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CROPS AND WEALTH IN UGANDA

by

C. C. WRIGLEY

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CROPS AND WEALTH IN UGANDA

A SHORT AGRARIAN HISTORY

BY

C. C. WRIGLEY

EAST AFRICAN INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL RESEARCH, KAMPALA, UGANDA

1959

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PREFACE

FOR two years, from 1952 to 1954, I was privileged to hold a research fellowship at the East African Institute of Social Research, Kampala. This sketch of the agricultural history of Uganda represents part of the fruits of my labours during that period. I hope later to present a more detailed study of agrarian life in the Buganda Province. For the belated appearance even of this first study I am solely to blame.

My indebtedness to others is very great. Dr. Audrey Richards, sometime Director of the Institute, was a constant source of inspiration and guidance. Many colleagues at the Institute, and at the University College of East Africa, among whom I must particularly mention Dr. C. Ehrlich, Dr. W. Elkan and Mr. L. Joy, have contributed to the shaping of the ideas expressed in the following pages, though none of them is of course responsible for any judgments made therein. The Uganda Government allowed me to make use of some of its unpublished records, and many of its officers gave valuable assistance in various ways.

In the writing of tribal names I have followed the currently approved practice of omitting Bantu and other grammatical prefixes. Thus the people more generally known as the Baganda appear here as the Ganda, the Iteso as the Teso. An exception is, as usual, made for the prefix *bu-*, signifying "country." Buganda is the country of the Ganda.

A difficulty of which I have been very conscious is that I am addressing (I hope) some readers who are much better acquainted with Uganda than I am and some who may not be acquainted with it at all. Those in the first category are encouraged to omit the reading of Chapter II.

C. C. WRIGLEY.

INTRODUCTION

During the nineteenth century large tracts of the earth's surface, in which production had hitherto been carried on solely or mainly for the direct and more or less immediate benefit of a narrow range of consumers, were brought, by the provision of more efficient means of transport and the establishment of wider and more stable systems of law and order, within the orbit of the international exchange economy. The inhabitants of these regions were thus enabled, even without making any significant alteration in the techniques of production, to increase their wealth, to extend their command over goods and services, by producing and exporting commodities which, though valueless or nearly so at their place of origin, commanded a high price on the markets of the world, receiving in exchange the artefacts of industrial societies and the skilled services of foreigners. There was nothing fundamentally difficult about this process, at least in its early stages. Most of the newly opened countries, especially those which lay within the tropics, were capable of yielding some product or products, mineral or agricultural or both, which possessed a scarcity value in the world at large. Since famine and pestilence and war had generally kept the population well below the normal carrying capacity of the soil, most of them had land to spare for the production of a surplus. Since the provision of food and shelter had rarely occupied the whole energies of the people, there was generally labour to spare as well, especially as ordered government removed the necessity of protection and the temptations of predation, thereby freeing the young males for other and more profitable activities.

This is not to say, however, that the process of grafting specialised forms of production on to a subsistence economy could be accomplished without much friction and many disappointments, or that its success did not bring fresh problems in its train. Though labour was available, it was not always available in the right quantity in the right places, nor was it always conspicuously willing to work. Though few lands were altogether lacking in special, profitably exploitable assets, it was not always obvious what these assets were. The most efficient and economical form of organisation, the proper role of capital, the correct techniques of exploitation were often not arrived at without a great deal of experiment and loss. Moreover, although the production of a surplus for exchange meant, almost by definition, an economic gain, the effect of the new increment of wealth might be in some respects deleterious, destroying or impairing the existing system of social relationships and making necessary a perhaps painful effort of reconstruction. And even the strictly economic gain was often a limited one. For after a certain time, especially as the checks on population growth were generally being removed at the same time as *per capita* cultivation was being increased, there ceased to be land to spare: the point was reached at which production for export could not be further extended, or perhaps even sustained, without encroaching either on the food supply or on the fertility of the soil. Even apart from this particular limiting factor, the process of enrichment through the simpler forms of specialised primary production could not be continued indefinitely. There came a time when economic growth could not be sustained without radical improvements in equipment and technique or drastic changes in the structure of the economy.

In these pages I shall attempt to trace the growth of an export-crop economy in one small tropical dependency. They are not to be regarded as in any sense a comprehensive economic history of Uganda. Some aspects of that history have been or are being treated by other hands; and the present study, which concentrates on the actual organisation of agricultural production, is intended to be complementary both to the late Mr. P. G. Powesland's account of the supply and utilisation of labour[1] and to Mr. C. Ehrlich's as yet unpublished history of cotton marketing.[2]

Lying in the heart of Africa, separated from the ocean by some 500 miles of mostly arid and unpromising country through which no navigable waters run, Uganda was among the last parts of the world to feel the impact of international trade. A few products of the outer world appear to have reached it by devious routes a little before the end of the eighteenth century,[3] but until the 1840s it had not been visited by, nor was its existence even known to, any member of civilised society. No European set foot in the country until 1862, and no European came to live there until 1877. It was only in 1890 that the first steps towards the establishment of civilised government were taken, and the process can hardly be said to have been completed in the outlying areas until 1914. More important still, it was only in 1901 that the railway, completing its arduous journey from Mombasa to Kisumu, on the easternmost gulf of Lake Victoria, spanned the wilderness which lay between Uganda and the sea and so brought its peoples into effective contact with the markets of the world.

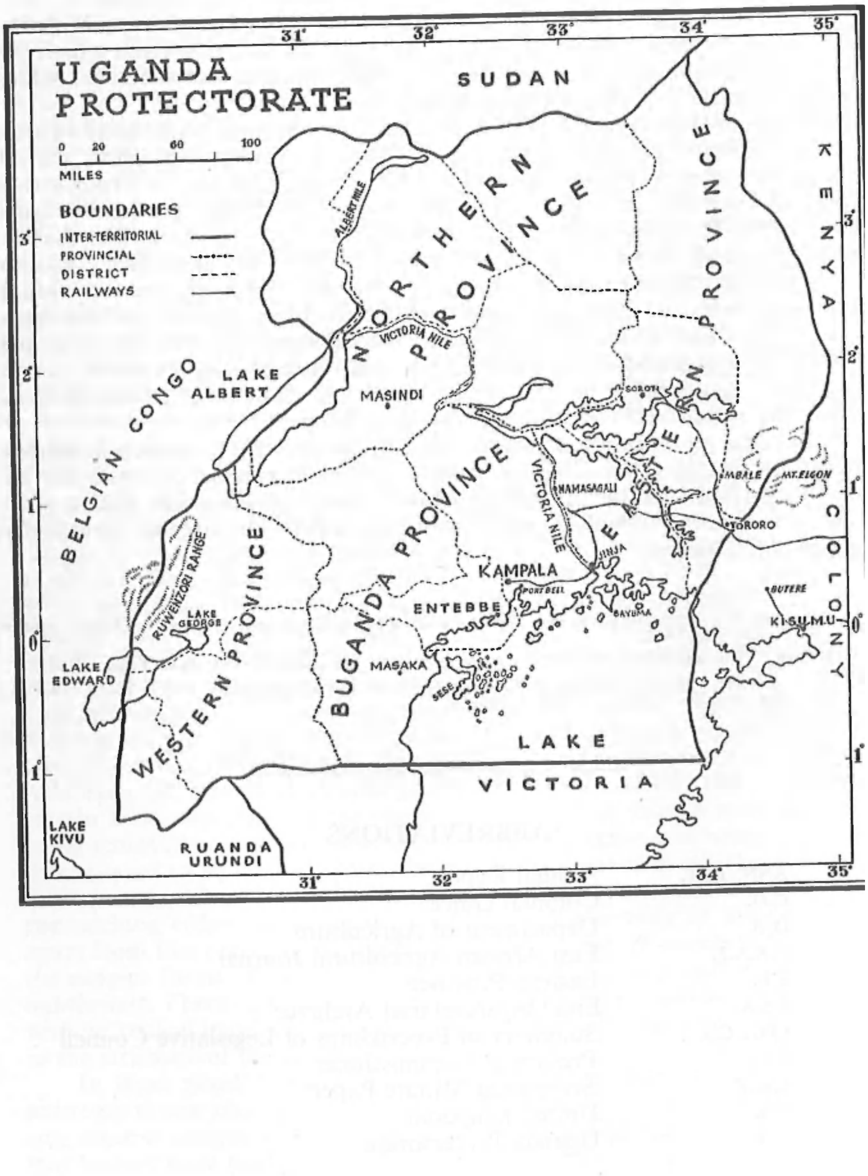
The development of Uganda is thus a very recent process, to all intents and purposes a process of the present century. Within that short period economic progress has been steady rather than brilliant. The Protectorate has not been the scene of one of the more spectacular economic transformations. It is perhaps best described in negative terms; its special characteristic, among the newly developed countries of the world, is that it has no very special characteristic. It does not, for one thing, possess any great mineral wealth, so that the quickest of all roads to fortune has not been open to it. Nor, although it lies across the equator, is it well suited to the growth of those products of the hot and humid tropics, such as cocoa, cloves or rubber, the peculiar properties of which bring really large returns to their fortunate producers. Nor again has its development been either assisted or complicated by an influx of alien colonists. Large-scale irrigation is neither necessary nor possible. These negations make the recent economic history of Uganda in a sense the more interesting, in that it may be taken almost as an abstract type of tropical, non-maritime, newly discovered, politically dependent country.

1. Powesland, P. G. *Economic Policy and Labour, A Study in Uganda's Economic History*. East African Studies No. 10. Kampala, 1957.
2. Ehrlich, C. *The Marketing of Cotton in Uganda, 1903-1939*. (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, London, 1958).
3. Kagwa, A. *Basekabaka b'e Buganda* (the Kings of Buganda), 4th edn., Kampala, 1953, p. 73. Cf. Thomas, H.B. and Scott, R. *Uganda*, London, 1935, p. 6.

ABBREVIATIONS

ANN. RPT.	Annual Report
C.O.	Colonial Office
D/A	Department of Agriculture
E.A.A.J.	East African Agricultural Journal
E.P.	Eastern Province
E.S.A.	Entebbe Secretariat Archives
LEG. CO.	Summary of Proceedings of Legislative Council
P.C.	Provincial Commissioner
S.M.P.	Secretariat Minute Paper
U.K.	United Kingdom
U.P.	Uganda Protectorate

UGANDA IN RELATION TO SURROUNDING TERRITORIES



CHAPTER I

THE LAND AND THE PEOPLE

Uganda lies almost entirely within the basin of the upper Nile. Part of it is contained within the lesser basin of Lake Victoria, but the bulk of the country consists of a plateau, 3,000 to 4,500 feet above sea level, tilted slightly away from the Lake, from which it is separated by a low, irregular wall of hills, breached only by the Nile itself. Close to the Lake, the plateau is dissected into countless small, characteristically flat-topped hills, which modulate northwards into gentle undulations. Between these uplands the waters move imperceptibly through a labyrinth of swamps and meres towards the desert and the Mediterranean Sea. The western margin of the plateau is marked by the deep trough known as the Western Rift, which contains Lakes Edward and Albert and forms in large part the western frontier of the Protectorate. Mountainous country is found only on the fringes. In the south-west the Mufumbiro cones and the Ruwenzori massif tower over the Rift; in the east Mount Elgon rises abruptly out of the plain; and lesser ranges mark part of the northern and north-eastern frontier.

In spite of what has just been said about its lack of peculiar natural assets, there can be no doubt but that Uganda is one of the more favoured parts of Africa. Altitude, and in the south the moderating influence of Lake Victoria, give it a warm, equable climate. Meteorologically, it lies midway between the steaming jungles of the Congo basin and the arid wastes of eastern Kenya. It is within the equatorial zone of permanent low pressure and convectional storms, which, however, are not here at their greatest intensity. Mean rainfall varies from twenty-five to sixty inches. The largest falls occur in the south centre, along the margins of Lake Victoria; in the east, on and near the slopes of Mount Elgon; and in a broad tract of country to the north-west. Between these areas a belt of lower rainfall runs across the country from north-east to south-west. These variations are roughly reflected in the characteristic vegetation. True equatorial rain-forest is found only in a small area in the extreme west, where the Congo jungles spill over the frontier into the country of Bwamba, but a modified form of tropical forest is found in south Buganda and Busoga, near the northern and north-western shores of the Lake, and again to the north-west, in Bunyoro. Most of these forests, however, have been removed by human agency, and the typical vegetation is now a rank growth of grasses, notably the towering Napier or elephant-grass, *pennisetum purpureum*. On the slopes of Elgon and the other mountains, where man has not intervened, there are bamboos and other forms of highland forest. The south-west—western Buganda, Ankole and much of Toro and Kigezi—is for the most part open grassland, with scattered bush and trees and some riverine forest. Similar conditions recur in Karamoja in the north-east, but here the vegetation is still less luxuriant and the country wears an almost desert aspect in the dry season. The central and northern parts of Uganda—northern Buganda and Busoga, Lango, Acholi, Teso and Bukedi—are occupied by open woodlands merging into low-tree savannah.

More important, from an agricultural point of view, than the average amount of rainfall are its reliability and its seasonal distribution; and here again Uganda is reasonably fortunate by African standards. Reference to the maps prepared for the recent Royal Commission on Land and Population in East Africa[1] shows that more than half its total area (compared with less than a tenth part of Kenya and Tanganyika) enjoys virtual certainty of a

1. Cd. 9475, 1955.

minimum of thirty inches, and that only two small areas in the north-east and the south-west fail to enjoy virtual certainty of at least twenty inches. (That is, these minima are reached or exceeded in not less than nineteen years out of twenty.) Thus, so far as rainfall is concerned, stock-keeping is practicable throughout the territory and in the greater part of it crops can be planted with a good prospect of a reasonable yield.

The seasonal distribution of rainfall in Uganda is affected by the double transit of the sun across the zenith, which gives rise to two periods of heavy rainfall following the equinoxes. The "spring" rains are generally the heavier and more prolonged of the two, though in the west this disproportion is less marked and may be reversed. Thus, given the rapid growth and ripening which is characteristic of the tropics, it is possible to raise two "annual" crops from the same land, and permanent vegetation is not normally subjected to the strain of prolonged drought. This is especially true of the vicinity of Lake Victoria, whose influence makes for a still more even spread of rainfall, so that even the theoretically dry seasons which follow the solstices are hardly ever completely so. Towards the north of the Protectorate, however, not only is this influence much weakened, but there is a tendency towards convergence of the rainy seasons and a definite winter drought.

TABLE 1[1]

AVERAGE ANNUAL RAINFALL AT SELECTED STATIONS

	Total (inches)	*Percentage falling in* *April-Sept.*	*Dec.-Feb.*
North-west			
Arua	55.04	66.2	7.8
Gulu	60.58	71.0	6.5
Hoima	55.93	58.9	11.6
North-east			
Moroto	34.83	75.6	6.9
Soroti	51.39	72.3	7.8
East			
Tororo	55.16	61.6	13.4
South-centre :			
Kampala	45.34	56.0	17.2
Entebbe	59.10	57.2	18.0
South-west			
Masaka	42.31	53.2	18.4
Mbarara	35.41	45.5	19.2
Kabale	38.68	43.5	23.9

Thus, although the annual precipitation is as high or higher in some of the northern areas than in the south, its agricultural effectiveness is greatest in the narrowly equatorial regions of Uganda. A recently published map[2] underlines this point by showing that at points on the shore of Lake Victoria the probability of obtaining optimum crop water requirements twice a year is as high as 74 per cent., whereas at Gulu in the north, where the total volume is similar, this probability is only 4 per cent.

After water, among the preconditions of successful agriculture, comes soil, so that we must now take a brief glance at the geological background of Uganda. Though there are some recent sediments in the north-east and volcanic debris on the slopes of most of the mountains, especially Elgon, the greater part of the country, like the greater part of the African table-land, rests on rocks of very ancient formation—mainly gneisses, schists and granites. Normally, the soils which overlie such rocks in the tropics are heavily leached and poor in nutrients, but in much of Uganda topography and rainfall distribution have combined to produce a much more favourable result. The dissection of the plateau has given rise, not to a single soil type, but to a sequence, or catena, which is repeated with minor variations on every individual hill. On the summits there is a thin covering of greyish soil,

1. Derived from figures in U.P. Ann. Report, Dept. of Agriculture for 1956.
2. U.P. Report of the Agricultural Productivity Committee, 1954, facing p. 94.

often almost completely eroded. The valley floors are coated with an acid clay, which is virtually uncultivable even where it is not waterlogged. (This is commonly known as black cotton soil, apparently because neither cotton nor any other crop will grow on it.) On the lower slopes there is an acid, sandy soil, full of organic matter but otherwise poorly endowed. But the middle and upper slopes, which make up the bulk of the land surface, are covered with deep, heavy red and chocolate earths of excellent structure, well supplied with plant nutrients. Here again, however, the more southerly regions, with their strongly marked relief and even rainfall distribution, are better placed than the northern parts of the country, where the soils are in general lighter and the lower members of the catena occupy a larger proportion of the total area.[1]

In sum, then, there are two relatively small areas, in the far north-east and in the south-west, midway between Lake Victoria and the western frontier, in which cultivation is a precarious and not very rewarding activity and in which the emphasis is necessarily placed on the keeping of stock. Everywhere else, except in the hot and arid Rift Valley, agriculture is reasonably productive and secure. But certain areas possess outstanding advantages, especially for the raising of perennial crops. Best of all, though of very limited extent, are the western spurs of Mount Elgon, with their steady precipitation and rich volcanic soils. Next comes a much more extensive area to the north of Lake Victoria, comprising the southerly parts of Buganda and Busoga; and after that, in order of superiority, come parts of the Toro, Bunyoro and West Nile districts in the west and north-west of the Protectorate.

The native peoples of Uganda are most commonly classified according to the principal language groups, which correspond to some extent with minor differences of physical type. The whole south-western half of the country is occupied by Bantu-speaking peoples, the north-west by the speakers of Nilotic and to a less extent of Sudanic languages, the north-east by Nilo-hamites and the south-east by Bantu with substantial Nilotic and Nilo-hamite intrusions. According to the 1948 census the tribal distribution was as follows:

TABLE 2[2]

TRIBAL DISTRIBUTION AT 1948 CENSUS

Tribe	*Numbers*	*Tribe*	*Numbers*
BANTU		NILOTIC	
Ganda	836,091	Lango	265,296
Soga	426,608	Acholi	209,378
Nkole	394,806	Alur..	96,421
Kiga	271,738	Dama	73,037
Gisu	243,742		
Nyoro	180,610		644,132
Toro	162,659	NILO-HAMITIC	
Ruanda[3]	131,048	Teso	462,664
Gwere	83,223	Karamojong	108,282
Konjo	73,745	Kumam	55,924
Nyuli	56,975	Others	40,917
Others	115,182		
			667,787
	2,976,427	IMMIGRANTS	
		Ruanda[3]	158,003
		Rundi	56,504
SUDANIC		Others	37,039
Lugbara	183,111		
Madi	63,439		251,546
Others	22,148	UNSPECIFIED	108,965
	268,698	TOTAL	4,917,555

1. See Thomas and Scott, *op. cit.*, pp. 54-64. Tothili, J. D. (ed.). *Agriculture in Uganda*, Oxford, 1940, pp. 59-73.
2. Source: East African Statistical Department, African Population of Uganda Protectorate, Nairobi, 1950. My classification is not identical at all points with that used in this document.
3. The homeland of this great tribe is partly in Uganda but mainly in Belgian territory. For the purpose of this table I have assumed that those shown as living in the Kigezi and Ankole districts are natives of Uganda but that the remainder are immigrants from outside the Protectorate.

An alternative and perhaps more significant classification is that which distinguishes the so-called inter-lacustrine Bantu from the remaining tribes of the Protectorate. The inter-lacustrine area, for this purpose, comprises the whole of Uganda to the west and south of the Victoria Nile, with an extension eastwards in Busoga, and also extends over north-western Tanganyika and the Belgian trust territory of Ruanda-Urundi. The peoples of this area, with the exception of the Kiga and Konjo, were characterised by their construction, in the era preceding British rule, of centralised administrative systems, with specialised political roles and something in the nature of a governing class, whereas in the rest of Uganda, and indeed of East Africa, authority was much less concentrated and its radius of action was much smaller. The contrast should not, perhaps, be drawn too strictly. It has been shown, for example, that the Nilotic Alur possessed at least the rudiments of a state system;[1] and probably only the Nilo-hamitic tribes, the Sudanic Lugbara and the Gisu of Mount Elgon, could properly be described as chiefless societies. Nevertheless, it was a contrast which impressed itself strongly upon early European visitors, who were uniformly struck by the dignity of the ruling chiefs and the order and decorum of social life in the inter-lacustrine group of states.

Typically, indeed, these units of order were quite small in size and simple in structure, like the chiefdoms which were incorporated into the modern kingdom of Ankole[2] or the several "principalities" which made up the modern district of Busoga.[3] In the nineteenth century, however, there were within Uganda two states, namely Bunyoro[4] and Buganda,[5] which represented really substantial agglomerations of power. To the rulers of these states explorers and missionaries accorded the title of "king" without hesitation or unduly heavy irony. They disposed of subservient courts, elaborate hierarchies, subordinate chiefs and well-organised armies. Partly by systematic taxation and corvees, partly by the organisation of rapine against the surrounding peoples, they brought about impressive concentrations of wealth. Europeans were astonished by the orderliness and ceremony of their government, even as they were horrified by its barbarous cruelties.

Of the two kingdoms, Buganda, which occupied the country lying round the north-western corner of Lake Victoria, though the smaller in area, was the more closely knit, and in the mid-nineteenth century the more successful both in war and in commerce. Most of the surrounding tribes, even on occasion Bunyoro, paid tribute to the Ganda king. It was to his court that the Arab traders who appeared in the land about 1850 mainly gravitated, and it was there that ivory, and to a less extent slaves, gathered in from the greater part of the modern Protectorate, were collected for export to Zanzibar and beyond.

Hard on the heels of the Arab traders came European explorers, notably Speke and Grant in 1862 and Stanley in 1875.[6] From the time of Stanley's visit onwards the kingdom of Buganda, with its control over trade, its fertile soil, its ordered government and its exceptionally enterprising and receptive rulers, was the focus of European interest in east central Africa and the principal base for European activity in that region. Anglican missionaries presented themselves at the court of king Muteesa in 1877 and Roman Catholics two years later; and within a short space of time both missions had scored evangelical successes without parallel in Africa. So important in the minds of the Ganda were these new ideologies that they served as catalysts for

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1. Southall, A. W. *Alur Society*, Cambridge, 1956.
2. Oberg, K., in Fortes, M. and Evans-Pritchard, E. E. *African Political Systems*, London, 1940. Morris, H. F. The Making of Ankole. *Uganda Journal* XXI, 1957.
3. Fallers, L. A. *Bantu Bureaucracy*, Cambridge, 1956.
4. Roscoe, J. *The Bakitara or Banyoro*, Cambridge, 1923. Baker, S. W. *Ismailia*, London, 1874. Casati, G. *Ten Years in Equatoria*, London, 1891.
5. Roscoe, J. *The Bagunda*, London, 1911.
6. Speke, J. H. *Journal of the Discovery of the Source of the Nile*, London, 1864. Stanley, H. M. *Through the Dark Continent*, London, 1878.

political action. In 1888 the kingdom dissolved into factions warring under the standards of Rome, Protestantism, Islam and the traditional religion. In 1890 the Imperial British East Africa Company, which had been formed under royal charter to exploit and administer the British sphere of interest in East Africa, seized the opportunity of the resultant turmoil to establish a precarious protectorate, helping the Christian Ganda to defeat the Moslems and then enabling the Protestants to gain an ascendancy over their Catholic rivals. The cost of governing Buganda, however, was beyond the resources of the Company, and in 1894 the country was formally taken over as an imperial Protectorate.[1]

After a period of hesitation the Ganda, or rather a section of the Ganda leadership, had decided to make terms with the advancing civilisation and power of Europe. By this decision they gained great benefits. Their kingdom remained intact, being administered under British supervision by a native government consisting of the leading Christian chiefs. (The king was first reduced to impotence by the revolutionary factions and then replaced by an infant.) The position of this aristocracy was consolidated by the Uganda Agreement of 1900,[2] which *inter alia* made its individual members the legal proprietors of the better part of the country. Buganda was not only the original nucleus of the Protectorate to which it has given its name (for "Uganda" is only the form which "Buganda" necessarily assumes in the Swahili language, the medium of intercourse between Europeans and Africans at this period), but became for a time, under the British, the preponderant power therein. The kingdom of Bunyoro in the west, which by contrast had maintained an uncompromising resistance to European penetration, was overrun by a joint British-Ganda army in 1894. More than half the country was subsequently annexed to Buganda, and individual Ganda took a prominent part in the administration of the residue. On the other hand the small states of Busoga, east of the Nile, which had hitherto been subject in varying degrees to Ganda domination, were placed directly under British rule, probably because they occupied an important section of the line of communication between Buganda and the coast. Meanwhile two new kingdoms were consolidated in the south-west: Ankole, which absorbed several other states, and Toro, a province of Bunyoro which had enjoyed a precarious and intermittent independence during the nineteenth century and was now definitively severed from the parent state.

In 1900, when the signature of the Uganda Agreement marked the transition from the period of pacification and extemporary government to the era of settled administration, British rule did not extend effectively north of the Nile, or east of it except in Busoga. During the next decade or so, however, the unorganised peoples of the north and east were gradually, and with remarkably little resistance, brought under the control of British officers. The final stages in the consolidation of the Protectorate were marked by the establishment of administration in Karamoja, in the far north-east, in 1911 (though continuous government did not begin until 1921); in Kigezi, in the far south-west, in 1912, following the delimitation of the international frontier; and in the West Nile district in the north-west, which had hitherto been purely nominally subject to the government in Khartoum, in 1914-15. Again, the Ganda played an active auxiliary role both in the subjugation and the subsequent administration of most of these outlying territories. Replicas of the Ganda system of government, modified to serve the purposes of British rule, were imposed on each tribe, and operated in the first instance largely by Ganda personnel. During the inter-war period, however, these agents were gradually withdrawn, as members of the indigenous tribes were trained for office; and Buganda became again one tribal unit among others. It remained, none the less, by far the largest and most

1. The principal secondary sources, each of which contains an extensive bibliography, for this phase of Uganda's history are: Thomas and Scott, *op. cit.*, Ch. 1; Ingham, K. *The Making of Modern Uganda*, London, 1958; Low, D. A. *The British and Uganda, 1862-1900.* (unpublished D.Phil. thesis, Oxford, 1957).
2. Wild, J. V. *The Story of the Uganda Agreement*, Nairobi, 1950, gives the text of this document.

important unit of the Protectorate, enjoying both a larger measure of autonomy and a higher status than the rest. It constitutes a province in itself, whereas no other tribe has been given more than district rank.

In order to make the story which follows more readily intelligible, the political structure of Uganda, as it exists today, is tabulated hereunder. Provincial and district names and boundaries have been altered from time to time during the past half century, but not so drastically as to disturb the general pattern.

TABLE 3

THE ADMINISTRATIVE UNITS OF UGANDA

Unit	*Principal Tribe(s)*	*Area*[1] (sq. miles)	*Population, 1948* ('000)
BUGANDA PROVINCE			
(comprising Mengo, Masaka and Mubende Districts) ..	Ganda	16,597	1,302
EASTERN PROVINCE			
Busoga District	Soga	3,399	506
Bukedi „	Teso, Gwere, Dama, Nyuli, Samia ..	1,701	333
Bugisu „	Gisu	1,166	267
Teso „	Teso	4,533	403
NORTHERN PROVINCE			
Karamoja District	Karamojong	10,336	126
Lango „	Lango	4,519	266
Acholi „	Acholi	10,703	216
West Nile/Madi District ..	Lugbara, Alur, Madi	5,294	336
WESTERN PROVINCE			
Bunyoro District	Nyoro	4,198	108
Toro „	Toro, Konjo	4,319	259
Ankole „	Nkole	5,621	401
Kigezi „	Kiga, Ruanda ..	1,757	396
		74,143	4,918

Though the political groupings of Uganda have a certain bearing on the theme of the present study, a more relevant classification is that which is based on the distinction between the forest peoples and the rest, for this is a distinction between two fundamentally different types of subsistence economy. For the purposes of this classification the "forest" areas, which for the most part contain only residues of their original vegetation, are Mount Elgon (Bugisu), south Busoga, south Buganda, most of Bunyoro and western Toro. Here the food supply derived essentially from planted crops, principally bananas, *musa paradisiaca*,[2] whereas in the remainder of Uganda it derived from sown crops, principally finger-millet, *eleusine coracana*, and from livestock. The distinction is not absolute. The planting tribes always grew a certain quantity of seed-bearing crops and generally possessed some livestock, while bananas and other planted crops, notably sweet potatoes, were to be found outside the areas just listed. The difference of emphasis, however, is unmistakable. It is impossible to say for certain whether these groups were originally a homogeneous people who adjusted their modes of production to suit different local environments, or whether they were peoples of entirely different origin who were brought into proximity in the course of Africa's prehistory, but on the whole the latter hypothesis seems the more probable. There are indications, notably the abrupt transition, more abrupt than was warranted by the natural conditions, from the millet country of Bukedi to the banana country of Busoga, that the distinction is in part a cultural, that is to say an historical, and not solely an ecological one. The banana, along with the yams and taro with which it is generally associated, is almost certainly native

1. Excluding open water and reserved forest.
2. A distinction is sometimes drawn between the plantain, *musa paradisiaca*, and the sweet banana, *musa sapientum*. The two species (if in fact they are distinct species) are grown concurrently in Uganda, the one being used for cooking and the other for brewing.

to south-east Asia; and it seems likely that these plants were brought thence to tropical Africa at a remote epoch, possibly in company with certain other allegedly Indonesian culture traits. The seed-bearing crops, finger-millet, sorghum and simsim, had a quite different focus of origin, in north-west India or Ethiopia; and the cow, the sheep and the goat likewise belonged to North Africa or western Asia. So it is at least possible that seed-farming and animal husbandry on the one hand and tropical gardening on the other came to Uganda by very different routes and at very different times.[1]

Be that as it may, the differences between gardening and agriculture are numerous and profound, as may appear from the following sketches of agrarian life as it was lived, before the coming of the export crops, in different parts of Uganda. In Buganda and Busoga a young man, on reaching marriageable age, would clear an acre or two of vacant land and set out banana cuttings. On the edge of the grove he built a hut, in which he installed his bride, and then, in the ordinary course of events, he was set up for life. After a year or a little longer the first bunches of fruit came to maturity. The stem was then cut down and the fruit was steamed and eaten as a starchy mash or, if it belonged to the sweet variety, was converted into beer. Meanwhile the stem had put forth fresh suckers, so that, when fully developed, the grove contained clusters of up to twenty stems in varying stages of maturity and, taken as a whole, could normally provide food at every season of the year. Some insurance against temporary shortage was, of course, necessary. Originally, this was probably provided by plants with starchy roots such as colocasias (taro) and various species of yam, but though these plants were still to be found here and there, they had been largely superseded within the past few centuries by the American sweet potato, which served as the second main source of carbohydrate food and played a particularly important role during the growing period of the banana grove. It was grown from slips set out individually in raised mounds. Subsidiary annual crops, which were grown outside the grove in small plots, neatly laid out with grass paths between them, included beans, which contributed vegetable protein to the diet, simsim, a grain rich in soil, sorghum, grown primarily as an ingredient in banana beer, a little maize, tobacco, various vegetables and pulses. Within the grove there were often cucurbits and clumps of sugar-cane.

Very similar systems of horticulture prevailed in Bunyoro and much of Toro, except that there the roles of the sweet potato and of cereals were relatively greater. In Bugisu the banana was again predominant, though finger-millet and sorghum were grown in considerable quantities at the foot of the mountainside.

This kind of tropical gardening is in many ways the most satisfactory form of subsistence economy that man has evolved. The yield of food continues all the year round, so that there are no hungry seasons and no problems of storage. The supply is as assured as it can ever be for communities which depend entirely on their own local resources; and it is obtained at very low labour cost. Less than two acres of bananas, with less than an acre of annual crops, suffices to feed a simple family unit of four or five persons. The banana grove, nourishing itself from its own debris of fallen leaves and stems, with further assistance from the refuse of the homestead, continues to bear fruit for an indefinitely long period, certainly for a whole generation, perhaps for many lives of men. Thus the initial fairly heavy investment of labour in the clearance of the dense natural vegetation and the breaking of the heavy soil yields large and long-continuing returns. For, once the grove has been established, all that is necessary is to keep down the growth of weeds, which are in any case checked by the shade of the trees, to strip off dead leaves and break up fallen stems. None of this is heavy work and its yearly volume is small. The only tool required for cultivation is the hoe—not the type familiar to English gardeners but a broad-bladed implement

1. Cf. Stuhlmann, F. *Beitrage zur Kulturgeschichte von Ostafrika*, Berlin, 1909. Sauer, C. O. *Agricultural Origins and Dispersals*, New York, 1952.

like a spade set at right-angles to the shaft. For all operations except the initial clearing and breaking of land, feminine strength sufficed. Basic food production, indeed, could be left entirely to the women of the tribe, who, incidentally, were spared the laborious pounding of grain which is so onerous a part of the work of most African women. The men were thus set free to hunt and to fish, to build neat and substantial homes, to make clothing out of skins or bark, to devote time and care to the fashioning of implements and pots and canoes, to indulge in politics and war. The form of the economy, moreover, made for a fixed habitation and a settled mode of life, with all that that implies for cultural development. It is not surprising therefore that the Ganda, and to a less extent the Nyoro and Soga, should have been remarkable for the elaboration of their material culture and of their political organisation.

The security and productivity of the planting economy, however, can at least arguably have a very different effect from that which has just been suggested. In the eyes of a strenuous European observer, "the perennial banana" was "a dangerous blessing," which had intensified the natural tendency of the Ganda to idleness.[1] Certainly, the tropical gardeners in general, though they were most probably the originators of food production, have not since made any great showing in human history; and it may be that this is because their needs were too easily satisfied, because their way of life did not demand effort or forethought. Within Uganda they are represented not only by the "advanced" Ganda and Nyoro but also by some of the most unorganised and culturally meagre tribes, such as the Gisu and the Amba, so that no firm connexion can be established here between banana-culture and either progress or backwardness. Nor is it true, as has been inferred from consideration of Buganda and a few other East African examples,[2] that a planting economy necessitates ordered government. What appears to be true is that it necessitates some reasonably stable and orderly form of society, and that if, for historical reasons, this happens to take the form of a centralised state, the result will be a kingdom of quite exceptional cohesion and durability. Buganda and Bunyoro contrasted strongly in these respects with the ephemeral military empires of southern Africa. Both these types of structure were autocratic and predatory, but Ganda and Nyoro kings and armies operated from fixed bases; they were a superstructure erected on the foundations of settled and stable societies.

In one respect the planting economies were perhaps somewhat defective. Bananas and sweet potatoes, even when supplemented by beans and other sources of vegetable protein, do not provide a properly balanced diet. Originally, gardening was most probably complemented by hunting and more particularly by fishing. Here, although small game and fish did make some contribution to nutrition, this balance was not completely maintained. Nor was it fully restored by the inclusion of stock-keeping in the economic system. The rank vegetation of the countries in question was by no means ideally suited to the pasturing of cattle. On the densely cultivated slopes of Elgon pocket-handkerchief greenswards were reserved, which, with the aid of stall-feeding, enabled the Gisu to maintain a small number of beasts. In Buganda and Bunyoro the position was rather different, for these kingdoms had come to include, besides their forested nuclei, considerable stretches of drier and more open country, in which large numbers of cattle were herded, not by the Ganda and Nyoro themselves but by a special caste known as the Hima or Huma, of whom more anon. Even so, milk was very much a luxury, especially in Buganda, and only among the ruling classes was beef at all regularly consumed. The ubiquitous goat and fowl did something to remedy the deficiency, and so, to a lesser extent, did the grasshopper and the termite. Certainly it does not appear that the consequences of a predominantly starchy diet were as disastrous as might have been supposed. Though not equal in physique to the northern tribes, who today

1. Peters, C. *New Light on Dark Africa*, London, 1891, p. 407.
2. Stuhlmann, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

contribute the majority of Uganda's soldiers and athletes, the Ganda were reasonably hardy and successful warriors and were notable for their speed and tirelessness as carriers and runners.

In the remainder of Uganda the prevailing form of economy followed the more typical African pattern, in which the keeping of livestock was carried on side by side with the hoe-cultivation of seasonal, seed-bearing crops. The general agricultural procedure was roughly as follows. Bush and grass having been cleared away and the soil dug, a preliminary crop, usually simsim, was sown and harvested. The principal food crop, finger-millet, which was believed to do poorly on newly opened land, was sown early in the succeeding year and reaped at the end of the first rains. During the latter part of this year its place was taken in the vacant fields by a miscellany of subsidiary crops, including sorghum, simsim, cowpeas and other pulses. The process was repeated in the following year, and on the better lands it might continue for one or even two years after that. Then, as yields began to decline, the land was abandoned to the slow regenerative influences of bush and grass and new fields were carved out of the waste to take their place.

This type of cultivation of the soil was everywhere combined with the herding of cattle, goats and, to a lesser extent, sheep. The two practices, however, though combined, were in no sense associated. The cattle of Uganda were totally unfamiliar with the yoke; in the properly agricultural, as well as in the horticultural areas, the only instrument of cultivation was the hoe. Nor was there any deliberate and systematic application of manure. Stock-keeping and agriculture were discrete activities, the one carried on exclusively by the men, the other mainly by the women, though in the more arduous operations of cereal-growing men generally played a more active role than they did in the cultivation of bananas. Though it would certainly not be true to assert that the livestock of these tribes was without economic value in the ordinary sense of the term, the greater part of their subsistence was undoubtedly derived, in most areas, from the cultivation of the soil. Even of the Jie, who live in one of the more arid areas of Uganda and are generally described as a pastoral tribe, it has been shown that crops (here mainly sorghum) have for a very long time made at least as great a contribution as animal products to the diet of the people as a whole.[1] Cattle provided milk and, with goats, an occasional supply of meat, but their principal function was to serve as a medium of exchange and a standard of value, as one of the very few means by which wealth could be stored and success displayed.

In the far north-east, however, among the tribes grouped under the general title of the Karamojong, the economic emphasis was necessarily placed much more on pastoral activities and less on the precarious and meagre yield of the soil.[2] Here cultivation was left entirely to the women and old men of the community; herding, with the associated fighting, was practically the sole occupation of the able-bodied males. This specialisation arose in part from the necessity, imposed by the long droughts characteristic of the region, of driving the herds far afield in search of grass and water; for a large part of the year the herdsmen lived in temporary camps remote from the main settlements.

In the drier parts of the south-west, in Ankole, western Buganda and parts of Toro and Bunyoro, there was again a marked emphasis on cattle; and here too there was specialisation, but in a different form. In these areas, the herdsmen, who were known as Hima or Huma, constituted a curious type of occupational caste, living side by side with but separate from the more numerous agricultural population, called the Iru or Eru. Neither the Hima nor their wives cultivated the soil at all, and the men at least lived almost exclusively on milk, blood and occasional meat. In so far as vegetable products such as beer, tobacco and flour were required, they were obtained from the Iru, originally perhaps in exchange for animal products, but latterly

1. Gulliver, P. H. Jie Agriculture. *Uganda Journal* XVIII, 1954.
2. Gulliver, P. H. *The Family Herds*, London, 1955.

to a large extent as a species of tribute. For in a large part of the area the caste distinction was a horizontal one. In Ankole the rulers were drawn exclusively from among the Hima, and the Iru lived in a state of semi-servile subjection. In Bunyoro and Toro this was not the case, but the herdsmen there also enjoyed a markedly higher status than the ordinary cultivators. In Buganda, on the other hand, the roles were reversed, the Hima living there as a kind of outcasts on the fringes of the kingdom, herding cattle which were usually the property of Ganda chiefs.

We do not know for certain whether this caste system is the product of differentiation within a single society or whether the Hima and Iru were peoples of entirely different origin, but, in spite of the complete identity of their present languages, the latter hypothesis seems the more probable, since the caste distinction corresponds with rather striking differences of physical type. What is more doubtful is the relative antiquity of the two sections of the population. It has generally been assumed, on the strength of their political dominance and their ethnic affinities, that the Hima were relatively recent immigrants from the north, who brought kingship as well as cattle to south-western Uganda, imposing themselves as a ruling aristocracy in the midst of a more primitive people. There are, however, at least equally strong reasons, namely that the palaeolithic population of parts of East Africa seems to have been of a similarly "caucasoid" type[1] and that the Ankole cattle are of the primitive long-horned race which has been superseded elsewhere in East Africa by the hardier and more productive zebu,[2] for believing the Hima to have been among the most ancient elements of Uganda's population.

Something must finally be said about the organisation of agricultural production in the period before British rule was established. Little space, however, need be wasted over the old question whether agriculture, and more particularly the tenure of land, was individual or communal, for it is now very generally recognised that the debate was founded in large part on a misconception, and that the economy was, in different senses and in different contexts, both individual and communal. Everywhere in Uganda the unit of food production was the household, a group which was often somewhat larger than the conjugal family but never approximated to the clan. In this sense agriculture was individualistic. On the other hand, the agricultural activities of the households, like all their other activities, were subject to the overriding control of the community which afforded them protection. The community controlled a territory, of which, *vis-à-vis* other communities, it was the owner. Any member of the community, by virtue of his membership, was entitled to cultivate any vacant land within the territory; the right of access to land was necessarily synonymous with the right of residence. Since land was not, generally speaking, a scarce factor, and since no one could wish to claim rights over more land than was necessary for the subsistence of his family, neither land itself nor its products being marketable commodities, conflicts of interest arose but rarely. If allocation did become necessary, it was performed by the community, that is to say by the governing body of the community, whatever that might be.

The "community" might in principle be a simple entity, a village settlement or clan group. More often it was complex, that is, the community with which the individual dealt was itself part of a wider grouping, so that people lived within concentric circles of authority. The authority might be extremely loose and diffuse, being vested in a group of elders or family heads. But in Uganda it was more commonly concentrated to some degree in the hands of a chief, who, again, might be independent or might form part, as in the lacustrine kingdoms and especially in Buganda and Bunyoro, of an elaborate hierarchy of rights and powers. If the Ganda were asked who "owned" the land the answer was usually "the king," because he was the undisputed master. But in another sense the owner of a particular piece of

1. Cole, S. M. *The Prehistory of East Africa*, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1947.
2. Stuhlmann, *op. cit.* Adametz, L. *Herkunft und Wanderungen der Hamiten*, Vienna, 1920.

land was the subordinate chief within whose administrative domain it lay. Between this chief and the cultivator, however, there were normally one or more grades of lesser functionaries, and in another sense again the land belonged to the village chief with whom the cultivator actually dealt. In Buganda, and to a lesser extent in the other kingdoms, the control exercised by the chief was very real, and the common people had to pay heavily, in service and in kind, for the privilege of occupying part of his domain. Yet it was not really land they were paying for, and certainly their payments were not rent in our sense of the term. They were acknowledgements of his authority, returns for his protection, patronage and hospitality.[1] Everywhere, whether there were chiefs or not, whether their authority was strong or weak, the land belonged in the most practical sense to the family which used it; they would not lose possession so long as they retained membership of the community and so long as they went on using it. How long it could be left unused without forfeit of the right of reoccupation was a matter for argument and for local differences of custom. The true waste, however, indisputably belonged to no one, or, which is saying the same thing, to the community.

At the basis of the tribal economies of Uganda, then, were the family fields, the family banana groves, the family herds, tended by and for the use of the family group. Between these units there was often co-operation in the protection of the herds, in the critical operations of agriculture, in the magical processes which were an essential ingredient of economic life, but there was nothing which derogated from the fundamental independence of the household as a producing and consuming unit. In the more elaborate societies there were, in addition to the ordinary family groups, the larger households of the chiefs, with their numerous wives, their slaves, their poor relations and other hangers-on, and their right to call at need on the labour of the people under their rule. But even the chiefly households were still essentially subsistence units. The surplus resources at the disposal of the chief enabled him to live better and more securely than the ordinary man, to maintain his dignity, to give the feasts which helped to bind the people to their allegiance, but not to engage in large-scale exchanges or to live a life that was different in kind from that of his followers.[2]

This is not to say that the Uganda economy was one of a pure subsistence or household type. In the local communities there were semi-specialist workers, such as the potters and more definitely the smiths. There were some products which entered into trading relationships that often extended across the tribal frontiers—dried fish from the main lakes and rivers, salt from the shores of Lakes Albert and George, spear-blades and hoe-blades from the notable iron deposits in Bunyoro and northern Acholi, the excellent barkcloth of Buganda.[3] There was also a considerable redistribution of property, chiefly in the form of livestock and women, by way of war and rapine and by way of the tribute paid to the more powerfully organised states. But, apart from very minor exceptions such as the dried bananas occasionally exported from Buganda and the coffee beans which were produced on the shores and islands of Lake Victoria, the products of the soil did not enter into trade. This was because everyone was producing much the same things by similar techniques and in similar conditions, and because the means of transport, which, away from open water, consisted solely of the human head,

1. As the Ganda patiently explained to European enquirers, "the chief doesn't rule land, he rules people." Mair, L. P. *An African People in the Twentieth Century*, London, 1934, p. 158. cf. Ocheng, D. O. Land Tenure in Acholi. *Uganda Journal* XIX, 1955. "The question of who was the owner of the tribal, or for that matter the clan lands, could not be easily answered. The obligations which the people had towards their *rwot* had become part of their tribal custom, so that people carried them out, not because they were aware that he was the owner of all the land, but because it was their custom. There had been no necessity for owning land; therefore people did not even think of doing so. Even the *rwodi* were not sure what 'private ownership of land' meant, apart from the fact that by custom and hereditary rights they were 'owners' of the land. What they wanted from the new government was respect for their rights as *rwodi*, and they were satisfied living together with their people provided these rights were not violated."
2. Cf. Fallers, *op. cit.* p. 143.
3. Peters, *op. cit.* p. 390. Schweinfurth, G. and others, *Emin Pasha in Central Africa*, London, 1888, pp. 118-19, 149, 154, 180. F.O. Confidential print 6861/85. Lawrance, J. C. D. *The Iteso*, London, 1957, pp. 13-14.

did not permit of the exchange of commodities in bulk. Agriculture was the necessary foundation of the economy, but was not an important component of the meagre commercial superstructure.

This situation was not altered by the arrival of Arab merchants in the mid-nineteenth century and the consequent construction of a tenuous link between Uganda and the international exchange economy. For between Uganda and the ocean there lay nearly a thousand miles of Africa (the traders did not use the direct route across Kenya, but the less arduous and hazardous though longer route across Tanganyika to the ports opposite Zanzibar) over which goods had still to be transported on the heads of human carriers. Thus, apart from slaves, who transported themselves, the only possible export was ivory, which sold in Zanzibar at up to £1,000 a ton. This trade brought considerable new wealth to some of the peoples of Uganda, more especially the Ganda, but made no appreciable change in the nature of the economic system. Nor did the establishment of British rule in Buganda in 1890-93 make, in itself, any significant difference. For one thing, the immediate result of the British intrusion was not the creation of a larger and more stable system of law and order but rather an intensification of disorder. Not until 1899 was peace finally established even in the central nucleus of the Protectorate. More important, the means of transport were not, at first, improved. For the first decade of British rule, therefore, exports continued to consist of a small and diminishing flow of ivory.

But the means of transport were in process of being improved. Early in 1902 the railway from Mombasa to the Lake port of Kisumu was opened to public traffic. After the boundary changes which were effected later in the year, Kisumu did not actually lie within Uganda, but in conjunction with dhows and steamers plying on the Lake the railway brought a substantial part of the Protectorate within reasonably easy reach of the ocean and of the great markets which lay beyond. For the first time the value at the coast of Uganda's agricultural products was greater than the cost of their transport thither, and it was clear that in the case of the higher-priced commodities transport costs would henceforward be only a small part of their total value. A new economic era had been inaugurated. New opportunities and new problems presented themselves before the Government and peoples of Uganda.

CHAPTER II

THE BEGINNINGS OF DEVELOPMENT, 1902-14

At first blush, the problems were rather more apparent than the opportunities. To the Government, the development of an import-export trade was mandatory. Up to the end of the financial year 1901-02 the British taxpayer had provided nearly £1½ million for the acquisition and administration of Uganda and £5½ million for the construction of the railway. True, it has been demonstrated that the motives behind this investment were in large part not of an economic nature; there had been an intense desire to put an end to the slave trade and to prevent the Christian kingdom of Buganda from falling victim to paganism or Islam.[1] But commercial objectives had also been in view, and the taxpayers had been led to believe that they would receive some return for their money—not perhaps in actual cash but in an important addition to Britain's supplies of raw materials and an important extension of the market for British manufactures. Moreover, as the Special Commissioner, Sir Harry Johnston, commented in 1901, the philanthropic enthusiasm of a few years back had notably subsided and the emphasis on a material return had grown correspondingly stronger.[2] But over and above the desire to obtain some kind of profit out of Uganda there was the more pressing need to prevent further losses. Expenditure in 1901-02 was still £229,000, although the expensive task of military pacification was virtually over, and revenue, in spite of the imposition of a hut tax of three rupees on the natives of Buganda, was still only £74,000. The balance was made up by the Imperial Treasury, which had been protesting for some years past at this constant unremunerative drain on its resources. The first object of policy, therefore, was that there should be incomes which could be taxed.

The immediate prospects for the creation of such incomes did not appear particularly bright. No minerals had been discovered, and, although Johnston was still hopeful, there were in fact no minerals to be discovered, apart from the copper deposits of Ruwenzori in the remote west, a little tin on the south-western border and certain others, such as tungsten and niobium, whose economic value lay in the future. Apart from ivory, the only obvious existing resources were hides and skins (the automatic, and now marketable, by-product of pastoralism), and certain wild or half-wild products of the forest, such as raffia and sanseviera fibres, vine rubber, chillies and the indigenous robusta coffee. Of these only rubber appeared to have real potential importance. But the experience of the Congo Free State was showing that wild rubber was an asset which it was difficult to develop without the most crude and ruthless exploitation of the native collectors. In any case, the forests of Uganda were not particularly rich in this commodity; a large-scale attempt to exploit the largest single tract of forest, begun in 1907, proved a disastrous failure.[3] All the products listed made their appearance in Uganda's export statistics during the first years of the century, but their total contribution to the solution of the economic and financial problem was hardly more than negligible.

On the other hand, most European visitors from Stanley onwards had sung the praises of Uganda as a rich agricultural country capable of producing a wide range of tropical and sub-tropical commodities.[4] Nor were they

1. Low, D. A., British Public Opinion and the Uganda Question, October-December, 1892. *Uganda Journal*, XVIII, 1954.
2. Report by Her Majesty's Special Commissioner on the Uganda Protectorate. Cd. 671, 1901
3. See below, p.25.
4. Stanley, *op. cit.* Wilson, C. T. and Fellkin, R. W. *Uganda and the Egyptian Sudan*, London, 1882, pp. vii and 337 ff. Schweinfurth, G. and others. *Emin Pasha in Central Africa*, pp. 118 ff. Lugard, F. D. *The Rise of Our East African Empire*, London, 1893, I 379 ff.

fundamentally in error. Certainly the first expert opinion seemed to confirm their view. The question was, reported the horticulturist who accompanied Johnston in 1900, "what will not grow and flourish in Uganda?"[1] The real questions, however, were: what will flourish sufficiently, and command a sufficiently high price, to make its production and export profitable; and how was its production to be organised? The two questions were related, for different crops would call for different methods.

Among the actual and potential products of the soil a broad distinction was drawn between two main categories. On the one hand there was "native produce," that is to say the marketable surplus of crops already grown by the native population for its own subsistence. None of these, however, were valuable enough to be worth exporting, with the exception of the oil-bearing plants, simsim and groundnuts; and even these promised no spectacular margin of profit. On the other hand there were plantation products—exotics which, it was assumed, could be produced only with the help of extraneous (that is, European, or possibly Indian) initiative, capital and direction. The lists of such commodities put forward by Lugard, Johnston and others before the coming of the railway were long and varied, including tea, cocoa, sugar, vanilla and above all coffee, which in the 1890s was regarded as the most lucrative of all tropical products and was already being planted extensively in German East Africa and Nyasaland.

In the event, of course, the foundations of Uganda's modern economy were not laid on any of these products but on cotton, which Johnston had dismissed as being probably unable to compete with the established products of other countries.[2]

There had been one or two early experiments in the planting of cotton, certain species of which grew wild in parts of the Protectorate, but the first serious and successful plantings took place in 1904. In retrospect, the manner in which this momentous step was taken seems curiously casual, almost accidental. Some years earlier, not without some misgivings on the part of those who distrusted any departure from pure evangelism, the Church Missionary Society had started near Kampala an "industrial mission," or, as it would now be called, a technical school, in which a few Ganda youths were trained in useful occupations such as carpentry, bricklaying and printing. In 1903 the enterprising superintendent of the mission, Mr. K. Borup, secured support at the Society's headquarters in London for an expansion of its activities, and a limited company was formed by a group of its wealthy sympathisers to provide the necessary funds. Among the original projects of the Uganda Company, as this organisation was called, were sawmilling, simple engineering—and the cultivation of cotton.[3] In missionary and philanthropic circles the idea of cotton-growing in Africa was by no means new. It will be recalled that Mrs. Jellyby placed her hopes for the regeneration of the dark continent on the establishment of coffee plantations. But on this point Dickens appears to have been mistaken; among the people of whom she was so unkind a caricature the slogan prevalent in the mid-nineteenth century was Christianity, Civilisation, Cotton.[4] The revival of the idea at this time was due in part to the impetus given by the British Cotton Growing Association, which was formed in 1902 with the object of freeing Lancashire from what was regarded as a dangerous dependence on the United States for its supplies of raw material. The Association supplied Mr. Borup with the seed which he brought to Uganda at the end of 1903, and its agent, the British East Africa Corporation, was shortly afterwards to become the Uganda Company's main competitor.

Private enterprise, however, was not alone in promoting cotton cultivation in Uganda. In the embittered twilight which so often encompasses the pioneer, Borup later asserted that his scheme met with "nothing but sneers

1. Johnston, H. H. *The Uganda Protectorate*, London, 1902, I 290
2. *Loc. cit.*
3. Ehrlich, C. *The Uganda Company : The First Fifty Years*, Kampala, 1953.
4. See Burton, R. F. *Zanzibar*, London, 1873, II, 144.

and jeers" from the official community, with the single exception of the Government botanist, Mr. M. T. Dawe.[1] Any such scepticism, however, appears to have been of very short duration, for the Government also imported seed about the same time as Borup.[2] It appears to be true, none the less, that in 1904 and for the next two or three years official interest in the crop was very spasmodic and half-hearted, and that the main credit for its establishment must remain with the Company.[3]

Cotton-growing being a very simple process, and the funds available being extremely slender, the procedure adopted, both by the Company and by the Government, was not to assemble a body of hired labourers but to distribute seed to certain of the Ganda chiefs and leave the rest to them. The system worked. Towards the end of 1904, 54 bales of cotton lint, valued at £236, were on their way down the railway to the mills of Lancashire. From this insignificant beginning there soon arose a thriving export trade, whose early growth is best set forth in tabular form.

TABLE 4[4]

COTTON EXPORTS, 1905/6 - 1910/11

Year	*Number of Bales*	*Value in £*
1905/6	241	1,089
1906/7	980	11,411
1907/8	3,973	51,594
1908/9	3,945	41,232
1909/10	6,209	59,596
1910/11	13,378	165,412

By this last date cotton accounted for more than half the total exports of the Protectorate. All other exports—ivory, hides and skins, chillies, fibres, a little coffee and rubber—increased during the same period only from £89,000 to £138,000. It was plainly due primarily to the incomes generated by cotton production that the Government's revenue rose from £60,000 in 1904-05 to £191,000 in 1910-11, by which time it was within sight of financial self-sufficiency.

It is to be noted that cotton cultivation was being tried out at this time in many parts of Africa, yet nowhere else (except, later, under very special conditions, in the Sudan) did it meet with any comparable measure of success. It seems worth while, therefore, to enquire into the factors which made this success possible. In the first instance attention must be focused on the kingdom of Buganda. For although from 1907 onwards cotton-growing spread to many other parts of the Protectorate it was Buganda that decisively demonstrated the possibilities of the crop and, more important, the possibilities of export-crop production by African natives on their own fields without direct European supervision or any overt coercion.

One reason was, of course, the exceptional fertility of the land. As a matter of fact, the climatic conditions of Buganda are not ideally suited to the cotton plant. The rich soil and relatively heavy rainfall tend to produce an excess of vegetative growth and the ripening season is not quite hot enough and often not dry enough. Cotton grown under expert supervision to the south of the Lake in Tanganyika, where the natural conditions are not at first sight nearly so propitious, has produced far higher yields than any that have been achieved in Buganda. The crux of the matter, however, is that in Buganda a total failure of the crop is virtually inconceivable. Even in the

1. *Uganda Herald*, 21.v.20.
2. E.S.A., S.M.P. 1707/3 and 43. U.K. *Report on the Introduction and Establishment of the Cotton Industry in the Uganda Protectorate*, Cd. 4910, 1909.
3. *Uganda Herald*, 30.vii.20, letter from E. Brown.
4. Thomas and Scott, *op. cit.* p. 505.

worst of seasons, even with the sketchiest of cultivation (and it was said that the methods used in the first years would have been disastrous in any less favourable environment) the grower can be sure of a sizable harvest. Thus the industry was here safe from the kind of setback which repeatedly befell it in the Nyanza Province of Kenya, where, as an official commented sadly, the amount and timing of the rainfall seemed to be almost never right.[1]

Yet all that has been said so far is that the economic potential of Buganda was unusually high. We have not explained why the potential should have been converted into actual wealth with such unusual rapidity. For East Africa, in the early years of this century, was full of unrealised potentials. There was unused land in plenty, some of it extremely fertile, much of it perfectly usable. There was also unused labour in plenty. On all sides there were young men who, deprived of their former military functions, could only with great difficulty be induced to divert their energies to productive work. Everywhere there arose the exasperating conflict between Europeans who, for selfish or unselfish reasons, for the sake of private profit or for the sake of public prosperity, were eager to promote development, and a native population which, believing itself on the whole to be quite well off as it was, offered only a reluctant and irregular collaboration. Whether Africans were expected to work for hire on European plantations or to cultivate economic crops on their own behalf, the situation was fundamentally the same. Labour could be extracted from them only by the dreary processes of "encouragement" and "moral suasion," by economic pressure in the form of taxation and, not infrequently, by direct coercion.

Nothing is harder to measure than the element of compulsion in the initiation of new forms of production in Africa. There can be no doubt but that in Buganda as elsewhere this element did exist. The Ganda were, in the first place, under the necessity, from 1900 onwards, of earning money by one means or another in order to pay their taxes. (It is clear, however, that although officials and missionaries noted and welcomed the access of industriousness which followed the imposition of a hut-tax the motive behind the imposition was primarily if not solely a fiscal one; the people were not taxed in order that they might be made to grow cotton; rather, they were urged to grow cotton in order that they might be able to pay taxes.) Over and above this, there is no question but that, at the beginning, the peasants were called out to grow cotton under the chiefs' orders precisely as they were called out to make roads, to carry government stores or to build the chiefs' houses. "The chief beat the drum," said one elderly informant, "and when we had gathered round he told us to dig the plots which had been marked out by the roadside and gave us cotton seed to plant." In the abstract, so to speak, most Ganda agree that cotton-growing started under compulsion—often adding that this was one of the best things that the British have ever done for them. On the other hand, there are many individuals who assert that they personally began to grow cotton, in the years before 1914, of their own will and motion. The truth seems to be that the response to economic opportunity, though by no means wholly spontaneous, was rather more spontaneous than in other parts of East Africa. An initial push was given by European enterprise, both public and private, but the process thus started rapidly gained momentum under the stimulus of the people's own economic aspirations.

For the resistances to economic betterment, the inertia of ignorance or contentment, which elsewhere were only gradually and partially overcome, had in some measure been overcome in Buganda before ever the first cotton seed was planted, before the first train reached the Lake shore, before European dominion had been established. Half a century of active commerce with the outer world, operating on a society which was already inherently

1. U.K. *Joint Committee on Closer Union in East Africa*, II, 393.

acquisitive and competitive,[1] had raised the conventional level of subsistence far above the East African norm. This was perhaps not true of the whole population, but it was true of that very substantial section which consisted of the chiefs and their households and dependants, the frequenters of the king's court and capital. For these, well before the turn of the century, cotton cloth was already a necessity and many other commodities had become the objects of positive cupidity. Lugard[2] noted in 1893 that in contrast with the rest of East Africa it was unnecessary here to create wants before commerce could begin. The wants were already there: sound, good cloth, house utensils, writing paper ("which they really want")—such were the needs which British merchants should exert themselves to meet. A little earlier, indenting on the Chartered Company for further supplies of trade goods, Captain Williams warned them that the usual rubbish would not do for Buganda.[3] Only the best-quality cloth should be sent, and he added a long list of articles which he said were "constantly asked for," including scented soap, flannel coats, gilt and silver chains, watches, needles, pens and paper, padlocks, kettles, tents. Her Majesty's Commissioner, pausing on the bank of the Nile in 1893 to buy bait from a fisherman, found that his proffered string of beads, such as had done duty as currency all the way from the coast, was quite unacceptable; reading-matter was demanded in lieu.[4] Much similar testimony has been assembled by Powesland,[5] and the point needs no further emphasis.

On the other hand, though the economic standards of the Ganda were already high and they were familiar with the notion of a surplus, the idea of production, and especially of agricultural production, for exchange was less familiar to them and in many ways unwelcome. Their nineteenth-century wealth had come to them, in the main, directly or indirectly from predation. As their own historian remarked, "The people did not learn to sell (sc. to produce for sale), because they obtained everything by force of arms or by gift from the Kabaka."[6] Wealth, however, and wealth very largely in European terms, was a widely and clearly recognised objective; and the change of method was not so very difficult an adjustment.

Moreover, in so far as the Ganda had to be pushed into producing cotton, it was to a large extent Ganda who did the pushing. Everywhere in East Africa the European authorities sought to use African chiefs as the levers by which the inert African mass might be moved. But here, and only here, the levers were in some degree self-acting; they imparted a thrust of their own, additional to that which was imparted to them. Generally, East African chiefs abetted the economic endeavours of European officers because they were told to do so, or because they knew that the volume of local production for the market was one of the criteria by which the merits of chiefs were judged. Such motives were certainly not absent in Buganda; there is evidence that once the Uganda Company's initiative had proved successful official pressure was brought to bear on the less energetic chiefs to initiate or intensify production in their areas.[7] But to many of the Ganda leaders there was more to the question than this; they themselves believed that increased production was a good idea.

Even in the pre-British period the chiefs of Buganda had been an unusual type of African governing class, in that they owed their positions to appointment from above rather than to hereditary right, but those who held sway at the turn of the century were still further removed from the normal concept of an African chief. Though they bore traditional titles and operated what was still recognisably the traditional system, they were essentially

1. Wrigley, C. C. Buganda: An Outline Economic History. *Economic History Review*. 2nd ser. X, No. 1 (1957).
2. Lugard, F. D. *The Rise of Our East African Empire*, London, 1893, II, 140.
3. F.O. Confidential Print, 6341/217.
4. Portal, G. H. *The Mission to Uganda*, London, 1894, p. 140.
5. Powesland, P. G. *Economic Policy and Labour, op. cit.*
6. Kagwa, A. *Basekabaka b'e Buganda* (the Kings of Buganda), 4th edn., Kampala, 1953, p. 277.
7. Ehrlich, C. Cotton and the Uganda Economy, 1903-1909 *Uganda Journal*, XXI 1957.

revolutionaries, who had achieved power by violent subversion of the established order, and they were inspired by a revolutionary dynamic which consisted of eager acceptance of all things European. The relationship which existed in the 1890s between Europeans, especially missionaries, and this native Christian aristocracy was among the most remarkable in the whole history of culture-contact. Missionary descriptions of Buganda in this period were irradiated by a strange romantic light, and when due allowance had been made for the sense of high drama inherent in the Evangelical view of life and for a certain innocence on the part of the writers (the Ganda leaders were clearly tough and ambitious politicians as well as convinced believers) there seems no doubt that there did exist a powerful shared enthusiasm, a shared sense of the opening of new horizons both spiritual and material.[1] The Christian Ganda to a large extent adopted the European view of the virtue of work and progress and economic development. They sought education for themselves and their children and their followers. They helped to finance the building of churches and schools, including that Industrial Mission which contained the germ of the Uganda Company and of the cotton industry.[2] And, assisted by the deference towards constituted authority that was deeply rooted in the minds of the Ganda masses, they saw to it that the experiments in cotton-growing were brought to a successful fruition. In one district at least, the experiment was launched by means of a written contract between the Company and the county chief, the Company undertaking to provide the seed and the chief (Samuel Mukasa of Bulemezi) to have it planted and to deliver the proceeds back to the Company for processing and export.[3]

This simple organisation naturally did not endure for long. For one thing, the Uganda Company soon lost its monopoly control over the disposal of the crop. In 1907 two rival ginneries were set up in Kampala, one by Mr. James Buckley, formerly a mechanic in the Company's service, the other by a French trading firm, L. Besson et Cie. In addition, the British East Africa Corporation began to buy cotton for processing in the ginnery which it had built at Kisumu in Kenya, and several Indian merchants were interposing themselves between the growers and the ginners. For another thing, the Government began to play an increasingly active part in the supervision and control of all stages of production. The Governor of the day, Sir Hesketh Bell, and his principal adviser in the matter, Mr. Dawe, had the vision to see, at a time when the output was barely a hundredth part of what it ultimately became, that cotton-growing in Uganda, so far from being merely an experiment, was already an assured success; and that, so far from being a subsidiary venture, it could be made the main instrument of economic progress. "No part of our Empire," he told the Colonial Office in December, 1907, "is more promising for cotton. . . . Within 100 miles of the Lake shore we have more than a million landowners (sic) willing and eager to grow cotton and at least 20,000 square miles of eminently suitable land." Within a year or two, he thought, cotton would be the country's main export, and in a few years time "output should be enormous."[4]

But this achievement, in Bell's view, would be contingent on the provision of governmental help on a scale and of a kind not hitherto contemplated. For in spite of the rapid progress made so far all was very far from well with Uganda cotton. During 1908 complaints began to come in from Britain alleging a falling off in the quality of the lint supplied.[5] Part of the trouble was that, owing to early experimentation with different varieties of seed, the lint lacked the uniformity of staple and fineness that was one of the spinners' most essential requirements. It was also asserted that in the new

1. See, e.g., Tucker, A. R. *Eighteen Years in Uganda and East Africa*, London, 1908. Harford-Battersby C. F. *Pilkington of Uganda*, London, 1898. Mullins, J. D. *The Wonderful Story of Uganda*, London, 1904. Cf. Oliver, R. *The Missionary Factor in East Africa*, London, 1952.
2. Church Missionary Archives, Uganda letter-books, Walker to Baylis, 21.vi.98 and 4.xii.99.
3. Miti, J. K. *History of Buganda* (MS. in the library of the School of Oriental and African Studies).
4. E.S.A. S.M.P. 1707/43.
5. *Ibid.*, S.M.P. 1707/8, 10, 41.

conditions of hot competition buyers were paying little attention to quality, even inciting growers to pick the bolls before they were mature. Critics pointed to the horrid example of Indian peasant-grown cotton, which "sown anyhow, grown anyhow, ginned anyhow," occupied one of the lowest positions in the world market. The criticisms appear to have been exaggerated (they owed something to the feud between the British Cotton Growing Association and the Uganda Company, which hotly disputed them) but there was undoubtedly some ground for concern. The Governor decided on very drastic intervention: all undesirable kinds of cotton were to be eradicated, and in future all seed was to be distributed by Government, if possible from breeding stations of its own. His decision took shape in a set of stringent Cotton Rules, issued under an enabling Ordinance of March, 1908, and successfully carried into effect, thanks to the co-operation of the Ganda chiefs and to the fullness of the authority which they wielded over their people. By the following year the Government was able to claim that all varieties of cotton except one, American Upland, had been practically eliminated.[1] Two Government seed farms were established in 1908. They were not, however, at first under really expert supervision, and it was some time before they could provide all the seed required for sowing or undertake breeding experiments. In addition, the cultivation season was now definitely fixed to the second rains, and in order to limit the spread of pests and diseases the growers were compelled by law to uproot and burn all their plants before a certain, annually promulgated, date, generally in late March or April.

These restrictive measures, however, were not judged to be sufficient. It seemed clear that cotton-growing had reached a stage at which it needed more attention, and more expert attention, than either the Uganda Company or the Government, out of its present resources, could provide. The Company does not seem to have done more than circulate instructional leaflets in the vernacular. Government guidance had so far been given, if at all, by the district officers, who of course knew nothing about cotton, and by the small staff of the Botanical Department, who did not know very much. There was need on the one hand for research into the types of cotton and the methods of cultivation most suitable for local conditions, and on the other for skilled and intensive supervision of the native cultivator. After discussions with the Colonial Office and the Imperial Institute a specialist Cotton Superintendent was appointed in 1908, and two years later a fully fledged Department of Agriculture somewhat belatedly came into existence. (Kenya had had such a Department since 1903, but it does not seem to have occurred to the authorities hitherto that agronomists might be valuable and necessary even where there were no settlers.) Even now, and for a long time to come, the Department was too small for any intensive or widespread supervision of the cultivators to be possible. In 1914 it consisted, apart from the veterinary staff and two scientific specialists, of the Director, six agricultural officers and one ploughing instructor. Instructional and hortatory functions had still to be left very largely to the administration and the chiefs, notably assisted in some places by missionaries.

The quality of Uganda's cotton crop was now reasonably assured, and the quantity continued to increase phenomenally. The drastic measures of control taken in 1908 opposed only a momentary check. To the further expansion of output between 1908 and 1914 Buganda contributed very little; progress was maintained by the extension of cultivation to hitherto undeveloped areas of the Protectorate, especially in the Eastern Province. Cultivation on a serious scale started in Busoga in 1907. Since this district was a cultural and political appendage of Buganda, its success here called for no remark. But in the next two or three years it spread rapidly over the whole province. "Enormous strides" were reported in 1909 and in the follow-

1. Cd. 4910.

ing year, with "thousands of cultivators clamouring for seed," the industry was regarded as firmly established—not only or even principally in Busoga but in the newly administered districts to the north and east.[1] The turbulent Gisu, some of whom had only just ceased to shoot poisoned arrows at their district officer, came down from their mountain fastnesses to grow cotton on the plains, and amongst "the wild Lango" cultivation spread almost simultaneously with the establishment of administrative control. The most striking success, however, was achieved in the Teso district. The crop was first grown experimentally here in 1908, yet by 1913-14 the output had reached 7,500 tons of seed-cotton, against 4,000 in Busoga, 3,600 in Bukedi and 1,420 in Lango. Much of this success was due to the introduction of the ox-drawn plough, well suited to a district in which cattle were abundant and the country largely flat and open.

It is nevertheless somewhat remarkable that such peoples should have engaged so largely and so immediately in production for the market. They were by custom practically naked, and the taste for cotton cloth and for other imported goods, other than steel hoes, was diffused among them very much more slowly than among the Ganda. They had no governing aristocracy to serve as channels of European culture and ready-made instruments of European authority. On the other hand there was one want which they did feel more keenly than the Ganda. Cattle were intensely desired, both for their own sake and as opening the way to earlier and more frequent marriage, and it is a peculiarity of this type of expenditure that it is largely self-defeating; the supply of cattle being highly inelastic and the supply of women completely so, the result can only be inflation of the price level, creating a constantly increasing demand for cash. Further, the lack of an indigenous ruling class was in part made good by the importation of Ganda "agents," who appear to have been even less inhibited in their dealings with these simple people than with their more sophisticated fellow-tribesmen. It can hardly be doubted, however, that strictly economic motives had even less to do with the early progress of the cotton industry than they had had in Buganda. It is even recorded that growers had to be restrained from leaving the market before they had received payment for their cotton.[2] Cultivation here was clearly very intimately bound up with the poll-tax and with simple acquiescence in European orders. The matter is probably well summed up in the words of the historian of the Teso district: "The British administration . . . introduced . . . poll-tax and, by forcibly encouraging the planting of cotton, ensured that there was no excuse for failing to pay it."[3] Not that encouragement appears ever to have been forcible in any literal sense of the term; acceptance of the official wish that they should grow cotton was simply one aspect of these people's rapid and ready acceptance of British rule.

During the last pre-war years the only limits to the expansion of cotton production seemed to be those which were imposed by difficulties of transport. Forty miles was about the maximum distance over which the grower could be induced to carry his own cotton, and the use of hired porters by up-country buyers added seriously to the cost of the product, as well as being a very big addition to the rapidly increasing demand for labour. The solution was twofold: the improvement of communications and the building of ginneries in the country areas, so that only the lint, which represented no more than 30 per cent. of the total weight of the seed-cotton, would need to be transported to the Lake ports. By 1914 something had been done on both fronts. The Busoga railway, completed in 1912, spanned the unnavigable section of the Victorian Nile and brought the central regions of Uganda within reasonably easy reach of the port of Jinja. Shortly before the war a few motor vans made their appearance on one or two of the main roads of Buganda and Busoga. At the beginning of 1907 there had been one ginnery

1. E.S.A. Ann. Rpts., P.C. E.P., 1909/10 and 1910/11.
2. Ehrlich, *loc. cit.*
3. Lawrance, J. C. D. *The Iteso, op. cit.* p. 40.

in operation, at Kampala; in 1914 there were twenty, of which fourteen were situated in the midst of the growers in outlying areas of Buganda and in the Eastern Province. These developments, helped by the upward movement of the trade cycle, encouraged a further expansion of output, which brought cotton exports in the year 1914-15 to over 32,000 bales, valued at £351,000 —a sum which represented more than 70 per cent. of the value of all exports. In the following year Uganda was able to do without an imperial grant-in-aid. The first great objective of the Government had been attained, and it had been attained almost entirely through the agency of a crop grown almost exclusively by the native population. True, the direct revenue from cotton was so far negligible—a few hundreds of pounds from the fees paid for buying permits and the rental of ginnery sites—but the main items of revenue, poll-tax and import duties, both depended on the money incomes of the people, in which the income from cotton (including the wages of those employed in ginning and transporting it) was overwhelmingly the most important element.

That cotton was a purely native activity was a fact which was always noted in the early years with an air of faint surprise. "Unlike most other cotton-producing countries," Dawe wrote in 1908, "cultivation in Uganda is almost entirely in the hands of the peasantry."[1] It is doubtful whether the first part of the sentence was even then really correct, and it has since become clear that, failing slavery, large-scale irrigation or thorough-going mechanisation, cotton cannot normally yield a surplus over labour costs sufficient to cover the overhead expenses of plantation management. What was remarkable was not that cotton was a native crop in Uganda but that any native crop should have played so dominant a role in the economy. The first years of the twentieth century were in many ways the apogee of the tropical plantation system. It was firmly established in Java and Ceylon and was beginning to carry Malaya forward towards an unimagined prosperity. Nearer home, Nyasaland and German East Africa were being developed as a matter of course on similar lines. Nowhere in the tropics were the commercial possibilities of peasant agriculture proven and in few places were they even guessed at. Even in West Africa native production of cocoa was in its infancy. The palm-oil industry was indeed long established, but that could be classified as the collection of forest produce rather than as agriculture proper. In 1897 a Royal Commission had adumbrated for the West Indies an alternative system of small-scale production under the scientific direction of an Imperial Department of Agriculture.[2] But the West Indies were very different from Africa, and the system was as yet quite untested. That Uganda was to be one of its main proving-grounds could hardly have occurred to anyone in 1900. It seemed axiomatic that, since Uganda was admittedly not a settlers' country (universal malaria and not uncommon blackwater, not to mention other diseases, made that seem more self-evident than it would be today), it must, if it were to be anything at all, become a planters' country.

Yet the planters were slow in coming. Apart from small and transient efforts by a few adventurers,[3] there was no European agriculture until 1907 and very little until 1910. For the first decade of the century "native production" had the field virtually to itself. It has been asserted (not long ago this would have been a boast but in the mouths of many economists it has now become an accusation) that the slow development of plantation enterprise was the result of a set policy, adopted from the start, of developing Uganda as a "black" Protectorate and of upholding indigenous land rights against capitalistic instrusion.[4] On the other hand, it has also been alleged that "Johnston and his immediate successors fostered the view that plantation development, primarily under European management, of such products

1. E.S.A. S.M.P. 1707/43.
2. C.8656.
3. Hattersley, C. W., *The Baganda at Home*, London, 1908, p. 87. *Uganda Herald*, 30.vii.20.
4. Ehrlich, *loc. cit.*

as rubber, coffee and cocoa, offered the most promising economic future."[1] In reality, it is difficult to discern any consistent doctrine in the behaviour of the Protectorate authorities at this stage. If any doctrine had been formulated in set terms it would have resembled the common-sense "dual policy" that was enunciated in Kenya in 1923, according to which both native and non-native agriculture were to be given equal opportunity for development according to their respective capabilities. Within this framework there was room for differences of emphasis. Some officials were keen champions of native rights and looked on capitalistic operations in Africa with a certain suspicion and distaste. Others thought that planters' capital was so vital to Uganda that native rights would have to be relegated to second place. From time to time one or other of these inclinations can be seen to have been in the ascendant, but on the whole, before the First World War and for some time after it, the administration appears to have taken a neutral and empirical attitude to this question. Sir Hesketh Bell, who came to Uganda from Dominica, one of the few tropical colonies whose economy was already based on peasant agriculture, records that he saw his new charge as "a field for a great experiment in the direction of purely African progress" and for "the creation of an essentially African state" complementary to and contrasting with "the white man's country" on its eastern border;[2] and his arrival in 1906 was later regarded as marking the commencement of a "policy of encouraging native production."[3] But the views quoted did not prevent him from believing that "large scientific plantations" had an important role to play even in the cotton industry,[4] nor, as we shall see, from doing his utmost to secure land for the use of European entrepreneurs. Of Johnston's economic policy only one thing can be said with confidence; he was determined that there should not be repeated in Uganda the process which he had witnessed in Nyasaland, the acquisition of vast areas of native-occupied land by speculative companies. To any such large-scale alienation he was "totally opposed . . . at any rate until it has been shown that a mass of small traders and 4,000,000 natives cannot between them develop the resources of the country in a manner productive of profit and happiness to all."[5] It is clear, however, that the class of "small traders" was intended to include, or at any rate did not firmly exclude, non-African planters owning estates of modest size.[6]

The truth is that, having once ruled out mass colonisation on the one hand and huge land concessions on the other, policy-makers at this time did not see any critical significance in the distinction between the remaining possible forms of exploitation, between planters who caused crops to be grown by paid labourers and merchants who purchased crops from independent peasant producers. It was obvious that labour would in any case be provided by Africans, and equally obvious that technical knowledge, initiative and capital would in any case be provided by people other than Africans. The precise method by which these factors should be combined appeared to be a matter of simple practical expediency. In the production of cotton, the loose and indirect control exercised by the merchant-ginners over the African producers proved to be adequate for the purpose and the most economical way of doing things. For crops such as coffee and rubber it was thought necessary to bring labour under the discipline of plantation management. But the distinction was one of method rather than of principle. Thus the philanthropists of the Uganda Company set up rubber plantations with hired labour in 1907, without, it seems, any idea that their new enterprise was fundamentally different in its implications from the original venture into cotton production. Certainly the distinction was not between

1. Thomas & Scott, *op. cit.* p. 41.
2. Bell, H. *Glimpses of a Governor's Life*, London, 1946.
3. E.S.A. S.M.P. 7725/11, Memorandum on native policy, 1924.
4. Cd. 4910.
5. Johnston, H. H. *The Uganda Protectorate*, London, 1902, I, 296.
6. Thus he told the Foreign Office that there was "undoubtedly a considerable field for European enterprise and capital in the direction of plantation work." (Cd. 671.)

capitalistic and non-capitalistic forms of production, but only between different modes of employing capital. The cotton industry required a very considerable capital outlay, not indeed on the actual cultivation of the crop but in its processing and merchanting, quite apart from the public expenditure on research, instruction and communications. "Peasant production" was possible only because the peasant was surrounded by a network of supervisory, manufacturing and distributive agencies.

In its inception, indeed, cotton production was regarded as very much a Uganda Company enterprise. The chiefs acted as the Company's managers, the peasants were its employees, so to speak, at one remove. The appearance of competitive buyers and the intervention of Government gave the growers a somewhat more genuinely independent position in the industry. Even so, the industry continued to be considered as, in many respects, non-native property. Planters of coffee and rubber, complaining of the special interest taken by the Government in the cotton crop, did not so much allege that native production was being given preference over non-native as that certain European enterprises, the firms engaged in ginning and exporting cotton, were being favoured at the expense of others.

The one crucial point of difference between the two systems was, of course, that one did and the other did not presuppose an at least temporary transfer of land to non-African ownership. Now on this point, so far as the kingdom of Buganda, the most fertile and the most settled part of Uganda, was concerned, an unexpected twist had been given to the situation by the terms of the concordat negotiated by Sir Harry Johnston with the Ganda chiefs in 1900.

The principles governing the land settlement in Buganda were not essentially different from those which guided British administrators elsewhere in East Africa.[1] The general idea was that the natives would be confirmed in possession of the lands which they "occupied," whereas the "waste and uncultivated" portions would be at the disposal of the Crown and available for sale or lease to immigrant farmers and planters. The crux lay in the interpretation of the term "native occupation." This could be, and sometimes was, construed so as to cover little more than the land actually under cultivation, even small interstices between settlements being liable to appropriation. More generally it was accepted that each tribal group had a defined territory which should remain inviolate. Now there could be no doubt that the whole of Buganda was tribal territory. Equally, there could be no doubt that the kingdom contained far more land than the natives were then using or would be able to use in the foreseeable future. The problem, therefore, was to find some means of dividing up the land so as to establish the Crown's right of ownership of the surplus waste. The problem was complicated by the intricacy of native land tenure, or rather by the intricacy of Buganda's political and social structure. Now that land was about to acquire a marketable value, it was necessary to cut through the hierarchy of rights and powers and establish a clear-cut system of ownership. Johnston was aware from the first that from political necessity he would have to allot some land to the king and chiefs, who, from one point of view, were the existing owners of the soil. He was anxious, however, to keep such allocations small, for the recent history of Nyasaland had persuaded him that rights of ownership granted to African chiefs would be transferred immediately to European purchasers, to the detriment of the rights of the peasant cultivators. He, therefore, proposed a threefold division of Buganda: estates would be granted to the magnates of the realm; the remainder of the cultivated land would be reserved for the use of the native population as a whole by being placed under the control of a mixed board of trustees; the waste and uncultivated areas would become the property

1. See Thomas, H. B., and Spencer, A. E. *Uganda Land and Surveys*, Entebbe, 1938; Ingham, *op. cit.*; Wild, *op. cit.*; Oliver, R. *Sir Harry Johnston and the Scramble for Africa*, London, 1957. The fullest account, however, is in Low, D. A. and Pratt, R. C. *Buganda and British Overrule 1900-1955* (in the press). I am grateful to Dr. Low for allowing me to see the draft of part of this work.

of the Crown. In the course of the negotiations, however, this scheme was greatly modified. For political reasons, it was found necessary to recognise the rights of a much larger number of chiefs than had been intended, to grant individual estates to the lesser gentry as well as to the magnates, and to include in these estates a certain amount of waste as well as cultivated land. Thus there emerged as the aggregate of land in this category a figure of 9,003 square miles—nearly half the supposed total area of Buganda and rather more than half the actual area. This came to be regarded as the natives' share, and legislation was subsequently enacted (the Land Transfer Ordinance of 1906, supported by the Buganda Land Law of 1908) to ensure that it should remain substantially in native hands. Neither lease nor sale to non-natives was forbidden, but to any such transaction the consent both of the Governor and of the *Lukiiko*, the governing body of Buganda, was required. This being so, it was not deemed necessary to make any further reservation of native rights; the idea of trusteeship disappeared from view, and the remainder of the land was placed at the unrestricted disposal of the Government. Johnston himself, in reporting to his masters in the Foreign Office, laid stress on the real property which the Agreement had secured for the Government;[1] and to at least one later official it seemed that "the underlying motive of all native land administration (was) to redeem Johnston's promise of valuable Crown land."[2]

It was not at first apparent that redemption would present any difficulty. Great stretches of waste and uncultivated but exuberantly fertile land were now, in theory, available for sale to planters, with promise not only of an immediate revenue in cash but also of the larger economic benefits that would acrue through European agricultural enterprise. In practice, however, this was not the case. Johnston's immediate successors took the view that alienation must wait until the demarcation envisaged by the Agreement had actually been carried out, and two further decisions ensured that this would mean a long delay. First, since the allocation was both individual and arithmetical, each of the chiefs having been awarded a certain number of square miles, or fractions of a square mile, according to his rank, the demarcation had to take the form of a full-scale cadastral survey, which proved to be a difficult and protracted undertaking. Secondly, it was ruled that the Ganda must have first choice and that the actual allotment of lands must be left in the hands of the Lukiiko.[3] Now after a decade of chaos in the state it was virtually impossible to determine which chiefs were in rightful possession of what land, even if the term "possession" had carried any clear meaning; and certainly the Lukiiko made little attempt at any such determination. In practice, the more powerful chiefs marked out their "miles" where they chose, which was naturally in the more fertile and populous regions near the Lake, and the smaller fry followed suit as far as they were able.

The upshot was that the distribution, redistribution and survey of the chiefly estates dragged on for years. Several attempts were made to secure finality but without success. By 1907 the Land Office had registered 6,600 claims (compared with the 1,000 estates originally envisaged) and there was nothing to prevent further claims being lodged for another twenty years or more.[4] And at the same time the Government saw all the more desirable areas of Buganda disappearing into native ownership. It seemed that the Crown would have to wait a generation for its share, which would then be located entirely in the remoter and less fertile parts of the country. The authorities were in the somewhat absurd position that, though in theory they had some 8,000 square miles at their disposal there was hardly any that they could actually offer to planters.

Yet it is easy to overrate the influence of law and policy upon the

1. Cd. 671.
2. E.S.A. S.M.P. 5063/21, 1911.
3. Thomas and Spencer, *op. cit.*
4. E.S.A. S.M.P. 9561/1.

course of economic development. Certainly it would be quite wrong to suppose that there was, in the first years of the century, a flood of capital and enterprise seeking to enter Uganda but dammed off by legal obstacles and by a sentimental or doctrinaire official dislike of interference with the native way of life. If there had been, we may be fairly sure that the obstacles would have been surmounted and official resistances overborne. In fact, a few enquiries were received from Afrikaners and others[1] whose interest was clearly not in Buganda but in the Kenya highlands, the greater part of which had until 1902 been included in the Uganda Protectorate. These were quite properly redirected to Nairobi; and that was all, or nearly all. The most that can be said is that if the authorities at this time had made the attraction of planters the first object of policy they could probably have acquired a few. The real reason for the slow development of a plantation sector of the economy is probably to be sought not in institutions and policies but in the state of the market. The product which had taken first place in Lugard's and Johnston's prospectuses, as we have seen, was coffee. But by 1900 coffee-planting was not by a long way the attractive proposition that it had seemed a few years earlier. The price of coffee follows a cycle of its own, to a large extent independent of the general short-period and long-period trade cycles, and in the period in question the trend was sharply downward. The value of Rio No. 7 in New York had fallen from 17.9 cents per lb. in 1890 to 15.9 cents in 1895 and 8.2 cents in 1900. A nadir of 5.6 cents was reached in 1903, but the subsequent upward movement was very slow, and the 10-cent mark was not exceeded until 1911, when a new boom set in.[2] During the first decade of the century the plantations which had been enthusiastically established earlier on in German East Africa had to live through very evil days and in Kenya only small and hesitant experiments were conducted. The other staple of later plantation enterprise in Uganda was rubber, but in 1900 rubber-planting, as distinct from the tapping of forest trees and vines, was nowhere beyond its infancy. It was not until 1907 that plantations began to contribute an appreciable quantity to the world supplies of this commodity.

It was in 1907, and in connexion with rubber, that European capitalists, both large and small, began to take a definite interest in the agricultural possibilities of Uganda, though it was not until 1910-11, with the revival of the prospects of profit out of coffee-planting, that the interest became keen or widespread. In 1907 the Uganda Company started a rubber plantation. In the same year a group of London financiers received a lease of no less than a hundred square miles of forest in Uganda and shortly afterwards floated the Mabira Forest (Uganda) Rubber Company, with an authorised capital of £120,000, to exploit the same.[3] The original idea was to collect wild rubber, but as this proved to be uneconomic the company was obliged to turn to plantation enterprise.

There was nothing cool about the welcome which the planters, who now began to appear on the scene in increasing numbers, received from the Administration. A common official view was that stated by the Land Officer in 1911: "The crying needs of this country are European population and capital, and agricultural development, together with increased transport facilities."[4] By "agricultural development" was meant, notwithstanding the success of cotton, mainly the planting of permanent crops. "These developments," wrote the Chief Secretary in the same year, "can never be carried out by the native population."[5] A pencilled comment on this by the new Governor, Sir Frederick Jackson, "I don't agree at all"—represented almost the first sign of opposition to the prevailing view of things. And even Jackson, although he was undoubtedly the most "pro-native" of all

1. E.S.A. S.M.P. 2771.
2. Wickizer, V. D. *The World Coffee Economy*, Stanford, 1949.
3. Thomas and Spencer, *op. cit.* C.O., East African Pamphlet No. 9.
4. E.S.A. S.M.P. 4/30.
5. E.S.A. S.M.P. 4/7.

the early governors of Uganda, was in no way opposed to a moderate and regulated influx of European population and capital.

But even a moderate influx could, it was thought, be made possible only by a settlement of the "native land question," around which the greater part of the discussion turned. The concession to the Mabira Forest Company had been possible because the Agreement had specifically reserved forest lands to the Crown. Alienation of all other land in Buganda, however, was still obstructed by the difficulties described above. By 1908 the Government was becoming desperate. "The Agreement," wrote the Chief Secretary, "is rapidly becoming a nightmare." The Ganda had taken unreasonable advantage of a favourable interpretation and tension was at breaking-point. He found it hard to believe that the intention had been to "throw all the more accessible land to the natives without consideration for Government interests." Sir Hesketh Bell concurred: the Agreement had proved "a truly disastrous bargain."[1]

There did, however, appear to be ways in which the evils of the situation could be mitigated. The estates which the chiefs marked out for themselves rarely coincided with and often did not approximate to the number of acres to which their certificates entitled them. The Buganda Government claimed that it should be permissible to balance excesses against shortages. That is, where a man's estate was found on survey to be less than his allotment, he should be allowed to mark out the balance elsewhere on land of his own choosing; and where it exceeded his allotment the excess should be re-allotted by the Lukiiko to another claimant. The Land Officer argued that to concede this would be to lose the last chance of getting any good land within the near future, "until Buganda has been picked over and over again by the natives." In the first place, therefore, an administrative ruling was made that shortages were not to be taken up within the eight central counties of Buganda. Secondly, the Lukiiko was somehow persuaded to enact the Land Law (Survey) of 1909, the effect of which was to settle the question of excesses and shortages in such a way that the Government would be able to locate some Crown land immediately. It was laid down that shortages were to be made good, not immediately and at the pleasure of the allottee or the Lukiiko, but afterwards and at the pleasure of the Government. Furthermore, any allotment which was not claimed at the time of the survey was to be treated as having lapsed, and the land in question would fall to the Crown.[2]

Given its premises, the Government's action was not unreasonable. It could fairly be argued that the Protecting Power was entitled, by reason of its services to the country and by the terms of the Agreement, to some valuable land. The chiefs themselves had little reason for complaint; they had already done very well out of the land settlement. The significance of the episode lies in the underlying assumptions, that the interests of the Government and the interests of the native population were in direct conflict, and that economic progress could be achieved only by diverting large areas of land into non-native ownership.

It was indeed little more than an episode. Jackson, who arrived early in 1911 after an interregnum of nearly two years, did not deny that it was desirable to secure land for the Crown, but he did doubt whether the expedients adopted to that end were "dignified and in keeping with the traditions of the Government of a Native Protectorate."[3] Believing that even a bad bargain should be kept, he rescinded the ruling about the taking up of shortages in the central counties and proceeded to negotiate with the Ganda chiefs a supplementary Agreement which was signed in April, 1913, and which completely annulled the situation created by the Law of 1909. As a result, by 1919 only about 60,000 acres of Crown land, apart from

1. E.S.A. S.M.P. 1427.
2. E.S.A. S.M.P. 1573.
3. E.S.A. S.M.P. 5063/18.

swamp and forest, had been definitely located; most of this was in the distant county of Bugerere, and most of it was poor land.

To would-be planters who could not secure a grant of Crown land in Buganda there was open the alternative of buying or leasing it from its native owners. They did not find it difficult to locate willing sellers, though as time went on the price demanded rose enormously; in 1911 it was normally about Rs. 4 an acre, by 1914 it was ranging between Rs. 30 and Rs. 45. Such transactions, as has been explained, needed the consent of the Governor and of the Lukiiko. Bell had declared in 1908 that in general he was very much averse to giving his consent to the sale of native land.[1] But as the demand became keener, and the prospects of securing Crown land for alienation faded, the official attitude changed. By 1910 the Acting Governor was urging in a despatch that it was "very desirable to encourage some of the native chiefs, who have far more land than they can ever hope to develop, to sell part of it to desirable Europeans."[2] Nor did Jackson dissent from this, though he ruled that landowners should not normally be allowed to part with more than half their total holding.[3] Lord Cranworth, a Kenya settler who was extending his interests to Uganda about this time, was surprised by the liberality of land policy; he had no difficulty in purchasing three estates from native chiefs—which, he said, "would have been regarded in B.E.A. (sc. Kenya) as a crime against God and man."[4] The consent of the Lukiiko might be a little more difficult to obtain. There was a conflict of interest here between chiefs who were eager to sell in the best market and their more far-sighted colleagues, who were busily amassing landed property themselves and wished to keep the market restricted. But although there was often obstruction and delay it does not appear that consent to sale was ever actually withheld. By 1916 non-natives had secured the usufruct of a little over 50,000 acres of land that had been the property of Ganda chiefs, and in most cases the owner had parted with the freehold title.

Buganda was not the only part of the Protectorate in which European enterprise was possible and, as the boom in coffee and rubber developed, there was steadily increasing interest in the economic potential of other districts, more especially Busoga, Bunyoro and Toro. In these three districts and also in Ankole, which was hardly plantation country but was thought to be suitable for European cattle-ranching, a settlement of the land question was particularly urgent. Here, but not elsewhere in the Protectorate, the political structure was in some respects similar to that of Buganda, and the ruling aristocracy naturally hoped for freehold estates on the Buganda model. With the rulers and chiefs of Toro and Ankole, indeed, Johnston had concluded Agreements which envisaged the granting of such estates, though on a much smaller scale than in Buganda. There had been no formal agreement with Bunyoro, which was conquered territory, or with the comparatively petty states which made up Busoga, but in these districts too the chiefs had been given some reason to believe that their claims to landownership would receive official recognition.

In 1911 the Government set up a committee, consisting of the Principal Judge, Sir William Morris Carter (as he afterwards became), the Attorney-General and the Land Officer, to make recommendations for a land settlement in these four districts. The Committee defined its objects, in its first report,[5] as being to guarantee to the natives the possession of adequate areas of land, to define individual native rights and to ascertain what land was available for development by Europeans and others. It is clear that the last object was the dominant one: the idea was to clear the whole question of native rights and needs out of the way so that development could proceed. Owing to the sparseness of native population and cultivation, there did not

1. E.S.A. S.M.P. 27/45.
2. E.S.A. S.M.P. 116/13b.
3. E.S.A. S.M.P. 3045/11.
4. Cranworth, Lord, *Kenya Chronicles*, London, 1939, p. 39.
5. E.S.A. S.M.P. 2198/2.

seem to be any great difficulty about this. It seemed possible to deal fairly and even generously with the natives, to leave them in possession of the land which they then cultivated, with an ample margin for the future, and still have plenty of scope for alienation to Europeans. The Committee's solution was based on the Buganda precedent, but with important modifications. Land grants were no longer regarded as an award to the native aristocracy but as the endowment of the tribe as a whole. Therefore, although the grants were to be made to individual chiefs, they were mostly to take the the form of "official" estates, which would not be private property but would be held by the chief only so long as he held his office. Collectively, these grants would constitute the native reserve in each district. Their aggregate area was arrived at by means of a simple formula: allow four acres for each family, multiply by the number of families, multiply again by three to provide for future needs. This calculation left over 80 per cent. of the total land area of the four districts available for alienation, and not less than 2,000 square miles in any one district.

This scheme, formulated in January, 1912, and submitted to the Secretary of State, after minor modifications, in 1915, was never implemented, for reasons which will appear later. Its interest lies in the light which it throws on the assumptions current in official thinking at this time: the rights of natives were rights to the land which they occupied; the needs of natives were sufficient land for subsistence agriculture; development would be a wholly European process.

Such restrictions as were imposed on the acquisition of land by Europeans at this period were the product of interventions by the Colonial Office rather than of the policy of the local authorities. The Crown Lands Ordinance of 1903 had provided for both freehold and leasehold grants, but required the special sanction of the Secretary of State for any freehold grant exceeding 1,000 acres. In 1907 the Secretary of State ruled that no non-native was to be allowed to acquire even the leasehold of more than 10,000 acres;[1] and in 1909 the 1,000-acre maximum was made to apply to the purchase of native-owned as well as Crown land.[2] Moreover the Governor was repeatedly instructed that the grant of freehold was to be kept within the narrowest possible limits.[3] In all this, however, the home authorities were not animated, or at any rate not primarily animated, by considerations of native policy but by the current Liberal doctrine concerning the proper relationship between the State and the land. The objects were to check speculation and to secure for the Crown, by a system of revisable rents, a share in the probable future increase of land values.

What effect these limitations had upon the development of plantation enterprise in Uganda is difficult to say. Except for the Mabira Forest venture, there was certainly no investment in Uganda by large financial interests, but these may have been deterred as much by the poor success of that venture as by the conditions of land tenure. On the other hand smaller enterprises proliferated rapidly between 1910 and 1914. There was no mass influx of colonists, but a considerable number of people who had originally come to Uganda for other reasons began to devote their attention to agriculture. One of the prime movers of this form of development was Mr. Michael Moses, who arrived in Uganda before 1900 as a clerk in Government service but shortly afterwards resigned in order to engage in a wide variety of business enterprises, among which, in the years immediately before the First World War, coffee- and rubber-planting were predominant. In partnership with Dr. H. H. Hunter, one of the first two lawyers in private practice in Uganda, he had formed five separate syndicates by the end of 1913, each of which was busily engaged in the flotation of plantation companies. Another leading entrepreneur of this period was Mr. C. W. Hattersley, a former missionary and first headmaster of Mengo High School, who

1. E.S.A. S.M.P. 4915/1.
2. E.S.A. S.M.P. 1910/9.
3. E.S.A. S.M.P. 3086/4, 3045/17.

combined planting with the sale of agricultural equipment and was thus able to secure financial backing in Sheffield. Other planters were recruited from among Government officials, especially land surveyors, from former employees of the Uganda Company (including Borup himself), from East Africa's floating population of South African and other adventurers. A few refugees from the depressed plantation industries of India also came to try their luck in the new country. Indians themselves were not yet prominent in agricultural enterprise, but the great merchant Alidina Visram had already added planting to his multifarious interests in Uganda.

In these early years the prospects of the planters seemed extremely bright. The sun of official favour shone brightly upon them. Their crops promised well. In the rich soils of Buganda and Busoga the coffee trees grew fast and the initial yields were heavy; an outbreak of the dreaded leaf disease, *hemileia vastatrix*, which had laid waste the plantations of Ceylon and south India a few decades earlier, passed off in 1913 without disaster. Rubber was a rather more doubtful proposition. Two different species were tried out. The Ceara tree, *manihot glazovii*, which was believed to be suitable to regions of moderate heat and humidity such as this, proved a total failure; the Para species, *hevea brasiliensis*, grew rather more slowly than in its Brazilian homeland or in Malaya. But it was nevertheless growing and showing every sign of future profit. There was also considerable faith in cocoa, which had shown promise in the botanical gardens at Entebbe and was being planted commercially in several parts of the country.[1]

Prices ruled high. Uganda plantation coffee was selling in London at around £80 a ton in 1913. By this time the best of the rubber boom was already over, the value of the plantation product having fallen from the fantastic figure of 12s. a lb. early in 1910 to a little over 2s. late in 1913. But even at this level there could be no question of loss; on a well-run estate in 1914 production costs were reckoned at 8¼d. a lb., and freight and London charges added 3¾d. to the total cost.[2] Labour was still extremely cheap. The standard wage for unskilled plantation labour at this time was Rs. 3 or Rs. 3/50 per month, or rather for thirty working days, whereas it had risen to Rs. 5 in the highlands of Kenya and to Rs. 10-12 on the coast. Largely for this reason Lord Cranworth had been able to get 1,000 acres under coffee in Uganda at a time when very few planters in Kenya had as many as a hundred.[3]

The financing of plantation enterprise presented little difficulty. In this period speculative capital was readily forthcoming in London for rubber-planting anywhere in the tropics, and there was also a rich source nearer at hand. Many of the wealthier Kenya settlers, like Cranworth, sought to combine the pleasures of residence in the Highlands with the profits of investment in Uganda. In 1913 the shares of one Uganda plantation company were selling in Nairobi for £3.[4] In aggregate the capital sunk in these enterprises was by no means inconsiderable; by the beginning of 1919 it was estimated that half a million pounds had been invested in rubber alone.[5]

Nor was land really hard to come by. The absence of a formal definition of native rights in land outside Buganda did not prevent the Government from making a considerable number of grants to non-natives, for except in Buganda the whole of the country was in law the property of the Crown. For a time the district of Busoga, with its fertile soil, and its proximity to the Lake port of Jinja, was especially popular. But in 1913-14 a dozen plantations sprang up in Bunyoro, along the newly constructed highway from Butiaba on Lake Albert to Masindi Port on Lake Kioga, and about

1. U.P. Ann. Rpts. D/A, 1912/13, 1913/14. Brown, E., and Hunter, H. H. *Planting in Uganda*, London, 1913.
2. See *Uganda Herald*, 24.i.19.
3. Cranworth, *loc. cit.*
4. *Uganda Herald*, 13.x.13.
5. *Ibid.*, 24.i.19.

the same time a few bold spirits began to plant coffee in the highlands of Toro, notwithstanding that their only link with a Lake port consisted of nearly 200 miles of execrable road. Buganda, however, remained the principal theatre of plantation enterprise, partly because of its natural advantages, partly because the purchase of chiefs' estates was a simpler, though a more expensive, method of acquiring land than the negotiation with district officers that was necessary in other areas.

Early in 1911 there were reported to be about a score of non-native estates in Uganda, with a total of a little over 2,000 acres under permanent crops, among which rubber easily predominated. Four years later the position was as follows:[1]

TABLE 5

NON-NATIVE ESTATES, MARCH, 1915

	Number	*Total Acres*	*Acres under Crops* Coffee	Rubber	Rubber and Coffee	Cocoa	Total
Buganda ..	104	—	7,378	2,253	4,635	1,639	15,905
Busoga ..	10	—	1,531	57	100	181	2,220
Bunyoro ..	11	—	422	—	100	38	940
Toro ..	10	—	585	—	—	—	740
Total ..	135	58,000	9,918	2,310	4,835	1,868	21,675

Since coffee trees do not yield even a small crop until the third year after planting and rubber trees cannot be tapped effectively until the seventh year, the plantations had not begun to make an appreciable contribution to the economy when the First World War broke out. Nevertheless few people doubted that this form of agriculture had a very great part to play in the future development of the country. Uganda, it was agreed, would remain a "native" country, in the sense that its white population would never become numerically significant. Nor could it be denied that "native production," in the form of cotton cultivation, was firmly established as one of the pillars of the economy. But it was not intended or expected that it would continue to be the sole pillar. Uganda was to all appearance moving towards a mixed economy, in which Africans would provide labour-power partly as independent peasant cultivators and partly as wage-earners, while non-Africans would contribute capital and managerial skills, in some cases merely to the processing and merchanting of crops, in others to their cultivation.

1. U.P. Ann. Rpts. D/A, 1910/11 and 1914/15.

CHAPTER III

PLANTERS AND PEASANTS, 1914-30

We have said that in 1914 the sun of official favour was shining on the planters. But although this was generally true there were already clouds in sight. In certain quarters opposition was beginning to develop, not to the existence of planters but to the assumption that they could and should play a dominant role in the future evolution of the economy. One centre of such opposition was the Department of Agriculture. The Department, as we have seen, had come into existence as an auxiliary of the native cotton industry, and although plantation agriculture was by no means excluded from its purview (in 1913, for example, it acquired a mycologist to advise on measures against coffee leaf disease) it continued to look on assistance to, and control of, the cotton-growers as its primary function. Having constantly before its eyes an example of the successful cultivation of an economic crop by African peasants it tended to prefer the further development of a proven crop and a proven system of production to the still speculative activities of the planters. This tendency was reinforced by a personal factor. Mr. S. Simpson, who was in charge of the Department from 1911 to 1928, happened to be a man of radical outlook, such as is to be found here and there among members of the specialist branches of the Colonial Service, with a strong antipathy towards capitalistic enterprise. His views may well have been strengthened by previous experience in Nyasaland, where there had been land-grabbing on a large scale, and where, moreover, European agriculture had enjoyed only a very moderate measure of success. His coolness towards the planters became so notorious that he was publicly rebuked by the Development Commission of 1920, a body which included some of his own colleagues as well as business-men and planters.[1]

More important resistance to the growth of plantation agriculture came from certain of the provincial administrators, and notably from Francis Spire, that remarkable man who entered Uganda in 1893 as the personal servant of the first Commissioner[2] and left it in 1918 after eight years as Provincial Commissioner of the Eastern Province. In 1911 Spire had looked on the advent of the first planters in Busoga with cautious approval,[3] but by 1913 the caution was very much more marked than the approbation. From that time onwards he displayed an increasingly intransigent opposition to the scheme put foward by the Land Settlement Committee and to its underlying assumptions. In direct opposition to the prevailing view of economic development, he urged that the aggregate output of a mass of smallholders was likely to be far greater than that of European estates.[4] "Every development," he wrote in 1915, "must be carried out by the natives." And the natives were in fact carrying out development quite satisfactorily under Government guidance before the planters had even appeared on the scene. His plan for Busoga, like that of the Committee, envisaged the reservation of some part of the land for the natives and the alienation of the remainder. The differences were, first, that Spire argued against the grant of estates to individual chiefs and for the creation of communal reserves, within which the peasants would gradually be led along the road to full individual proprietorship, and secondly, that he would have permitted only the alienation of such land as the natives quite clearly could not use,

1. U.P. *Report of the Development Commission*, 1920.
2. Colvile, H. *The Land of the Nile Springs*, London, 1895. Oliver, R. *Sir Harry Johnston and the Scramble for Africa*, London, 1957.
3. U.P. Ann. Rpt. P.C. E.P., 1910/11.
4. U.P. Ann. Rpts. P.C. E.P., 1912/13, 1916/17. E.S.A. S.M.P. 2686/30, 2198/50, 51, 76, 78, 89.

after allowance had been made for grazing, fallow, population increase and the extension of economic crops. In hard figures, the Committee had intended to place 913 square miles of Busoga under native ownership, whereas Spire wished to reserve 2,232 square miles for native use, or about two-thirds of the total area of the district. The Director of Agriculture, who was consulted on the matter for the first time in 1915, went further. Undiplomatic as always, he recommended that no land whatever should be alienated in any part of the Eastern Province, at any rate for the next ten years.[1]

Spire's proposals did not meet with the approval of the Committee, who urged that it was most undesirable to prevent the alienation of such large areas, since much of the best land would thus remain undeveloped. The Governor, too, felt that his scheme would be subversive of all progress.[2] But when the Committee's report (after further revisions of detail) was submitted, together with Spire's critique, to the Colonial Office in the summer of 1915, it met with an unexpected rebuff: the Secretary of State replied curtly that he was "not satisfied that the Committee's scheme (was) in the best interests either of the peasants or of development."[3] In any case the matter was to be left in abeyance until the end of the war.

Meanwhile support for Spire and hostility to the intrusion of alien interests in land were steadily crystallising among the provincial administrators. The influx of planters into Bunyoro met with determined opposition on the part of the Provincial Commissioner, which was withdrawn only on direct orders from the Governor.[4] In 1919 the Provincial Commissioners met in Council and unanimously agreed that adequate land should be reserved for native occupation with an absolute guarantee against alienation.[5] "Adequate land" they defined as six acres per head of the population in Busoga and Toro and eight acres per head in Bunyoro and Ankole. On this basis the area available for alienation in the four districts would be 1,078 square miles, against the 16,392 square miles envisaged by the Committee.

The motives of the administrators were somewhat mixed. At the highest level there was genuine concern for the rights and the welfare of the people in their charge, and genuine faith in their ability and willingness to exploit the resources of the soil on their own account, without being placed under the control of alien landlords and employers. At the lowest level, the planters were objected to because they were rival employers of labour; their advent tended to make road construction and other public works more difficult and more costly. Somewhere in between there was the feeling that the planters were a novel and disturbing influence, an alien body which could not be assimilated into the ideal hierarchical structure that consisted of the district officer, the chiefs and the people. Some were alleged to obstruct the collection of poll-tax; most sought to secure for their employees exemption from customary labour obligations. In general, their presence tended to the corruption of tribal morality and the weakening of tribal disciplines. The administrators' attitude, in short, was not, in any proper sense of the term, a liberal one; it was conservative, and segregationist. They did not attempt, and could not have attempted at this stage, to exclude European enterprise altogether or to preserve native ownership of the whole of Uganda. But they sought to conserve, side by side with the European sector of the economy, a substantial sector in which the native peoples, protected both against exploitation and against undue contamination by European influences, could develop, as the later formula had it, "along their own lines."

But the provincial administrators, though increasingly influential, did not determine policy, and at a higher level the current was flowing strongly in the opposite direction during the later war years and for some time thereafter. This was the period in which the doctrine that the tropical

1. E.S.A. S.M.P. 2198/83.
2. *Ibid.*, 2198/53, 70.
3. E.S.A. S.M.P. 2198/85.
4. *Ibid.*, S.M.P. 2382.
5. *Ibid.*, S.M.P. 2198/160.

dependencies existed in order to supply the metropolis with cheap raw materials was most frequently and most crudely propounded.[1] It was also the period in which faith in white settlement and plantation agriculture reached its apogee. In Uganda, the planters were more numerous and more confident. The *Uganda Herald*, which at this time was their mouthpiece, not only prophesied unlimited expansion of the plantation sector but did its best to belittle the performance and prospects of the cotton industry.[2] And in Sir Robert Coryndon, who succeeded Jackson as Governor in 1917, and who had been one of the Rhodesian pioneers, they had a convinced supporter.

In the land controversy the real issue was no longer how much land in total, outside Buganda, the planters were to be allowed to occupy, but how completely they were to be excluded from certain areas. The Land Officer, the lawyers and the Governor agreed in regarding the whole idea of guaranteed reserves, propounded by the Provincial Commissioners, as "a capital error." The most that the Governor would concede was the rough demarcation of areas in which "native interests would definitely predominate."[3] The Provincial Commissioners at first protested that this would do nothing to allay the people's growing anxiety about the security of their land, but by 1920 their opposition was weakening. In September of that year two of them joined with the Committee in signing yet another report,[4] which was described as a compromise but which in fact represented a very big retreat from the positions previously held. It was now accepted that it was impracticable to reserve definite areas for the native population and unwise to exclude non-natives from any large blocks of land. Estimated native requirements were reduced from 6-8 to 4-5 acres per head. Part of the land conditionally reserved for native use, would, after all, be awarded to individual chiefs, but even this the Governor reserved the right to alienate, not only for public purposes in the ordinary sense of the term, but for any purpose "which the Governor deems to be for the benefit of the Protectorate and people."

New efforts were also made to secure the transfer of more land from the chiefs of Buganda to European entrepreneurs. In 1916, having at last secured the enactment by the Kenya legislature of a land ordinance which definitely excluded freehold tenure, the Colonial Office had ruled that Uganda must keep in step. The Governor had been instructed to make no more freehold grants of Crown land and, in conformity with this, to withhold his consent from any outright sale of native-owned land.[5] This ruling had been accepted with great reluctance, and in April 1920, Judge Carter, as Acting Governor, pressed the Secretary of State to rescind it. He urged that consent should not normally be refused to the alienation of land in Buganda, so long as the Ganda retained as much as they actually needed for their own use, and this, he thought, was less than half the area allotted to the chiefs in 1900. The legal argument that, since the chiefs' estates were supposed to be freehold property, they could not properly be forbidden to dispose of them as they chose, moved Lord Milner to give a reluctant assent.[6]

Thus in the summer of 1920 the tide seemed to be flowing strongly in the direction of large-scale land alienations and large-scale development of plantation agriculture. There had indeed already been considerable expansion. Between 1915 and 1920 the number of estates in being had risen from 135 to 220 and their total area from 58,000 to 126,000 acres, or 197 square miles.[7] This appears a trivial extent in comparison with the 3,000 square miles which was already in European occupation in Kenya.[8] But, of course, in Uganda there was none of the extensive pastoral and arable

1. See Hancock, W. K. *Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs*, Vol. II, Part I, Oxford, 1940, pp. 106 ff.
2. *Uganda Herald*, 11.iv.19, 27.v.21.
3. E.S.A. S.M.P. 2198/158, 159.
4. *Ibid.*, S.M.P. 2198/189.
5. E.S.A. S.M.P. 4915/1.
6. *Ibid.*, S.M.P. 27/55, 71.
7. U.P. Ann. Rpt. D/A, 1919/20.
8. Kenya Colony. Agricultural Census, 1920.

farming that was characteristic of Kenya. In the area under crops the gap between the two countries was much narrower (38,000 against 176,000 acres), and in the areas under the more intensively cultivated and valuable crops it was narrower still. Indeed, Uganda could boast of 27,000 acres of plantation coffee (some of it planted under the shade of rubber trees), whereas Kenya had only 20,000 acres at this stage. And although coffee and rubber were still the principal plantation crops in Uganda, with cocoa a poor third, the horizons were beginning to broaden. Despite vehement opposition from the Director of Agriculture, plans were maturing in 1920 for the leasing of 10,000 acres in the densely populated Eastern Province to a large company for the cultivation of sugar, and also for the large-scale cultivation of cotton on the plantation system.[1]

Yet all was not really well with the plantation sector of the Uganda economy. By this time it had become apparent that the land question, which was still exercising the minds of Government officials, was essentially academic. The crux of the matter was the labour question. For there was little point in discussing whether non-native entrepreneurs should be allowed to acquire one or two or sixteen thousand square miles of land when they were already having great difficulty in finding sufficient labour to develop and maintain the two hundred square miles which were already in their hands. This aspect of the matter has been treated at length by Powesland and will be dealt with only briefly here. The essence of the problem, here as elsewhere in East Africa at this time, was that there was no ready-made proletariat such as European employers were accustomed to have at their disposal. Nor was there any prospect or intention that such a proletariat would be formed. No one had suggested that the alienation of land should go so far that the existing native population would be deprived of the means of subsistence. Thus the attraction of wage-labourers depended on the demand for goods and services not available within the subsistence economy. Now it was shown above that in Buganda at least this demand was already quite highly developed in comparison with other parts of East Africa. But this was not saying very much. Even in Buganda the money income considered necessary by the bulk of the population was still small, and, notwithstanding the low level of wages, could be obtained by very brief spells of employment. Outside Buganda, and perhaps Busoga, it hardly exceeded the Rs. 5 which represented the Government's demand for tax. The money income considered to be desirable was, of course, substantially larger, but the strength of most people's desire was generally not equal to the strength of their aversion from the hard and tedious manual labour that the planters mainly offered.

Nevertheless the supply would no doubt have been adequate for the planters' needs if plantation employment had been the sole source of money incomes. But this, of course, was not the case. More especially in Buganda, a variety of other opportunities presented themselves to the people: road-making, public and private construction, domestic service, craftsmanship, commerce, crime, and above all the cultivation and transport of cotton. Here arose the difficulty inherent in the construction of a "dual economy," of an economic system consisting of two juxtaposed compartments, one of which contained capitalistic agriculture and the other subsistence agriculture plus the cultivation of certain economic crops: labour was a factor common to both compartments, and the effective supply was not sufficient for the full development of both. Theoretically, a natural equilibrium would be attained; the progress of each compartment would be determined by its relative economic capacity, that is, by the relative remuneration which it could offer to those who worked in it. In practice, however, the situation produced stresses which were bound to seek a political outlet.

One obvious solution would have been the suppression or discouragement of the cultivation of economic crops outside the plantation sector. This,

1. E.S.A. S.M.P. 4086/18, 24. S.M.P. 5790.

however, was a demand that the planters of Uganda were not in a position to make effective; the cotton industry was far too valuable to the country and the Government for any attack on it to have a chance of success. The only instance of such an attack appears to have been a protest made by the local planters in 1914 against active official support for the development of cotton-growing in Bunyoro, where it was almost as much a novelty as plantation agriculture. The District Commissioner's reply was sharp: "It is neither the wish nor the intention of His Majesty's Government to exploit this country's many advantages for the sole benefit, financial or other, of a white population, numerically small, at the expense of native interests, or at the expense of improving native conditions of livelihood."[1]

The other main line of attack was to secure an increase in the supply of wage-labour by the use of coercion. This attack was consistently and vehemently pressed by the planters,[2] and with a large measure of success. Even before their arrival the Government had found it necessary to adopt a system of compulsory recruitment of paid labour for the making of roads, the carriage of official stores and other public services, or rather to regularise the practice which had existed informally since the beginning of the Protectorate, whereby the chiefs had placed labour at the disposal of their European overlords. During the second decade of the century and especially during the war years, administrators often slipped into "supplying" the planters with part of the labour recruited for their own use.[3] Even when this was not done, as Powesland has shown, the mere fact that compulsion was applied at all worked to the benefit of the planters, since it kept wages below the level which would have been fixed by the interplay of supply and demand, and probably produced a larger supply than would have been forthcoming voluntarily at any possible level of wages.[4] To this extent coercion distorted the economic growth of the country, giving it a bias towards wage-earning types of activity and so assisting plantation agriculture to develop further than it could have done had economic forces alone been allowed to operate.

It must be added, however, that the balance was in part redressed by a distortion in the opposite direction. For coercion was applied not only in the recruitment of wage-labour but also in the development of native agriculture. The Bunyoro planters' complaint was not that the local Africans were growing cotton, but that the District Commissioner was "insisting" on their doing so. And was he not begging a rather large question when he implied that it was in the interests of the natives to grow cotton for sale to European merchants but not in their interests to grow coffee in return for wages from European planters? Such calculations as could be made suggested the contrary. Thus on the basis of the average prices and yields over the period 1910-18 it was reckoned that half an acre of cotton brought the grower a return of Rs. 12, but that the cost of the labour expended on it amounted to Rs. 19—that is, the same labour could have earned Rs. 19 from wage employment.[5] The calculation was in itself somewhat insecure, and it left a great deal out of account—the uprooting from village life, the separation from the family (not that these things were necessarily regarded as disadvantages), the irksomeness of plantation discipline, the very bad living conditions that had often to be endured by estate labour. It also left out of account the larger consideration which, though not yet clearly formulated, lay behind the preference of most administrators for peasant agriculture, namely the consideration that it was better for the social and political health of Uganda

1. E.S.A. S.M.P. 4624.
2. Yearbook of the Uganda Planters' Association, 1916/17. E.S.A. S.M.P. 1371/69a. *Uganda Herald*, 17.i.19, 25.iv.19.
3. E.S.A. S.M.P. 1371/71a. Ann. Rpts. P.C. E.P. 1912/13, 1919/20.
4. As the Acting Governor explained to the Planters' Association in 1920, "at the present stage of development of the natives it is essential that, if the country is to be properly administered, the Government must, in the absence of economic pressure, insist on work of a public nature being done. . . . If it does insist, and distributes its demands in a suitable manner, the labour supply to the planter will be increased." (*Uganda Herald*, 23.i.20.)
5. E.S.A. S.M.P. 5790/14.

that the great majority of its people should be peasants rather than proletarians in the service of alien employers. But from a strictly economic point of view it seems that the question of the relative advantage to the African population of the two forms of production was at least an open one. On the face of it, coercion in any form was not in the interests of the natives, since they were thereby deprived of the right to make their own choice between leisure and goods—though it could be argued that until they had acquired a wider knowledge of the benefits that could accrue from a money income they were incapable of making a rational choice in this matter. But if they were not to be allowed to choose idleness it was clearly in their interest that the range of possible employments should be as wide as possible, that their labour should be demanded by private employers as well as by the Public Works Department, the district officers and their own chiefs. Compulsion, applied in the mild and not very effective forms open to a British Government, could modify but not annul the advantage which accrued to the mass of the people from the excess demand for labour. As far as Buganda is concerned, there is abundant evidence, not only that the people prospered in the immediate post-war years, but that they were prospering without undue exertion, either on the coffee plantations or in their own cotton-fields.

Yet, despite the vociferousness of the planters' complaints, it was not labour shortage that lay at the root of their difficulties. It is true that by 1920 the planters of Buganda and Busoga were virtually unable to secure any unskilled labour from the local tribes. But they had to a large extent surmounted this difficulty by recruiting among the remoter peoples, especially those in the west and north-west who, for want of means of transport, were unable to earn money by growing cotton but had to provide themselves at least with the money for poll-tax. And beyond the frontiers of Uganda there were other sources to be tapped. Considerable numbers of labourers came from the densely populated areas of western Kenya to work in Uganda, and above all there were the crowded and poverty-stricken peoples of Ruanda-Urundi. These outlying peoples, and especially the Ruanda, were soon to solve the labour problems of *African* farmers in central Uganda,[1] and there was no reason why they should not eventually have done the same for European planters if these had been in a position to employ them.

The crux of the matter was that the costs of agricultural production under direct European management were inevitably high, and that the value of the output had to be correspondingly high if the plantations were to pay their way. If this was true of any plantation enterprise it was especially true of plantations situated in the heart of Africa, separated from their main markets by several thousand miles of ocean, nearly 700 miles of single-track railway and a complicated system of internal road and water transport.

Now although Uganda is a fertile country which is capable of yielding almost any tropical or subtropical product the planters had not succeeded in discovering any product to which the local conditions were specially and uniquely suited. They had no equivalent for the rubber of Malaya or the high-grade coffee of Kenya. The early promise of cocoa was soon found to have been delusive, though not before much capital had been sunk into its planting. Most of the trees grew and yielded fruit, but not enough fruit to make their cultivation profitable. Much the same was true of para rubber. The most expert of the planters admitted in 1919 that according to the textbooks Uganda was too high for the successful cultivation of this tree.[2] He still thought he could prove them wrong, but in fact they were substantially correct. Rubber can be produced in Uganda but it cannot compete with the produce of Indonesia and Malaya. There seemed at first to be little doubt about the technical and economic success of coffee, which grew wild in the

1. See below, p. 56.
2. *Uganda Herald*, 24.1.19.

forests of southern Uganda. Yet here too there was disappointment. The indigenous coffee belonged to the commercially inferior robusta species, and the planters, as a matter of course, preferred to cultivate the high-value arabica, the coffee of the London market. But for this tree most of Uganda is not quite high enough. Initial yields were often heavy, but the trees were very susceptible to the condition of debility known as die-back, caused partly by careless cultivation, partly by unsuitable climatic conditions. Moreover, the quality of the product was far from high, in no way comparable to that which was attained from the start in Kenya.

The basic economic weakness of the Uganda planters was obscured for a time by the boom conditions which prevailed for a couple of years after the end of the war. As is usual in such conditions, quality was of relatively little account; and with their coffee fetching up to £160 a ton in the early part of 1920 (about double the pre-war maximum) planters could register a reasonable profit on their operations. Yet even in these years by no means everything was in their favour. Almost alone among commodity prices, the price of rubber scarcely moved above its immediate pre-war level, and was now a mere fraction of the price current when most of the Uganda plantations had been started. And even the price of coffee did not rise nearly as far as the price of Uganda cotton, which, fortuitously aided by the activities of boll-worms in the United States, reached the fantastic figure of 52d. per lb. in Liverpool in March 1920, about four times its highest pre-war value. Thus the balance of economic advantage tilted sharply away from plantation agriculture towards the industry that was based on peasant production. Another factor which adversely affected all East African producers, but especially those who had to make interest payments, was the disastrous rise in the value of the silver rupee, followed early in 1920 by the introduction of a sterling-based currency at a rate 50 per cent. above the old exchange value of the rupee.

Then in the summer of 1920 came the culminating blow, the world-wide collapse of the commodity markets. By September the value of the best Uganda coffee had fallen below £100 a ton, and by March of the following year it was below £80, whereas the inferior marks had become virtually unsaleable. Rubber by this time had slumped to less than a shilling a pound. These figures were well below the cost of production, and the planters were crying ruin.[1] For to most of them the crisis came at the crucial point of their career, when the original capital had been exhausted and profits had only just begun to accrue. Their only hope lay in some form of governmental intervention; and here their real political as well as economic weakness disclosed itself. They were few in numbers, and with the exception of the Mabira Forest Company they had no very influential support in London. Nor were they in a position to claim, like the farmers of Kenya, that their fortunes were indissolubly linked with those of the European community at large. For the merchants were at least as numerous and influential as the planters, and their interests were not only not identical but at some points antagonistic. As importers, they welcomed the high exchange rate that was so hurtful to the producers; as exporters they were far more concerned with the fortunes of the cotton industry than with those of the plantations. One of their leading spokesmen said bluntly that "parasitic industries were not wanted," and another that "the real producer in this country was the native grower."[2] The banks, too, passed judgment on the economic prospects of the planters by withholding further credit.

There was another factor which made it certain that such help as the Government could give to anyone in this crisis would not be extended to the planters: cotton production was regarded as being in a special sense an imperial interest. The Parliamentary Commission of 1924 rightly dismissed the

1. *Uganda Herald*, 17.xii.20, 7.i.21, 4.ii.21.
2. *Ibid.*, 11.ii.21.

allegation that the people of Uganda had been made to grow cotton for the benefit of Lancashire.[1] The production of exportable crops had been pressed on the people for the sake of the country's prosperity, or more specifically for the sake of an increasing revenue. Cotton had received special attention because it was better suited than any other crop to the soil and climate of Uganda and the capabilities of its cultivators. As has been demonstrated in many parts of the tropics and subtropics, there are very few products which can add as much and as quickly to the wealth of a society which is destitute of capital and skill. On the other hand, the British Cotton Growing Association, founded in 1902, had had something to do with the inauguration of the cotton industry in Uganda. It had provided some of the original seed and it had created an atmosphere in which cotton would be the first thought of public and private entrepreneurs in such a country. And in this period the circumstances which had given rise to the formation of the Association had recurred in an acuter form. The Governor reported in July 1920 that on a recent visit to Britain not only the manufacturers but "members of the House of Commons and responsible officials, including the Secretary of State himself" had impressed upon him the "urgent need on Empire grounds of increasing the production of high-class Uganda cotton as rapidly as possible." "The position," he reported, "was one of definite anxiety."[2] Thus, despite the hopes which it had reposed in plantation agriculture and its strong sympathy with the planters, the Government was not allowed by the Colonial Office to respond to their plea for financial assistance,[3] but it did step in to purchase native cotton in 1921 which would otherwise have remained unsold, fearing lest the growers should become altogether disheartened.[4]

So the planters were left to weather the storm as best they could. Their ruin was by no means total. Some disappeared; others were able to transfer their remaining capital to other enterprises, such as cotton-ginning; but the majority had no option but to hang on in hope of better times. And for some of them better times did come. Rubber, indeed, was virtually finished; the trees were never tapped again, except briefly in the middle 1920s and in the Second World War; many of them still stand as sombre memorials of misinvestment. But the more efficient and more prudent of the coffee-planters not only survived but enjoyed a modest prosperity when the market revived. During the later 1920s there was even a small influx of fresh settlers to the highland areas of Toro, mostly men who had come from Kenya in search of cheaper labour.

Where Europeans failed, Asian planters occasionally succeeded. In 1924 a successful merchant, Mr. Nanji Kalidas Mehta, having bought up several derelict estates in the eastern part of Buganda, planted large areas with sugar. A few years later a still larger enterprise of the same kind was created by Mr. Muljibhai Madvani out of the wreckage of the coffee plantations in Busoga. Like the tea industry, which registered a more modest success a little later on, the sugar industry was distinguished from the older kinds of plantation enterprise by two special features. In the first place it did not depend wholly upon the vagaries of the export market; there was an internal demand which was capable of almost indefinite expansion along with the rising living standards of the people. Secondly, both tea and sugar are crops in the cultivation of which the advantages of scale are much more decisive than they are in the production of coffee, chiefly because the processing cannot readily be separated, geographically or organisationally, from the cultivation.

None of this altered the fact that the slump of 1920-22 had dealt plantation agriculture a very heavy blow, and that the subsequent recovery was

1. U.K. *Report of the East Africa Commission*, Cd. 2387.
2. *Uganda Herald*, 16.vii.20.
3. E.S.A. S.M.P. 3911. U.P. Leg. Co. 1st session, 23.iii.21.
4. U.P. Ann. Rpt. D/A, 1921.

only partial. The following figures, though not wholly reliable, show the general trend.

TABLE 6[1]

CULTIVATED AREA ON NON-NATIVE ESTATES

(Acres '000)

	1920	*1922*	*1925*	*1929*
Coffee	27.4	20.8	18.9	19.7
Rubber	18.8	14.4	14.0	12.5
Cocoa	4.3	0.9	1.0	—
Tea	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.3
Sugar	0.3	3.1	2.9	5.0
Total[2]:				
European	35.2	24.2	24.4	26.8
Asian	2.6	6.8	6.3	7.8
	37.8	31.0	30.7	34.6

The impact of the slump on the prosperity of the cotton industry was equally severe, and the reaction of the producers was, at first, not dissimilar. The very low prices offered for the crop harvested at the beginning of 1921 were reflected in greatly reduced output in the following season. But here the resemblance ended. The cotton-growers could not leave the country or divert their energies to other forms of production. Indeed, the people of Uganda were forced back on cotton-growing as the only remaining way in which they could earn the money for tax payments and for the satisfaction of their other wants, which had been greatly stimulated by the high incomes received in previous years. Partly for this reason and partly because of an intensification of official pressures, the pre-slump level of output was regained in 1923, and in the next two years was far surpassed.

TABLE 7[3]

EXPORTS OF COTTON, 1919/20-1925

	Bales	*Thousand £*
1919/20	36,530	1,210
1920 (April-December)	47,695	3,779
1921	81,336	1,281
1922	48,290	878
1923	88,046	2,027
1924	128,604	3,487
1925	196,038	4,686

These contrasting sets of figures were evidence of a decisive turning-point in the history of Uganda. The economy had always in fact been based on native production, but now it became apparent that it always would be, since the hopes that had been reposed in plantation agriculture were not going to be fulfilled. A proportion of the existing planters might make a tolerable living, but they were not going to achieve the kind of success that would attract large additional drafts of European population and capital to the country. Plantations would remain a valuable ingredient in Uganda's economy but they could not become its principal substance. If there were to be further agricultural development it would have to be undertaken on a system in which the overhead costs were much lower and the expectations much more modest. This was quickly recognised in official circles. In October 1921 the Chief Secretary, who less than a year earlier had declared it to be the policy of the Government "to encourage European settlement and the

1. U.P. Ann. Rpts. D/A.
2. The total acreage is less than the sum of the acreages of individual crops, because of the practice of interplanting.
3. Thomas and Scott, *op. cit.*

investment of capital in every possible way"[1] set forth his revised views as follows: "As regards crops in Uganda, I consider the best policy is for the natives to grow these and for the Europeans to purchase and market them. This is, I believe, the Director of Agriculture's view, and it has proved to be the correct one."[2]

One immediate consequence of this abrupt change of front was a decision to add coffee to the list of "native" crops. This was not an entirely new departure. A robusta coffee tree or two had always formed part of the normal appurtenances of a Ganda homestead; and in 1907, before the arrival of European planters, and again in 1911, the Government had distributed seeds of the arabica species and instructional leaflets to the Ganda chiefs, not altogether without result.[3] During the next few years many chiefs and others in Buganda, in deference to official exhortations and, later, in imitation of their European neighbours, did plant small areas of coffee (and rubber); and in 1912 a few were even reported to be the owners of "fair-sized plantations."[4] In this year a beginning was made in another area. An enterprising district officer, Mr. P. W. Perryman, realising that cotton could not be grown on the slopes of Mount Elgon but that coffee could (this is in fact the one part of Uganda which is capable of yielding really high-quality coffee), caused one or two small plots to be planted by people of the newly tamed Gisu tribe.[5]

But meanwhile European planters were arriving and were not slow to voice a protest.[6] Like their counterparts in Kenya and Tanganyika at a later stage, they asserted that ill-tended native coffee plots would be breeding-grounds of pests and diseases; that the export of ill-prepared native coffee would damage the reputation of the plantation product; and that the possession of a few trees would provide natives with a perfect cover for theft from their European neighbours. They did not demand the prohibition of native cultivation, but they sought to insist on its strict supervision and on such measures as registration fees and the submission of returns, which would have effectively debarred all but a few literate and well-to-do Africans from participating in the industry. The Director of Agriculture, arguing that it would be "absurd to refrain from the rational development of the Protectorate's resources because of a small influx of planters," successfully fended off these demands. A "Produce Protection Ordinance" enacted in 1918 was allowed to remain a dead letter, and more drastic restrictions, approved in principle in 1920, were delayed in application until, with the collapse of the plantation industry, the demand for them had disappeared.

Nevertheless, between 1914 and 1922 native coffee planting made very little, if any, progress. The efforts of the Government and of the growers were concentrated almost exclusively on cotton, which, besides being less politically controversial, yielded much quicker returns, required less skill and attention, and in this period was probably more lucrative. The trees which had been planted in Bugisu grew and flourished (except for some which the Gisu surreptitiously killed because they had seen them holding sinister dances in the moonlight)[7] but the planted area remained negligible. A rough count taken in eight counties of Buganda in 1922 showed a total of 350,000 trees in native gardens, or the equivalent of about 450 acres.

Yet there was no real reason why coffee—arabica in Bugisu, robusta elsewhere—should not prosper under African management. The amount of skill and care necessary to its survival was really very small, and in the case of robusta practically nil. The argument that Africans could not or would not wait for a crop which took three years to mature had little force in Buganda. They were able to wait, because their subsistence was assured

1. E.S.A. S.M.P. 4806/26.
2. *Ibid.*, S.M.P. 5790/6.
3. *Ibid.*, S.M.P. 2118 and 2384.
4. *Ibid.*, Ann. Rpt. P.C. Buganda, 1912/13.
5. U.P. Ann. Rpt. D/A, 1912/13.
6. E.S.A. S.M.P. 2118, 4624, 5255.
7. Perryman, P. W. Native Witchcraft, *Uganda Journal* IV, 1936.

and their need for cash was not pressing; and as for their willingness, were they not accustomed, for the sake of bark-cloth, to plant trees with a much longer period of growth? The argument that cultivation had to be associated with processing plant that required a large cash outlay was equally untenable, for coffee could, though not without some loss of quality, be prepared either by the growers with the aid of very simple appliances or in central factories run on the same lines as cotton ginneries. There could be no doubt that capital and European management made for higher yields and better quality. But the question was whether the value added by these factors exceeded their cost; and in 1922 the answer appeared to be that it fairly clearly did not. Thus if coffee production were to expand at all it would have to do so without their aid.

By this time the opposition of the planters had begun to weaken. To some of them, indeed, who realised that it might be better to follow the precedent set by the cotton industry and to concentrate on the processing and marketing side, the expansion of native coffee-growing appeared no longer as a menace but rather as an opportunity. If they could buy, treat and sell it, the larger the native crop the better. This thesis was first set out by one of their number in a letter to the Press in 1922.[1] At the time this attitude was still exceptional, but when the Planters' Association discussed the matter with the Government early in 1925 they could no longer present a solid front of opposition.[2] Uganda was caught up in the backwash of the storm that raged fiercely in 1925-27 over native coffee-growing in Kenya and Tanganyika, but the issue was no longer really a live one here.

The Government began to take the matter seriously in hand in 1923.[3] Central nurseries were set out in all suitable districts, and seedlings of an improved type of robusta, having been given a proper start in life, were issued free to all comers. A specialist Coffee Officer joined the staff of the Department, and numbers of African instructors were recruited and trained. The apparatus of administrative "encouragement" was also set in motion. The Kabaka of Buganda was instructed to inform the chiefs and people of the county of Buddu, who had complained that cotton did not flourish for them, that they must grow coffee instead. The early progress of the industry in that particular area undoubtedly owed much to the energetic persuasions of the district officer, Mr. J. R. B. Postlethwaite, ably abetted, according to local tradition, by Chief Joseph Kisenyi, who promised coffee-growers exemption from the necessity of volunteering for work on the construction of the Jinja-Kampala railway. Again, however, besides those who planted coffee more or less under duress, there were individuals who, on their own showing, took to it of their own accord and planted much bigger areas than the minimum that was required of them. There were indeed ample economic reasons for their acting thus. Robusta coffee has been described, not unfairly, as the "perfect crop for the lazy farmer";[4] and in the middle and later 1920s market conditions were exceptionally favourable. Not only was the price fairly high, but the ratio between it and the price of cotton was much better than hitherto. In the period 1921-23 the export price of cotton, weight for weight, was nearly two-and-a-half times that of coffee, but in the years 1926-29 this differential practically disappeared, and in one of these years a ton of clean coffee actually fetched a higher price than a ton of lint cotton. Since it takes more than three tons of seed-cotton to make a ton of lint but only about two tons of dried "cherry" to make a ton of clean coffee, and since a ton of cherry coffee is produced with far less labour than a ton of seed-cotton, the relative attraction of coffee-growing is obvious enough.

The extension of African coffee-growing was nevertheless steady rather than spectacular. The crop became of some importance only in three limited

1. *Uganda Herald*, 27.x.22.
2. *Ibid.*, 22.i.26.
3. U.P. Ann. Rpt. D/A, 1923. E.S.A. S.M.P. 7599.
4. Huxley, E. *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*, London, 1949, p. 284.

areas. One, by far the largest, was the Masaka District of Buganda, of which the aforementioned county of Buddu formed much the biggest part. The second was Bugisu, where the experiments initiated in 1912 were prosecuted with greater vigour from 1922 onwards.[1] Between then and 1934 the planted area increased from a hundred to 4,000 acres and the output from thirty to 850 tons. The Gisu, who in the early 1920s went out in large numbers to work for wages in Buganda and in the Kenya Highlands, were thus enabled to make a good living in their native hills. The third and very minor coffee-growing area was the remote county of Bwamba, situated on the edge of the Congo forests in the west of the Toro District, where the climatic conditions were ideal, and whence no crop with a lower unit value could possibly have been exported.[2] The gradual shift of the coffee industry from its original plantation basis to one of peasant production is indicated in the following table.

TABLE 8[3]

ACRES PLANTED TO COFFEE

	1922	*1925*	*1928*	*1931*	*1934*
Non-Native	20,820	18,884	18,408	17,559	13,391
Native :					
Buganda	c.600	959	4,673	16,970	21,050
Bugisu	400	475	1,134	2,114	4,023
Western Province ..	—	353	2,924	1,816	5,276
Total	1,000	1,787	8,731	20,900	30,349

Increase in output naturally lagged behind the increase in acreage. But African producers gradually filled in, and eventually did far more than fill in, the gap left by the reduced scale of operations in the plantation sector. Exports reached a peak of 2,565 tons, nearly all plantation produce, in 1922, declined to 1,495 tons in 1925 and did not show a definite increase until after 1930. But by 1934 they had risen to 7,715 tons, well over half of which was native-grown.

After 1920, since the planters had ceased to be a major economic and political force, the controversies which had been agitating Government and people lost most of their urgency. In 1921-22, for the first time in many years, there were more people seeking employment than could find it. Thus, not only was there no further question of directing Africans into private European employment, but the Government could afford to bow to the mounting pressure of British public opinion and abolish the system of compulsory labour on public works and services, except for local tasks of such a nature as could be brought under the heading of customary communal labour. Since there was "practically no (European) demand for agricultural land,"[4] the problem posed by the conflict between the rights and interests of the native population and the needs of capitalistic agriculture receded into the background. The problem did not cease to be discussed, but the debate, though prolonged for many years, became increasingly academic. No formal solution was ever found, for it proved impossible to achieve, by any legal formula, the double object of assuring the native population ample land for the future and of leaving the way open for the alienation of small areas as the occasion arose. In theory the Government retained the power to dispose of all land outside Buganda to non-native purchasers, and occasionally, as in Toro in 1926-28, it exercised that right in practice, where there was unquestionably land to spare without trespassing on native rights of occupation. But the onus of proof was now laid heavily

1. U.P. Ann. Rpts. D/A. E.S.A. S.M.P. 6610. Ann. Rpts. P.C. E.P.
2. Winter, E. H. *Bwamba Economy*, East African Studies, No. 5. The Development and Organisation of the Bwamba Robusta Coffee Industry. *E.A.A.J.* III, 1937.
3. U.P. Ann. Rpts. D/A.
4. U.K. Annual Report on Uganda, 1922.

upon those who wished land to be alienated. For, as the Secretary of State was informed in 1922, "the prosperity of Uganda now depends wholly on peasant production, for the continuance and expansion of which undisturbed occupation of the land by the peasants is essential."[1] Thus, when in the following year the Colonial Office reaffirmed its earlier ban on the outright transfer either of Crown land or of native-owned land in Buganda to non-natives, it did so with the full concurrence of the Protectorate authorities, which had been emphatically lacking in 1916.

One of the reasons which led to this change of front was a hardening of opinion among the Ganda themselves. By this time the question of the alienation of estates had ceased to be merely a matter of the conflicting personal interest of chiefs, and was beginning to be influenced by a nascent patriotism which looked on the chiefly estates as being in a sense the national endowment of the Ganda people. In November, 1921, the Lukiiko had passed unanimously a resolution which condemned the transfer of freehold title to persons other than natives of Uganda. The resolution stands, and the maintenance of African proprietary rights in the soil, together with the maintenance of the position of the Kabaka, has ever since been the principal article of Ganda political faith. The position thus taken up by the Ganda authorities has been consistently endorsed by the Protectorate Government. For the latter soon began to make a virtue of its economic necessities. Peasant production, favoured in the first instance because it no longer had any serious competitor, was favoured also because it accorded well with the philosophy held during the 1920s by almost all those who were professionally or intellectually concerned with African affairs, namely, that capitalism and wage-labour were disruptive of the native social order, and that the maintenance of this social order was at least as important as material progress. The policies which were originally adopted as a matter of practical expediency hardened gradually into a political doctrine, which was upheld even when the expediency was no longer unquestioned. In 1946, indeed, the Governor pronounced it to be axiomatic that larger and quicker results could be achieved by placing agriculture under direct European management, but at the same time made it clear that this method of development could not and would not be adopted.[2] It had become a basic principle of the unwritten constitution, not merely that, in the terms of the formal declaration which the Government thought it necessary to issue in 1950, Uganda was "not to be developed as a country of non-native farming and settlement,"[3] but that no appreciable addition could be made to the 300-odd square miles of land which had passed into non-African hands at an earlier stage.

1. E.S.A. S.M.P. 27/117.
2. U.P. *A Development Plan for Uganda*, Entebbe, 1947, p. iii.
3. *Uganda Gazette*, 11.vii.50.

CHAPTER IV

THE RURAL ECONOMY BETWEEN THE WARS

It has been shown that the early 1920s saw the eclipse of alien agricultural enterprise in Uganda, and the consolidation of the system of native production, that is, of a system in which the production of crops, for export as well as for subsistence, was carried out within the existing framework of African society, leaving only marketing and processing (though this is a very important qualification) to be conducted by external agencies. In other ways too this period was a decisive turning-point in the fortunes of the people. They had already gained much from their connexion with European civilisation and the international market; a larger quantity and wider range of goods and services, far greater liberty of movement and action, better security of life and property, as well as access to new worlds of spiritual and intellectual experience. But for all that, the last decade of the nineteenth and the first two decades of the twentieth centuries had been for most of them a time of stress and tribulation. The establishment of the new regime had been attended in Buganda and Bunyoro by warfare of unprecedented ferocity and destructiveness, bringing pestilence and famine in their train. The opening up of the country had exposed it to the ravages of epidemic diseases, some wholly new, others already familiar but greatly intensified in their incidence. Plague, cholera, small-pox and typhoid had succeeded one another, and worst of all was the terrible visitation of sleeping-sickness, which is reckoned to have carried off 300,000 people between 1900 and 1908. Meanwhile the twin demons syphilis and gonorrhoea made ever-increasing inroads on the vitality of the race. Just as conditions were beginning to improve, there came the East African campaign of 1914-18, in which few men died from bullets but many thousands from disease. The war was followed by a new crop of epidemics, including the world-wide lethal influenza, and also, in the Eastern and Northern Provinces, by a severe famine. Contemporaries were agreed that the population of Buganda had suffered a serious, some said a catastrophic decline since the mid-nineteenth century; and vital statistics, unreliable though they were, suggested that the decline had not yet been stayed. Not least among the factors adverse to economic progress in Buganda during this period was the fall in the numbers of the people and the probable decay of vital energy among the survivors. In most of the remainder of the Protectorate the demographic situation was less alarming, but among the conquered and demoralised Nyoro it was almost certainly worse.

So far, moreover, the common people of Uganda had borne the main burden of development as well as reaping some of its fruits. They had been subjected to compulsory or near-compulsory labour in a variety of arduous and unfamiliar forms. For, apart from the great initial investment in railway construction, little capital had been injected into the Uganda economy, and progress had been achieved mainly by the utilisation of the crude manpower that was the country's principal existing asset. Such capital as had been invested had been applied largely to payment of this labour during the period of production rather than to increasing the efficiency of the productive process. Roads and buildings were the products of virtually unassisted human toil. So were the crops produced for export, whether on plantations or on African holdings, and their transport to the Lake ports had likewise depended mainly on the legs and neck muscles of human carriers.

From 1920 onwards the general conditions of life rapidly improved. After this there were no more actual famines in Uganda, and no more war or other serious disturbance until 1939. Medical science obtained a decisive mastery over the epidemic diseases and began to tackle the endemic scourges with slower but gradually increasing success. In 1924 recorded births at last exceeded recorded deaths in Buganda. Improved roads and the general use of the motor lorry soon did away with the head porterage that had been hitherto the most burdensome feature of economic life. Thus the worst impediments to growth were being removed, and the way was made clear for a forward surge of production, such as did actually take place between 1922 and 1925.

But there is another side to this. The victory of peasant production was not necessarily a victory for the peasant, nor did the great increase in cotton production necessarily imply a corresponding increase in the real welfare of the producers. On the contrary, it may have been, and probably was in part, a symptom of constricted opportunity and diminished economic freedom.

During the first two decades of the century there had been a large, various, and steadily increasing demand for labour, and it was impossible that this should not have been in some degree to the advantage of the labourers. Government officials wanted them to grow cotton, to make roads and to carry stcres; chiefs wanted them to grow cotton and also to perform the menial services that had been customary in the traditionally authoritarian societies; merchants wanted them to carry cotton to the ports; planters wanted them to dig the soil, to pick coffee and tap rubber. All these employers made their wishes known in somewhat pressing terms, so that the common people were obliged to put forth a greater total effort than they might have offered of their own accord. But at the same time a wide choice of activities was open to them, and they could not be prevented from sharing largely in the proceeds of development, or even from taking an increasing proportion of their new wealth in the form of leisure.

This paradox was well illustrated by the contrast between the fortunes of the cotton industry in Buganda and in the Eastern Province. Even before the war it had been evident that the rate of growth was lagging badly in Buganda. In 1912, indeed, a French firm, owners of a ginnery in Kampala, had complained that output in their catchment area was actually declining, and had suggested that the position might be remedied by the Government's "using perhaps a little pression."[1] Investigation had not revealed any conclusive evidence of a decline, but neither had it been possible to point to any marked expansion, such as had obviously been taking place throughout the Eastern Province. That the newer area should have shown a higher rate of increase was natural enough, but the figures (for what they were worth) indicated that Buganda was being actually outstripped. In 1910, twenty-eight acres of cotton had been planted in Buganda for every thousand of the population, and only fourteen in the Eastern Province—thirty-nine in Busoga, seventeen in Teso and three in Bukedi and Lango. By 1914 plantings had increased to thirty-eight acres per thousand in Buganda, but to eighty-one in the Eastern Province, with no less than 131 acres in the Teso District. During and immediately after the war Buganda seems to have made up a little of the lost ground, but the Eastern Province's lead was still a long one. In the 1919-20 season it produced 31,735 bales of cotton against a mere 13,550 from Buganda. (The output of the northern and western districts of the Protectorate, mainly because of the difficulties of transport, was still negligible.)

Around this time, indeed, the economic performance of the Ganda was a great disappointment to the authorities. The large hopes which had been placed in this highly intelligent and docile people, and in its progressive and co-operative governing class, seemed to be failing of fulfilment. The Governor told a London audience in 1920 that the Ganda for all "their dominant intelligence and capacity," appeared to be content to live quietly amongst their banana trees without making much effort to contribute to the

1. E.S.A. S.M.P. 2622/1.

progress of the country. The Eastern Province, he thought, was "altogether more virile and industrious and alive."[1] His interpretation of the reasons for this contrast were implicit in the epithets which he applied to Buganda: "forested and plutocratic." The first of these epithets contains the belief, which was neither new nor without validity, that this lush, green country, with its equable climate and unfailing food supply, was not one in which the more active virtues would naturally flourish. That they had so conspicuously flourished at an earlier stage was due to countervailing forces of a political character, and these forces had lost much of their former power. It was here that the plutocratic character of Ganda society became relevant. The belief that the existence of a wealthy upper-class was an adverse factor was a new judgment, and one which would have surprised an earlier generation of policy-makers. For it had been widely assumed that the conversion of the Ganda chiefs into landed proprietors, besides being a political necessity, would be conducive to economic progress, that the chiefs, being granted security of tenure, would set to work to develop their estates. But in practice most of them had adopted easier methods of enrichment, converting their title deeds directly into cash or levying money tribute from the peasants in lieu of the customary labour services. The dynamic young revolutionaries of 1890, the chiefly entrepreneurs who had helped to launch the cotton industry in 1904, had gradually become a satisfied, conservative class. By 1916 the Director of Agriculture was already attributing the relatively poor output of cotton in Buganda to the "remarkable apathy" of the chiefs, and this in turn to the tenurial system peculiar to that Province.[2]

Yet it may be doubted whether this interpretation was altogether correct. The Ganda chiefs were by no means the only plutocrats in Uganda: one of the county chiefs of Busoga was estimated in 1924 to enjoy an annual income of £4,000 per annum, derived from various forms of tax and tribute.[3] And the legal status of the Ganda landowner-chiefs in no way prevented them from using customary labour services, like their colleagues in the Eastern Province, for the production of cotton. Even if they did not do this, they still had a direct interest in the expansion of cultivation, for it had become the practice to levy tithes on the cotton produced by the peasants.[4] The real reason for the slackening of the economic impetus in Buganda lay, it may be suggested, not in the growing "apathy" of the chiefs, but in the diminution of their power. We come back again to this point, that the Ganda, living as they did at the centre of European government and of European missionary, commercial and agricultural enterprise, had too many income-earning opportunities open to them to be amenable to the kind of economic discipline under which the remoter peoples laboured. The demands made upon them tended to cancel one another out. Thus the planters constantly complained that masses of Ganda escaped the obligations of wage-labour by claiming to be in the service of the chiefs, while, conversely, Government officials alleged that there were "hundreds of lazy natives sheltering under the wing of the planters"[5] and thereby escaping the obligations of cotton-growing and customary labour. The Ganda, in short, grew less cotton than other tribes because they were freer and fundamentally better off.

Now it is apparent that the partial eclipse of the planters led to a sensible weakening of the economic position of the common people of Uganda, to a strengthening of the influence of the officials and the chiefs. If the output of cotton rose rapidly between 1922 and 1925, it was partly no doubt because standards were rising, wants increasing, but it was also because the range of alternative opportunities had narrowed and because the pressures that were exerted from above were now concentrated on this sector. In 1923-24 an

1. Coryndon, R. Uganda, *United Empire*, n.s. XI, 1920.
2. E.S.A. S.M.P. 2622/21, 2198/83.
3. *Ibid.*, S.M.P. 6025, report of committee on dues and tributes.
4. See below, p. 49.
5. E.S.A, Ann. Rpt., P.C. Buganda, 1912/13.

intensive propaganda for the extension of cotton planting was directed against the peasants, especially in Buganda, where the young Kabaka took the lead in impressing the wishes of Government upon his people.

Before long, however, the balance of economic and political forces operating on agriculture was altered by a new turn of the wheel. The furore which had been aroused in Britain by evidence of "forced labour" in Kenya had rendered the Colonial Office and the Colonial Service exceedingly wary of the use of compulsion in any form; and the authorities soon became aware that encouragement and propaganda could be and often were construed by African chiefs in ways that would not stand Parliamentary examination. As a later Governor drily explained, "in October, 1924, just before the arrival of the Ormsby-Gore Commission, it became necessary to issue to all Provincial Commissioners a circular deprecating the excessive zeal shown by chiefs in fining and imprisoning natives for failing to show sufficient activity in planting."[1] Even in the following year punishments for this offence were still being recorded in native court returns. As a matter of fact, the Commission, while setting its face against improper forms of pressure, endorsed the official view that Africans could not be allowed to remain idle. The people continued to be left in no doubt that authority required them to grow cotton; and to this day there persists among the Ganda a residual feeling that production in general and cotton production in particular are obligations which they owe to Government—some even believe them to be obligations which are written into that sacred compact, the Agreement of 1900. But from the middle 1920s onwards the cruder sanctions fell into disuse, and the activities of the peasants began to reflect, much more straightforwardly than hitherto, their own economic needs and desires.

In relaxing its economic pressure at this time the Government was moved in part by the belief that coercive measures, besides being undesirable had ceased to be necessary. In the first place, the expansion of exports, and of cotton exports in particular, was no longer a matter of such pressing urgency as it had been hitherto. The Protectorate was comfortably solvent and free from Treasury control; and at the same time shortage of raw material had ceased to be Lancashire's principal anxiety—indeed, it was taking a steadily diminishing proportion of Uganda's crop. In the second place, it was believed that the people of Uganda could now be trusted to grow large quantities of cotton without being subjected to the kind of pressure that had hitherto been applied to them.

Up to a point, this confidence was not misplaced. The output of cotton was on the whole maintained at its former level during the later 1920s, even though the trend of prices was not such as to inspire renewed enthusiasm among the growers. But on the other hand the rapid expansion of the previous years was not sustained.

It will be observed that, while the size of the crop in any one year was, of course, at the mercy of the weather, the extent of cultivation fluctuated

TABLE 9[2]

COTTON PRODUCTION IN THE 1920s

Season	*Area Planted* (acres '000) *Buganda*	*E. Prov.*	*N. Prov.*	*W. Prov.*	*Total*	*Exports* *Bales*	*£'000*	*Average Price* (Shs. per 100 lb., f.o.b. Mombasa)
1919/20	47	90	23	2	162	47,695	3,779	399
1924/25	192	301	81	10	584	196,038	4,686	119
1925/26	190	322	76	19	607	180,860	3,052	84
1926/27	173	323	79	16	591	131,728	1,691	64
1927/28	200	250	71	12	533	138,486	2,475	89
1928/29	200	376	103	20	699	204,057	3,313	81
1929/30	199	363	81	20	663	129,122	1,555	60

1. U.P. Leg. Co., 8th session, 5.ix.29.
2. U.P. Ann. Rpts. D/A.

in sympathy with changes in the price level, an indication that production was now governed largely by strictly economic considerations. (Oddly enough, the correspondence was least marked in Buganda, where the growers were undoubtedly more sophisticated and economically responsive than elsewhere. The acreage figures, however, were not nearly accurate enough for any refinement of inference to be possible.) The producers' response cannot properly be called a rational one, since they had not learned that this year's price was no guide at all to next year's. But at least it was technically correct and not "perverse": they appear to have proportioned their effort according to the expected reward. Caution is however needed in the interpretation of these figures, for there were other factors at work as well. The marked increase in the cotton acreage of the Eastern and Northern Provinces in the 1928-29 season was attributed at the time, not to enthusiasm engendered by the relatively high prices received for the previous crop, but to the fact that the people were under an obligation to earn additional income in order to repay the Government for famine relief earlier in the year.[1]

A very important corollary to the abandonment of coercive or quasi-coercive measures for the promotion of agricultural production was a drastic revision of the economic functions of the chiefs, who had been the principal instruments of coercion. The middle 1920s, indeed, witnessed changes in the organisation of native agriculture that were in some ways of greater significance than the earlier shift of emphasis from plantation to peasant agriculture.

At the very beginning, as we have seen, cotton production was organised communally and carried out under the control of the chief like any other collective task such as the building of his enclosure or the repair of a road. How the proceeds were shared, or even whether they were shared at all, is not very clear, but it can be taken for granted that the major part went to the chief, as the major part of all forms of wealth, in such societies as Buganda and Busoga, had always gone. That the chief, in Buganda, was now also the landowner had nothing to do with the form of agricultural organisation. The chief could command his people's services, not because he had title deeds but because he had authority. The distribution of land titles merely determined which individuals would wield authority in each locality. The organisation was the same in Busoga, where the chiefs had not become proprietors. It was the same, too, in Bukedi, Teso and Lango, where customary labour services had amounted at most to a rudimentary form of boon-work and where the individuals now in power owed their authority mainly to British nomination and support.

This communal system, unavoidable in the first stages of the introduction of an unfamiliar crop, began to seem unduly cumbersome as soon as the industry had become established. It was irksome to the peasants to work in central fields rather than on their own homestead plots. It was also irksome for the chiefs to have to direct their labours. After a very few seasons, therefore, the communal system began to be replaced by a pattern which may be called seigneurial. The peasants continued to grow some cotton under the chief's orders and for his benefit, but they also began to grow it on their own holdings and to sell it on their own account. Now a seigneurial pattern of this type is inherently unstable. Where a money economy exists, but capital, enterprise and managerial skill are scarce, it is to be expected that the demesne farm will lose ground to the peasant holding, that week-working serfs will steadily be transformed into dues-paying tenants. This process undoubtedly took place in Uganda, but at a markedly different pace in different parts of the country. The transformation appears to have been swiftest and most far-reaching in Buganda, where economic and social life were soonest and most thoroughly permeated by the use of money. The terms of the law drafted for enactment by the Lukiiko in 1916, when it was intended

1. U.P. Leg. Co., 8th session, 11.x.28.

to make cotton-growing a legal obligation, can probably be taken as reflecting the standard practice of that time. Every county chief, it was to be decreed, shall cultivate at least 1½ acres of cotton, every sub-county chief one acre, every parish chief three-quarters, every village headman half and every peasant a quarter of an acre.[1] It seems therefore that there were at this time both independent peasant cotton plots and larger chiefs' cotton fields cultivated by tribute-labour. But it does not sound as though the demesne fields were at all extensive or the labour obligations at all onerous. The proceeds of demesne agriculture, however, did not exhaust the profits drawn by the chiefs from cotton production, nor did labour on the demesne fields exhaust the obligations of the peasants. Ganda custom provided not only for the rendering of labour services, which since 1902 had been partially commuted by the payment of a money tribute called *busulu*, but also for the rendering of gifts of produce such as barkcloth, beer and eggs. On the analogy of this custom, it had become the practice for the landowner-chief to exact a share (a tenth part seems to have been the norm) of the cotton produced by the peasants on their own account. By the 1920s we hear very little of tribute-labour or demesne agriculture in Buganda but a great deal of the cotton tithe, or *nvujjo*.[2] It is clear that production was passing steadily into the hands of peasant cultivators, each with his little cotton patch contiguous with his wife's food garden, and that the landowner-chiefs were steadily being transformed into a rentier class, living off tribute and tithe and playing no longer even a supervisory role in the process of production.

In the Eastern Province, on the other hand, where money was less widely diffused and where the peasants were less prone to undertake production of their own accord, there was no equivalent to the Ganda system of tithe payments. Here a large part, perhaps a major part, of the total crop long continued to be grown by unpaid labour for the profit of the chiefs.[3] Throughout the Province, even though they had no real customary basis outside Busoga, the chiefs' claims to labour services had been supported by the administration, though a month, or in some areas fifty-two days, a year was generally recognised to be the legitimate maximum. This practice, originally intended to be merely for the maintenance of the chiefs' dignity and authority, gave them the opportunity to embark on large-scale cotton production, an opportunity which they were the more likely to take in that they enjoyed neither salaries nor marketable rights in land. Some of the Teso chiefs were reckoned to have made up to £700 out of cotton in 1924, a figure which implies the existence of fields of 300 or 400 acres. In this district, and to a lesser extent in Bukedi there was a special factor at work. The introduction of the ox-drawn plough had produced a distinct advantage of scale, such as did not exist elsewhere, and a concentration of production in the hands of the few who could afford the outlay on this relatively expensive item of equipment. Ploughing did not greatly reduce the labour requirement for each acre of cultivation, since the weeding and picking had still to be carried out by hand, but it did make for larger units of production.

So there emerged the paradox, that it was not the landed proprietors of Buganda but the chiefs of the Eastern Province who were most actively engaging in production and in the development of their "estates," even though they held no legal title to the land. Observation of this paradox led to a drastic change in land policy, and in particular to a reappraisal of the virtues of individual proprietorship, at any rate of the kind which had taken shape in Buganda. When Mr. Spire, in 1913, attacked the Land Settlement Committee's proposals for Busoga, he did so on two grounds. He rejected, as we have seen, the thesis that the largest possible amount of land should be

1. E.S.A. S.M.P. 2622/22.
2. *Ibid.*, U.P. Leg. Co., 6th session, 22.x.25, 15.xii.26.
3. E.S.A. S.M.P. 6025.

earmarked for European enterprise, but he also criticised the proposal that such land as was to be reserved for native use should take the form of estates granted on the Buganda model to individual chiefs. The ideas behind his protest, which soon became the orthodoxy of the provincial administrators, were essentially conservative ideas, inspired less by egalitarian concern for the interests of the peasantry than by the desire to preserve the existing social and economic order. Since it was assumed, and at the time probably correctly assumed, that if the chiefs did not take the lead in growing cotton, very little cotton would be grown, and since the Soga and other Eastern Province chiefs appeared to be taking the lead more effectively than the landlords of Buganda, there seemed to be no justification for extension of the Ganda system to other areas of the Protectorate. And in other ways too the granting of individual estates was thought to be undesirably subversive. From the administrators' point of view the private ownership of land as a saleable asset made the chiefs too independent of Government and weakened the bonds of feudal authority. As time went on, as estates changed hands through inheritance and sale, landownership in Buganda was tending to be divorced from political office and hereditary rank; already by 1915 there were fears of the emergence of "a discontented class of disinherited sons of chiefs."[1] It seemed much better to continue the existing system whereby the chiefs drew, in the form of dues and services, an income which was sufficient to maintain their dignity and position but which was strictly contingent on their tenure of office. Nor did the administrators look with favour on a system of peasant proprietorship, for this too would be conducive to indiscipline. Their emancipation, it was recognised, would some day become inevitable, but for the present, Spire wrote in 1913, "the natives are quite unfitted for individualism. The feudal and communal system must be supported in every way."[2]

As we have seen, no action was taken on any of the several reports compiled by the Land Settlement Committee between 1913 and 1920. The chiefs of the Soga and the other aristocratic tribes were not granted titles to land, but neither was the granting of such titles definitely excluded for the future. But in the meantime further changes were taking place in official thinking. By 1918 certain administrators were beginning to question the desirability of tribute-labour and chiefly cotton fields.[3] The grounds of their disquiet were not yet either ethical or economic but political. Direct involvement in economic processes was not consonant with the dignity of a governing class; it distracted the chiefs from their proper administrative tasks; it corrupted their characters (one young Soga chief was denounced for being "immersed in trade and bad habits").[4] Another point on which stress was laid was that chiefs who were allowed to profit from their people's labour could not be expected to be zealous in encouraging them to seek outside employment. Official thinking was beginning to move towards the concept of a salaried native administration, functionally divorced from landownership and from production. Opinion, however, was by no means unanimous on this point; some officials continued to urge that it was essential to the maintenance of social discipline, as well as to the production of a satisfactory volume of cotton, that the chiefs should continue to have control over the labour of the common people.

During the early 1920s, however, a more revolutionary change of policy took place, which derived from a thorough-going transference of the Government's interest and esteem from the landowners to the peasants, from the ruling aristocracies to the masses of the people. For this change there was a wide variety of reasons, some moral or sentimental, others economic, others again political, some stemming from a reappraisal of local problems,

1. E.S.A. S.M.P.'2198/83.
2. E.S.A. S.M.P. P.C. E.P., 1912/13.
3. *Ibid.*, S.M.P.s 1371/77, 6025/5.
4. *Ibid.*, Ann. Rpt. P.C. E.P., 1917/18.

others from an alteration in the climate of opinion in Britain and in the orientations of colonial policy.

One reason was the negative one that the political support of the leaders of African society had become much more dispensable now that British rule was based on unchallengeable foundations; their co-operation could be bought at a lower price; their resentment was less feared. The existing chiefs, indeed, were very much out of favour with the Protectorate authorities. Forceful personalities, whose aid had been invaluable in the turbulent period when administration was being established, had now become a nuisance and a stumbling-block. Their arbitrary methods were not appropriate to the more orderly form of government that was now possible; their quest for personal power and wealth was out of harmony with current social policies. And in the economic sphere it was beginning to be suspected that, so far from being the indispensable agents of progress, their role was a parasitical one. It was the peasant cultivator, after all, who did the work, and it was no longer believed that he would do it only under duress. Might he not even produce more if he were assured of a larger share of the fruits of his toil? The merchants, who were perhaps the best judges, now thought that he would. They also believed (though their reasons are not entirely clear) that a more equitable distribution of incomes would lead to larger sales of British goods.[1] Certainly the peasants of Uganda had no heartier champions in this period than the spokesmen of the European commercial community, who lost no opportunity of drawing attention to the exactions of landowners and chiefs and of pressing for a reform of the economic system.[2]

Quite apart from political and economic considerations there were obvious moral questions to be posed. If it were unethical to constrain Africans to work for European employers, could it be right that they should be constrained to labour for the profit of their own chiefs? If gross inequalities of fortune were deplorable in Europe, could they be desirable in Africa? In principle, the answers were clearly "No," and justification of the existing system on the ground of its conformity with native custom was increasingly held to be unwarrantable. For the current exactions of money and labour were in part not based on custom at all, and, in so far as they were so based, practices which had been reasonable and acceptable in the old economy had become onerous and oppressive in the new.

The policy which gradually emerged during the early 1920s was, in outline, as follows. Outside Buganda, the chiefs would not be granted freehold titles, nor would they be allowed to retain indefinitely a feudal dominion over their people. Instead, those of them whose political services were still required would be converted into salaried officials. The peasants were to be given effective security of tenure immediately and formal rights of ownership when they were ready to receive them. Within Buganda, the transfer of land into peasant ownership was to receive every encouragement, and in the meantime the tenants were to be given all possible protection against exploitation. These policies, however, were not adopted without much controversy, some resistance from the more conservative of the provincial administrators and a number of temporary deviations. Nor were they fully implemented in every respect. Outside Buganda some elements of the feudal structure managed to survive the impact of the reforming impulse.

The Buganda Agreement of 1900 now came in for severe criticism, not for the old reason that it had left too much land in the hands of the natives in general, but for the new reason that it had given too much land to the chiefs, had "conferred immense and largely unintended benefits"[3] upon a small section of the community to the detriment of the laborious peasant

1. One of them argued that the peasants, if given the chance, would buy Manchester fabrics, Birmingham hardware, Coventry cycles, whereas the wealthy chiefs spent their money on American cars. (E.S.A. S.M.P. 6025A/82.)
2. *Uganda Herald*, 17.vi.21. U.P. Leg. Co., 2nd session, 9.vi.21; 6th session, 22.x.25.
3. E.S.A. S.M.P. 5063/101.

masses. Poor Sir Harry Johnston became the target for universal obloquy or at best was patronisingly forgiven for a blunder committed in ignorance of the true nature of indigenous land tenure.[1] The possibility that a system which had been evolved within the framework of a subsistence economy might not be well suited to the situation created by the railway and the export trade, was either disregarded or met with a plea for evolutionary and gradual change, as much as possible unlike the "crude innovation" that Johnston had made in Buganda. It was, however, quite true that individual proprietorship of the kind that had been introduced here was not proving itself particularly appropriate to current forms of production. Very few of the Ganda landowners had the means or the ability to manage their estates, which ranged from a quarter to eight square miles, as agricultural units. The actual unit of cultivation, in the great majority of cases, was the simple peasant holding of four to six acres, so it was natural to assume that the superimposed landlords were at best otiose and at worst an intolerable incubus. "The ultimate desideratum," according to the Acting Governor in 1922, was "the division of the land among a large number of peasant proprietors."[2] And again in 1924 the Governor, Sir Geoffrey Archer, told the Secretary of State that the policy of his Government was to "do everything possible to encourage the appearance and multiplication of the peasant proprietor."[3]

As a matter of fact, the peasant proprietor was beginning to emerge of his own accord in Buganda.[4] The mere operation of inheritance, in a society which did not clearly recognise the rights of primogeniture, was tending to the disintegration of the original great estates, and this tendency was being reinforced to an increasing extent by purchase. The supreme object of every ambitious peasant was to acquire rights of ownership in land—not because the "landless" man was in any danger of destitution (for with thousands of fertile square miles still covered by elephant-grass and bush the *use* of land could be obtained easily enough) but partly for the sake of greater independence[5] and partly to secure entry into the higher ranks of society, to which title deeds were up to a point an automatic passport. As a result, considerable numbers of smaller property units, ten to a hundred acres in extent, more consonant with the actual scale of agricultural operations, were beginning to appear side by side with the surviving great estates. But, although this development was welcomed by the Government, it clearly did not provide a complete or early solution of the problem. If the natural processes of inheritance and sale were left to work unassisted, the emancipation of the peasantry would take several generations; and the authorities therefore decided that positive action would have to be taken.

They were assisted to this conclusion by the agitation which broke out in Buganda in 1922 under the name of the "Bataka" movement. The causes of this movement were complex. In part it was what it professed to be, the protest of the hereditary clan leaders, whose rights, it was asserted, had been overriden in the land settlement of 1900 by the revolutionary oligarchy. In part it was the product of personal dissensions within the governing group, and in part it expressed the grievances of the smaller landowners, arising out of the land tax of 1921, which bore much more hardly on the petty squire than on the owner of great estates. The one thing that it almost certainly was not was a peasants' revolt. But it nevertheless served to focus the attention of the Protectorate authorities on agrarian discontents and especially

1. For example, the Governor, Sir William Gowers, told Legislative Council in 1929: "Mistakes have been made in the rather remote past in matters of land tenure, due to an imperfect knowledge of African ideals and customs, as opposed to ideals, customs and laws imported from overseas." (U.P. Leg. Co., 9th session, 31.x.29.)
2. E.S.A. S.M.P. 27/117.
3. E.S.A. S.M.P. 8386/4.
4. See Mukwaya, A. B. *Land Tenure in Buganda*, East African Studies, No. 1, Kampala, 1953.
5. See letter from Mr. David Bassude in the *Uganda Herald*, 17.vi.21, in which it is explained that people bought small pieces of land in order to "free themselves from the chiefs' pernicious outside influences they adopted and brought to bear on the men who are living on their land."

on the exactions, said to be increasingly onerous, of the landowner-chiefs, both great and small.

It is always very difficult, when one reads denunciations of social and economic abuses, to decide whether oppression and extortion have really become more severe, or whether public and official opinion has merely become more sensitive to their existence. There are indeed, as has been suggested above, reasons for believing that economic change after 1920 tended to strengthen the power of the chiefly and landowning classes. On the other hand there are good *a priori* grounds for supposing that the landowners' exactions cannot have been very onerous. Even in the old days, although a Ganda commoner would not have dreamt of denying in principle that his lord had a right to his labour or his produce or both, he was quick to withdraw his service from any unduly oppressive master. And under British rule his mobility and his independence had undoubtedly increased. Moreover since land was not at this time a scarce factor it seems impossible that people could have been made to pay very dearly for its use. How dearly they did pay it is not easy to discover. In theory, *nvujjo* was supposed to represent a tithe. The standard practice, however, appears to have been that the peasant was allowed to grow one quarter-acre plot free of charge but had to hand over 25 lbs. of cotton, or its money equivalent, for each additional plot.[1] This would have represented between a quarter and a fifth of the normal yield, and probably did constitute a substantial deterrent to increased production. In comparison with the rates prevalent under the metayage system in many other countries, the levy was a light one. On the other hand, it had less warrant than the true metayage payments, since the landowner here provided neither seed nor equipment. Moreover, in addition to the *nvujjo* on cotton the peasant had to pay a tribute or *busulu*, normally five shillings a year or the equivalent of some 30-40 lbs. of cotton, which was levied on all residents on an estate, regardless of the extent or quality of their holdings or the money value of their crops. These standard figures for *nvujjo* and *busulu*, however, were subject to large variations according to the sophistication of the peasants and the character of the landlords; and if on some estates they may have been exceeded there were others on which the rate was lighter.

The "Bataka" agitation gave the Protectorate Government a powerful political lever for the enforcement of reform. In 1927, after important changes of personnel in the Buganda Government, the Lukiiko was persuaded to enact the "Busulu and Nvujjo Law," which reflected the current concern of higher authority for the interests of the peasants.[2] Considering the disfavour into which the system of large estates, and their owners, had now fallen, and the strictures which officials had recently passed on "the abominable system of landowners' tithes,"[3] the reforms were of a very moderate character. The collection of *busulu* and *nvujjo* was not forbidden; on the contrary it now received statutory recognition. But henceforward the exactions were limited to what the authorities regarded as reasonable figures, *busulu* to Shs. 10 per annum for each holding (of which the landowner was to receive Shs. 8/50 and the Government Shs. 1/50) and *nvujjo* to Shs. 4 per annum in respect of each acre or part of an acre under cotton or coffee. At the time these were quite substantial figures (*busulu* was calculated as representing a month's wages and *nvujjo* as a tenth part of the value of the crops), and with the fall in prices which took place shortly afterwards the burden of the peasants became heavier than had been intended or than it would have been in the absence of legislation. In the longer run, however, the increasing wealth of the country and the fall in the value of money were to render the peasants' payments almost nugatory. More important than the limitation of exactions was the essential corollary, the prohibition of

1. E.S.A. S.M.P. 2622/86.
2. Mukwaya, *op. cit.* The text is in the *Laws of Uganda*, 1951, VII, 1238.
3. E.S.A. Ann. Rpt. P.C. Buganda, 1925.

eviction for any cause other than the non-payment of the statutory dues. In this way a long stride was made towards the official ideal of peasant proprietorship. For henceforward every cultivator in Buganda would be possessed of an interminable, heritable tenancy, subject only to quit-rent and tithe, the real value of which was eventually to dwindle into insignificance. Such holdings were generally only roughly demarcated, but it was understood that they should include enough land for the subsistence of the peasant's family and for the standard family cotton-field, normally with some small reserve of waste. But owing to the sparseness of population an energetic tenant was often allowed to put much larger areas under crops, and land that he had once planted could not thereafter be withdrawn from his use. The rights of the landowner were restricted to the collection of fixed and moderate dues and to the exploitation of such land as was not included in any peasant holding.

Outside Buganda, where the land rights of the governing class had not received any legal recognition, it seemed possible to go further and eliminate them altogether. By 1922 the authorities had reached a firm decision that freehold estates would not be granted to the chiefs of Busoga and Bunyoro.[1] Subsequent petitions from the Soga chiefs, requesting that they be placed on an equal footing with their counterparts in Buganda were almost angrily rejected.[2] The authorities now had scant sympathy with those who, it was suggested, were merely anxious to be allowed to live in affluence at the expense of the peasantry. They did indeed relent in 1930 to the extent of offering estates totalling eighty-five square miles to members of the "old families" of Busoga. This offer, however, was spurned by the Soga and was not renewed.[3]

In Bunyoro, although freehold titles had not been granted, the aristocracy, with the acquiescence of the administration, had been quietly consolidating its quasi-feudal domains into private estates, the peasant occupiers being constrained to pay *busulu* at the rate of Shs. 7 per annum. But this process was brought to a halt as a result of a commission of enquiry in 1931,[4] which recommended that *busulu* should be converted into a native authority tax, from which salaries would be paid to chiefs holding recognised administrative posts, and that terminable compensation should be paid to existing "landowners" for the loss of tribute-income. "If, as the outcome," commented the commissioners, "there is evolved a nation of small farmers, we shall be well content." As an additional means to that end they recommended the adoption of the procedure already introduced in Toro and Ankole, whereby the peasants could obtain certificates of occupancy giving them legal security of tenure of defined holdings. Very little use was made of this provision, however; it appeared that the Nyoro, Toro and Nkole peasants were content with the security afforded them by customary law.

In the Eastern Province the rights of the peasantry have never been defined by any legal enactment or provided with documentary support. Nevertheless, as an administrator remarked in 1940, "the peasant has quietly consolidated his position as an individual occupier."[5] The ideal of a free peasantry, however, required that the cultivator should have control not only over his land but also over his labour. It was necessary, in other words, to eliminate the system of tribute-labour and servile cotton cultivation that had been allowed to grow up throughout the Eastern and parts of the Northern Provinces. A first step was taken in 1922, when it was made optional for the Soga peasants to commute their labour obligation for a money tribute. A more radical change was brought about in 1926, though like the almost contemporary reforms in Buganda, it was still quite

1. E.S.A. S.M.P. 2198/291.
2. *Ibid.*, S.M.P. 2125.
3. Fallers, L. A. *Bantu Bureaucracy, op. cit.*
4. U.P. *Land Tenure and the Kibanja System in Bunyoro*, 1931.
5. Robertson, D. W. *The Historical Considerations Contributing to the Soga System of Land Tenure*, Entebbe, 1940, p. 36.

moderate in character. The chiefs were not altogether deprived of their right to unpaid labour, but the maximum was reduced from a month to twelve days per annum, commutable for a money payment of Shs. 4. A further Shs. 6, representing the balance of eighteen days' labour, was paid into a central fund, from which, with the addition of poll-tax rebates, salaries were disbursed to the more important chiefs. Thus, while in money terms the peasant's contribution was no lighter than before, he became increasingly master of his time. The final step was taken ten years later, when all personal tribute, whether in labour or in cash, was done away with.[1]

So during the inter-war period there took shape a new pattern of agrarian society. At the bottom was an undifferentiated mass of free peasant cultivators, the *de facto* proprietors of small holdings which yielded them both food and a modest money income. Above them was an administrative hierarchy of salaried chiefs, who, apart from the residual *busulu* and *nvujjo* in Buganda, no longer derived any direct profit from the land or its products. They were still expected to stimulate and in some degree supervise the cultivation of cotton, but this was now simply part of their function as Government officials, and no longer a function of landownership or feudal dominion.

This at least was the theory. But the reforms of the 1920s left the landowners and chiefs in possession of one very important asset—their control over the uncultivated and unallocated land. The waste was at their disposal whether, as in Buganda, they were its legal owners or, as in the other traditionally aristocratic societies, they merely had the customary function of allotting it to new claimants. So long as there was land to spare for all, this power of allocation remained purely formal, the chief receiving no more than a nominal payment, such as a chicken, in recognition of his authority. But as population grew and cultivation encroached upon the waste, the remaining vacant land began to command a steadily increasing price, and after the Second World War its disposal was to become a lucrative source of income for the landowners of Buganda and the village chiefs of Busoga.[2]

There was another way in which landowners and chiefs could make use of their rights over the uncultivated land: they could develop it themselves. As we have seen, the general trend during the 1920s was towards small-scale peasant farming. Neither economic circumstances nor Government policy was favourable to the existence of large units of production, whether they took the form of European plantations or of African chiefs' demesnes. But at the same time a new factor was beginning to reverse this trend. Landowners had lost control of the labour of their own tenants and dependants, but cheap labour of another kind now presented itself.

Only a part of Uganda had so far really come under the influence of commercial agriculture. Cotton cultivation was well established in Buganda and the Eastern Province and in the Lango and Acholi districts of the Northern Province, but the whole of the west of the Protectorate, with the possible exception of Bunyoro, lay so far from railway stations or Lake ports that cotton-growing was not really a remunerative occupation. It paid the Alur and Lugbara, the Kiga and Nkole, better to send their young men to earn wages in the more favoured central districts of the Protectorate, especially Buganda. For some time the economic forces which drove these people eastward were reinforced by Governmental policies; they were not encouraged to take up cotton-growing at home because their labour was required by the Public Works Department and the planters. After 1920, when the need for wage-labourers began to carry less weight than the administrators' desire for stable and settled societies, this policy was reversed. Everything possible was now done to foster local agriculture and so to keep the young men at home, in the bosom of their families and under the authority of their

1. Fallers, *loc. cit.* E.S.A. S.M.P. 6025.
2. Fallers, *op. cit.* p. 165. Richards, A. I. (ed.), *Economic Development and Tribal Change*, Cambridge, 1954, pp. 128-29.

chiefs. But there was not a great deal that could be done. Cotton-growing remained as unprofitable as ever, partly because of the cost of transport and partly because of unfavourable climatic conditions. Experiments were made with various crops of higher value, but except in Bunyoro, where tobacco provided an important supplement to cotton, and in the county of Bwamba in Toro, where coffee flourished, they had very little success. Buganda continued to attract steadily increasing numbers of migratory workers, not only from the western districts of Uganda but also from the far more populous countries of Ruanda and Urundi and to a lesser extent from the Lake Province of Tanganyika. At first they came mainly to work for European employers, both public and private. But it soon became a common practice for them to earn their food by working in the evenings for neighbouring Ganda farmers. From this it was a short step to full-time paid employment; and in due course, as plantation employment declined, the Ganda could reckon on a regular and ever-increasing supply of wage-labour. During the 1920s a vast, unobtrusive tide of migration set in towards Buganda, a vast recombination of the factors of production.[1] On all the roads that led towards Kampala came a raggle-taggle army of producers, moving from lands where labour was nearly valueless to the region where fertile soil, abundant space and ready markets made it relatively dear. Some of them, the independent-minded Alur and Lugbara in particular, chose to grow cotton on their own account, renting land for a season from its Ganda proprietors. Others, especially the Ruanda, many of whom were eager to escape permanently from their own poor and strictly governed land, sought and obtained permanent holdings, on which they settled down to live in the same terms and in the same manner as the Ganda peasantry. The majority of them, however, offered their services for hire; and since, as migrants temporarily bereft of the means of subsistence, they could not afford to put a high value on their labour, their presence gave the Ganda an excellent opportunity to expand production beyond the limits of the ordinary family holding. Thus, after all, the demesne farm made a new appearance on the scene; many landowners began to cultivate cotton on a relatively imposing scale. And not only landowners. There was nothing that debarred the ordinary Ganda cultivator from taking Ruanda and Nkole labourers into his employ and pushing the frontiers of his holding further back into the surrounding waste. The statistics of acreage, however, do not allow us to suppose that this process was carried very far during the 1920s. We may suspect that most Ganda used foreign labour, as many of them still do, as a substitute rather than as a supplement to their own. And the employment of hired labour, though increasingly common, was not by any means a universal feature of Ganda rural economy. The normal unit of agriculture even in Buganda, and the all but universal unit everywhere else, was still the little family homestead, with its two or three acres of food crops and its acre or two of cotton, tilled entirely or mainly by the members of the family.

By 1930 the people of Uganda had settled down to the new way of life that had been mapped out for them by British rule and the railway.[2] It was a quiet, on the whole an unexciting and unexacting life. There was no more war and no more politics except in a very muted form. Person and property were as secure as laws and magistrates could make them. The impact of external trade had been absorbed and the economy reconstituted on a new basis, of which the essential element was the production of cotton, supplemented by the production of coffee in Bugisu and parts of Buganda, of tobacco in Bunyoro and of groundnuts in the Eastern and Northern Provinces. The effect of economic change on the lives of the people had, on the whole, been surprisingly small, whether it is the pattern of activity or the pattern of consumption that is brought under review. They had not to any considerable extent been either driven or drawn into systems of production that were

1. See Powesland, P. G., in Richards, *op. cit.*, pp. 27 ff.
2. See, for instance, Mair, L. P. *An African People in the Twentieth Century*, London, 1934.

fundamentally novel in organisation or technique. They did not figure at all in the higher echelons of enterprise, which were manned exclusively by members of the immigrant communities. They took no part in the export-import trade, or, except as labourers, in the processing of crops; even in retail commerce they were eclipsed by Asian traders; they had produced no members of the liberal professions, other than teachers and clergy, and very few highly skilled workers. It was only in agricultural production that Africans could really be said to contribute largely to the functioning of the exchange economy. In this sphere the change had indeed been a thorough-going one. It was now accepted that the cultivation of the soil, that is, the production of seed-cotton, was the normal and proper occupation for the great majority of men; and this implied a revolutionary change in the mode of life of men belonging to the "planting" tribes, though less so for the seed-farmers. The cotton plot had become almost as integral, by now almost as traditional-seeming, a part of the standard peasant holding as the banana grove or the millet field. Production for the overseas market had been grafted on to subsistence farming, and with very little disturbance of the parent stock. In Buganda and Busoga the cotton field took its place beside the banana grove, along with the beans and sweet potatoes and other seasonal crops which had always figured in the agricultural system. In the drier areas further north and east cotton was woven into the customary rough-and-ready crop rotation, being normally planted after the harvesting of the main crop of finger-millet. An acre or two was thus added to the cultivated area of each homestead, but, except on a few estates in Buganda, the general scale of farming operations had not been sensibly altered. Nor—and here the big cotton-farmers of Buganda were no exception—had the techniques. Virtually the only technical innovation had been the substitution of imported steel hoes for the local iron product. Ploughing had made a certain headway, but only in limited areas of the Eastern Province.

The increment of wealth that had accrued to the people through production for export was hardly spectacular. A rough calculation shows that in 1928-29, a season of high yields and good prices, the cotton crop yielded approximately £7 to every tax-payer (that is, to every more or less able-bodied adult male) in Busoga, and approximately £6 to every tax-payer in other parts of the Eastern Province and in Buganda. Not every tax-payer was a cotton-grower, so that the income per farm would be a little higher than this. Moreover, cotton was not the only source of farm income, but it is fairly clear that other sources—the minor export crops, the foodstuffs purchased by the small urban population, hides and skins—did not make a really substantial contribution at this stage. Taxation, too, was heavy. In 1929 the Uganda Government's revenue, at £1,682,990, amounted almost to 40 per cent. of the national export income. The cultivator of the Eastern Province was mulcted of Shs. 21 in direct taxation alone; and his counterpart in Buganda paid Shs. 15 to the central Government and, unless he chose to do a month's unpaid labour on the roads, a further Shs. 10 to the native authority. It is clear that the sums which could be spent on imported goods by the average peasant were not large. A few wealthy chiefs and landowners could now live in brick houses, wear smart European suits and ride in motor-cars, but as far as the mass of the people were concerned the improvement in the standards of living had not been particularly impressive. Cotton clothing—shirt and shorts or long Arab gowns for the men, voluminous and usually gay dresses for the women—had become general, representing a net addition to the property of some tribes, a superior substitute for skins or barkcloth in others. Bicycles were very common. For the rest there were a very few household goods, needles, matches, soap, lamps and lamp oil, here and there a luxury article such as a watch, a fountain pen or a gramophone. The whole of the farmers' earnings, of course, was not spent on imported goods, and we must not overlook the fact that the circulation of the income derived from exports generated further incomes, which accrued to the purveyors of meat and fish and beer, to tailors and potters and cycle mechanics, to carpenters and builders. (One of the most important changes in Buganda and Busoga was the almost universal replacement of the old, ill-ventilated hut by a more substantial and durable dwelling, built on a rectilinear frame and equipped with joinery doors and windows.) Occasionally, these internal exchanges had more than a local character. Although statistics are entirely lacking, it seems likely that the Ganda cotton-growers had already begun to buy slaughter cattle not only from the pastoral areas in the west of their own country but also from the cattle-rich districts of Ankole and Teso, so that the wealth derived from cotton-growing was to some extent diffused beyond the main areas of production. It remains true, however, that the prosperity of Buganda and the Eastern Province was not matched in the remainder of the country. The output of cotton in Lango and Acholi did little more than provide the people with the means of paying poll-tax. The remoter north-western and south-western districts contributed hardly anything to the export trade; their incomes derived mainly from migratory wage-labour, and did scarcely more than cover the recurrent expenditure on taxes and the capital outlay on bride-wealth cattle. In arid Karamoja the life of the people had hardly been touched at all by economic change. Like other pastoral tribes in East Africa, they were still in that very rudimentary stage of money economy in which it was not commodities but shillings that were bought, and those only in the tax-collecting season. They still went naked about their customary avocations, the men herding their cattle and the women tending their meagre crops of millet as of old; the occasional sale of a hide or a bullock constituted their only contact with the world of commerce.

Even in the more advanced areas, however, the people cannot be said to have been raised on to a wholly new material plane. To the Ganda at least, cotton cloth and most of the other imported goods had already been familiar before the arrival of the railway and the growth of the cotton industry, though their use was of course more widespread now and the volume of consumption had increased. The really striking improvement in the condition of the people derived from that part of their expenditure which was channelled through the public authorities—first and foremost the inestimable blessing of peace and justice, but also the roads which made travel easy and the increments of knowledge and of health which had begun to accrue to them through Governmental as well as missionary efforts. These increments, however, were not yet large. Public expenditure on education in 1929 amounted to 32 cents of a shilling per head of the population, and expenditure on medical services to 90 cents.

If the people of Uganda were still poor in material goods, it was largely because they did not choose to be richer. There could be no doubt—indeed the fact was shortly to be demonstrated—that the surplus produced for the market could have been very much greater than it was if the average cultivator had been willing to exert himself more. The term "peasants," which has been used to describe the rural masses of Uganda, did not possess the connotation of laboriousness that belongs to it in Europe or in Asia. Agriculture was the normal occupation of the majority of men, but for very few was it more than a part-time occupation. Their labours in the cotton-fields left most people ample time for beer and talk, for family ceremonies and family quarrels, for village politics and the other activities which made up the normal stuff of rural life.

That the mass of the people should not have strained very hard after further increments of wealth, though reprehensible in the eyes of many Europeans, is readily understandable. In the first place, whatever the statistics might appear to show, the poverty of Uganda was not of a distressful kind. Indeed, the more fertile areas, where the productivity of subsistence agriculture was high, rather noticeably exuded an atmosphere of ease and fatness. This had very little to do with the developments of the previous quarter of a century; it had always been so. There was no destitution in Uganda and little real hardship, unless it was that which was suffered by the migrants on their arduous journeys to and from Kigezi or Ruanda. Except for the prevalence of disease, there was nothing in the condition of the people that cried urgently for cure, and in their easy-going way of life there was much that was positively gracious and attractive. There was also, it is true, a certain ennui, but for this malady greater assiduity in the tedious processes of cotton cultivation did not appear to be a very obvious remedy. In the second place, the opportunities for enrichment, though considerable, were not brilliant. Greater assiduity would have raised the standard of living but it would not have opened the door on a new world. To work eight hours a day instead of four in order to be able to buy two shirts a year instead of one was a course of action which, comprehensibly, the average man was not tempted to adopt.

It was, moreover, now the average man who set the pace of development. The impetus from above which had acted so strongly on the peasant masses in the early years of the century had now very markedly slackened. The Ganda aristocracy, which had taken the lead in introducing the peasants of Buganda and elsewhere, to the exchange economy, had been largely deprived of the power to force progress on the people, and the keenness of its own desire for progress had been blunted with the passage of time. The dynamic oligarchs of the earlier period had for the most part become, or been succeeded by, a race of comfortable country squires and routine administrators. The determination of the volume of output was left in the main to the free choice of the peasantry; and "a nation of small farmers," though it may earn high marks for stability and social harmony, is not likely to be a nation of innovators or, when it is not under the pressure of need, to be conspicuous for its dynamism. For the time being there was equilibrium between the incomes of the people and their wants and, failing the intrusion of some drastically disturbing factor, it seemed likely that economic progress would in the future be slow. This prospect accorded well with the current wishes of the European rulers of Uganda, who now valued stability and order more highly than progress. Rapid economic change was indeed generally regarded, by administrators and intellectuals alike, as an evil to be averted rather than as a desirable objective. Nothing could be more striking than the contrast between the enthusiasm of missionary and of some secular writings on Uganda in the 1890s and the early 1900s, with their confident assumption that a new province had been added to Christian civilisation, their confident prediction of rapid cultural and economic growth, and the somewhat complacent reference in a semi-official description of the Protectorate, published in 1935, to "the complex task of building a civilisation which, in its spiritual and material aspects alike, is beyond the present range of native imagination or aspirations."[1]

TABLE 10

COTTON PRODUCTION, 1928/37

	Output ('000 bales)[2]					*Exports*[3]		*Average Price*
	Buganda	*E. Prov.*	*N. Prov.*	*W. Prov.*	*Total*	*Bales '000*	*£'000*	(Shs. per 100 lb., f.o.b. Mombasa)
1928/9	82.2	94.3	22.4	3.7	202.6	204.1	3,312	81
1929/30	69.1	44.1	12.5	4.3	130.0	129.1	1,555	60
1930/1	62.4	93.7	30.6	3.1	189.8	188.9	1,503	40
1931/2	82.3	104.7	14.3	2.1	203.3	207.3	1,584	38
1932/3	120.6	133.7	29.9	7.1	291.3	294.8	2,682	45
1933/4	112.2	132.6	26.8	5.7	278.2	285.6	2,928	51
1934/5	130.5	81.1	31.1	6.2	249.0	253.2	2,823	56
1935/6	144.0	138.5	32.4	7.4	322.2	321.4	3,327	52
1936/7	148.7	148.7	27.5	6.4	331.4	338.4	4,269	63
1937/8	179.1	191.9	44.5	8.6	424.2	402.2	3,428	42

1. Thomas and Scott, *op. cit.* p. 43.
2. U.P. *Report of the Commission of Enquiry into the Cotton Industry*, 1938.
3. U.P. Ann. Rpts. D/A.

So the Uganda economy was to all appearance drifting very slowly forward on very quiet waters, when the shock of the great depression fell upon it. The effect of this impact was surprising. The economy shuddered briefly, then went forward rather faster than before. Unfortunately, the most sensitive index to the reactions of the producers, the number of acres planted with cotton, becomes unavailable at this point, for it is known that the acreage statistics, which had never been more than approximations, were wholly unreliable during the 1930s, owing to a muddle over the methods of estimation. We have therefore to rely solely on the figures of output, which, being subject to the vagaries of rainfall, cannot indicate more than the general trend. The direction of the trend, however, is quite unmistakeable.

At first sight, these figures provide a perfect illustration of the so-called perverse response of peasant producers who, instead of reducing output when prices fall, increase their efforts in order to maintain their expenditure at its customary level. For here, although the price received in 1932 was less than half the price received in 1929, the output from the crop planted that year was more than double the output from the crop planted in 1929, and more than 40 per cent. greater than any previous harvest. On closer examination, however, this conclusion becomes less secure. First of all, the apparent increase in 1930/31, the first year of the depression, must be discounted altogether, for the previous year's harvest had been reduced by exceptionally unfavourable weather. Secondly, the inferences which might be drawn from the figures for the early 1930s are apparently contradicted by those for the latter part of the decade, for output continues to increase although prices are now moving slowly upwards. Thirdly, low export prices for cotton were at least partly offset by low import values for manufactured goods. The following table shows the approximate relationship between changes in the price paid to growers for cotton, in the prices of selected imports entering largely into African consumption and in the volume of production.

TABLE 11

PRICES AND PRODUCTION (1929 = 100)

	1930	*1931*	*1932*	*1933*	*1934*	*1935*	*1936*	*1937*
Price of Seed-cotton[1] ..	84	60	60	49	56	65	53	73
Prices of Imports:[2]								
Corrugated iron ..	92	81	76	78	80	80	73	115
Grey cloth	82	65	55	51	55	52	51	58
Dyed cloth	85	72	58	58	56	52	51	58
Coloured cloth ..	84	64	57	52	49	51	50	58
Lamp oil	72	63	40	43	35	42	36	49
Bicycles	93	79	63	46	54	55	61	63
Output of raw cotton ..	94	100	143	137	123	159	163	209

Thus it appears that in the early years of the depression the real value of a given quantity of cotton was only slightly less than it had been in 1929, and that from 1935 onwards it was actually greater. Against this, however, must be set the fact that the retail prices of imported goods did not fall as far as their landed values at Mombasa, since import duties (on cloth), railway rates and traders' margins were not proportionately reduced. Taking this into account, there is little room for doubt that the growers' reactions in the early 1930s were in some measure perverse. This conclusion is reinforced by the sharp upward trend in the production of coffee, both in Buganda and in Bugisu, notwithstanding that the decline in the value of this commodity was more severe and more prolonged than the decline in the value of cotton.

Once more, however, care is required in the interpretation of these figures. The volume of output, of course, reflects the response of producers, not to the current trend of prices but to the trend that was visible three to five

1. Derived from Commission of Enquiry, *loc. cit.*
2. Derived from Kenya Blue Books.

years previously. It is only the acreage figures, therefore, that can provide us with an indication for the year-by-year impact of market fluctuations. Among these, only the figures for non-native coffee estates are quite unambiguous; in this sector of the economy diminishing profits, or increasing losses, were having their natural consequence in the total or partial abandonment of plantations. The statistics given for native coffee-growing in the Western Province must be regarded with a good deal of suspicion, for it is known that little real progress was being made anywhere in this Province except in the little county of Bwamba. In that county coffee-growing was not properly inaugurated until the late 1920s, so that its subsequent expansion must be taken to reflect the response of the Amba, not to current market trends but to their first introduction to the exchange economy as such. The figures for the principal producing areas, Buganda (mainly the Masaka district) and Bugisu, convey a somewhat confusing impression. In Buganda, although expansion did continue during the depression, the period of most rapid progress appears to have been the years of high prices at the end of the 1920s, whereas in Bugisu progress seems to have been maintained at an almost constant rate throughout the decade under review. In both cases, however, market forces were not the only ones that were operative. It was in 1929 and 1930 that the peasants of the Masaka district were being presented with the choice between planting coffee at home and being sent off to shovel earth on the track of the Kampala railway; and the disappearance of this incentive in 1931 may well have had as much to do with the subsequent slackening of expansion as had the fall in the market price of coffee. On the other hand, the expansion in Bugisu during the early 1930s can be attributed at least in part to the inauguration of the "Bugisu Coffee Scheme" in 1930 and the much larger measure of official encouragement and guidance which was thereafter extended to the cultivators.[1]

TABLE 12

COFFEE PRODUCTION, 1928/37[2]

	Acres Cultivated							*Average Price* (Shs. per cwt. f.o.b. Mombasa)
						Exports		
	Non-Native	*Buganda*	*Native W. Prov.*	*Bugisa*	*Total*	*Cwt. '000*	*£'000*	
1928	18,400	4,700	2,900	1,100	8,700	40·0	164	81
1929	19,900	11,300	3,400	1,400	16,100	41·2	177	86
1930	19,300	16,200	3,800	2,000	21,900	48·9	155	63
1931	17,600	17,000	1,800	2,100	20,900	70·0	161	46
1932	17,600	18,800	3,800	2,800	25,400	87·1	223	51
1933	15,300	20,100	3,400	3,500	27,100	100·4	210	42
1934	13,400	21,000	5,300	4,000	30,300	154·3	293	38
1935	13,700	22,500	7,400	5,000	34,900	125·7	231	37
1936	13,500	27,500	9,800	6,100	43,400	228·7	381	34
1937	13,600	30,800	11,100	7,000	48,900	257·9	420	32

In the later 1930s the picture becomes considerably clearer: everywhere, in spite of continually falling prices, African cultivators were steadily adding to the number and size of their coffee gardens. It is, however, possible to regard this behaviour, not as "perverse," but as "correct." For it may well have indicated a realisation on the part of an increasing number of farmers that even at the worst of times coffee was the most remunerative crop that it was in their power to grow.

From this tortuous and inconclusive discussion certain tentative inferences may perhaps be drawn. It seems incontestable that in the first and worst years of the slump African cultivators, taken as a whole, countered falling prices by increased effort, thereby maintaining their real incomes at approximately their former level. This is a response that could reasonably have been predicted of them. Since for the great majority of them the money

1. U.P. Ann. Rpts. D/A. Anon. History of the Bugisu Coffee Scheme, n.d. (in Mbale District Office).
2. U.P. Ann. Rpts. D/A.

costs of production were virtually nil there could be no question of "profits" being converted into "losses" by deteriorations in the market situation. Falling prices could not possibly drive the cotton-growers and coffee-growers out of business. They could, and presumably did, make effort seem less attractive, but on the other hand a very large part of the real income requirements of the peasantry was irreducible. Tax payments, and in Buganda *busulu* payments, had still to be made, and their real burden was increased by the falling values of exports. Over and above this, much of the pre-slump consumption of the peasants consisted of goods which had become conventional necessities and which would not readily be foregone even though the cost of their acquisition, in terms of effort, had increased.

Yet the desire for a constant real income, though it was certainly operative, does not seem entirely adequate as an explanation of the very rapid expansion of output, especially of cotton, in the early 1930s, and it is clearly quite incapable of explaining the further expansion which took place in the latter part of the decade. It appears that the effects of price fluctuations were superimposed on a groundswell of genuine economic growth, which was strong enough to survive the discouragement of the slump and which gained additional momentum from the stimulus afforded by the subsequent partial revival of the market. The stability, even stagnation, which had been evident in the later 1920s was beginning to be disturbed. The wants of the people were gradually widening in range and deepening in intensity. This can be attributed in large part to the almost inevitable effects of education and mimesis, but it may also be conceded that the theory which lay behind the reforms of the 1920s was proving in some degree correct: the common people of Uganda, having been emancipated from servile labour and assured of the enjoyment of at least the greater part of the fruits of their toil, were beginning to display a little more of the industriousness that was expected of a free peasantry.

In the last years of the inter-war period, then, the agricultural economy of Uganda was markedly expanding. But the expansion was still of a purely quantitative kind. It can be said that there are two distinct types of economic development: the type which is the consequence of an extension of the market, of improvements in the techniques and organisation of trade and transport, and the type which results from improvements in the methods of production. In the one case people grow richer because the productivity of their land and labour has increased, in the other because the value of their produce has been raised. Now it is evident that the development which had taken place in Uganda had been almost entirely of the latter kind. The efficiency of the factors of production had not been significantly improved, but larger quantities of land and labour had been brought into employment, and the additional produce had been of kinds which, thanks to the construction of a modern communications system, to the security afforded by British rule and to the enterprise of European and Asian merchants, had far higher exchange values than any commodity (ivory excepted) which had figured in the old economic system.

That this process had been beneficial it was scarcely possible to doubt, but at the same time the limitations of its beneficence were becoming ever more apparent. It was estimated, for example, that, on the basis of normal yields and the relatively favourable prices of 1937, the cotton-grower of Busoga could expect to receive Shs. 151 for his crop.[1] Acreages, yields and prices were all substantially lower in most other districts; in Teso for example the average grower was reckoned to receive only Shs. 62, in Bunyoro Shs. 59, in West Acholi Shs. 57. In the Mengo district of Buganda the return was put as high as Shs. 249, but this calculation was based on estimates of acreage that were almost certainly inflated and ignored the share of the proceeds that went to the hired migrant workers. It was clear at all events

1. U.P. Commission of Enquiry, *loc. cit.*

that nowhere in Uganda was the ordinary peasant in receipt of incomes that could be taken, even by the most modest standards, to connote prosperity. Nor did it appear that he had much prospect of receiving such incomes in the future through a simple continuance of the existing processes of expansion. It is true that nearly everywhere there was to all appearance an ample reserve of waste land of similar quality to that which had already been brought under the hoe, and that there was still plenty of room for increased effort on the part of the cultivators. But these reserves of land and labour were not limitless, nor was it to be expected that their employment would yield increments equal to those obtained in the first stages of the commercialisation of agriculture. The prospect seemed to be that the rate of progress would slow down and would ultimately stop, leaving the people still a long way short of real wealth.

A few years earlier, policy-makers might have accepted this prospect with equanimity. But during the 1930s a silent revolution, discernible both in London and in Entebbe, in intellectual as well as in political and administrative circles, was taking place in the values of Colonial Government. The intellectual revolution can perhaps be pin-pointed to 1936, when the International African Institute turned aside from the study of tribal institutions and how to preserve them and devoted a whole issue of its journal to the problem of nutrition.[1] In and around the Colonial Office, thought and study were moving along the road that led to the great Colonial Development and Welfare Act of 1940. It was no longer considered to be enough that African governments should be solvent and that African peoples should be secured against exploitation and against the disruption of their social systems. Philanthropy, the good repute of the British Empire, and perhaps also the interests of British industry, required that they should as soon as possible cease to be poor. More was now being demanded of the Uganda economy, and more fundamental changes in its character began to seem necessary. It was not questioned at this stage that the economy would continue to be overwhelmingly agricultural, that the principal crops would continue to be those whose utility was already proven, or that production would continue to be carried on mainly in small-scale peasant farming units. But whereas the attention of Government had hitherto been concentrated on the relatively simple task of getting the people to till the soil, efforts were now made to ensure that they should till it to rather better effect.

Two main lines of attack were developed during the 1930s. In the first place, attempts were made to improve the organisation of marketing and processing in such a way that the producer would receive a larger share of the export price of cotton and other crops. These matters are excluded from the scope of this essay. It may be sufficient to say that the Government acted on the premise, which was at least superficially a very odd one, that the producers would be likely to benefit from a reduction in the competition for their produce. Few people would now claim that the reforms introduced in this period were of decisive advantage either to the peasants or to the economy as a whole, and some would argue that they were positively hurtful.[2]

The second line of attack was more direct.[3] The attention of the Department of Agriculture, and of other branches of the Government, was increasingly focused upon the objective of raising the productivity of African agriculture, rather than upon mere additions to the size and number of the cotton fields. This was possible, partly because the actual planting of cotton had become a well-established habit, but also because the resources of the Department, though still very meagre in relation to the magnitude of its responsibilities, had been considerably increased. In 1921 its superior grades comprised a Director, a Deputy Director, nine field agricultural officers

1. *Africa*, IX, 1936.
2. See Ehrlich, C. *The Marketing of Cotton in Uganda, 1903-1939* (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, London, 1958).
3. The following paragraphs are derived mainly from the Department's annual reports and from Tothill, J. D. (ed.), *Agriculture in Uganda*, Oxford, 1940.

of various ranks and three scientific specialists. By 1932 the number of field officers had risen to eighteen and the number of specalists to nine. Perhaps more important than the growth in its numbers was the improvement in the quality of the staff. Of the first generation, apart from the scientists, only Mr. Simpson himself had been able to put letters after his name, but almost all the newer recruits were qualified men. This remark is not intended to put exaggerated stress on the value of formal training for the operators of agricultural extension services, nor to belittle the yeomen services rendered by less qualified men in the formative period of Uganda's agricultural development. It remains true, however, that the men of the second generation were on the whole of higher calibre. For so small a dependency, indeed, Uganda was very fortunate during the 1930s in its agricultural officers, whose thin ranks included two future Agricultural Advisers to the Secretary of State. The Department also won considerable repute by its scientific research, of which W. S. Martin's work on soil structure was perhaps the outstanding example.

In its early days the Department had two main functions. The first, in which it was on the whole merely an auxiliary of the Administration, was to ensure that the areas planted with exportable crops, principally cotton, should be as large as possible. The second was the maintenance and improvement of the quality of the exportable products. In both a very considerable measure of success had been attained. The acreage figures speak for themselves; and although Uganda's cotton was descended from standard American strains, it consistently excelled its ancestors in length of staple and fineness of count.

On the other hand virtually nothing had been done to improve the efficiency of African agriculture. There was no evidence that the yield of cotton had increased, and the subsistence side of the economy had not been touched at all, save for the introduction or wider dissemination of that unpalatable and unnutritious but drought-resistant root, cassava. It was not that the defects of native methods had been ignored. Indeed, faith in the possibilities of improvement was stronger in the early days than it afterwards became. It seemed obvious (more so, perhaps, to lay officials than to agronomists) that productivity could be increased by bringing native practices into line with those of Europe, that is to say, by substituting the plough for the hoe and permanent rotations for the existing system of long-term bush fallow.

On both these lines advance had been attempted. The plough, as we have seen, was introduced into Teso almost concurrently with cotton seed, and with considerable success; by 1915 there were fifty-eight ploughs in use, by 1920 210, by 1926 more than 3,000. Attempts to extend this innovation to other districts, however, ended in failure, with a partial exception in Bukedi. Some experiments were carried out in Buganda in 1923-24, but the heavy vegetation and broken terrain made them unrewarding, and they were abandoned after most of the oxen had succumbed. A more ambitious venture in the mechanical cultivation of the lower valleys of Bugisu, with tractors provided by the Empire Cotton Growing Corporation, came to an equally rapid end, the returns being found to be in no way commensurate with the costs. Moreover, as time went on, the desirability as well as the feasibility of ploughing began to be doubted. Its assumed advantages had been, first, the cultivation of more extensive areas and, secondly, the more thorough turning of the soil. But it was of little avail to till larger areas if the subsequent weeding and picking had still to be carried out by hand; and it was gradually recognised that deep cultivation, so far from being an improvement, might have positively harmful effects on the soil, that the traditional "scratching of the surface" might be well adapted to local conditions.

A similar disillusionment was in store for those who confidently believed that shifting cultivation could readily be superseded by a rotatory system of European type. During the 1920s experiments were carried out at the Department's main research station at Serere in the Teso district, where cotton was grown in continuous rotation with leguminous and other fertility-restoring crops. But after a few years the experimenters were confronted with an unexpected result: their cotton yields were not only diminishing rapidly but were actually lower than those which were being achieved by native cultivators in the same neighbourhood. This gave the Department furiously to think; and further research disclosed that losses of fertility were caused here by deterioration in the physical structure rather than in the chemical composition of the soil. This was a disturbing conclusion, for it implied that no form of crop rotation and no kind of manuring could provide a complete answer to the problem, that there could be no escape from the necessity of leaving the land to recuperate under uneconomic vegetation. Indigenous practice could be improved upon by sowing suitable grasses on the abandoned arable instead of leaving regeneration entirely to the slower processes of nature, but at the best only about half the total land area could be brought under cultivation at any one time without disastrous consequences.

On the face of it, this still left plenty of room for the expansion of cultivation, since in 1935 only one-tenth of the land area of Uganda was actually under crops, and even in the most densely populated district 4.4 acres were theoretically available for every man, woman and child of the population that had been recorded in 1931. But when account was taken of swamps and other uncultivable land, of areas of low natural potential such as Karamoja and much of Ankole, of the requirements of grazing, of the necessary minimum of forest and woodland, the margin began to seem much narrower than had previously been supposed. Intensive surveys of a number of individual villages, carried out in 1937, revealed that in some localities saturation point was being approached or had even been exceeded.[1]

There were two further considerations which gave cause for uneasiness and even for alarm. First, comparison of the census figures for 1921 and 1931, imprecise though both these enumerations had undoubtedly been, left no room for doubt that in almost every part of Uganda the population had begun to grow, not yet very rapidly but with an ominously gathering momentum. This was in answer to the prayers of earlier administrators, who had believed that the emptiness of Uganda was one of the most serious obstacles to its development. But in the light of the agronomic knowledge that had recently been acquired the filling up of the land began to seem more menacing than welcome.

The second cause of anxiety was the spectre of accelerated erosion, which had now begun to disturb the sleep of agronomists everywhere in the tropics and subtropics, and of which there were horrid examples close at hand in Kenya and Tanganyika. In Uganda there was little evidence of an imminent major catastrophe, but as soon as people began to look they had no difficulty in finding signs that the processes of erosion were already at work in many parts of Uganda, or in predicting that increased pressure on the soil, due to a growing population and a growing desire for cash, could easily lead to a disaster in the not very distant future. The problem of erosion was to a large extent bound up with the more general problem of soil exhaustion, for it was when the physical structure of the soil had been broken down by prolonged cultivation that it was most vulnerable to erosive forces. Part of the answer therefore lay in the evolution of a system of cropping which would prevent the deterioration of the soil. But this line of attack was neither sufficient nor sufficiently immediate in its remedial action. It was judged necessary that more direct measures should be taken to hold the soil in place. And not only the soil but the water also. The loss of rainfall through surface run-off was a serious matter in itself, quite apart

1. Tothill, J. D. *A Report on Nineteen Surveys done in Small Agricultural Areas in Uganda*, Entebbe, 1937.

from the loss of the precious particles of earth that were likely to be carried with it, for it was becoming clear that even in the wetter parts of Uganda water was the crucial limiting factor in the growth of crops. The first and most elementary measure of soil conservation was to ensure that crops were planted along and not across the contour of the field, so that the slight ridges produced by the hoe would act as an impediment to the waters instead of providing them with ready-made channels. In addition, it was recommended that strips of grass be left at intervals between the cultivated fields. On more steeply sloping land, such as the greater part of Buganda, it would be necessary to go further, to encircle the hillsides with a series of bunds, held in place by tough *paspalum* grasses; and on the very steep hills of Kigezi actual terraces would have to be constructed. In Bugisu, despite the mountainous character of the country, the danger of erosion was fortunately less serious, partly because of the properties of the soil, partly because most of the land was under permanent crops.

By the beginning of the Second World War, or at any rate by its ending, it may be said that the authorities knew most of the answers to the problem of soil conservation. But the application of these answers was a very different matter. To persuade people to grow economic crops had been a comparatively simple undertaking. In this the authorities were working with the grain, for the peasants did after all have a desire for cash, even though the desire was generally not as keen as might be wished. But it was far more difficult to persuade them to grow economic or other crops in an efficient manner. Only by long-sustained badgering had it been possible to secure general, but by no means universal, conformity with such simple rules as the planting of cotton on the contour, and the more or less correct spacing of the seeds. And now it was proposed to invite the peasants to make more fundamental changes in their farming methods, to carry out laborious engineering works as a prophylaxis against dangers that were not yet visibly imminent. Clearly this was going to be a long and arduous undertaking. The campaign for better husbandry had been in progress since the middle 1920s. There had been courses for selected smallholders, who, it was hoped, would return home and set an example to their neighbours; there had been courses for chiefs; and all the time there had been teaching and preaching aimed directly at the cultivators by administrative and agricultural officers, aided by a growing corps of trained African instructors. But an officer of the Department felt bound to confess in 1946 that the results of all this effort had been "frankly disappointing."[1]

1. Masefield, G. B. Agricultural Extension Methods Among African Peasant Farmers. *E.A.A.J.*, April, 1946.

CHAPTER V

THE LATEST PHASE

By the end of the Second World War the tendencies which had been apparent in official thinking during the late 1930s had been sharply accentuated. Humanitarian considerations, the exigencies of international politics, the desperate plight of the sterling area, the prospect of an advance towards self-government immeasurably more rapid than had hitherto been envisaged—all these combined to make the growth of production and wealth in Uganda seem a matter of pressing urgency. A further factor which weighed heavily with policy-makers was the now obvious increase in population, which, if it continued unchecked and if other things remained equal, would inevitably lead within two or three generations to an actual reduction in average incomes. This disaster could be averted, so the argument ran,[1] only if Africans very soon adopted the attitudes towards procreation that had become normal in advanced western societies; such attitudes were associated with very high standards of living; therefore a very high standard of living must be attained here, and without delay.

At the same time a gloomy view was taken of the prospects of obtaining the kind of progress now desired by the kind of method which had hitherto been applied. By now, indeed, agronomists were much less concerned with wresting further increments of income from the soil than with the prevention of a disastrous depreciation of the original capital. But even if this danger could be averted, the now traditional cotton patch, which had served well enough during the first stages of development, hardly seemed an adequate basis for the creation of a really prosperous society. An official committee came to the conclusion in 1944 that even if the current high prices held, even if yields could be improved, cotton would never make the producer rich.[2] The situation was clearly summed up in the remarks of an official quoted by Mrs. Huxley.[3] "The ordinary peasant," he said, "can't cultivate more than about three acres of cotton on a family basis. Now at present prices, three acres (in Teso) can't normally bring in more than about about ten pounds a year." Having shown that the cost of employing hired labour was greater than the return, he went on: "So you see, the peasant comes to a full stop. He can't increase his production and so he can't improve his standard of living. And a standard of living isn't going to be very grand on ten pounds a year." "These," Mrs. Huxley commented, "are the limits of peasant agriculture, sharp and clear." Nor was it believed that any other crop would take the place of cotton. Coffee was admittedly a good deal more remunerative, but it was necessarily restricted to certain areas. Among these, Bugisu was already more or less saturated, and though there was some scope for increased production of robusta in Buganda it was thought that here too the economic limit was not far off.

The course of events during and immediately after the war seemed to justify the gloomy view that was being taken of the possibilities for further expansion in peasant agriculture. The war, naturally, disrupted the economy in a variety of ways. Large numbers of young men were diverted from production to military service. In the first years of the war the prices of Uganda's staple products remained low, and though they rose considerably after 1942 there was, in the prevailing shortage of consumer goods, little incentive to increase production. Since regional self-sufficiency was imperative in war conditions, and food crops failed repeatedly in Kenya and Tanganyika, the authorities were forced to foster the production of maize at the expense of cotton, the export of which was lower in 1943 than in any year since 1921. But even when the war was over cotton production showed no sign of regaining its pre-war level.

1. U.P. *A Development Plan for Uganda*, by E. B. Worthington, Entebbe, 1947, p. 8.
2. U.P. *Joint Report of the Standing Finance Committee and the Development and Welfare Committee on Post-War Development, 1944.*
3. E. Huxley, *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*, London, 1949, p. 251.

TABLE 13[1]

COTTON PRODUCTION, 1939/48

	Output of Seed-Cotton (tons '000)					Exports	
	Buganda	*E. Prov.*	*N. Prov.*	*W. Prov.*	*Total*	*Bales* '000	£'000
1939/40	81.2	82.7	12.0	3.1	179.0	304	3,760
1940/41	83.5	112.4	18.5	5.7	220.1	366	4,262
1941/42	61.3	61.6	13.7	3.3	139.9	236	2,862
1942/43	33.4	31.8	1.6	0.6	67.4	123	3,238
1943/44	46.7	47.5	8.3	1.8	104.3	190	5,043
1944/45	75.1	69.7	13.4	2.6	160.8	264	7,026
1945/46	77.5	42.2	12.5	3.3	135.5	219	5,620
1946/47	66.6	52.2	16.8	2.8	138.4	253	7,119
1947/48	45.1	41.7	11.4	2.8	101.0	174	7,458

The Government decided to attack the problem of Uganda's poverty on a number of separate fronts. To begin with, African agriculture was to be taken firmly in hand. Exclusive reliance on the slow processes of exhortation and demonstration was to be abandoned; and by virtue of the Buganda Agricultural Law[2] passed by a still compliant Lukiiko in 1946, and of similar enactments in other districts, the authorities acquired far-reaching powers of direction, which enabled them to enforce soil conservation and other measures of agricultural improvement and even in some instances to dictate the choice of crops. In addition, it was hoped that peasant agriculture could be transformed by the introduction, on the initiative and at the expense of the State, of tractor-drawn implements, which would make it possible for African farmers, or groups of farmers, to undertake cultivation on a far larger scale. There was also envisaged, however, a much more radical departure from the tradition of small-scale peasant farming. As we have seen, the idea of enlarging the narrow sector occupied by private European agriculture was rather reluctantly set aside for political and social reasons, but similar objections did not apply to the development of large-scale agricultural enterprises planned and managed by the State. Two major undertakings of this kind were now to be started, with the dual object of bringing large areas of unused land under cultivation more rapidly than could be accomplished by peasant colonists (the areas in question were in south Busoga, which had been denuded of population early in the century by sleeping-sickness, and in tsetse-infested country in northern Bunyoro) and of establishing a system of guided agriculture more efficient than ordinary peasant farming.

The really significant new departure at the close of the Second World War, however, was the decision that agriculture alone would not suffice. Though it was agreed that the bulk of the population would continue, within the foreseeable future, to be cultivators and herdsmen, the hope for rapid economic progress now rested largely on the development of mining and secondary industry, which would both provide for the employment of the surplus population, the people whom the land would shortly be unable to sustain, and would also generate incomes larger than anything that could ever be got from even the most efficient husbandry.

In the event, these plans and prognostications have so far not been fulfilled at all. During the past decade wealth on a scale hitherto undreamt of has flowed into Uganda, not from the new forms of large-scale agriculture, which have been an almost total failure, nor yet from mining and manufacturing, which have made but slow headway, but from the old-established export industries and in the main from the efforts of the African peasant, with his smallholding and his hoe.

The main reason for the new lease of life enjoyed by peasant agriculture has of course been the tremendous rise in the unit value of its output. In the immediate post-war period this development was quite unforeseeable.

1. U.P. Report of the Agricultural Productivity Committee, 1954. Ann. Rpts. D/A.
2. U.P. *Laws of Uganda* (1951) VII 1285.

The prices of cotton and coffee had indeed moved sharply upward—cotton from an average of Shs. 49 per central, f.o.b. Mombasa, in the period 1936-39 to Shs. 176 in the period 1946-49, coffee from Shs. 31 to Shs. 87 per cwt. But the impression of increased prosperity which these figures might have connoted was extremely misleading, for the prices of the counter-balancing imports had risen even further. By 1948 the official export price index (1935-38=100) stood at 344, but the import price index at 390.[1] The latter figure related to all imports, of which a large proportion were capital goods and producers' materials; and the prices of consumer imports, especially of those which entered largely into African consumption, had almost certainly risen more than this, owing to the elimination of cheap Japanese cloth. And since, as we shall see, the peasant producers were receiving very much less than the export value of their crops, there can be no doubt that the rural population was markedly less well off than it had been before the war—a fact which goes far to explain both the unrest and general malaise which characterised Uganda in these years and the obvious lack of enthusiasm for the production of cotton.

In 1950, however, the terms of trade turned very sharply in Uganda's favour. In this and the subsequent years export prices not only rose rapidly in absolute terms but far outstripped the increase in the prices of imported goods. This was true of cotton, but it was more spectacularly true of coffee, for here the general trend in favour of primary products was accentuated by special factors operative since the war: a rapid rise in consumption together with a reduction in exports from Brazil and Indonesia, the countries which, as producers of low-grade coffee, were Uganda's most direct competitors. In the immediate post-war years Uganda had not reaped the full benefit of this change, owing to the long-term contract with the Ministry of Food, which, though very favourable at the time of its signature in 1943, proved as things turned out to have been a bad bargain. Now, however, coffee receipts leaped upwards, giving the Uganda economy perhaps the greatest single boost which it had ever experienced. The following comparison between the prices of the main exports and those of a selection of imported consumer goods gives some idea of the changing relationship between the two.

TABLE 14[2]

IMPORT AND EXPORT PRICES (1936/38 = 100)

	1948	*1949*	*1950*	*1951*	*1952*	*1953*	*1954*	*1955*
Import Prices								
Corrugated Iron ..	402	425	393	609	595	487	454	458
Grey Cloth	768	598	557	739	800	568	518	480
Dyed Cloth	567	416	567	799	837	692	690	712
Coloured Cloth ..	678	502	468	652	654	509	447	433
Lamp Oil	187	188	129	237	267	271	242	235
Bicycles	240	246	246	266	286	300	294	294
Export Prices								
Cotton	412	427	460	798	754	486	510	513
Coffee	297	448	900	1,004	1,079	1,114	1,341	931

Throughout the period, however, the full benefit of higher world prices has been withheld from the producers by the operation of Government policy. During the latter part of the war, and for some years afterwards, the coffee crop was bought in bulk by the United Kingdom Ministry of Food, the cotton crop by the Ministry of Supply and the Government of India. To make this procedure possible the Government had to take control of marketing, and in so doing, of course, it secured control over the prices paid to the growers. Now the export prices obtained from 1943 onwards under these contracts were considerably above the levels prevailing during the 1930s and in the first years of the war. The authorities calculated, rightly,

1. East Africa High Commission. Economic and Statistical Bulletin, No. 4.
2. Calculated from Annual Trade Reports of Kenya and Uganda, 1936-38 and 1948, Annual Trade Reports of Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika, 1949-55.

that if the full increase were passed on to the producers the result, given the almost total inelasticity in the supply of imported consumer goods under wartime conditions, could only be inflation. It was therefore decided to set aside a large proportion of the proceeds as a kind of post-war credit for the growers. To this simple motive for restricting farmers' incomes, however, others were soon added. Control over the prices paid to producers gave the Government the opportunity to put into practice the much canvassed proposal for stabilising the incomes paid to primary producers by the creation of price assistance funds, money being withheld in good years and disbursed again in times of depression. Thus what was conceived as a temporary wartime expedient became a permanent feature of official policy.

Nor was this all. In the profits of State-controlled marketing the Government saw a ready-made source of funds for the large programmes of public capital expenditure which it now had in mind. The temptation to divert these profits from their originally stated purpose was not successfully resisted. It was made known that while part of the money withheld from farmers would eventually be paid back to them, another part would be used to finance "projects of benefit to the cotton- and coffee-growing areas." The last words were meaningless and have meant nothing; the money has simply been an addition to the Government's financial resources.

An additional, though related, argument for holding down the price of cotton and coffee arose from the Government's desire for a great increase in manufacturing and construction. Supply conditions were such that a larger demand for wage-labour would not in itself bring about any great increase in its price; but, since the level of wages was closely linked to the cost of subsistence, an expansion of the non-agricultural sector would nevertheless entail a rise in unit costs, unless food production could be correspondingly expanded. For a time, therefore, the authorities were anxious that the output of export crops should not be increased at the expense of the food supply, and even that farmers' energies should be diverted away from cotton and coffee towards the crops required for local consumption. The low prices offered for exportable products were deliberately intended to have a disincentive effect.

The upshot was that by the end of 1953 the farmers of Uganda had involuntarily contributed nearly £30 million to price assistance funds and about £22 million to development projects of various kinds, in addition to about £30 million paid in export duties, which contributed to ordinary revenue. Rarely during this period did they receive as much as three-quarters of the price which would have been warranted by the state of the export market. In 1950 they obtained only 50 per cent. of the actual value of their cotton and a mere 27 per cent. of the value of their coffee. In 1951 the figures were 39 and 31 per cent.; in 1952 they were 45 and 43 per cent.[1] Since then the levies have been greatly reduced and there have actually been some disbursements from the price assistance funds. But for more than a decade the growers, *qua* growers, were consistent losers, and losers on a very substantial scale.

The policies here outlined, which have also and more notoriously been applied in Ghana and Nigeria, have attracted much controversy among economists and others.[2] The question cannot be discussed at length here, but one or two comments may perhaps be made. To begin with, a clear distinction must be drawn between the case for centralised marketing as such and the case for the manipulation of farm prices to the permanent or temporary detriment of the farmer. Though advocacy and criticism of the system of controlled marketing often turn on the fact that they make price manipulation possible, the system also raises the quite independent problem

1. Derived from East African Statistical Department, *Background to the Budget*, Nairobi, 1955.
2. See, e.g., Royal Commission on Land and Population in East Africa, Cd. 9475 (1955), pp. 80-83. P. T. Bauer, *West African Trade*, Cambridge, 1954, pp. 283-343. Articles by P. T. Bauer and F. W. Paish, P. Hill, P. Ady and M. Friedman in *Economic Journal* LXII 750, LXIII 468 and 594, LXIV 698 and 704.

of whether on balance it reduces or increases total marketing costs, the difference between the price paid by the overseas purchaser and the price which *could* be paid to the producer. This question we shall leave aside. On the question of price manipulation, it is clear that the price assistance funds and the development funds raise entirely distinct issues. Even though the real complaint against pre-war prices of primary products was not that they were unstable but that they were usually low, it remains true that violent fluctuations of prices and incomes are, to say the least, a serious inconvenience, especially perhaps to governments and to the building industry. In practice, however, Government policy in Uganda has not merely not mitigated but has actually aggravated the effects of market fluctuations. Like everyone else, the Uganda authorities assumed at first that the prices of cotton and coffee would return to "normal" (that is, pre-war) levels shortly after the end of the war. Hence the object of the planners during the middle 1940s was to build up reserves against the coming slump. But in fact, as we have seen, the moderately high prices of this period were followed, not by a slump, but by still higher prices. By this time, however, the authorities were under strong pressure to relax the austerity of their policies, so that in the early 1950s local price policy and world market trends, instead of counteracting one another, were moving in unison. Growers of coffee especially began to receive an increased proportion of increased market values, with the result that the producers' price trebled between 1952 and 1954—and was halved again within the next two years. Fluctuations in the producers' price for cotton were less marked, but even so it was allowed to increase by nearly two and a half times between 1948 and 1952. Since then it has remained approximately stable, but taken as a whole it cannot be said that price policy has had anything like complete success in ironing out variations in farmers' incomes.

The main force of criticism, however, has been directed against the use of marketing-board surpluses to finance development. It is clear that these surpluses, when diverted to general development funds, are in effect taxation and must be considered as such. (In Uganda, indeed, straightforward export taxes have progressively replaced marketing profits as the instrument of extraction.) The argument is, first, that the tax is unfair, in as much as it falls only on one section of the population, and, secondly, that it is excessive. It is argued that the levies on export crops have a directly deterrent effect on production, thus reducing the wealth of the country. It is also argued that they have a harmful effect on personal savings and investment, and that the money diverted to public purposes would have borne larger fruit if it had been left in the possession of the farmer, to be spent on the improvement of his farm. Alternatively, it may be asserted that the aggregate rate of capital formation is too high for so poor a country to sustain, and must result in undue hardship for the rural population.

It may be that these contentions have less validity than is commonly supposed. The argument of inequity, even if it is not sufficiently countered by the plea of simplicity of collection, does not seem to carry very great weight, since the growers of cotton and coffee are in fact the great majority of the population. Export taxes or their equivalent are plainly more equitable, in the sense of being more proportional, than the flat-rate direct taxes and the import duties on articles of common use which were formerly the mainstay of the Protectorate's finances. It is even possible that they are less unfair than income tax, which in Uganda would very probably fall with disproportionate weight on the few whose incomes were readily accessible to inspection. There is a further point which may be worth consideration. It seems clear that the incomes which have been received, or which might have been received, by West African producers of cocoa and by East African producers of coffee during the past decade are in large measure to be regarded as rent. They bear no relation to the incomes which their recipients could have earned by applying their labour and capital in any other way, but represent the payment which the world market has had to make to the owners of special, globally scarce, varieties of land. It is arguable that coffee land should be looked on as a national asset, and that its proceeds could therefore quite properly, and without injustice to the farmers, be diverted to national expenditure.

The argument of hardship is, I think, not easy to sustain. It may be possible to show statistically that Uganda, which has been investing about 20 per cent. of its geographical income, is as poor a country as India, which cannot manage a rate of capital formation of as much as 10 per cent. But there are very different kinds of poverty; and a rate of saving which would inflict distress on the people of India may be quite tolerable to the people of Uganda, who are in all circumstances assured of a reasonable subsistence. Except in the war and immediate post-war years, the levies on the farmers have not entailed an actual reduction in their real purchasing power, but only a sacrifice of part of the increase which would otherwise have accrued to them. Since the rural population is in fact much better off than it was before the levy system was introduced, it is difficult to maintain that hardship has been inflicted on them.

This does not mean, however, that the sacrifice was not regarded as a bitter grievance. It was emphatically so regarded, at any rate in the more sophisticated areas, and here we come to a point of warrantable criticism. An attempt to achieve rapid economic growth by means of a high rate of public capital formation is a peculiarly difficult line of action for a government which, like the Government of Uganda, is neither sufficiently democratic to base its policies on popular consent nor sufficiently powerful to have its policies acquiesced in without popular questioning. The situation demanded a strenuous effort on the part of the authorities to make their plans comprehensible, even if not fully acceptable, to the people who paid for them; but such an effort, so far as I can discover, was not made, at any rate in the early post-war years. As a result, discontent over the price of cotton acted as a lighted match to the smouldering pile of general political dissatisfaction, which broke into flame in the disorders of 1949. Among the several grievances then brought forward by the insurgents, this was the only one which was admitted by the subsequent commission of enquiry to have had real substance.[1] Thus the Government was obliged to beat a gradual and partial retreat on the price front, with the result that, as has been shown, income fluctuations since the war have actually been greater than fluctuations in the world market.

With the argument of disincentive we move on to very speculative ground. If the farmers had been allowed higher prices for their crops they would of course have had more money available for investment in farm improvements, transport equipment and the like, and it may well be that some additional investment of this kind would in fact have been carried out. It is also true that governments in general are prone to misinvestment, and that not all the development expenditure of the Uganda Government has in fact been wisely conceived. But the opinion of some critics, that the volume of fruitful investment would have been higher if market forces had been allowed to operate undisturbed, seems to me to be based on *parti pris* rather than on empirical analysis. My own view is that, if a high rate of capital formation was judged to be desirable, then a measure of forced saving was indispensable. Moreover, it would be generally agreed that the need for investment was particularly urgent in fields such as education and communications, which almost necessarily lay within the sector of public expenditure. As for the effect of price limitation on the willingness of farmers to produce crops for the market, it will be shown that production has in fact increased very considerably during the period in question. It is

1. U.P. *Report of the Commission of inquiry into the disturbances in Uganda during April, 1949,* Entebbe, 1950.

of course open to the critics to maintain that the increase would have been greater if the full possible incentive had been granted to the growers. Others, taking their stand on the allegedly perverse responses of peasant farmers, may assert a diametrically opposite opinion, holding that if a given level of income could have been attained with a lower volume of output the actual output would indeed have been lower. It is hardly possible to prove the matter one way or the other. It is easy enough to show that if the price of a particular crop is raised the output of that crop will at once go up, not down. This was strikingly illustrated by the sudden and spectacular increase in the production of maize in 1953, following a season of unusually high prices. The post-war history of a number of minor crops, such as castor seeds, soya beans and chillies, also shows a close positive correlation between price and output, proving, if proof were needed, that the farmers of Uganda are rational beings, who do their best to apply their energies in the most profitable ways open to them. None of this, however, allows us to arrive at a firm conclusion as to the relationship between agricultural prices and agricultural output as a whole, or to determine the point at which the average farmer balances his desire for goods and his desire for leisure. The uncertainty applies only to short-term reactions; in the longer run it can be assumed that high incomes do have a stimulating effect, in that they bring about a general rise in the conventional standards of consumption.

It may well be that the real ground of complaint against the Government's policy is not that it has invested too much but that its saving has been excessive, that its insistence on the building up of large liquid reserves has had a deflationary and debilitating effect on the economy. Certainly it is worthy of note that, despite the emphasis on capital formation, actual physical investment, to judge by the volume of imported producer goods, has been very much slighter in Uganda than in Kenya. It has recently been pointed out that this is nothing new: a very conservative approach to public finance, and its corollary, a huge export surplus, have long been characteristic of Uganda.[1] However, this is not an essay on fiscal policy; and it is time that we returned to agriculture.

By 1948 the authorities had come to the conclusion that the continuing low level of cotton output was no longer acceptable. The cotton industry was after all the mainstay of the economic system, whatever other developments might be planned; and now that the particular needs and pressures of the war period had ceased to operate it could not be allowed to languish. In the 1948-49 season, therefore, an intensive propaganda campaign was directed against the growers; the co-operation of the local African authorities was enlisted by the promise of a share in marketing profits; and the producers were even offered a rather higher price, which was promulgated before the beginning of the planting season. Other favourable factors were probably present, in as much as the young men had now returned from the war and had mostly spent their gratuities and settled back into rural life. Nevertheless the results seemed to indicate that, even though nothing in the nature of coercion was now permissible, official exhortations still had a lot to do with the intensity and the nature of economic activity. For the change in the situation between the 1947-48 and the 1948-49 seasons was truly impressive: the acreage was increased by about 50 per cent., and the output was more than doubled. The pre-war level of production had been practically regained, and with some fluctuations, due mainly to the weather, has been sustained ever since.

By itself, this table suggests that, after climbing out of the war-time trough, Uganda agriculture has been, at best, marking time, and that any improvement which has occurred in the country's economic situation since the 1930s has been due solely to the fortuitous rise in export values. It suggests also that Buganda has been losing ground in relation to the

1. Hazlewood, A. Trade Balances and Statutory Marketing in Primary Exporting Countries, *Economic Journal*, LXVII, 1957.

remainder of the Protectorate. Cotton, however, is no longer anything like the whole of the story; and the recent history of coffee production flatly contradicts both of these suggestions.

TABLE 15[1]

COTTON PRODUCTION, 1937/38 and 1947/48-1955/56

	Output of Seed Cotton (tons '000)					**Exports**	
	Buganda	*E. Prov.*	*N. Prov.*	*W. Prov.*	*Total*	*Bales* '000	£'000
1937/38	106.7	110.9	27.0	5.0	249.6	402	3,428
1947/48	45.1	41.7	11.4	2.8	101.0	174	7,458
1948/49	106.6	88.5	30.7	5.6	231.4	390	17,343
1949/50	96.4	70.2	31.5	7.5	204.6	349	16,698
1950/51	86.0	86.8	26.4	7.0	206.2	346	28,742
1951/52	76.3	98.9	42.0	6.7	223.9	378	29,954
1952/53	60.0	98.2	25.9	6.5	190.6	333	16,793
1953/54	79.9	112.1	32.8	8.9	233.6	393	20,877
1954/55	58.0	81.6	29.6	6.7	175.9	308	16,386
1955/56	62.4	105.4	39.6	8.2	215.6	376	19,285

A sharp upward trend in coffee planting was already visible in Buganda during the later 1930s, notwithstanding that the price was then very low not only absolutely but also in relation to the price of cotton. (A number of those who are now among the largest African coffee planters have told me that they began operations in 1937 or thereabouts.) The trend gained momentum about the end of the war and again with the forward surge of prices in 1950. The cumulative effects of this activity, masked by poor seasons in 1953 and 1954, were spectacularly manifested in 1955, when the value of the coffee grown by Africans in Buganda actually exceeded the

TABLE 16[1]

COFFEE PRODUCTION, 1938 and 1947/56

	Output (tons '000)[2]						**Exports**	
	Buganda (*robusta*)	*Bugisu* (*arabica*)	*Other African robusta*	*Other African arabica*	*Non-African robusta*	*Non-African arabica*	*Cwt.* '000	£'000
1938	20.1	2.1	?	?	?	?	280	328
1947	32.6	3.1	0.3	0.2	4.9		414	1,536
1948	68.9	3.0	0.4	0.2	3.6		756	3,247
1949	33.9	2.9	0.3	0.1	2.6		478	2,891
1950	52.5	2.9	0.5	0.2	3.1		638	8,332
1951	69.3	3.9	0.7	0.4	3.8		873	13,654
1952	59.1	2.2	0.6	0.3	4.9	0.3	788	12,345
1953	54.1	2.3	0.6	0.1	5.9	0.4	714	11,544
1954	50.4	3.1	1.5	0.3	5.3	0.6	693	13,477
1955	120.3	6.2	2.6	0.5	7.7	0.8	1,490	20,152
1956	92.7	4.2	2.3	0.2	8.9	1.3	1,381	15,720

value of the entire Protectorate's cotton crop. The expansion of coffee production, which has been achieved partly in addition to and partly in substitution for cotton-growing, has been viewed with some misgiving, not only by the cotton-ginners, but also by the authorities, who have repeatedly urged the farmers not to abandon cotton for a crop whose future economic prospects are very uncertain. It is true that the good fortune which has attended coffee producers, and especially the producers of low-grade coffee such as Buganda robusta, can already be seen to have been temporary. Yet there can be little doubt that the change has brought tremendous and lasting gains both to the Ganda and to the Protectorate at large, for at any foreseeable price ratio coffee yields larger returns, both in terms of land and in terms of labour, than either cotton or any other crop which peasant farmers are in a position to grow.

1. Sources as for Table 13.
2. The figures in each column are not directly comparable. Those for Buganda and other African relate to dried cherry, those for Bugisu to parchment, coffee and those for Non-African to hulled coffee. Very roughly, 1 ton of hulled coffee = 1¼ tons parchment coffee = 2 tons dried cherry.

In other ways, too, the agricultural economy is considerably more diversified than before the Second World War. Cotton and coffee still overwhelmingly dominated the export sector: together they represented 89 per cent. of the value of agricultural exports in 1955, and 77 per cent. of all exports. But tobacco is of some importance in Bunyoro and is beginning to be important in the West Nile and Acholi districts of the Northern Province; and a number of other products, such as castor seed and soya beans, have from time to time made appreciable contributions. The most significant new development, however, has been the growth of a local market. With the expansion of the towns, and the increase in the numbers of people who do not control the means of subsistence, foodstuffs which were formerly grown almost exclusively for household consumption have become marketable; and many Ganda farmers have begun to make large incomes from the sale of surplus bananas and other staple foods. Maize, hitherto a minor subsistence crop, first entered the market on a large scale during the war, the area under cultivation rising from 120,000 acres in 1938 to 316,000 in 1944. It was sustained at about this level until 1953, when, after a crop failure in Kenya, it leapt suddenly to 660,000 acres—a striking illustration both of the responsiveness of African farmers and of the margins still remaining in the agricultural system. This was a peak figure, which has not been attained since. But there is no doubt that maize has obtained a permanent place of some importance in the economy, though the protectionist policy of the Kenya Maize Control prevents it from achieving its full potential development.

One of the principal developments since the war has been the concentration of agricultural wealth in certain areas of the Protectorate and especially in Buganda. The slow expansion of marketable output in the north and west, which may be accelerated in the latter area by the recently completed extension of the railway, has been eclipsed by the immense enrichment which coffee has brought about in Buganda.

TABLE 17[1]

CROP SALES BY AREA, 1952 and 1956 (£'000)

	Cotton		*Coffee*		*Tobacco*		*Other Crops*[2]		*Total*		*Per Caput*[3] (£)	
	1952	*1956*	*1952*	*1956*	*1952*	*1956*	*1952*	*1956*	*1952*	*1956*	*1952*	*1956*
Buganda ...	4,135	**3,761**	3,893	7,785	**17**	**28**	919	n.a.	8,966	11,574	6.89	8.89
E. Prov.												
Bugisu } Bukedi }	—	277	376	1,350	—	— }	57	n.a.	2,153	1,627 }	3.59	6.31
	1,718	1,269	—	—	—	— }				1,269 }		3.71
Busoga ...	2,445	3,188	3	27	—	—	354	n.a.	2,801	3,216	5.54	6.35
Teso ...	1,246	1,274	—	—	—	—	57	n.a.	1,303	1,274	3.23	3.16
N. Prov.												
Lango ...	1,012	984	—	—	—	—	—	n.a.	1,012	985	3.80	3.70
Acholi ...	652	788	—	—	4	9	—	n.a.	655	797	3.03	3.69
Karamoja	—	5	—	—	—	—	—	n.a.	—	5	—	0.04
W. Nile ...	354	547	—	1	15	57	6	n.a.	375	603	1.12	1.79
W. Prov.												
Bunyoro ...	223	310	1	7	52	84	1	n.a.	276	401	2.55	3.71
Toro ...	146	173	36	131	—	—	13	n.a.	196	305	0.76	1.16
Ankole ...	—	—	19	37	1	—	71	n.a.	91	38	0.23	0.09
Kigezi ...	—	—	1	1	4	7	19	n.a.	24	8	0.06	0.02
Total ...	11,929	12,576	3,925	9,341	93	185	1,497	n.a.	17,851	22,100	3.63	4.48

Thus it would appear that production for the market is far more highly developed in Buganda, Busoga and Bugisu than in the remainder of the country, and that agriculture still yields scarcely any money incomes to the peoples of Karamoja or to those of any part of the Western Province except Bunyoro and the coffee-producing county of Bwamba in the Toro District. Taken by itself, however, the above table would be seriously misleading, for the wealth generated in the intensively agricultural districts is to some extent diffused through the country as a whole. In the first place, a large proportion (it is impossible to say how large, but perhaps nearly as much as a half) of the incomes received by Ganda farmers are in fact

1. Ann. Rpts. D/A, 1952 and 1956.
2. Castor seed, maize, groundnuts, chillies, peas, beans, grass, sunflower, onions, soya beans, wattle, simsim, millet, potatoes, shea butter nut, flax, wheat (but not including bananas). No figures are available for these commodities after 1952, when marketing was decontrolled.
3. 1948 population.

paid out to hired labourers, and much of this wage-income flows out to the poorer districts of Uganda as well as to Ruanda-Urundi and other neighbouring territories. In the second place, farmers enriched by the production of coffee and cotton allot a high priority in their expenditure to the more regular consumption of meat, so that the trade in slaughter cattle has become a major feature of the Protectorate's economic life. This development has been encouraged by the authorities, not only for nutritional reasons but also as a means of counteracting the pastoralists' tendency to overload the grazing-grounds with unprofitable beasts. In 1954 it was estimated that Buganda was annually importing the equivalent of 65,000 adult cattle, and Busoga a further 10,000, representing a disbursement of not less than £600,000. The principal exporting districts were Teso (36,000 units), Karamoja (17,000) and Lango (15,000).[1] In Teso and Lango the idea of cattle as a potential source of money income had been very generally accepted, but the same could not yet be said of Karamoja, where the "cattle complex" remained in full vigour and a demand for shillings, over and above the annual tax, still hardly existed; here the export of cattle was due mainly to official pressures.

In general, the trend which was visible in the 1950s, and which could be expected to become more pronounced in the future, was a trend towards regional specialisation within Uganda, towards an allocation to each area of the functions which it was best fitted to perform. Fuller use was being made of the most fertile areas by the concentration of their resources upon the production of coffee, which only they could grow, and of bulky foodstuffs for the towns in their vicinity. Crops such as cotton, which were less exacting in their requirements, were being relegated to lands of rather lower quality. And the relatively arid areas of Uganda were beginning to contribute to the economic system as suppliers of badly needed meat. Even within Buganda there was some local specialisation. The densely populated countryside in the immediate vicinity of Kampala was being increasingly devoted to sweet potatoes, the plant which gives the heaviest yield of bulk carbohydrate, and to the raw materials of beer—sweet bananas and latterly also pineapples. A little further out came the great coffee-and-banana belt. The remoter inland parts of the province were in part almost deserted owing to the presence of the tsetse fly and the scarcity of surface water and in part devoted to livestock production.

Since specialisation is the essence of economic development all this was clearly very much to the good. There was one further step in this direction, however, which the farmers of Uganda had not yet taken. Not only did the country as a whole remain self-sufficient in respect of its basic food supply, but each household still endeavoured to grow its own food in addition to whatever crops it produced for sale. In the existing state of communications and distributive machinery, and considering that coffee and bananas, cotton and millet fit very well together in the farming systems, this policy, though in theory questionable, was in practice almost certainly sound. At the margin, however, there had been some change, at any rate in Buganda. There, little attention was paid to the legal regulation according to which every landholder was supposed to maintain a quarter of an acre under cassava, as a reserve against the failure of his ordinary food supply. Many farmers now planted only such quantities of food crops as would be sufficient for their requirements in a normal year, covering the deficit in unfavourable seasons with maize flour which they bought from the shops. By this procedure, of course, a distinct economy of resources was secured.

Meanwhile, on the technical side, great and to some extent successful endeavours had been made to improve the efficiency of African agriculture. Scientific research had of course continued; and in this context Uganda had been very fortunate in being chosen as the site of the principal field station of the Empire Cotton Growing Corporation. The scientific work of the

1. U.P. Report of the Agricultural Productivity Committee, 1954.

Department of Agriculture had also continued to be directed primarily towards cotton. Its principal achievements in this field were the breeding of markedly improved strains of the plant and the dusting of the seed with a chemical preparation called perenox, which did much to reduce the incidence of pests. The campaign against erosion had made considerable headway, to the extent that the danger of real disaster could be said to have been averted. The show-piece of soil conservation was undoubtedly the terracing of the steep hill-sides of Kigezi, which was one of the most spectacular pieces of agricultural engineering in Africa. In Teso, another badly threatened district, the general adoption of the practice of strip-cropping had done much to relieve the situation. Slow but steady progress was also being made with the protection of the hill slopes of Buganda by contour bands planted with *paspalum* grass. This was being effected neither by outright coercion nor yet by pure persuasion, but by an intermediate process which might be described as badgering, and which has made "paspalum" a familiar and detested word in the Ganda language. Though inevitable, it was unfortunate that the Department of Agriculture should for many years have been associated in the minds of the farmers primarily with pressure to engage in arduous labours of which neither the necessity nor the advantage were immediately apparent. The work of the Department did, however, include propaganda and instruction of a more directly constructive kind. Here and there, for instance, farmers had been persuaded to make a beginning with scientifically planned rotations of annual crops and with the integration of cattle-keeping and cultivation, the adoption of pasture improvement, stall-feeding and the dunging of the coffee and banana groves. But the most ambitious innovation was the attempt to substitute tractor-drawn implements for the peasant's hoe. In the immediate post-war period—in the period of the Groundnut Scheme—the tractor was widely regarded as a *deus ex machina* (or *in machina*), which would rapidly transform the whole character of farming operations. This has not come to pass, but mechanisation has nevertheless had a certain impact. A number of small "machine tractor stations" have been set up under the aegis of the Department, from which tractors and their drivers are hired out to African farmers on request.[1] The main effort was at first concentrated on Buganda, where the broken terrain, the rank vegetation and the dense occupation of the land by irregularly disposed smallholdings combined to make mechanical cultivation exceedingly costly, and where in any case the increasing emphasis on permanent crops was making it less useful. Recently the focus of interest has moved towards the more open country in the Northern and Western Provinces. The scale of operations has remained small. In 1956, 4,478 acres were ploughed on contract, of which 1,708 were in Lango and Acholi, 1,333 in Bunyoro and Toro and only 989 in Buganda.[2] Nor could it be said that the process had yet been proved to be fully economic. A development which seemed to show more long-run promise, but the success of which depended on a wider diffusion of mechanical skills and general savoir-faire among the rural population, was the purchase of tractors by individual farmers.

It was clear at any rate that mechanisation was for the few, not for the many, and this brings us to a subtle and gradual change that was taking place in the pattern of the Department's work. In lieu of the handing down of rules, instructions and exhortations to an ignorant and, in theory, subservient peasantry there was emerging something more like an agricultural extension service as the term is understood in a civilised state. The Department's officers were moving away from the heart-breaking task of raising the general level of African agriculture a notch or two up the scale of efficiency, and were turning to the more rewarding process of providing expert guidance to the minority of farmers who were both willing and able

1. U.P. White Paper on Mechanisation of African Farming in Uganda, 1954. Ann. Rpts. D/A from 1948 onwards.
2. U.P. Ann. Rpt. D/A for 1956.

to profit from it. In 1953 the Agricultural Productivity Committee noted and welcomed the appearance on the scene of the professional farmer. In 1956 work was started on the construction of two Farm Institutes, which were intended to provide training, not only for Departmental staff and schoolteachers but also for Africans wishing to make a career in agriculture; and in the same year there was set up a Farm Planning Unit—not to impose new methods of operation on all and sundry, but to provide guidance "at the request of individual farmers or groups of farmers."[1]

In the early and middle 1950s new winds were blowing through the Uganda countryside. Increased prosperity was evident on every hand—most notably in Buganda but to some extent throughout the country—in the housing and clothing of the rural population, in the multiplication of bicycles and motor-cars, gramophones and wireless sets, in the country shops stocked with tinned milk and wheat loaves and bottled beer. But along with this progress there was also visible the beginning of a profound structural transformation. Hitherto, the peasants of Uganda had conformed to a more or less standard type. They were hardly farmers, as the term is understood in Europe, but only part-time "cultivators," whose participation in the exchange economy did not extend much beyond the raising, by primitive methods, of an acre or so of cotton or other marketable crops. Agriculture was rarely either a dominant interest or a full-time occupation. It was merely a chore, which had to be engaged in so that a limited number of money requirements might be met. (The food supply was primarily the business of the women.) There were indeed, among the landowners of Buganda, some who farmed their land on a much larger scale, enjoyed much larger incomes and had altogether higher standards than the ordinary peasant. But even these differed from the peasants only in having labour under their control. The methods of work were the same, the whole approach equally unprofessional.

Now, however, men of a new type were emerging out of the homogeneous mass of cultivators—men who definitely looked on agriculture as a means of growing rich. Specimens might be found almost everywhere, but it was only in Buganda that they were at all common. They had begun to make their presence felt just before the war, but it was only in the post-war decades that they really came to the fore. They were of diverse origins. Some were landowning squires, who had discovered that direct exploitation of the soil could be far more profitable than the mere receipt of rent and tithe. A few were simple peasants, who were climbing out of the ruck by virtue of more than ordinary intelligence and character. Many, probably the majority, were traders, clerks, artisans, even schoolteachers, who had retired to the country in middle life and were endeavouring to sustain by agriculture the kind of incomes to which they had become accustomed elsewhere. What they had in common was quite simply a dissatisfaction with the merely normal standard of living, a determination to grow rich. To farm on a more ambitious scale meant, first and foremost, to cultivate more land, and to cultivate more land meant first and foremost to employ more labour. By no means all the "new men" were any better farmers from a technical point of view than the simplest of the semi-subsistence cultivators. There was, however, a slowly increasing number of men who not only willingly took but actually sought the advice of Agricultural Officers, whose attitudes and practices were beginning to assume a truly professional character.

Since large and successful farmers were much commoner in Buganda than elsewhere, it might be tempting to see the explanation of their emergence in the tenurial conditions peculiar to that province—in the existence of legal rights in land and of units of ownership much larger than the standard peasant holding. But although it is true that successful farmers usually owned land to begin with or bought land as soon as they began to be successful, it does not appear that documentary title was an essential condition of

1. U.P. Ann. Rpt. D/A for 1956.

their success. Many of them founded their fortunes on ordinary tenant holdings, which were not always at all strictly delimited in area. Moreover, large agricultural undertakings did occur sporadically in other provinces. In Acholi, for example, there was at least one 70-acre African farm, which had been created with no apparent difficulty within the framework of customary tribal law. The main reasons for the prevalence of large farmers in Buganda appeared to be rather the existence, until recently, of large reserves of eminently fertile land, the availability of cheap immigrant labour, the exceptionally high profits which could be extracted from the soil, and a form of society which stimulated competition and set no barriers to ambition.

It would be wrong, however, to draw too sharp a distinction between the "professional" farmers and the remainder of the rural population. At one end of the scale there was the lethargic and usually drunken peasant, who produced in the year just enough cotton or coffee to pay his rent and taxes and to provide clothing for his back. At the other was the farmer who had fifty or even a hundred acres under coffee, whose labour force ran into scores, who perhaps also owned a shop and a share in a curing-works, whose approach to the whole undertaking was thoroughly business-like and who was by any standard a wealthy man. But between these extremes there was not a gulf but a continuum, containing all sorts and conditions of persons engaged with greater or less energy and success in the practice of agriculture. In spite of the very wide divergences of fortune which had taken place, the fundamental structure of agrarian society remained unaltered, in as much as it was still assumed that every member of the community was or could be a cultivator, that every family had or could obtain, somewhere, a piece of land sufficient for its maintenance.

There were, however, signs of a more radical change looming on the horizon. In the first place, the growth of population was beginning to challenge the assumption that there was or could be land for everyone. So far, there was acute pressure on the land only in the mountainous districts of Kigezi, where it had been partly relieved by resettlement, and Bugisu. In the Protectorate as a whole there certainly remained ample space for the present generation of cultivators and probably the next; in Bunyoro, for example, where the birth-rate remained obstinately low, the local authorities were actually inviting African colonists from Kenya to help fill up the vacant territories. But in many areas the end of this particular road was already in sight. In much of Buganda and Busoga land had already ceased to be a free good, in that new settlers were being obliged to make initial payments of as much as £10 an acre, or even more, not for title deeds but for occupancy rights. Though there was as yet very little actual landlessness among the native populations of these areas, there was emerging a class of people who might be described as cotters, who possessed little more than a banana grove and were dependent on wage employment for almost the whole of their money income. Moreover, some landowners in Buganda were applying all possible pressure to get their small tenants to vacate their holdings, in order to make room for the expansion of their own farms. It was clear that universal landholding would before very long become impossible, or at any rate would cease to be compatible with the existence of some farms of very much more than average size. Nor could there be much doubt that it would not be the large farms that would give way.

One factor which had hitherto prevented still further differentiation was the continued use, on farms of all types and sizes, of very simple techniques and very cheap equipment. The further spread of mechanisation would alter this, and so would the wider adoption of mixed farming, with the necessity of expenditure on cattle, fencing and the transport of manure. In these ways a decisive advantage would be conferred on farmers with fairly large areas at their disposal and some capital behind them.

So far, the African farmer's responsibilities and opportunities had virtually ended with the harvesting of his crops. He had no part in their processing and marketing. All he had to do with his cotton was to separate the stained bolls from the sound ones; all he had to do with his coffee was to lay it out in the sun to dry. Processing was carried out in central factories. Marketing presented him with no problems, for he could, and had to, dispose of the whole of his crop at the nearest trading centre or ginnery at a price laid down by the Government. In such circumstances no premium could be paid for superior quality. But by 1957 the urgency of raising the quality of Buganda robusta was so great that the Government was considering means of encouraging the partial preparation of coffee on or near the farm, so that higher prices could be paid, not only for well-prepared coffee but also for coffee which had been picked at the proper time and thoroughly dried. (Under the existing system, differences in quality are apparent only after the coffee has left the central factory.) If any such measure went through, a clear line would be drawn between the farmers who had the capital and the enterprise to acquire processing equipment and those who had not.

On several counts, therefore, it was plain that differentiation was going to become more pronounced, that class distinctions in rural society were going to be more and more sharply drawn. Before long, Uganda would be leaving behind "that early and rude state of society which precedes both the accumulation of stock (i.e. capital) and the appropriation of land."[1] Notwithstanding the growth of exchange, its economy had so far remained in that "rude" form. Nor had the acquisition of proprietary rights by the Ganda chiefs in 1900 amounted to appropriation in the operative sense of the term, for the use of land had remained open to all. The change would be profound and its social consequences were unpredictable. The upheaval had long been foreboded, and those who wished to avoid it had seen in the co-operative society an expedient whereby the advantages of specialisation might be obtained without the resultant inequality and social stress. Now the co-operative movement had made great headway in Uganda since the Second World War, and had come to play a considerable part in the marketing and processing of crops. But on agriculture it had made scarcely any impact. The Ganda at least appear to have the strongest aversion to anything in the nature of collective labour. They would rather till their own land or even, if need be, work independently for hire. And even on the commercial side the co-operatives had owed most of their success to the special privileges accorded them by the Government. It was not difficult to prophesy that here too the future lay rather with the individual entrepreneur or group of entrepreneurs.

If the trend continued towards differentiation of the rural population, towards a sharper distinction between large farmers and cottagers, between employers and workers, between economic leaders and economic followers, Uganda would be following the road which had been travelled by all the advanced countries of the world—certainly not excluding the Soviet Union. The process could hardly fail to produce economic gains, in as much as larger scope would be allowed for differences in human talent and ambition. It might even produce gains for almost everyone, for many smallholders could certainly have earned far more by working for others than they actually did earn on their own holdings. But on the other hand there would be disturbance. If the change were gradual—and there was no reason to suppose that it would be other than gradual—the disturbance would not have to be severe. But the dread of disturbance, the awareness of a threat to the old easy-going, fundamentally egalitarian way of life, was very much present among large sections of the rural population, especially but not solely in Buganda. It lay behind the obsessive fears of expropriation by European settlers or by the Government—the latter wholly baseless, the former having a basis only in the occasional acquisition of land for railways,

1. Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations* (London: Routledge, 1905), p. 36.

agricultural research stations and the like. It lay behind the growing antagonism between the Ganda and the African immigrants whose presence was helping to make land scarce. It was one of the root causes of the prevailing political unrest, and of an atmosphere in which the Government was readily believed to be engaged in the systematic poisoning (or sterilisation) of its African subjects. Yet the unrest was not all dread. For the more vigorous members of society new opportunities were unfolding, and it was impossible to live in rural Uganda in the early 1950s without being conscious of stir and hope, of the opening up of new horizons.

Finally, we must return for a brief glimpse of a sector of the agricultural economy which we have neglected since the 1920s. Non-African plantation enterprise had gone through hard times after 1930. It had survived, but not without considerable reconstruction. The individual planter-settler was almost extinct, though a few Asian business-men contrived to run small coffee plantations as a sideline. Most of the estates were now run as units of large, highly capitalised organisations, among which the Uganda Company was pre-eminent. The plantations had shared in the general expansion of the economy after 1950 and continued to make an important contribution to the wealth of the country.

TABLE 18[1]

NON-AFRICAN AGRICULTURE, 1938-56

	1938	*1947*	*1950*	*1953*	*1956*
Acres Planted					
Coffee	13,313	17,600	21,067	22,825	24,129
Rubber	10,813	7.000	7,000	7,000	—
Sugar	15,312	28,000	26,662	26,547	30,503
Sisal	7,200	8,600	9,800	9,000	7,000
Tea	2,884	5,100	6,406	8,397	11,920
	49,522	66,300	70,935	73,969	73,522
Production—Tons					
Coffee	n.a.	4,900	2,581	6,340	10,200
Rubber	n.a.	200	44	45	—
Sugar	n.a.	56,900	46,108	47,973	69,037
Sisal	n.a.	800	964	900	630
Tea	n.a.	1,700	1,849	2,140	3,036
Production—£'000					
Coffee	n.a.	343	616	2,009	2,625
Rubber	n.a.	21	21	11	—
Sugar	n.a.	1,207	1,721	2,146	3,154
Sisal	n.a.	107	107	60	30
Tea	n.a.	380	414	599	1,122
		2,000	2,900	4,826	6,931

Apart from the revival of coffee growing, the most significant post-war development in the non-African sector was the expansion of the tea industry, which, freed from the restrictions hitherto imposed on it by international agreement, and soundly based on a rapidly growing domestic market, seemed to be assured of a prosperous future. Tea is pre-eminently a "plantation," that is to say a large-unit crop, in that it needs to be processed by elaborate equipment immediately after picking. It is possible, however, to delegate the cultivation to small producers, provided that a factory is situated in their midst and that they are subjected to sufficient discipline to ensure a regular supply of leaf; and experiments in this direction were being conducted in the 1950s. It was to be hoped that, in this way and in others, the old rigid distinction between "African" and "non-African" agriculture would begin to be broken down as Uganda grew more adult. One of the messages most insistently conveyed in the report of the Royal Commission on Land and Population in East Africa was that the locking up of non-African capital and enterprise in a separate compartment of the economy, however expedient it may have been in the early stages of the

1. Ann. Rpts. D/A.

country's development, could not but have a constricting effect on the economic growth of the community as a whole. Now that the people of Uganda were ceasing to be unsophisticated and helpless peasants, now that some Africans were beginning to farm on an almost "European" scale, the old classification was losing much of its meaning. It was not to be expected that the ban on the further acquisition of land rights by non-Africans would be relaxed in the immediate future, but there were other ways in which African agriculture could be fertilised by the application of the capital and the managerial and technical skills possessed by European and Asian citizens. The proposed partnership of peasant farmers and factory-owners in the tea industry represented one line of advance. Others, which had already been adumbrated by the Uganda Company, included the formation of agricultural companies by African landowners and European entrepreneurs and the use of European firms as managing agents on African-owned estates. Altogether, it seemed possible to look forward to the gradual evolution of a more sensibly integrated and co-operative system.

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