

THE COLONIAL ECONOMY. S.6 CLASS.

“Colonial economic policies were for underdevelopment and exploitation of Africa”. Discuss.

The imperialist European powers came to Africa with Various motives i.e. social, political, and economic but their stay in Africa was purely determined by the economic atmosphere in their respective countries. The following economic policies were introduced in Africa as a way of satisfying the metropolitan countries.

a) Land alienation;

When the Europeans came to Africa, large quantities of land were taken away from the Africans especially those that were economically viable in terms of fertility of soil and minerals, e.g. in South Africa, land was taken by Europeans and the Africans were concentrated in Bantustans. The same fate was in the high plateaus of Angola, Rhodesia and Kenya. Africans were left the unproductive areas while the fertile areas were used to supply raw materials.

b) Forced labor;

As the Europeans had acquired land there was need to acquire labor. As Grogan put it “we have stolen land, now we must steal limbs; compulsory labor is important of our occupation of the country”. It is from this view that forced labor policy was employed on Africans in farms, roads, railway construction etc. For example in West Africa the French used forced labor to build the Dakar- Bamako railway, the British used the same in East Africa when building the Uganda railway, Germany in Tanzania forced the Africans to work on cotton plantations, In Angola and

Mozambique contract labor used and Africans were exported to Sao-Tome and Principe islands.

c) Taxation;

Taxes were imposed on Africans to increase revenues for the colonies intended to run the day to day affairs of the government. Taxes were introduced as a way of compelling Africans either to grow cash crops or to work in European firms, the most famous being the hut and gun taxes which made Africans become wage workers in order to pay taxes. In Congo and Angola failure to pay these taxes amounted to the confiscation of property or in extreme cases death. The same was experienced in Kenya among the Kikuyu.

d) Production of cash crops and suffocating of domestic industries;

Forced labor in African countries was not for its own sake but to avail raw materials for the colonial European countries. Europeans introduced cash crops in a number of their colonies; cotton, coffee, rubber, palm oil etc. This was done at the expense of food crops which later led to famine in most African countries. Africans became producers of raw materials in form of cash crops and minerals. Europeans destroyed the infant industries in Africa and the only industries established were mainly processing industries purposely intended to reduce the bulk of the exported materials and make it easier for transport.

e) Education;

The most controversial of all the colonial economies was the ideological exploitation through western education. Elementary

education system was introduced in Africa where Africans were denied technical education. Africans were given basic education to become clerks, interpreters, secretaries etc. Africans were therefore made dependants on imperialism in all aspects of life which was not of help to them but an interest of colonial powers.

f) Transport system;

The most outstanding feature of the colonial economy was the modern transport sector where colonial powers through forced labor encouraged the construction of communication system e.g. roads and railway systems. These were intended to facilitate the transportation of raw materials from the interior of Africa to the coast so easily. Most railway networks were directed to economically productive areas. It is of no wonder that most railway lines were named after the products they were meant to transport from Africa e.g. iron line, palm oil line, cotton line and cocoa line, this was mainly pronounced in West Africa. In East Africa the Uganda railway run from Mombasa via Kisumu to Lake Victoria and another line from Kasese to Jinja purposely to transport cotton and copper. It is important to note therefore that the Europeans did not make attempts to make roads and railways link villages or countries to another but specifically made to connect the interior to the coast.

In conclusion, the colonial economic policies portrays that they were designed primarily for the benefit of the colonial masters. If Africans had anything to benefit from these policies, it was purely accidental and not desired.

COLONIAL ECONOMY IN CONGO FREE STATE UNDER LEOPOLD

11.

1. How did Congo become the property of King Leopold.11.?
2. Discuss Leopold's policies in Congo Free State.
3. Discuss the various methods employed by Leopold. 11 in the exploitation of the Congo.
4. Discuss the impact of the Belgians in Congo during the colonial period.
5. How was Leopold 11 able to acquire and consolidate his rule over the Congo up to 1900?

METHODS USED IN ECONOMIC EXPLOITATION OF CONGO.

Leopold's interest in the Congo reached a serious level in 1876 when he convened a meeting of explorers, geographers, and philanthropists (humanitarians) in Brussels which led to the formation of International African Association (I.A.A). By 1884-85 Berlin Conference Leopold out won other European powers and acquired Congo Free State.

From 1876 up to 1908 Congo was a personal property of King Leopold 11 of Belgium. By 1908 when the Congo Free State was handed over to the Belgium govt. to become Belgium Congo, Leopold had instituted various methods of exploitation of African land and labor in Congo. These methods were inherited by the Belgian govt. when it took over and they include the following;

1. Forced labor; Africans suffered compulsory work in private settlers' plantations and those owned by the concessions and companies. In most cases they were not paid and if they were paid, the wages were meager. They were paid in form of lashes for the construction of communication lines e.g. roads and railway. Free labor was also used in the Katanga copper mines that were under primarily concession companies.

2. Taxation; Taxes were imposed on the Africans in Congo to raise revenue for the financially dry Leopold's govt. paying of taxes compelled Africans to seek employment from the concessionaire companies and other private undertakings to obtain money which they would use to pay the taxes.

Africans were called to pay the taxes in form of rubber and ivory. It should be noted that this policy made the Africans greatly suffer. They had to ensure collecting of rubber and hunting ivory from the bush. Worse still paying tax meant working three weeks in the rubber jungle. If one defaulted severe public flogging and mutilation could be applied to act as an example for the rest. It is also said that instead of revenue generated serving domestic development, it was repatriated to enrich Leopold's country Belgium. He built palaces and financed public projects in Belgium.

3. Indirect rule; The Belgian administrative hierarchy constituted of African rulers at the very bottom. These were supervised over by other African officials in the army occupying the bottom ranks

known as the sentinels. The sentinels punished culprits in the rubber collection. What should be noted is that the African rulers who were employed were very cruel and brittle. The use of such personnel was to enable high output and the payment of taxes. Thus Africans were used to force fellow Africans to be exploited.

4. Mineral exploitation; It is reported that after 1900, mineral prospects and exploitation of the Congo had reached an alarming point. By 1914 Katanga had become the major mineral producing centre north of Witwatersrand. Africans employed in the mines were under paid. Others mobilized on a forced labor basis. Apart from mineral exploitation, concessionaire companies also exploited other natural resources of timber and rubber.

5. Land policy; In 1891 Leopold came up with a policy by which all vacant land was declared govt. land. This was land which was neither occupied nor exploited by Africans. It should be noted that earlier on this land had been used by Africans for gathering, hunting and shifting cultivation. Moreover this land (regionale Dominate) contained rubber. The Africans were barred from freely collecting it. In this way the Congolese lost their land. In addition they had to avail their labor for exploitation. In addition Leopold also leased land portions to private companies on profit sharing schemes.

6. Signing of contracts and agreements; A lot of contracts were signed between Leopold and concessionaire companies to develop public works. In 1886 the contract between Leopold and Compagnie du Congo Pour le Commerce et l'Industrie (C.C.C.I). This company was to construct a railway line connecting Kinshasa (Leopoldville) and Matadi. In this contract for every 1km of a railway constructed 1500 hectares of land would be given to the company. A series of companies were also granted concessions to exploit the land. This resulted into the alienation of about 3,000 square miles of land in the lower Congo. Company du Katanga which was to build a railway from Katanga to Lake Tanganyika was responsible for this. Land which was not under the companies was to be Crown lands run by Leopold himself.

It should be noted that Leopold was not interested in developing public works in Congo because this required heavy investments. He therefore had to pay heavily using African land. However for the land taken, the Africans had to avail their labor for exploitation.

7. Cash crop production; Rubber production on African land was encouraged but food production was not yet the Africans were underpaid if at all their rubber was bought. As a result the neglect of farming culminated into starvation, famine and depopulation in the Congo Free State. It is reported that the population of by 1911 had fallen by 2/3 in only 20 yrs. Thus by emphasizing cash crop production, Africans lost their lands and food production was neglected and famine was bound to occur.

8. Development of transport systems; In Congo, railways and roads were constructed e.g. a railway line was constructed to link Matadi and Leopoldville (Kinshasa). Another one was to link Tanganyika region to the Katanga. It was on this transport network that forced labor was applied. Moreover land was taken from Africans to have this important development to take place. Worse of all the roads and railways pointed towards the Atlantic coast hence acting as sucking tubes for the Congo resources.

9. Division of Congo into districts; The Belgians feared African rebellions as a result of resentment of their rule. To solve this problem the Belgians divided Congo into small districts which numbered 600 in all. This helped in having closer political control by the Belgian administrators.

10. Education; Africans were denied higher education levels. They were only limited to primary levels. It is said that up to 1914 hardly any African had gone beyond primary level. Those who attained primary education were exploited as interpreters and clerks. Those who did not attend primary education were exploited as a reservoir of labor- unskilled.

11. Raiding African villages; The Belgians raided African villages and took women and children as hostages to their camps to be returned when men had collected a considerable amount of rubber. If someone collected rubber or brought poor quality rubber, then the village could be burnt to ashes by the village officials.

N.B. Because of such sufferings there was a lot of public opinion in Belgium which forced the Belgian govt. to take over Congo from Leopold. It was at this time that Congo Free State became Belgian Congo. It should however be noted that the Belgian govt. never changed the situation because it inherited the officials used by Leopold. However gradually forced labor was later dropped, money was put in roads and railway developments but the academic standards of the Africans (Congolese) remained very low.

MODERN TRANSPORT NETWORK SYSTEM.

The Uganda railway.

The Uganda railway was constructed on the basis of creating a strategic line between Uganda and the East African coast and to protect the British strategic interest in the area. The railway line traces its idea as far back as 1892 when Lord Salisbury the British Prime Minister thought of a means of consolidating the British claims over British East Africa an idea that he pushed to the British public, parliament and the Cabinet for support and this was realized when work started in 1896.

Problems faced in building the railway;

1. There was lack of labor force; recruitment of local labor was a problem because these local people did not regard the project as important after all they were pastoralists who were

- wondering around for grass. This made work on the railway difficult and the British had to import Indians coolies.
2. Between 1896-98, the railway work was delayed by lions around Tsavo which killed many workers and it was not until they were hunted by Major Patterson.
 3. The railway workers were always attacked by hostile tribes notably the Nandi and Masai who disrupted the work by cutting down telephone wires, telegraph systems, railway slippers and even harassed the workers.
 4. It also faced the problem of diseases especially malaria which was the most serious and led to the deaths of many workers not forgetting sleeping sickness and jiggers.
 5. There were various physical problems e.g. drought in the Nyika, floods, inadequate loading facilities and the geographical settings like mountains and marshes.
 6. Technical problems like mechanical breakdowns, lack of spare parts disrupted the engineers and delayed their work.

The completion of the Uganda railway was a great achievement to the British parliament and indeed its completion had far reaching consequences on the social, political and economic lifestyles of the people of East Africa.

1. The construction was the beginning of an influx of Indians into East Africa many of whom remained behind and involved themselves in economic activities especially businessmen in the urban areas.

2. African farmers got the opportunity to sale their produce outside their homes because of transport and as a result there was a boom in African farming and increase in wealth.
3. Uganda was made accessible, there was encouragement of cash growing e.g. in 1905 Bishop Borup introduced the first cotton seed and indeed this marked the start of an era of cash crop production.
4. There was the development of export trade in natural products and importation of manufactured goods and therefore new products were seen on the market.
5. It provided employment for large numbers of Asians and Africans some as permanent staff on the railway while others were casual laborers.
6. It led to land alienation especially in Kenya among the Nandi people, the Kikuyu and Masai people.
7. It led to urbanization because of various centers which were used for European settlements turned into towns and cities and business boomed all as a result of urbanization.
8. It led to settlement of the British in East Africa started by Sir Charles Elliot the commissioner of Kenya who decided to introduce European settlers in Kenya and indeed a large part of Kenya highlands were earmarked as a white man's country.
9. It led to the enlargement of Kenya in order to put the whole of the railway line under the same colonial administration. This was done in 1902 when Uganda eastern province was transferred to

Kenya. Also the capital of Kenya was transferred with the headquarters to Nairobi which was also near the geographical center of the countryside. The railway made it easier for the British to establish their authority in Kenya.

10. The railway brought the whole area under which it passed to be put in control of the British protectorate.

11. The problem of land locked Uganda was solved. Britain would transport troops, equipment and administrative personnel easily to Uganda protectorate.

12. Slave trade came to an end given that slave transport was no longer required and hence with easy transport legitimate trade was encouraged.

13. Also the conclusion of the railway led to migrant labor from rural to urban areas and the end result was population increase in urban leading to other social evils crime, prostitution etc.

Conclusively the construction of the Uganda Railway had both positive and negative impacts on the people of East Africa but the most outstanding was that East Africa was opened to the imperialistic world for a greater exploitation. No wonder many Afro-Centric scholars doubt the benefit the people of East Africa got from the Uganda railway except being a legacy of modern transport networks to smoother exploitation.

ROLE OF AFRICANS IN COLONIAL ECONOMIES.

Discuss the role played by Africans in colonial economies up to 1917.

During the era of colonial exploitation, it is important to note that Africans were not the customers but instead producers of products in the interest of the colonial masters mainly feeding their home industries.

These included;

- Provisions of land, Africans provided land for agricultural products, construction of transport network, administrative centers etc. Land was acquired either through diplomacy or forceful means like the Ndebele, Nandi, Khoisans⁵, and Barotseland etc.
- Africans provided cheap and free labor to the white e.g. in the development of transport network, worked in firms, mines etc. In Angola and Mozambique the Portuguese used Africans, British used forced labor in East and Central African.
- They paid taxes used in financing administration, development of infrastructure, transport networks all of which were pillars of colonial economies. There was the land tax, hut tax, gun tax, poll tax etc.
- They participated in cash crops production a key element of colonial economies for example in West Africa, Africans provided labor for the production of cotton, cocoa, groundnuts etc.

- Provided markets for manufactured goods from Europe i.e. they played a consumer role.
- They provided resources for exploitation e.g. mineral resources, forests which were very important for colonial exploitation.
- Used as supervisors for colonial exploitation in enforcing forced labor, taxation and this was more pronounced in British colonies because of indirect rule.

Conclusively the colonial economic policies were not a hand of the Europeans alone but Africans partly contributed to their own underdevelopment although in certain cases they were only toothless dogs and indeed the attempts for them to bite were in vain as seen in the various rebellions they staged e.g. Maji-Maji, Chimurenga, Nama-Herero, Hut tax wars etc. but they lost their independence.