

# THE GOLD RUSH IN KENYA

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**T**HE discovery of gold in Kenya has led to new robbery of land from the Africans. African villages and crops have been razed to the ground to make room for the gang of gold-diggers. This act of terror has filled the Africans with bitterness and resentment.

In the last 35 years the British imperialists have robbed all the best lands from the African natives of Kenya. The pastoral and agricultural Africans, entirely dependent on their land as the basis of their entire life, have largely found themselves landless. Uncompensated appropriation of native lands has rendered thousands of the Africans homeless, and often, where once they cultivated the soil or herded their cattle on land immemorially associated with the life of their family, they now find themselves serfs forced to work on their own lands for the benefit of the white "owners" and even in some circumstances to work without pay or food.

The soul of the African is stricken nigh to death by confiscation of its ancestral lands, the obstruction of its free development in social and economic matters, and its subjugation to an imperialist system of slavery, taxpaying, pass-carrying and forced labour. This policy of British imperialist robbery and oppression aroused the greatest alarm and anxiety amongst the Kenya Africans, the outcome of which was the revolt in 1922, when defenceless Africans—men, women and children—were shot down by these filibusters.

In order to undermine the minds of the African masses by hypocritical phrases, an ordinance was passed (*i.e.*, the Kenya Native Lands Trust Ordinance of 1930), followed by a Memorandum on Native Policy, in which documents we find *inter alia* :—

Primarily Kenya is an African territory and His Majesty's Government think it necessary definitely to record their considered opinion that the interests of the African natives must be paramount, and that if, and when, those interests of the Africans and the interests of the immigrant races should conflict, the former should prevail.

This sounds well and good on paper, but when it comes to real practice, no doubt it is the interest of the immigrant races (white imperialists) which "prevails." If we look into this matter properly we see that the railways and main roads which are built with money forcibly derived from the Africans, are serving the interests of the white imperialists.

This document went on with the same imperialist lies as follows:

The first essential is to remove finally from the native mind any feeling of insecurity in regard to his tribal lands—that the lands within

the boundaries as finally gazetted for Native Reserves are reserved for the use and benefit of the natives for ever. Any derogation from this solemn pledge would, in the view of His Majesty's Government, be not only a flagrant breach of trust, but also, in view of the inevitable effect upon the natives, a serious calamity from which the whole Colony would not fail to suffer.

This "Magna Charta" goes on to explain the rare cases where an exception must be made. It will be necessary to expropriate plots of native land. ". . . . for new purposes of public utility" such as it enumerated—schools, hospitals, post offices, water or electricity works, roads or railways. But it said:—

It is of high importance that no such compulsory expropriation, however small in extent, of land once definitely allocated to Native occupancy or use, should ever be permitted for the mere private or personal profit or other advantage of any individual.

It was further stated that if land is taken for public purposes other land equivalent in superficial extent, and also, as far as possible, equal in agricultural quality, convenience and market value to that taken away, plus an addition as compensation for disturbance, must be given. In order to cover the cost of reinstatement in new homes, the Government must also meet the cost of removal. But before such an action is taken the natives concerned had to be given ample notice; and finally, the assent of the Native Councils must be secured.

That was the law of Kenya and a "solemn pledge" till gold was discovered on one of the Kavirondo Reserves. In the presence of that glittering metal the British imperialists could not face their so-called "word of honour."

An Amendment Bill was rushed through the Legislative Council of Kenya, and in a short time it was sanctioned by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Cunliffe-Lister, who professes to have "the interest of the natives at heart." His action allowed the Kenya Government to amend the Native Land Trust Ordinance, and the taking away of native land and leasing it without any obligation to the natives concerned, to provide equivalent land. The restriction to "public purposes" is no more recognised, and lest the Native Local Councils should object to this contemptuous robbery, their consent is dispensed with. It is not considered necessary to bring a proposed "temporary" exclusion to the notice of the Local Native Council or the natives concerned.

Cunliffe-Lister, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, admitted this glaring robbery and lies of the British imperialists. In the House of Commons dealing with the amendment, he said: "Land may be temporarily excluded from a reserve for mining leases and that compensation for such temporary exclusion may be paid in money instead of in the form of additional land." This money is even not to be paid to the natives disturbed, but to some Native Trust Fund, which is in the hands

and controlled by these same imperialists. And even if the money were paid to the natives concerned, what could they do with it while the law of Kenya does not allow natives to buy land outside the Reserve? What low cunning and dirty trickery! Let those cajolers understand that the Africans are conscious of what is taking place, and it is their (African) "sacred" duty to fight hard against the imperialist oppressors.

The Secretary of State went on to affirm that :—

The provisions of the Bill have been agreed to by the Morris Carter Commission.

This Commission was appointed in response to the recommendation of the 1931 Joint Committee of Lords and Commons on East Africa.

The Joint Committee, after hearing the evidence of the African witnesses, who were brought all the way from Africa to England for this purpose, recommended :—

In view of the nervousness among the native population as regards the land question, a full and authoritative inquiry should be undertaken immediately into the needs of the native population, present and prospective, with respect to land within or without the reserve, held either on tribal or on individual tenure. Pending the conclusion of this inquiry no further alienation of Crown land to non-natives should take place.

The time has now come when the Kenya Africans will not be lured by such empty phrases, and appointment of commissions of "investigation." The above commission, instead of hearing the claims of Africans concerning lands which were robbed from them, went to spy how the British imperialists could steal more lands, and how best they could exploit and oppress the natives of Kenya.

Cunliffe-Lister, speaking in the House of Commons with regard to this expropriation of native land, said: "Nobody is going to benefit more than the natives." What are these benefits? Since the gold-diggers entered into the Kavirondo Reserve they have undoubtedly carried out wholesale looting. They have taken away the native land which the Government declared sacred and inviolable. They are turning young African girls and women into prostitutes in order to satisfy their sensual bestial lust, they are dragging their "honour" in the mud and slush, their civilisation is all in the interest of capitalist greed and imperialist exploitation. African villages have been overrun, their crops have been rooted out without compensation, the villagers have been brutally treated by the gold-diggers. This inhuman treatment is what the honourable gentleman calls "Benefit."

At present there are over 1,000 European prospectors in the country and many others are on their way there. The presence of these gold hunters in the Kavirondo country is regarded with the utmost hostility by the native inhabitants, who, less than two years ago were told that

their land had been reserved for their use for "ever," which they innocently believed, therefore, to be free from any alien settlement. But now they suddenly find it overrun by increasing numbers of European gold hunters who are gathering like flies round a honey pot in the hope of satisfying their greed at the expense of the natives of Kakamega. Already an area of over 400 square miles is in the hands of the prospectors, they have started damming and diverting the streams for the purpose of alluvial gold washing, and have taken to digging huge pits and trenches all over the place among the native villages and the cultivated fields. They have pegged the whole countryside for their future operations. The area so taken is most densely populated and closely cultivated by the natives. This shows that thousands of them will be homeless and landless. The Government stated that this expropriation of land will be only "temporary," and that is why compensation in land was not necessary. This is just a lie pure and simple because millions of acres of the best lands were formerly taken from the Africans in this way of "temporary occupation," and never came back. It is quite clear that what the British imperialists want is to create a landless class of Africans so that they can enslave them in the gold mines and herd them in the compounds just as they are doing in the South African goldfields.

In addition to the area mentioned above, there is an additional area of 5,900 square miles which might be taken at any time for the benefit of a few individuals who are going out to Kakamega for their selfish gains. What Africans are asking is where is the "solemn pledge?" Where is the "sacred trust?"

It is clear now that the "promises" which have been regarded as "sacred" have already been broken. Every Kenya African should understand that these promises are nothing but a dupe to keep us sleeping while the imperialists are planning for further robberies and exploitation in order to satisfy their own ends. It will be remembered that the policy of imperialists is to "divide and rule"; thus they have been able to rob and oppress us separately. Let us unite and demand our birthrights.

The eviction of the Masai by the British imperialists in 1904 from their best land of Laikipia to the barren land to the south of the Uganda Railway is still in the memory of many Kenyans. This unforgivable act of violent robbery was aided by some of our countrymen unconsciously, while they were thinking that they were fulfilling their duty to their "King and Country," but to-day, no doubt, many have realised what this means. Because from that time on many tribes have been treated in the same manner. Take for instance the Kikuyu, Kavirondo Nandi, Wakamba and many other coastal tribes, they have lost their best lands through the same brutal expropriation. Recently, while we (Kenya Africans) have been hanging on to these unworthy promises and petitioning

to the King and his Parliament, lands have been taken away from Swahilis at Kisauni (Free Town); their homes were rooted out in 1931 in order that the imperialists might have fine building ground round the coast at the expense of the Africans. The Kikuyu in 1930-31 lost hundreds of acres of valuable land for cultivation, grazing and many water falls. Their huts were razed to the ground by the order of the Government to give room for a private Electric Power Station for the benefit of the white settlers. To-day in 1933 gold having been found in Kavirondoland at Kakamega, they have to be evicted so that the coffers of the British imperialists may be filled. I cite these instances in order to show that petitions and appeals to the King and his Parliament will cut no ice.

Perhaps many will ask: "What can we do against an imperialist government which is armed with machine guns, aeroplanes and bombs, &c.?" My answer to that is, we have learnt examples from other countries. And the only way out is the mass organisation of workers and peasants of various tribes, and by having this unity we shall be in a position to put up a strong protest against this robbery and exploitation.

It is no secret that the money we pay by way of direct and indirect taxation is used to oppress and exploit us. Therefore the more we refuse to pay this contribution the weaker the oppression machine will be. And also by agreeing to work on these lands under slavish conditions we are helping our enemy to draw huge profits out of our sweat and blood by which they are able to carry on further robberies.

Therefore, all Kenya Africans must fight for their liberation. We cannot forget how we have been exploited and oppressed through these "solemn pledges." Let none of our countrymen have any faith in these imperialist hypocritical "promises" which mean nothing but the oppression and exploitation of the masses. In this fight we shall have the support of all who are oppressed by the British Slave Empire—the Indians, the Irish, the South Africans—all these people are revolting against this damnable Empire whose days are numbered.

With the support of all revolutionary workers and peasants we must redouble our efforts to break the bonds that bind us. We must refuse to give any support to the British imperialists either by paying taxes or obeying any of their slave laws! We can fight in unity with the workers and toilers of the whole world, and for a Free Africa.