pound shares in the Rhodesia railways and 700,000 acres of land in Bechuanaland. It will also derive half of the revenue secured from the sale of land in Northern Rhodesia until 1965! In 1933 the company sold its rights to the settlers' government for the sum of two million pounds. Although the South Africa Company has relinquished its administration of the imperial legacy of Rhodes, it is still the most powerful economic and political power in this part of Africa.

The British immigrants having secured self-government on October 1, 1923, immediately started to use South African methods in dealing with the million and a quarter Africans living within the borders of Southern Rhodesia.

This native policy was outlined to the Colonial Overseas League in London on July 12, 1934, by Sir Godfrey Huggins, who combines the office of Minister of Native Affairs with that of the Premiership. He declared, "It was time for people in England to realize that the white man in Africa was not prepared and never will be prepared to accept the African as an equal, socially or politically."

To enforce this Nazi doctrine, the first

thing the settlers did was to segregate the Africans in Reserves, as Hitler does to the Poles and Jews in Eastern Europe. The first Government Land Commission was set up in 1925 to take stock of the amount of land then held by Europeans and Africans. The recommendations, based upon the same principles as the Native Lands Act of the Union and the notorious Native Service Contract Act, were adopted and embodied in a law known as the Lands Apportionment Act of 1930. Under the terms of the amended act, Africans will be prohibited from buying or renting land except in certain reserved areas after 1942.

Native Reserves

The overwhelming majority of natives are concentrated in two reserves—Matabeland and Mashonaland—black areas corresponding to the Transkei and Ciskei in the Cape Province of the South African Union. The Rhodesian areas, however, are infested with tsetse fly. They are, for the most part, waterless and far removed from modern transport facilities. Consequently, natives inhabiting such districts have no means of marketing their crops. It is estimated that less than 10 per cent of railway mileage passes through these native reserves.

European settlers, on the other hand, not only own the best land, but are provided with every facility by the Government—which they control—to cultivate maize and tobacco and market them locally and abroad.

Commenting on these discriminatory practices, Professor Leonard Barnes, of Liverpool university, says in his book, *Empire or Democracy*, (p. 183):

"The most important agricultural produce of Southern Rhodesia is maize. Maize has been the staple food of the people for three centuries. Today it is grown for export as well, mainly by Europeans, employing African laborers at about 6d a day or less, on land that once belonged to the laborers.

"Since 1931 a Maize Control Scheme has been in operation which provides that the price of maize inside Southern Rhodesia shall be much higher than the world prices. It works out this way, that about two-thirds of the whole maize crop is sold for internal consumption at about double the price the other third fetches in the export market. With such an arrangement the vital question clearly is which of the people with maize to sell are to get the higher price, and which the lower.

"The short answer is that the law makes two provisions on this point. First, the bulk of the maize grown by the handful of European farmers shall get the higher price. Second, that Afri-

cans must sell at least 75 per cent of their output at the lower price."

Professor Barnes adds, "The Colonial Office has recently extended the same type of scheme to Northern Rhodesia."

The distribution of land in Southern Rhodesia originally allotted the million and a quarter Africans about 29 million acres; while 60,000 Europeans received some 50 million acres. The Africans are so congested in the reserves that the Government has recently decided to make some adjustments. It has added 7,465,000 acres to the native reserves, at the same time setting aside 34,966,000 acres for the exclusive use of present and future white settlers.

Under the Squatters' Ordinance, the native has to work 180 days for the white landlord. If he leaves the farm without permission from his master, the African is not only liable for criminal prosecution as a runaway, but the settler can hold the man's family as hostages until he surrenders. Because of the security which the employment of a native's family insures, most white landlords encourage the Africans to bring their families along with them from the reserves.

Racial Segregation

The Rhodesians are trying to go one better than their South African neighbors in the application of racial segregation. Lieut.-Colonel C. L. Carbutt, a former Chief Native Commissioner, has drawn up a plan whereby all Africans will be forcibly removed from acres in proximity to white communities and settled in a sort of black belt, or exclusive "African State," north of the Zambesi. According to the ingenious author, Southern Rhodesia would then become "completely a white man's country." The project has the endorsement of the Prime Minister. Addressing a meeting of settlers at Bulawayo on March 30, 1938, Sir Godfrey Huggins declared: "While there was yet time and space, the country must be divided into separate white and black areas. In the black areas natives would be allowed to rise to any positions they are capable of and would be protected from white competition.

"In the white areas the native would be welcomed, but on the understanding that he merely assist and not compete with the white man. Nation education should be by missions and not by the state till natives had a background of Christianity."

Taxes and Labor

Every African living within Southern Rhodesia has to pay poll tax to the amount of about 20 shillings (about \$5) per annum, plus ten shillings (about \$2.50) for a wife and five shillings

(about \$1.25) for a dog! Failure to pay tax money within a month after it is due makes the defaulter liable to a fine of £10 (about \$50) or three months' imprisonment.

All Africans born outside Southern Rhodesia must on entering the country first obtain permission to do so from the Native Affairs Department. Having secured an entry permit, the "foreigner" is allowed thirty days to find a job. In the event of his failing to do so he can be arrested as a vagrant and thrown into prison or deported.

He usually finds employment, however, for there is a great demand for such "foreign" labor, which is even cheaper than the indigenous kind. All European employers must endorse the native's labor certificate, stating the term of his contract and the amount of wages he is supposed to receive. The holder of such a document must produce it whenever demanded by one in authority. If an African leaves his employment without his document being endorsed he can be fined £10—more than two years' wages—or imprisoned for a period of up to two years.

During 1939 the total number of prosecutions under the Native Pass Laws and other racial regulations were 59,923, an increase over the figure of 52,666 in the previous year. Defaulters are hired to employers and the amount of tax due to the government is deducted from their wages. In this way the state secures a part of its revenue and provides labor for the landlords and mining companies.

The authorities are determined to turn the Africans into a nation of criminals.

British Taught Hitler Racism

The treatment meted out to these defenseless Africans shows that British imperialists can also behave like German Nazis when they lord it over a subject race.

The totalitarian regimes applied to the blacks (and to them only) in territories like the Union and Southern Rhodesia were in existence long before Hitler began to institute similar methods in Europe. Hitler not only copied from British colonial practices, but also largely borrowed the theoretical foundation for his racial philosophy from the writings of the eminent English publicist, Houston Stuart Chamberlin, author of *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*.

Is it any wonder that the Fuehrer has expressed in *Mein Kampf* great admiration for the British Empire? Hitler has certainly learned much from the British imperialists, especially those who have settled in the colonies.

The extent to which reaction has triumphed in the British colony of Southern

Rhodesia is best shown by examining the character of legislation enacted in recent years by the Rhodesian government.

On the initiative of certain missionary societies, an ordinance under the title of the Preacher's Bill was in 1936 presented to the legislative assembly, composed entirely of whites. Articles four and five of the bill recommended that:

"Wherever three or four natives are gathered together and conduct a religious service in the presence of a fourth native, which is either of a religious character or instruction in religion, the person conducting it will be liable to both fine and imprisonment unless he is in possession of a certificate granted either by the Native Commissioner or a missionary."

Like true Pharisees, these are the people who are forever talking about religious freedom! Freedom for themselves, not the blacks.

When the text of the bill came before the House of Commons for imperial assent, M.P.'s attacked it so violently that Malcolm McDonald, who was then Dominions Secretary, was forced to reject these discriminating clauses. For, had Parliament agreed to what the white Rhodesians were demanding, an African father reading the Bible to his family would technically be committing a criminal offense! And, as I said, the bill was sponsored by so-called Christian missionaries!

What was the reason for this un-Christian conduct? To prevent their black converts from organizing churches, independent of white control. Because of the racial attitude of the overwhelming majority of European "Christians" to Africans, many natives who have embraced Christianity have organized a distinct African church under their own management.

The Dutch Reformed Church, for example refused to participate in the World Sunday School Convention held in South Africa in July, 1940, on the ground that it is against their racial principles for white and black to associate on the basis of "equality even in the presence of God."

While opposed to "social equality" with non-Europeans, these men-of-God still want to control all religious activities among Africans.

Finger Print Passes

This particular bill was defeated thanks to the opposition in the House of Commons, but other racial regulations which have had the most disastrous effect for the Africans were enacted. About the same time as the Preachers Bill was presented, the Rhodesian Parliament passed an amendment to the Native Pass

Consolidation Ordinance, which received the approval of the Dominions Office in London. This act provides for the tightening up of control over the movements of Africans, as also do the Native Registration Act of 1936 and the Native Urban Location Ordinance. These regulations correspond to curfew and martial law established in the Nazi-occupied countries in Europe.

Any African, for example, living in a reserve area, but wishing to move into a Location or native ghetto, must first have his fingerprints taken and comply with other identification formalities, after which he is granted a special permit by the European Location Superintendent entitling him to enter the ghetto for a certain period.

Unlike the Poles and Jews in Poland, the Africans are not forced to wear any distinguishing badges on their arms. The color of their skin is a sufficient badge of servitude!

Africans living permanently in townships and European districts must observe curfew regulations. They are not allowed to be outside prescribed areas between nine p.m. and five a.m., without a special pass from the authorities. If an African not permanently residing in a Location sleeps in a tenement (which, incidentally, are built by white labor under the industrial color-bar regulations) the person giving such hospitality is liable to imprisonment on a charge of "harboring," unless permission was previously obtained.

Demand for Cheap Labor

The question of *lebensraum* for the 60,000 British settlers in Rhodesia was raised about the same time that Hitler was demanding more "living space" for the German *Herrenvolk*.

And the Imperial Government was adopting the same appeasement policy with Huggins as with Hitler. While Chamberlain was selling out the Czechs at Munich, a Royal Commission, headed by Lord Bledisloe, was dispatched to South Africa "to inquire and report into the question of amalgamating the two Rhodesias and Nyasaland."

Fortunately, for the blacks, the war intervened before a deal could be fixed up between Whitehall and the imperialists in Southern Rhodesia. The Imperial Government is afraid that any surrender at this time might incite the natives of Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland to open rebellion, for the Africans in these countries told Lord Bledisloe and his colleagues that they don't want to have anything to do with "Fuehrer" Huggins and his fascist regime. Their conditions are already bad enough, but Southern Rhodesia is no

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Black Man's Burden

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better than a glorified concentration camp for Africans.

Child Labor

There is no colony, with the possible exception of Kenya, where child labor flourishes as in Southern Rhodesia. In passing the Juveniles' Employment Act, a Government spokesman declared: "It was in the best interests of the children, as it prevented them becoming vagabonds and waifs exposed to pernicious influences."

This child labor regulation gives the Native Commissioner and officers of his department the right to arrange for hiring out children to white employers for a period not exceeding six months at a time.

Commenting upon the working of the Juveniles Employment Act, the Chief Native Commissioner makes the following interesting observations on the history of child labor in the colony: "The legislation was designed, as its traducers well know, to protect and control the ever-increasing stream of children, to legalize their claims for the wages they earned, and to insure for the other part that their monthly engagement should not, to their own detriment, be lightly abandoned."

The Commissioner speaks about wages earned by children. Well, let's examine the general scale of wages paid to adults in Southern Rhodesia.

In view of what I have already said about the regime in relation to the Africans, it will be no surprise to learn that trade unionism is not allowed among natives. The trade union movement in Southern Rhodesia, like the Labor Party, does not admit blacks to membership.

Moreover, the government is hostile to labor organization among Africans. Some years ago, African organizers were forbidden to form a religious society, much less an industrial organization for the purpose of obtaining higher wages, shorter hours and better working conditions. Colonial Blimps consider native trade unionism synonymous with bolshevism!

The working day is usually between ten and fourteen hours. Thirty working days constitute a month. Miners get about 29s. 6d (a shilling is about 25¢) a month. Imported labor is paid less. Africans from Nyasaland get 25s., and those from Northern Rhodesia 18s. They all receive rations—valued at 7s. 6d per month! Agricultural laborers get less than miners. The wage is 12s. 6d per month for men; 9s. for women, and 5s.

Special NAACP Train to Los Angeles

If the NAACP can get 125 reservations, we can have a special train to the Los Angeles conference next July. Preliminary arrangements have been made. The train will leave St. Louis, Mo., over the Missouri Pacific, on Friday afternoon, July 10. It will go west through the magnificent scenery of the Colorado Rockies, into Salt Lake City, Sunday morning, July 12, and on to Los Angeles, arriving Monday morning, July 13.

This will give delegates two whole days in Los Angeles before the conference opens on the night of July 14.

All persons who want to go on this train, whether delegates or friends of the NAACP, should make plans NOW. Write to the national office, 69 Fifth Avenue, New York. Ask your local ticket agent about the cost of round trip fares from your home by way of St. Louis.

Because the Army has first call on all railroad equipment, we must know EARLY about how many are planning to go.

Write the national office TODAY.

for children. Some in domestic service only get rations.

Live Like Animals

The Africans live and work under the most appalling social conditions. They live like animals and only a small percentage of them enjoys any sort of protection under social legislation.

White miners receive a minimum wage of 20s. per day of eight hours, plus free quarters and other social amenities. They are protected by all kinds of social legislation; Workmen's Compensation Act; Miners' Phthisis Act, etc., etc. It is no wonder that the white workers in the colonies constitute a labor aristocracy divorced from the life and struggles of colored labor. Imperialism not only exploits in the economic sense, but has succeeded in inciting the white workers against the black.

To maintain their political and economic domination over the Africans, the settlers are opposed to educating the natives. By keeping them ignorant they seek to justify their own racial superiority and right to rule.

Hitler is pursuing the same policy in Europe. In Poland and Czechoslovakia the Nazis are trying to suppress the national culture of the natives by destroying their schools, colleges and

universities, and by prescribing the books they may read. Since the Africans had no institutions of learning to destroy when they stole his land, the Rhodesian Herrenvolk have had it easier than the Nazis. But like the Germans, they are determined to keep all progressive and "dangerous thoughts" away from the Africans.

No "Rights of Men"

In one respect the British colonial planters and mining magnates in Africa are to be preferred to the bureaucrats at the Colonial Office in London, who pay lip service to democracy and do nothing to implement their official pronouncements as far as the colonies are concerned. Like the crackers in the Southern States of America, colonial Britons refuse even theoretically to concede to the Africans economic, political and social equality.

"The white man, English as well as Dutch, is determined to do all he can to remain, and, what is more, to rule," wrote Sir Thomas Watt in the (London) *Times*. "He hopes to get the sympathy and support of the Mother Country. If this is withheld, he will not be deterred. To those who say England cannot be a party to a great act of injustice I would reply that this matter is to us in South Africa such a vital and fundamental matter that no ethical consideration, such as the Rights of Men, will be allowed to stand in the way."

Justice Indivisible

Too long have the British people in the main (there have been notable exceptions) condoned colonial imperialism. Today the "evil thing" is overrunning Europe in the form of fascism. The working class and progressives in Britain must help the subject peoples in their struggles to emancipate themselves from the fetters of democratic imperialism, which in the Colonial Empire is indistinguishable from European fascism.

Let us never forget that justice, like peace, is indivisible, and that a socialist civilization, the hope of the future, is impossible of construction in a world in which humanity is half free and half slave.

John B. Nail Dies

John B. Nail, 89, pioneer business man of New York City died February 14 in a hospital in Harlem. Mr. Nail was the father-in-law of the late James Weldon Johnson. He is survived by his son, John E. Nail and his daughter, Mrs. Grace Nail Johnson.

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