

has to be certified, researched, abstracted. If that is traced back far enough it will be revealed that the title once belonged to us all in common. And the land value which I buy from him is an uncertain quantity. He is selling me the habits, desires, emotions, of thousands of his fellow citizens. These may change. He can neither control them nor change them to any marked degree. He is selling me what he neither made nor owned—title to the land merely gave him possession, gave him the land value which I had to buy from him.

It is apparent that we can own land, buy it, sell it, and traffic in it. The medium of exchange, the yardstick, is land value. We cannot create it. We cannot guarantee delivery or quality of product. Just as the earth is solid and continuous under our feet, with the clay and sand and rock and river all one solid contiguous reality, so land value is a wonderful rug or fabric, woven over the earth by humanity, of varying thickness in different localities, but there always. And that rug is woven by us all together, our common lives; our very being and breathing is its warp and woof. It is ours. It is our commonwealth.

Jesus said: "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's." Would He not say to-day: "Render unto Society the things that are Society's"? In all this mad scramble to tax this and to tax that, we have lost sight of certain fundamentals. Society has no right to take anything unless it has earned the right. We would be a wealthy commonwealth, if we would take our common wealth and use it. A tax on land value is not a tax; it is merely collecting collectively the income from what belongs to us collectively. We are merely asserting title

to what we have created and honestly own. The publicans and tax-gatherers of His day were held in scorn and derision. Shall we not follow His example as to the politicians and tax-gatherers of to-day, and convert them along with the other sinners?

The good earth lies open. Its nominal ownership, its value, its use, are all before us. Its private use is a privilege, granted to the individual by organised Society, and that privilege must be paid for. Such payments are just, are honest, are moral, and re-moralising. Of course, under such conditions as proposed, no persons would want to own land unless they could use it, but when you get right down to it, why should they? The converse, that everybody who wants to, could use the earth, is obviously true. And it can be demonstrated that everybody making proper use of land would be paying less tax than they are now. The extensive implications, economic and social, of this approach to our problem of taxes, will have to be covered in some other discussion.

And so, to conclude—I hate with a righteous hate a system of taxation that allows individuals to take from us what we all earn collectively, and a system that collectively takes from us what we earn individually; that keeps us carrying hay and water to an elephant standing in the midst of his own plenty, too blind to see; that makes drudges or liars out of us when we want to see the circus, and when we feel we have earned the right to see it.

That is a moral issue in taxation. It will have to be met, sooner or later. The sooner the better.

ALLEN V. BRETT.

AN AFRICAN'S VIEW OF COLONIAL SOCIALISM

Africa, Britain's Third Empire,* by George Padmore, originated, the author tells us, in a "request from the Pan-African Congress for a survey of the Colonial Problem in British Africa, in the light of the new Economic Imperialism euphemistically described as Colonial Development and Welfare." The facts, he claims, constitute "an indictment of a social system—Imperialism—from the point of view of an African." The book therefore represents the opinion of politically-conscious Africans whose influence is a growing factor in Colonial affairs. Mr. Padmore, although a socialist, is disappointed with its practical application to British rule in Africa. He contrasts the manner in which the British Government continues to ignore the African "educated, democratic classes," frustrating their ambitions, with the Russian policy of employing these classes to organise and modernise the more primitive Soviet territories.

Although this book is prohibited, we understand, in Kenya and other parts of Africa it is no mere diatribe but a well-written and valuable contribution to the subject. The author briefly but adequately surveys the origin and political development of each group of British African territories; the methods of direct and indirect rule; recent Colonial Development and Welfare policy; and the present organisation of Nationalist movements.

Although the racial discrimination and suppression of civil liberty now prevalent in South Africa is becoming fairly well known, Mr. Padmore gives some enlightening details which are often omitted by other writers. It might be objected that as the Union is not under British

administration (apart from the three Protectorates under the Commonwealth Relations Office) the "Colonial Fascism of South Africa"—as Mr. Padmore calls it—cannot be British responsibility. But conditions in Southern Rhodesia and Kenya have moved a long way towards this Colonial Fascism and the Colonial Office's efforts at developing Northern Rhodesia, Tanganyika and Nyasaland are almost certain to entail a further move in the same direction unless a different policy is pursued. Only the Sudan, ruled by the Foreign Office whose power is there checked by Egyptian claims, and Uganda, whose king retains considerable power, appear exempt from the characteristic dangers threatening British East and Central Africa.

The problem in West Africa, according to Mr. Padmore, is not so much the suppression of liberty as the prevalence of poverty. The comparative freedom he attributes to tropical diseases which have prevented European settlement; the poverty to exploitation due to "the British colonial policy of *laissez faire* economy and unplanned development of agricultural resources." But, in support of his condemnation of *laissez faire* he quotes examples of its exact opposite: how one or a few big European companies with the connivance of or even in partnership with the governments have secured the monopoly of buying the peasants' crops at lower than market prices. When in 1937 the Gold Coast peasants refused either to buy British cotton goods or sell cocoa to British firms the Nowell Commission, appointed to suggest remedies, recommended the restoration of a free market. Mr. Padmore mentions the Commission with

* Dennis Dobson, 12s. 6d.

approval and emphasises that it was far-seeing enough to give warning against any attempt to introduce official monopoly or combine it with private monopoly. Later, during the war, an official trading organisation staffed by personnel drawn from the big combines, was the set up. Mr. Padmore notices this but he does not notice also that the vicious system of taxation is exactly calculated to lower the price of what the peasant has to sell and raise the price of what he must buy. Seventy per cent. of Gold Coast revenue is derived from an export duty on cocoa and from customs duties on textiles and other essential commodities imported for sale to the peasants; and similar conditions apply to the other divisions of West Africa.

Post-war British Colonial policy has taken the shape of allocating £120 millions to "Development and Welfare" of the Colonies, and £150 millions to Development Corporations which, as Mr. Padmore points out, are really experiments in "State Capitalism" intended to bring profit to the British Government rather than benefit to the Colonial peoples. The inequity, compulsions and waste of these schemes are exposed in detail by Mr. Padmore, but his criticism suffers from the same weakness as that of Conservative criticism of the Ground Nuts Scheme. Behind it is belief in the same principles, but put into operation by other people.

As a general remedy for conditions in all the African Colonies Mr. Padmore proposes a transfer or diversion of political power away from both European officials of the Colonial Office and the hereditary or tribal African leaders (whom he considers illiterate, corrupt and subservient) to "the African intelligentsia—that small minority which has already acquired European cultural standards and scientific techniques." He does not explain the principles which are to govern the intelligentsia's use of its power, although in his able and convincing analysis of the evils to be overcome he repeatedly exposes the crying need to solve the land question and the facts show how closely this is related to poverty, exploitation and the suppression of civil liberty.

Over and over again in his survey Mr. Padmore refers to the African tradition that "land is considered a free good, like fresh air," and he denounces the alienation of land by British corporations and governments. But instead of tracing clearly the link between this original oppression and the resulting poverty, taxation, etc., he lumps all together as evils inherent in "the capitalist economy." In West Africa, for example, where, on the whole, the British Government has respected the principle of communal land tenure, Mr. Padmore notices the spread of landlordism and wealth among the chieftain families. He attributes this to "the impact of western capitalist influences." It is obviously the Law of Rent which knows no distinction between black or white, capitalist or labourer.

The *Report on the Colonial Problem* issued by the Royal Institute of International Affairs states: "The whole question of land tenure in Africa bristles with difficulties. The notion of individual ownership is foreign to African tradition, but often seems to the colonising Power to be essential to the development of modern methods of cultivation by a native peasantry, quite apart from the alienation of land for settlement by white men." Mr. Padmore quotes this significant paragraph but does not answer its implied question. The troubles of Africa are in essentials the troubles of the rest of the world:

in West Africa it is African landlordism, large-scale trading monopoly, and penal taxation; in less-congested South, East and Central Africa it is mainly European landlordism supported by serfdom and penal taxation.

The monopolisation of land, whether by European corporation or settler, is unjust; but so also is the monopolisation of land by British Government, African chief or African peasant. On the other hand, any land system which prevents land being put to its best use, or discourages the investment of capital (in the true sense) cannot be justified. Furthermore, although public works must be built and maintained in Africa as elsewhere, a tax like a Poll Tax, an unavoidable fine on a person's existence, or import and export taxes, penalising his production or needs, are directly unjust and oppressive.

In Africa, as elsewhere, the value of land, apart from improvements, depends upon the presence and activities of the people as a whole, whether European, Banthu, or Asiatic. Although at present, apart from some quite incommensurate variation of hut or poll taxes by provinces, this difference in the value of land is generally ignored by the British administrators there is no need for them to continue to do so. To abolish all poll and hut taxes, and customs and export taxes, and instead collect the value of land to defray public revenue would redistribute the burden of taxation in exact accordance with the communal advantages offered by each site. The now overtaxed Africans in the remote interior would no longer be forced to make long journeys to seek employment, nor could any one monopolise good land under a system of wasteful and primitive cultivation. The African tradition of communal right in land would be fully respected, while every European wishing to invest his capital would have security of tenure without the power of exploitation.

F. D. P.

LANDLESS PEASANTS IN KASHMIR

Reuter's correspondent in Srinagar has reported to the *Manchester Guardian*, July 14:—

The pro-India Government of Kashmir, headed by Sheikh Abdullah, has announced drastic land reforms forbidding landlords owning more than 125 acres to retain more than 20 for personal cultivation. Land in excess of 20 acres will be transferred, without compensation, to the actual cultivators.

A Government communiqué announcing the reforms said they were in accordance with "a plan of a new Kashmir" which envisaged, first, the abolition of landlordism, "because such a step would be pivot of all progress," and, secondly, land to the cultivator "to satisfy the land hunger of the landless peasant and ensure efficient working of lands."

Addressing a meeting, Sheikh Abdullah said the new measures would apply equally to those "other areas of Kashmir under Pakistan control where there is no constitutional Government." He added: "The agents of the Pakistani landlords in whose grip these areas are at present will not allow the new measures to be implemented, and so it is for the people of these areas to rise and overthrow their enslavers."

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