

SMALLHOLDER AGRICULTURE IN COLONIAL KENYA: THE OFFICIAL MIND AND THE SWYNNERTON PLAN

by Anne Thurston



CAMBRIDGE AFRICAN MONOGRAPHS 8

**SMALLHOLDER AGRICULTURE
IN COLONIAL KENYA:
THE OFFICIAL MIND AND
THE SWYNNERTON PLAN**

by Anne Thurston

CAMBRIDGE AFRICAN MONOGRAPHS 8

The African Studies Centre was founded in July 1965 to facilitate interdisciplinary research and teaching on modern African Studies in Cambridge. The Centre publishes the Cambridge African Monograph Series and the Cambridge Occasional Papers. The aim of these series is to make available occasional research reports, seminar papers, conference proceedings and bibliographies relating to African Studies.

Dr Anne Thurston is a Research Fellow at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, University of London. She is currently preparing handbooks on 'Colonial Records Sources for Development and Decolonisation' at the Public Records Office. She is also responsible for coordinating and lecturing in the M.A. in Overseas Record Management and Archive Studies for University College London.

J.B. Sender
Director

Cover picture: A team at work on land registration in Central Province in the 1950s. Credit: Kenya Department of Information (courtesy of the Ministry of Agriculture, Nairobi, Kenya).

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

Thurston, Anne F.

Smallholder agriculture in colonial Kenya:
the official mind and the Swynnerton plan.
1. Farms, Small—Kenya—History—20th
century

338.6'42

HD1476.K4

ISBN 0-902993-19-4

Preface

This is a revised version of the ODRP No. 6 published by Rhodes House Library, Oxford, entitled: *The Intensification of Smallholder Agriculture in Kenya: The Genesis and Implementation of the Swynnerton Plan*. The Cambridge African Studies Centre records its grateful thanks to the Oxford Colonial Records Project for their kind permission to republish Anne Thurston's work in this revised form.



Sir Michael Blundell, a Colonial Minister of Agriculture, with Bernard Mate, Minister for Health, performing the opening ceremony of the Zaina Reticulation Scheme in Central Province, 1961. Credit: Kenya Department of Information (courtesy of the Ministry of Agriculture, Nairobi, Kenya).

Contents

	Page
Introduction	1
1 Incipient Agricultural Services, 1906-1940	3
2 Development Without Economic Return, 1940-1950	18
3 Genesis of the Plan, 1950-1952	51
4 Revolution and Development Strategy, 1952-1953	65
5 Administrative Control, 1954-1956	82
6 Implementation, 1956-1963	97
Conclusion	130
Bibliography	138

This study was commissioned by the Oxford Development Records Project, and funded by the Nuffield Foundation and the Ministry of Overseas Development, as part of a larger programme to supplement the official record of post-war development with private sources. The project initially received contributions, including commissioned memoranda, recorded interviews and original papers, from about a hundred former Kenya officials. Subsequently I conducted further interviews about development in Central Province, to which the Swynnerton Plan relates most crucially. All of this material has been deposited in the Rhodes House Library in Oxford (MSS.Afr.s.1717).

As the collected material is only intended to augment the official records, a full examination of the Swynnerton Plan period will not be possible until they are open. However, for the closed period the collected sources have been supplemented as far as possible with Agricultural Department Reports and microfilms of Kenya National Archives Central Province Annual Reports and Handing Over Reports, while Keith Sorrenson's *Land Tenure Reform in Kikuyu Country* provides references to some closed administrative files. I am grateful to David Throup for allowing me to use his notes from the Kenya Agricultural Department records covering the period to the early 1950s.

Introduction

The Swynnerton Plan in Kenya, 1954 to 1959, was the most comprehensive of all the post-war colonial development schemes, which aimed to increase colonial production of goods and raw materials through state intervention. Although it was unique in many ways, its study illustrates the interplay of the various levels of decision-making – in London, in Nairobi and in the field – which operated in post-war British Africa. The Plan was drawn up in response to a crisis in land use in Central Province which stemmed from political decisions taken earlier in the century about land tenure and forms of production as well as from increasing pressures on peasant producers after the Second World War when real wages fell and households became poorer. However, while sanctioned in London and Nairobi, the content and the implementation of the Plan were controlled in the field by the Provincial Administration and the Agricultural Service. For all that London and Nairobi may have believed that they controlled development, its course was to a large measure determined by the field officers and was dependent upon the level of local collaboration they managed to achieve. This study concentrates on the field officers' perceptions of development.

Kenya's Provincial Administration, which was responsible for security and control, and its Agricultural Department, which was responsible for raising crop yields, sought solutions to a deteriorating pattern of land use in Central Province from at least 1930 onward. Both were inevitably caught up in the political realities and changing development fashions of their time, and neither had the power to effect a significant change, for until the mid 1950s they had

few real economic benefits to offer. Their support for individual enterprise and spontaneous accumulation of capital in the 1930s gave way to obsession with communal effort and soil conservation in the 1940s, with a return to economic individualism in the 1950s.

Yet gradually they evolved a body of solutions, which had been worked out in considerable detail by 1952; the Swynnerton Plan represented a culmination and amplification of these solutions, to which Nairobi and London turned during the Mau Mau Emergency as a means of expanding production, both to restore order and to forestall future discontent by broadening the middle class collaborative base. Once the Plan was in effect, its implementation was also to a large extent directed in the field. The expanded Administrative Service imposed unprecedented control in Central Province and initiated the decisions to villagize and to introduce mass land consolidation. This provided the basis for the controlled rapid expansion of agricultural services during the remainder of the Plan period.

Ultimately, it was a political decision, taken in Nairobi and London, not a development plan, which relieved the pressure on the land, at least temporarily. In 1959 the East African Royal Commission's recommendations to remove Highlands and reserve boundaries were accepted, and shortly afterwards schemes for Kikuyu resettlement were initiated in the Rift Valley. The field staff, despite all their efforts, had been unable to provide most Central Province farmers with viable economic units. However, they had achieved the mass introduction of cash crops and the foundation of a grade cattle industry at high standards which were to be of accelerating value to the Province and to cushion it from the effects of high population growth for at least a generation to come.

1. Incipient Agricultural Services, 1906-1940

During the colonial period Kenya had one of the finest agricultural services in Africa, but paradoxically until the 1930s almost no attention was paid to the most fertile land in the colony. While nearly 80% of the colony's land was arid or semi-arid, there were two main fertile areas – the Nyanza lake basin (Nyanza Province) occupied by Bantu and Luo groups, and the eastern highlands (Central Province) occupied by the Kikuyu and allied peoples.

At the end of the 19th century, the population of these fertile lands was expanding, but land use, as in most parts of the tropical world, was in a state of dynamic equilibrium. People still had enough land to shift their cultivation regularly within their land units, and there were still sparsely populated fertile lands on their borders, along the flanks of the Rift Valley and in the connecting belt in the centre of the valley. Much of this uncultivated land was used by pastoral peoples, and some of it, forested and too high for traditional crops, was used for hunting, trapping and honey gathering. Although sooner or later the population would probably have reached the limit of the fertile land, thereby putting pressure on the cultivation systems, periodic famine, pestilence and raids helped to keep it in check and thus to preserve the balance between cropping and resting.

Once the East African Protectorate had been established and its boundaries extended to incorporate the Uganda Railway, the Protectorate Government was obliged to balance its budget, particularly to offset the costs of constructing and operating the railway. Agricultural exports appeared to be the solution and European settlers the most effective producers, particularly in view of the

potential of the uncultivated fertile areas for temperate crops. In principle, African occupation was respected, and although the pastoral Maasai were moved from a large tract of land in the Rift Valley, the heavily populated areas, representing the most potentially productive land in the Protectorate, were largely undisturbed. Nevertheless, European settlement affected the balance of local cultivation systems. Some fertile areas lost land to settlement, and in particular the loss by Kikuyu families of land near Nairobi, which appeared under-utilised as a result of a drop in the population in the 1890s, was to figure centrally in the land protests which grew over the next fifty years. Of greater significance, the demarcation of the White Highlands and forest and reserve boundaries cut off expansion areas.

When the Agricultural Department was established in 1906, it was, like the Veterinary and Lands Departments, geared almost exclusively to European interests; the Provincial Administration looked after the African areas. Maize, coffee, sisal, wheat and dairy farming were established gradually as primary production crops, for which European farmers demanded and received various support services, such as research stations and a system of certified grading.

The 1920s did bring incipient agricultural services to African areas, first mention being made in the departmental annual report of 1920, which noted: "The Department is becoming more and more interested in the development of the highly fertile native areas." Seed issues by Administrative Officers since before the war had contributed to an expansion of cultivation, but now Agricultural Officers posted to African districts established seed farms. By 1924 African instructors were being trained at Bukura in Nyanza to manage

demonstration holdings.¹ Traditional crops – sorghums, millets, peas, beans, root crops, and black and yellow maize – began to be replaced by faster growing varieties, while a few cash crops were introduced, notably sesame seed, groundnuts, wattle, cotton and English market vegetables for sale in Nairobi. Throughout the decade the demand for surpluses remained high and the cultivated area increased considerably, largely through an expansion of women's labour time.²

In the 1930s the Department began taking services to the African areas more seriously. With the depression, the fall in world prices undermined the viability of settler export crops, and though European interests still dominated agricultural policy, there was more attention to the fertile African areas, which represented untapped agricultural potential and were less affected by production costs. Not only did the Colonial Office press for an immediate increase in African export production, but Sir Joseph Byrne, Governor of Kenya between 1931 and 1937, was less influenced by settlers than his predecessors and more receptive to African agricultural development. Consequently the Chief Native Commissioner and the Director of Agriculture emphasised the need for increased African production.³

The Carter Land Commission of 1932-1933 was also a significant factor. Signs of pressure on traditional land tenure systems and continuing protests about land alienation, notably by the Kikuyu Central Association, had pointed to the necessity of resolving land questions. The Kenyan African population

¹ Kenya Agricultural Department Annual Report, 1924.

² G. Kitching, *Class and Economic Change in Kenya*, pp. 25-50.

³ Kenya Agricultural Department Annual Reports, 1930-1940, *passim*; I.D. Talbott, "The Politics of Agriculture: Rural Development Planning in Kenya in the 1930s", Cambridge Conference on Kenya, 1975.

had reached an annual average growth rate of 1.5% in the decade 1921-1931⁴ which escalated gradually thereafter, and although relieved by the resident labourer or squatter system, which for many years acted as a safety valve for population pressure, when the demand for food production grew, internal pressures increased. In 1929 the Chief Native Commissioner had chaired two commissions to investigate land tenure systems in North Kavirondo and in the Kikuyu Districts, and it was noted that the concept of individual land ownership was emerging amongst the Kikuyu. The Colonial Office responded by appointing a colony wide land commission to define the European Highlands and African areas, study African claims of land alienation, suggest compensation and decide whether Africans needed more land.

Though the Commission took oral and written evidence from thousands of witnesses, over half of them Kikuyu, its conclusions amounted to a rationalisation of existing boundaries and offered no tangible solution to the problems arising from land alienation and population growth. It recommended that Africans had enough land but needed to adopt better farming methods and to consolidate fragmented land holdings. When the depression abated, the new emphasis on African agriculture continued, in part at least, because it looked bad in the light of the Carter Commission's recommendations to submit a budget showing a disproportionately high expenditure on European agriculture. However, the Commission's failure to improve the situation so increased distrust that when agricultural services were expanded, Agricultural Officers, particularly in Kikuyu districts, met suspicion even when they tried to establish demonstration plots or to increase wattle production.

⁴ R.D. Wolff, *The Economics of Colonialism*, pp. 106, 126.

Various other constraints kept African agricultural development at a minimum. Cadet Administrative Officers arriving from England had been prepared for an emphasis on African interests, for their training stressed the benefits of colonial administration, but Kenya was different, as Ken Cowley recalled:

It was very noticeable on this course that of all the African colonies, Kenya was regarded as being the one out of step in that there was still less "indirect rule" than in many of the other territories and it was clear that the Colonial Office in London felt that perhaps the Government in Nairobi was too much influenced by the Kenyan European unofficals.⁵

In any case the officers were too few in number and their resources too slender to make any appreciable impact, and with the depression the intake was exceptionally low; between 1931 and 1939 the number of Administrative Officers dropped from 140 to 114.⁶ Frank Loyd recalled that on his first posting to Embu in 1939 the entire district field staff consisted of the District Commissioner, a District Officer, an Agricultural Officer, a doctor, a nursing sister, a very junior member of the Agricultural Department and a junior member of the Public Works Department:

The financial situation at that time was such that every penny counted. We had no money for any sort of development. We were really hard pressed to maintain the fundamentals of running the district, maintaining the prison, maintaining the courts, the hospital and agricultural work on what I can only describe as an extremely small scale ... all we could do was try to persuade and explain and experiment with those who were anxious to improve their own

⁵ K.M. Cowley (ODRP 33), commissioned memorandum, f. 52.

⁶ D. Throup's Cambridge thesis (1983), 'The Governorship of Sir Philip Mitchell in Kenya, 1944-1952', p.16, forthcoming as *The Social and Economic Origins of Mau Mau* (James Currey: London, 1987).

holdings and their own production.⁷

Tom Askwith, posted as a cadet to the coast and then to Kisumu remembered that the shortage of money was the Administration's chief worry, and one which he attributed not only to the depression:

The channelling of so much money into making the machinery of white settlement work was the main cause. Money was needed for registering the entire African population and issuing them with identity cards, for maintaining a Labour Department for settling disputes, a large police force to administer the pass laws, and so on. ... It made me a bit resentful that one was expected to run a district with far smaller resources than our colleagues in the neighbouring territories of Uganda and Tanganyika. We were not so concerned that their living conditions were so much better than ours, but that we had so little to maintain even such essential services as roads.⁸

Agricultural Officers, far fewer in number, worked under the Administration, the elite corps, which was not always sympathetic to their efforts. By the end of the decade there was still only one Agricultural Officer for each of the African agricultural districts. They had scant contact with most of the population and could do little more than advise.

The increased production in the 1930s was therefore largely a result of an expansion of the cropped area, although the spread of faster-growing crop strains and the use of new cultivation implements did contribute. The demand for maize, both for home consumption and for export remained high, and although not valuable from a statistical point of view, estimates submitted by Agricultural Officers to the Department's economist, Vincent Liversage, give

⁷ Sir Francis Loyd (ODRP 99), interview, f. 3.

⁸ T.G. Askwith (RH MSS.Afr.s.1770/2), memoirs, ff. 5-6.

some indication of the increased volume of production⁹:

African maize production in bags, including maize grown for home consumption in the producing area:

1920	750,000
1930	1,387,104
1940	1,966,000

African maize in bags passing through inspection centres in Nyanza Province:

1936	157,000
1940	556,000

Returns of Central Province maize from sales outside the district:

1936	180,406
1939	326,079 (1940 was a drought year)

Nevertheless a basis for subsequent intensified land use through cash crops was initiated in this period. There was a marked expansion of cotton in Nyanza, sesame seed and groundnuts were more widely grown and some tobacco and rice were planted; in Central Province wattle began to be a significant source of income.¹⁰ Coffee was also introduced to African areas, but on a very small scale.

In Uganda and Tanganyika where there was a greater commitment to developing smallholder agriculture, African coffee production had been expanding since before the First World War. Robusta coffee grown in Uganda at altitudes of about 3,750 to 4,500 feet produced a low grade coffee, less

⁹ V. Livsage (RH MSS.Afr.s.510), "Official Economic Management in Kenya", f. 107. Livsage (ff. 103-111), and Kitching, *Class and Economic Change in Kenya* (pp. 55-62), analyse the reversal of policy in the 1930s whereby African maize was diverted to the export market and settlers tried to gain a monopoly of the domestic market.

¹⁰ G. Kitching, *Class and Economic Change in Kenya*, pp. 57-107. See also E.A. Brett, *Colonialism and Underdevelopment in East Africa*, pp. 205-107.

valuable than the Arabica in Tanganyika grown at higher altitudes and processed by hand. Its quality was not as high as Kenya European coffee and it brought lower prices, but it did demonstrate that Kenyan Africans could have grown coffee successfully had settlers' objections not prevented its introduction. But it was a bad time for coffee. Prices were very low, pests and disease were so severe that large acreages had to be cut back, and as yet there was little scientific advice to provide solutions. Settlers feared that the situation would get entirely out of hand if thousands of little plots of coffee were allowed in African areas.¹¹

Large parts of Nyanza and Central Provinces were well suited to coffee, and particularly those Kikuyu whose land bordered European farms or who had worked on European coffee farms wanted to grow it. Although the Coffee Plantations Ordinance of 1918 required every coffee grower to have an annual license, it was not illegal for Africans to grow it¹² and there had been a number of abortive efforts, as two instances demonstrate. Parmenas Mockerie, who had been to England for the Kikuyu Central Association, wrote to a friend there, Duncan Leys, in 1935:

The enclosed is a letter which has been circulated by the European Agricultural Officer of Fort Hall to mission schools. He has ordered all coffee trees grown by the Kikuyu to be uprooted, although these trees had been planted before the passing of the Native Grown Coffee Rules.¹³

¹¹ Sir Roger Swynnerton (ODRP 150), interview with A.Thurston, f. 340, interview with M. Cowen, f. 368.

¹² E.M. Chilver (RH.MSS Afr.r.204), notes on change in Bantu land tenure for the Royal Commission on East Africa.

¹³ C.E.V. Buxton (RH.MSS Afr.s.1103), Box 6, file 5, f.96. A pencilled note indicates that the rules were passed in 1934.

Chief Koinange, who planted coffee in Kiambu in the 1930s had obtained permission from the District Commissioner:

I told Canon Leakey and he gave me a few trees, which I planted near here. I went to European farms at Kiambu and I bought coffee plants and planted them, and I bought coffee seed and put them in the nursery down near the river – and I had many coffee trees. When they were about ready to fruit, one European farmer (Mr. Knight) visited me and said he wanted to see my place. He spent the whole day here and saw all the coffee, saying "very good", and went home. Four days later Canon Leakey came and told me that they were discussing my coffee in Nairobi and all the Europeans were cursing him because he had given natives coffee trees to plant, and they were very much annoyed by it and had resolved to come and pull down my coffee.¹⁴

When experimental African coffee schemes were given an official blessing, it was not in the Kikuyu Districts. Clarence Buxton, District Commissioner at Kisii, had pressed the Administration so persistently for permission to plant coffee that when the Colonial Office authorised it in selected African areas, Kisii was chosen, along with Embu and Meru.¹⁵ Nurseries were established in each area, and an undertaking was given to the Coffee Board that planting would be limited to a negligible acreage in districts remote from European plantations and would only be increased after consultation with the Board.

Tom Colchester, District Officer at Embu when coffee was introduced, saw it as part of the general campaign to push African crop production to raise incomes insufficient to meet taxes; it was not enthusiastically received:

¹⁴ R. Bunche, "The Land Equation in Kenya Colony" *Journal of Negro History*, pp. 41-42.

¹⁵ R.M. Maxon, "Cash Crop Innovation Among the Gusii in the 1930s", Cambridge Conference on Kenya, 1975.

I think the main reason was that the urge to plant coffee was largely a Kikuyu move and the Embu had never been much concerned with the campaign although once nurseries and planting started, it caught on rapidly. This is not to say that D.C.s and some (but not all) Agricultural Officers had not pressed for coffee planting to be allowed. There were actually in Embu station in 1932 some fine Robusta coffee trees which a past D.C. had planted in the boma vegetable garden to prove their suitability but around 1933 he had been required by higher edict to remove them.¹⁶

Meru was where smallholder African coffee really developed, due primarily to the combination of favourable ecological conditions and the long term efforts of Jack Benson, the Agricultural Officer, who made coffee his abiding interest. From the late 1930s he gradually developed, by trial and error, the standards and procedures which were to be the basis of Kenya's smallholder coffee industry.

A similar effort to introduce pyrethrum to the African areas was less successful. Liversage recalled:

There was no absolute prohibition but only an instruction to the Agricultural Department not to do anything to foster the industry in native areas. In 1938 the Agricultural Department proposed to encourage pyrethrum planting in suitable areas. The matter was referred to the Standing Board of Economic Development. The Director of Agriculture said what he had in mind was not unrestricted growing by natives but planting in certain areas where there was difficulty in finding a remunerative cash crop, under legislative control such as that in force concerning native coffee.¹⁷

The board turned the idea down, mainly on the grounds that pyrethrum was subject to violent price fluctuations and that there were dangers of over-

¹⁶ T.C. Colchester (ODRP 30), commissioned memorandum, f. 1.

¹⁷ V. Liversage (RH MSS.Afr.s.510), "Official Economic Management in Kenya", f. 136.

production and soil erosion on the steep hillsides of the districts most suited to the crop.

There were in the same period efforts to find an appropriate farming system for intensifying land use. Probably the first attempt was in 1930 when the Agricultural Officer for South Kikuyu (Kiambu) District, W. G. Leckie, established a mixed smallholding of about four acres at the Scott Agricultural Laboratories near Nairobi. He calculated that a smallholding of 12 to 28 acres could provide a family of four with a good diet and cover basic capital expenditure.¹⁸ At about the same time, Arthur Walford, an Educational Officer with agricultural training converted the little-used 10 acre farm at the Jeanes School, Kabete into a demonstration smallholding run on a rotational basis.¹⁹

These experiments were gradually elaborated. Agricultural Officers at the Scott Laboratories smallholding and at the Agricultural School at Bukura in Nyanza, experimented with rotations for indigenous and introduced crops, fodder and forage crops for leys and compost and manure as organic refertilisation. At seed farms operated by Local Native Councils, seeds were acclimatised to local conditions, mixed farming methods demonstrated and simple experimental trials conducted. Agricultural Officers everywhere were instructed to keep records of the agricultural potential of altitudinal zones including observations on climatic conditions, soil structure and experimental crop trials. Initially they reported the information direct to Nairobi, but in 1933 Provincial Agricultural Officers were appointed to the provincial headquarters

¹⁸ E.E. Biss (RH MSS.Afr.s.1069), notes on some results obtained at the experimental smallholding at the Scott Laboratories Kabete in relation to health; S.H. Fazan (RH MSS.Afr.s.1153), "Report on Small Holdings in the Southern Kikuyu Reserve".

¹⁹ Interview with A. Walford, October 1981, not recorded.

in Kikuyu (Central) and Nyanza Provinces to co-ordinate agricultural programmes. By the middle of the decade mixed farming and cash crops suited to each zone was the official accepted policy for virtually all the African agricultural districts.²⁰

The application of these experiments did not get very far, however, partly because of shortage of staff and funds, partly because of the atmosphere of suspicion, but more crucially because what was perceived as the dilemma of agricultural development was already manifest. Increasing population in the Kikuyu districts and in areas of Nyanza Province made more effective use of land essential, but the problems generated by the increased population – soil erosion and fragmentation – made the introduction of new systems ever more difficult.

The effect of increased cultivation, particularly of maize, was reflected in depleted soil resources. Fallows were broken before the three years required to restore loss of soil structure and fertility, and in some areas cropping became nearly continuous. Moreover, despite efforts to prevent it, people needing more land for cultivation and grazing cleared patches of bush and trees from hillsides and along stream beds. Without ground cover, top soil was eroded during the heavy rains.

Soil conservation, which had by this time become a central theme of instruction at the Imperial College of Tropical Agriculture College in Trinidad, was fast becoming a Colonial Office preoccupation and was causing concern

²⁰ Agricultural Department Reports, 1930-1939, *passim*; I.D. Talbott, "The Politics of Agriculture: Rural Development Planning in Kenya in the 1930s", Cambridge Conference on Kenya, 1975.

in various parts of the Empire, arising largely from the American "dust bowl" crisis. In Kenya it first received attention in the European areas, in Uasin Gishu spreading to Rongai and Trans Nzoia in the early 1930s.²¹

In 1935 Colin Maher, an Agricultural Officer, became interested in studying erosion in the African areas and raised the issue with the Chief Secretary. He was appointed to investigate soil conditions and over the next couple of years wrote reports on Kamasia, Njemps, East Suk, Kitui, Machakos, Embu, Meru and Nyanza. The Agricultural Department and the Secretariat were convinced that an ecological crisis was approaching, particularly in Baringo and Machakos, where the damage was most pronounced and large scale famine seemed likely, but also in the densely populated Kikuyu districts.²² Maher took charge of a Soil Conservation Service in 1937, set up as a separately funded section of the Department of Agriculture to provide advice and execute schemes in European and African areas. The same year Colonial Development Funds became available for mechanical terracing, which was attempted along with compulsory destocking in Machakos with little success. Maher was sent to the United States in 1938 to look at the Soil Conservation Service and came back fired with the programme's importance.²³

Controlling soil erosion rapidly became the overriding concern of the Agricultural Department. In the latter part of the 1930s a whole range of

²¹ A. Storrar (ODRP 149), interview with A. Thurston, ff. 53-54; R.O. Barnes (RH MSS.Brit.EMP.t.1), notes on soil conservation in Kenya, f. 10; Sir Roger Swynnerton (ODRP 150), commissioned memorandum, ff. 7-8.

²² KNA Ag 2/274 "A.C. Maher, Agricultural Officer", 1929-1952; CO 533/483/6 "Soil Erosion: Proposed Campaign", 1937.

²³ CO 533/483/7 "Soil Erosion: Application For Aid From Colonial Development Fund, 1937"; CO 533/483/8 "Soil Erosion, Proposed Study Visit to America, 1937-1938".

measures were attempted, including terracing, trenching, grassing, tree planting, destocking, composting and manuring, and in 1938 the departmental report recorded: "The problems of soil conservation and the maintenance and improvement of soil fertility continued to be the first concern of the Department's staff." Nevertheless, there was no less encouragement for high levels of maize production.

While soil erosion was a visible problem with a rational agricultural solution, fragmented land holdings presented more subtle difficulties. Traditionally land tenure in the fertile areas was controlled by lineage groupings. Governing elders allocated areas for cultivation or grazing, which men divided into plots for their wives and women dependants to cultivate. Since Kenya's ecology was characterised by a complex variation in rainfall, altitude and soil types, even within a short range, the plots were deliberately allocated in scattered strips. This also helped ensure that if crops in one section were destroyed by insects, animals, hail or raids, the family still had food. The women achieved an efficient agricultural system by accommodating their agriculture to the short and long rainy seasons and planting crops when and where they grew best. When, after several years, fertility began to decline, the plots were returned to fallow grazing land and others cultivated; when a land unit became crowded, new land was cleared and new holdings established.²⁴

By the 1930s steady population growth was undermining the logical basis of the land tenure system. This fundamentally negated the improvements the Agricultural Officers would have liked to be able to offer, except where there

²⁴ For a discussion of the system of land ownership see L.S.B. Leakey, *The Southern Kikuyu Before 1903*, Vol. I, pp. 109-122.

was a cash crop, such as coffee in Meru or cotton in Nyanza. Moreover, while the European agriculturalist could think in terms of an enclosed land holding with a perimeter fence around it, which provided him with an opportunity to plan, he could not come to grips with the traditional agricultural systems, with their bewildering complexity of mixed sequential cropping and land use patterns.

He saw the technical solution in consolidation, but there was little he could do to achieve it. As early as 1932 and repeatedly throughout the 1930s departmental reports lamented that the officers could do no more than assist by advice and propaganda for land consolidation and the smallholding system as the basis for intensified production and soil conservation. The bringing of a change in attitudes that would allow alteration in native custom, it was noted, was the responsibility of the Administration.

By the end of the decade, the intensification of African agriculture had reached a stalemate. Yet, ideas about the development of smallholder agriculture and the reconditioning of eroded lands were germinating in the field and moving toward the centre, particularly as field officers were promoted upward. Small Colonial Office grants were already available for development projects, and proposals were forwarded to London in anticipation of Colonial Development and Welfare legislation.

2. Development Without Economic Return, 1940-1950

At the end of the war the development strategies of the 1930s were temporarily abandoned, with significant repercussions. During the war, many of the field staff were absorbed into the military and little development was attempted. Moreover, efforts at soil improvement gave way to the drive, through incentives, to increase food production for the combined internal needs of the local population, large troop garrisons and prisoners of war, as well as for the external requirements by the Ministries of Food and Supply. Although this meant a buoyant economy for both African and European farmers, the resultant overcropping was unprecedented.¹

Alarm about the state of the land began to spread by the end of the war. Not only was it apparent that the productive capacity was declining, but 1943 saw the beginning of a long period of climatically caused crop failures and severe shortages, particularly in Machakos, which had to be met by relief food issues. When the Colonial Office, preparing for post-war reconstruction and expenditure of Colonial Development and Welfare funds, required the territorial governments to submit comprehensive development plans, Kenya's was the first to do so in 1943.² Its plan stressed rural development in African areas, foreshadowing cash crop development but allocating the largest portion of the proposed funding for soil conservation and increased water supplies.

¹ D. Throup, "The Governorship of Sir Philip Mitchell in Kenya, 1944-1952", pp. 97-101.

² D.J. Morgan, *The Official History of Colonial Development: The Origins of British Aid and Policy 1924-1945*, Vol. I, pp. 213-214.

In 1944 when Agricultural Officers were asked for proposals for post-war development in African areas their disenchantment was evident, as Liversage described:

Agricultural Officers almost unanimously expressed the opinion that, judged by the results, the British trusteeship for the Africans had so far showed itself a lamentable, almost criminal, failure. The basis of African life and welfare was the land. If the productivity of the land was destroyed all must finally perish. Yet we had stood by and seen destruction proceed, at an accelerated pace, until widespread hardship and misery was inevitable, not merely at a future time but very soon. In fact, this situation had already arrived in certain places and there was no remedy except somehow, somewhere, to find other room for the population.³

The most important proposal was submitted by Norman Humphrey, who was posted to South Nyeri in July 1944 to carry out an inquiry into general conditions affecting agriculture in the district. Humphrey was assisted by the Assistant Agricultural Officer, Tom Hughes Rice, who had learned soil conservation techniques at Kisumu under the Soil and Water Engineer in the Soil Conservation Service, Robert Barnes. He also kept in close touch with H.E. Lambert, the Administration's land tenure specialist who had been carrying out investigations in Central Province.⁴

Based on the equation that an average family should be able to produce an ample diet and earn 18 to 20 pounds a year from 12 acres, Humphrey calculated that South Nyeri could accommodate 15,360 families against the

³ V. Liversage (RH MSS.Afr.s.510), "Official Economic Management in Kenya", ff. 161-162.

⁴ D. Throup, "The Governorship of Sir Philip Mitchell in Kenya, 1944-1952", pp. 106-110; T. Hughes Rice (ODRP 84), f. 4; N. Humphrey, *The Kikuyu Lands: The Relationship of Population to the Land in South Nyeri*.

actual 28,271 resident families – 14,000 too many if the agricultural return were to be raised from the prevailing average of three pounds per family. In fact, as it has been subsequently shown, Humphrey's estimate seriously underestimated the population density.⁵

Rather than encourage the Government to continue its strategy of intensifying land use by developing smallholdings and gradually introducing cash crops, Humphrey concluded that radical reforms were essential if the land was to be saved from deteriorating irredeemably and his recommendations had a major impact on agricultural policy in the latter half of the 1940s. First, he proposed that Africans in excess of the carrying capacity of the land should be moved to new settlement areas in less populated drier lands and attention given to new agricultural methods and drought resistant crops. Second, he stressed Government's duty to restore communal feeling, which had been so neglected, and he urged that traditional forms of cooperation, such as communal cultivation, should become the basis of the attempt to restore soil fertility. Paul Osborne, the District Commissioner in Fort Hall, had already succeeded in dramatically increasing conservation terracing by working through traditional elders.⁶

These proposals were widely accepted – by Lambert, by the Provincial Commissioner for Central Province, by the Secretariat and by the new Governor, Sir Philip Mitchell, who arrived in December, 1944. Land rehabilitation, destocking and resettlement and the development of a communal

⁵ N. Humphrey, *The Kikuyu Lands: The Relationship of Population to the Land in South Nyeri*, p. 10; G. Kitching, *Class and Economic Change in Kenya*, pp. 117-121.

⁶ D. Throup, "The Governorship of Sir Philip Mitchell in Kenya, 1944-1952", pp. 133-135.

approach to agriculture became dominant themes in agricultural policy for the African areas, particularly as other studies showed populations vastly in excess of the theoretical carrying capacity of the land. Humphrey's next report, on the Teita Hills in 1946, indicated that there were 5000 too many people on the land', while Maher, writing to the Director of Agriculture in 1945 noted:

I believe that there are something like 200,000 people surplus to agriculture in Ukamba (Machakos), and I believe that the acquisition of sufficient land to give a suitable living in agriculture to the people (probably amounting to 1,000,000 in number) who are surplus to agricultural needs and possibilities in all the Reserves to be a physical impossibility.⁷

In the early years of his governorship Mitchell was intensely interested in land use problems along these lines. Shortly after his arrival he toured the badly eroded Machakos District and began sending preliminary proposals, including a mechanical terracing scheme, to the Colonial Office. Having served for over 20 years in Tanganyika and Uganda where settlers did not dominate policy, he felt that a source of administrative authority was needed to direct policy for African areas. In early 1945 he warned the Colonial Office, "The policy which is followed in respect of land depends on no more than the idiosyncrasies of the District Commissioner of the moment, and there is no continuity or co-ordination."⁸

⁷ KNA Ag 1/732 "Land: African Settlement Board. Simba, Kibwezi and Chulu Areas, Teita Area, 1946-1955".

⁸ E.B. Worthington (RH MSS.Afr.s.1425), "Soil Conservation", C. Maher to D.L. Blunt, 29 November, 1945, f. 78.

⁹ CO 822/114/10 "Closer Union, 1945", Mitchell to Oliver Stanley, 15 March, 1945.

Mitchell pressed for a co-ordination of departments dealing with agriculture and related services and a comprehensive development programme for African and European areas. As a result Major F.W. Cavendish-Bentinck was appointed Member for Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Natural Resources in 1945 as part of a general post-war reorganisation decentralising the Chief Secretary's work into groups of departments under unofficial members of the Executive Council. Mitchell then went on to propose a similar grouping of related departments at the field level and suggested four Provincial Assistant Directors for technical field development in the Central, Nyanza, Coast and Rift Valley Provinces. The need for co-ordination was, as Mitchell recognised, a major stumbling block to development, and the Colonial Office was sympathetic. However, it suggested instead that field officers work as teams, a concept which became basic to subsequent agricultural development in Kenya and elsewhere.¹⁰

Mitchell's ideas of a central board for agricultural policy under the new Member also materialised, but again not exactly as he had envisaged. A Board of Agriculture was established for the European areas and an African Settlement Board for the African areas. The latter, which first met in 1945, included the Directors of the Departments of Agriculture and Veterinary Services, the Secretary for African Affairs and unofficial African and European members. Later renamed the African Land Development Board (ALDEV), it controlled a three million pound Colonial Development and Welfare grant, allocated under the 1946 Ten Year Development Plan, for the reconditioning of African areas and for African settlement and resettlement. The funds were used for such projects as the construction of dams and boreholes, afforestation,

¹⁰ CO 533/537/9 "Grouping of Agricultural Departments", 1945.

tsetse fly clearance, reconditioning of grazing areas and grazing control schemes, largely in dry areas. Yet, as individually successful as many of these efforts were, they did not provide a breakthrough to raising the carrying capacity of the overcrowded agricultural districts nor to enabling large scale resettlement.¹¹

In fact, the attempt, in Mitchell's words, "to get on to the job on a really large scale with determination and consistency" had little real impact.¹² Neither Mitchell nor the Colonial Office were willing to confront the settlers on the two issues which could have contributed solutions – the Land Commission findings and African cash crop production. Thus, the inherent contradictions in official thinking remained: that Africans did not need more land (in the Rift Valley) but should be moved to arid land to relieve congestion, that they should return to tradition but their lives could be totally disrupted by resettlement and that they should learn better agricultural methods but could be denied access to the lucrative crops which would provide the incentive to do so.

In the critical post-war period, when the availability, for the first time, of funds and staff could have enabled the Government to respond to an impending crisis in African agriculture in the Central Province, the opportunity was essentially wasted in the pursuit of unrealistic options. Administrative and Agricultural Officers were left to evolve local solutions to national problems,

¹¹ For a description of ALDEV projects see *African Land Development in Kenya, 1946-1955: Report by the African Land Development Board* and *African Land Development in Kenya, 1946-1962: Report by the African Land Development Board*.

¹² CO 822/114/10 "Closer Union", 1945, Mitchell to Oliver Stanley, 15 March, 1945.

along the lines of Humphrey's proposals. Resettlement was much discussed, and small settlement schemes were attempted, but it was never feasible on a large scale. Communalism, on the other hand, was pursued energetically.

This emphasis was manifest in the attempt to create co-operative or group farms in western Kenya as a means of overcoming fragmentation and intensifying land use. It involved convincing several farmers, usually related, to agree to co-ordinate their farming activities by re-ordering their fragments, through exchange or sale, to form fields running down the hillsides which could be cultivated and terraced on the contour in planned rotations. By 1948 27 such group farms had been formed and were given all possible practical and financial assistance, such as free tractor terracing and ploughing, fencing and water supplies. Yet, by the end of the decade it was obvious that people had not accepted the reallocation of fragments and did not like the scheme.¹³ Tony Swann, who had been District Commissioner at Kericho, described its failure:

We took a complete ridge, we took five families that lived there. With Graham Gamble, we divided it up into what should be done ecologically. Where it was stony you put your wattle or trees, where it was good you put your food crops, where there was particularly good grass that was your pasture. We rotated, we had machinery, which you see on a collective basis you could do, so that you had the cultivation done. Absolutely perfect in theory, a show piece. People came from miles around to look at this wonderful thing. In five years it was stone dead, because the chaps said, "We've had it, we don't like it. We see the advantages, but quite honestly we want our own

¹³ Agricultural Department Report, 1948, p. 39; E.S. Clayton (ODRP 27), "File II: Land Use in African Areas": "Department of Agriculture Progress Report on Group Farming in Nyanza Province", 1947-1952; Sir Roger Swynnerton (ODRP 150), Interview with A. Thurston, f. 341, commissioned memorandum, ff. 4-5.

bit and to do it in our own way."¹⁴

L.J. Collings-Wells took the same view, "The failure and dropping of this approach was I think mainly because it was something being imposed by Government rather than something arising from the felt needs of the people."¹⁵

In Central Province, communalism became the basis of the soil conservation programme. This approach had the enthusiastic support of the Administration and the backing of the Secretariat, which wanted to preserve not only soil fertility but the chiefs' and elders' authority. Particularly after the war when returning soldiers had money to invest, traders and cultivators tried many means of accumulating profit. Although chiefs, headmen and elders had the same interests, the new competitors were seen as self-seekers whose lack of concern for communal values was fostering the growth of a landless class and opposition to development policies.¹⁶ In 1946 a Secretariat Circular noted:

Formerly "the tribe" did not mean simply the present generation but included all the generations yet to come. It is the duty of the Land Authorities to resuscitate this interpretation and to make the institutions and the people generally realise that the individual who disregards the welfare of the tribe's posterity and exploits a piece of tribal land for personal gain is committing a very grievous offence against the tribe.¹⁷

Kikuyu society had never been the harmonious non-competitive communal state which the Government idealised, and an indigenous class of capitalists was already well established. Paradoxically the attempt to impose communalism increased disparities, intensified competition and negated

¹⁴ Sir Anthony Swann (ODRP 149A), interview November, 1982, f. 22.

¹⁵ L.J. Collings-Wells (ODRP 31), commissioned memorandum, f.4.

¹⁶ D. Throup, "The Governorship of Sir Philip Mitchell in Kenya, 1944-1952", p. 23.

¹⁷ KNA Ag 4/491 "Nyeri Reconditioning Report", 1944-1946, Secretariat Circular No. 64, 22 May, 1946.

development efforts.

The programme to resuscitate the old clan or *muhiriga* system whereby elders were responsible for care of their lands began in Nyeri in 1945 as a six months trial under Humphrey's direction. Groups of labourers, largely women, were required to turn out two mornings a week to dig terraces on the family lands on set days. The effort really got under way when Tom Hughes Rice was transferred to Fort Hall later in the year. His enthusiastic efforts appeared at first to have spectacular results, and he recalled, "We soon found that the 'Muhiriga' groups were much more willing to co-operate in the care of their own clan lands than they ever had been under the direction of the chiefs and headmen."¹⁸

However, within two years the programme was at a virtual standstill, precipitated by Jomo Kenyatta's speech at a Kenya African Union meeting at Fort Hall in which he criticised aspects of the agricultural programme, particularly compulsory female labour. When the meeting resolved that women could not be compelled to work on terraces, work stopped immediately and in 1948 the district Senior Assistant Agricultural Officer reported:

It cannot be said that terracing has been a success this year. By dint of innumerable prosecutions and pressure in all directions, terrace output was stepped up over 800 acres in September and October but fell again in November and December. Communal effort is really a misnomer since the community consists of a few old but willing horses and contains no women and few young men.¹⁹

¹⁸ T. Hughes-Rice (ODRP 84), commissioned memorandum, f. 7; KNA Ag 4/118 "Provincial Agricultural Handing Over Reports", 1942-1951; D. Throup, "The Governorship of Sir Philip Mitchell in Kenya, 1944-1952", p. 135.

¹⁹ *ibid*, pp. 234-239.

The failure of the terracing campaign and the resentment it caused is indicative of the unrealistic agricultural policy of this period. Terracing, as Maher wrote to the Director of Agriculture in 1945, "is quite futile unless part of a complete agricultural development plan."²⁰ Not only was there little incentive to dig terraces, which was tedious for both the Agricultural Officers and the Kikuyu, but terracing was still in an experimental stage, and the decision to build narrow base terraces on the steeply ridged Kikuyu districts proved inappropriate. Leslie Brown who took over as Agricultural Officer in Embu District in 1947 was soon questioning their use, and by 1948 he was writing to the Senior Agricultural Officer at Nyeri, "Should not the policy be to proceed to bench terraces by conversion of narrow base terraces, and if so, how best to set about it?"²¹ Later he recalled:

They were undesirable in that they were relatively laborious to dig and required constant maintenance as natural erosion tended to fill them very quickly. They were, however, insisted upon by Colin Maher, Senior Soil Conservation Engineer, as policy, a profound error which could not be rectified until I became more senior and I and other officers fought the policy successfully.²²

Within a few years the policy was reversed and narrow based terraces were only built on the steepest slopes, but not before hundreds of miles of laboriously dug terraces had been destroyed by the rains.

Moreover, although the terracing campaign was to be run through traditional elders, it was controlled by chiefs and headmen and greatly

²⁰ KNA Ag 1/1065 "Soil Erosion, Native Areas", 1943-1946, Maher to D.L. Blunt, 29 May, 1945.

²¹ KNA Ag 4/80 "Agricultural Conferences and Meetings", 1933-1951, L.H. Brown to Senior Agricultural Officer, Nyeri, 21 August, 1948.

²² L.H. Brown (ODRP 18), commissioned memorandum, f. 99.

enhanced their power. Agricultural Instructors decided which areas should be terraced and did the necessary measuring, but chiefs and headmen, under Administrative Officers' instructions, were responsible for ensuring that people turned out. In his Half Yearly Soil Conservation Report for Fort Hall District for the latter part of 1946, Desmond O'Hagan as D.C. noted that "chiefs and headmen have been told that their efficiency will be judged to a great extent by the degree to which they have succeeded in encouraging and persuading their people to take part in soil conservation work".²³

The campaign inevitably interfered with people's lives and opened the way to abuse. Chiefs could enter people's property at any time and order their land terraced or their wattle or other crops destroyed; they could compel them to work on other people's land, although anyone with influence on the chief could avoid the labour and mainly the poor were turned out; as the programme assumed increasing urgency, those who refused to participate were subjected to heavy fines and other punishments. For instance, post-war sugar allocations, used to brew beer for ceremonies, could be withheld from a man who had not turned out for terracing.²⁴ In addition, Brown remembered, some Administrative Officers used soil conservation as a punishment:

When some location was backward over tax paying and given to drunkenness and crime I was often required to go and "lay on" some soil conservation there. I usually made a token effort to do some, but this was obviously an unsound point of view which should not have prevailed and I usually paid as little as possible attention to such requests as I could.²⁵

²³ E.B. Worthington (RH MSS.Afr.s.1425), "Soil Conservation and Swamp Development, Fort Hall District": "Half Yearly Soil Conservation Reports, Fort Hall District, half year ending 21 December, 1946", f. 111.

²⁴ *ibid.*, f. 111. L.H. Brown (ODRP 18), commissioned memorandum, ff. 101-102.

²⁵ G.P. Rimington (ODRP 131), interview, February, 1983, restricted.

After the breakdown of communal terracing the campaign continued on an individual basis and by the end of the decade large areas had been terraced. Philip Rimington arrived in Fort Hall District as Assistant Agricultural Officer in 1949 as part of a new build up of divisional officers, and his recollections help to illustrate how the programme was organised in the field.²⁶ In Fort Hall District there were four divisions, each with four locations. Rimington covered two divisions, spending a week in each location in turn. The local chief would be informed of his visit, and each Sunday he would load up a week's supplies and set out in an old Ford truck to camp with the chief or stay in his office. The chief arranged his programme for the week, during which he toured the location with the Locational Agricultural Instructor, visiting schools, giving demonstrations and inspecting the conservation work:

It wasn't very popular, we were seen off quite a lot of times. We used to have people in delegations coming along and saying they didn't want these terraces and giving reasons why ... they were losing a good four to six feet of land for every three foot drop of terrace, between one contour to the next was three foot, and they complained bitterly about this. I had sympathy for them, I must say. On the other hand, we had to train them for the reason why and try to show them why it was so necessary because the soil was being eroded and disappearing.²⁷

Between visits, the work was left largely to the Instructors who completed missing sections of terrace, often in areas which had been temporarily left aside as they were under grazing. The Agricultural Officers set monthly terracing targets, and it was here that Rimington felt the problems arose:

They would report back in that they'd added this bit in and added that

²⁶ *ibid.*

²⁷ *ibid.*

bit in and at the end of the month on pay day I would collect in all the figures they'd done ... but you just don't really bulldoze through the whole of a person's smallholding and everybody else's smallholding, which is in fact what we did do. That is really where I think we sort of came unstuck. The Agricultural Instructors perhaps felt power that they were in charge and in command, and they demanded to be able to fill their quota that they had to get so many yards dug, so many miles dug in that day.²⁸

Even at this stage, however, Rimington was not concentrating solely on soil conservation but trying to encourage new methods of planning farms to produce better yields. Although people were not hostile, their response was reserved and it was mostly only chiefs and instructors who followed his advice:

The funny thing was that they were started and the next door neighbour wouldn't do it because it was Government sponsored and Government assisted and they weren't really very keen on being involved. So example didn't pay off, which was my idea of trying to get them to do some planning. But anybody with a holding that hadn't been fragmented and was large enough to do some planning, we did it.²⁹

Many of the Agricultural Officers were interested in developing smallholdings and with the failure of communal and compulsory measures, the Department, though by no means united, gradually returned to the policies of the 1930s.³⁰ In August, 1947, a month after the breakdown of communal terracing in Fort Hall, the Provincial Agricultural Officer for Central Province, Trevor Moon, noted at the annual departmental conference that the future of intensely populated areas lay in "the establishment of higher priced, permanent

²⁸ *ibid.*

²⁹ *ibid.*

³⁰ KNA Ag 4/80 "Agricultural Conferences and Meetings", 1933-1951; D. Throup, "The Governorship of Sir Philip Mitchell in Kenya, 1944-1952".

or semi-permanent crops and not in low-priced crops such as maize and legumes."³¹ At the same conference, the Director of Agriculture announced that the coffee industry had withdrawn its objection to African coffee growing providing it was adequately supervised and not grown too close to European coffee. In 1949 it was announced that the Tea Growers' Association would not oppose African tea growing if it developed on organised lines, and Fort Hall, Nyeri, Meru, Kapsabet and Kericho were suggested as potential areas.³² That year the Central Province Agricultural Officers Conference resolved to encourage Africans to grow coffee in suitable areas and to speed up its introduction.³³

Leslie Brown, then Agricultural Officer at Embu, led this policy reversal. He argued that while a soil conservation programme, based on broad-based terracing, would continue to be necessary, punishments provoked resistance and gave the department a bad image; rather, intensified agricultural development would be stimulated by rewards including cash crops, land titles and loans for progressive cultivators. Moon put forward Brown's ideas at agricultural conferences and gradually they reshaped the policy for African agriculture. A man of tremendous personal vigour and quick temper, who savagely disagreed with many of his administrative colleagues on district priorities and who got on poorly with Africans, Brown was theoretically brilliant and would not compromise his ideas. By 1948 he and Moon were discussing a target figure for intensified production:

Moon was going to go to a land use conference in Jos, in Nigeria, I

³¹ KNA AG 4/80, "Agricultural Conferences and Meetings", 1933-1951, Agricultural Officers Meeting, August, 1947.

³² *ibid*, Meeting of Senior Agricultural Officer, February, 1949.

³³ *ibid*, Central Province Agricultural Officers Conference, October, 1949.

think in 1948. He was a very keen fisherman and he used to come down and fish for trout with me in Embu District. And as we were moving between pools one evening he said to me, "What do you think would be the kind of reasonable standard of living to aim at for African farmers?" So sort of off the cuff I said, "Well I suppose you know, subsistence plus about 100 pounds a year."³⁴

Only four years earlier Humphrey had calculated an average income of three pounds in Nyeri and suggested a target figure of 18 to 20 pounds. Brown's figure thus represented a radical leap, even taking account of post-war inflation, particularly in the light of the rapidly increasing population. Moreover, Brown suggested that it could be achieved in the high potential areas on consolidated land holdings of seven to 10 acres instead of the 12 to 15 acres then generally assumed to be the minimum economic holding.

This shift in policy corresponded with a dramatic growth of agricultural field staff. Under the 1946 development plan, Nyeri had been selected as a pilot district for intensive staffing.³⁵ Over the next several years Assistant Agricultural Officers were posted to new divisional headquarters and the number of African staff, including Agricultural Instructors, Produce Inspectors, Soil Conservation Staff, River Scouts and labourers, was greatly increased. The pattern was then extended to the neighbouring districts, and between 1945 and 1948 the European staff in most districts increased from one to three or four and the number of African staff trebled.³⁶ By 1952 the total staff involved in the agricultural campaign in Central Province had grown more than tenfold.³⁷

³⁴ L.H. Brown (ODRP 18), interview f. 61.

³⁵ Sir Roger Swynnerton (ODRP 150), interview with A. Thurston, f. 16.

³⁶ Kenya Agricultural Department Annual Reports, 1943-1948, *passim*.

³⁷ D. Throup, "The Governorship of Sir Philip Mitchell in Kenya, 1944-1952", p. 23.

The increased numbers added to the strain in Central Province but at the same time they enabled the Agricultural Officers to begin to fulfill their role as agriculturalists. Frank Loyd, who served in the Central Province Administration throughout the post-war and Emergency periods recalled:

If for example you had just one Agricultural Officer trying to cover the whole district, he could only visit an area perhaps once in a year. How could he possibly ever get known to the local people? So that the more staff you had the more they could concentrate in a given area, become known to the local people, who were then more likely to listen to the advice because they had seen them, knew what they were talking about, understood them and weighed up their personality.³⁸

The Agricultural Officers' enthusiasm was largely responsible for the spread of cash crop schemes. Ideas were communicated through personal contact and, as Loyd recalled, "might then be taken up elsewhere in the district or by the provincial officers concerned for trial elsewhere in the province." Many of the officers were not trained graduates, since in the post-war period graduates tended to be sent to the Rift Valley to plan the large commercial European farms; they were mostly Assistant Agricultural Officers with diplomas or practical experience who were gradually promoted upward and were committed to achieving local solutions.³⁹

Political and practical constraints kept cash crop development slow, so slow that the revolution in the direction of Kenyan agriculture was not readily apparent for the first few years. The European farming community, having invested heavily in coffee, tea, pyrethrum and dairy cattle were at last

³⁸ Sir Francis Loyd (ODRP 99), interview ff. 357-358.

³⁹ E. Yates (ODRP 183), interview, f. 57.

beginning to see signs of success and were strongly opposed to their introduction to African areas. They wanted to ensure sustained markets, but they were also reluctant to lose control of production quality or risk the spread of theft, pests and diseases. When the Department gradually began negotiating with the European controlled cash crop boards for relaxed cash crop quotas, change was achieved only with the promise of the highest standards of quality control, which the officers wanted in any case, to ensure African farmers' competitive position.⁴⁰

Thus development took place in a strictly regulated manner to overcome the technical difficulties, real and perceived, of introducing cash crops to smallholders. Each of the cash crops which was eventually to become the basis of smallholder agricultural productivity – coffee, pyrethrum and tea – was initially developed in Central Province, and each presented its own constraints. Coffee, the most readily suitable for widespread introduction, had to be established as seedlings in nurseries for 15 months and then took another three and a half years to produce a crop. High quality export coffee, as grown in European areas, was dependent upon sound planting, mulching and routine spraying against outbreaks of antestia, mealy bug, thrips, stem borer, leaf rust and latterly coffee berry disease, as well as on the cherry being picked in good condition and good pulping, fermenting, washing, grading and drying.⁴¹

Coffee in Meru District was the most significant cash crop development in any African area in the colony. Jack Benson's long commitment had facilitated the establishment of a smallholder industry which was to provide the basis for

⁴⁰ Sir Roger Swynnerton (ODRP 150), commissioned memorandum, ff. 2-3, ff. 12-13; interview with E.S. Clayton and I.D. Carruthers, f. 390.

⁴¹ *ibid*, interview with A. Thurston, ff. 357-358.

standards and procedures as coffee began to be introduced to other African areas. Initially he had permission to develop about a hundred experimental acres; by 1947 the official acreage in Meru and Embu was 342, but Victor Burke recalled that when he was posted to Meru as Assistant Agricultural Officer in 1949 there were many hundreds of acres of coffee and two or three coffee growers' societies operating under Benson's guidance.⁴²

Jack had a cautious response to this in the early days, immediately after the war, but by the time we, Golding and I, were there, there was a keen response to coffee. People originally thought that if they put land down to coffee the land would be taken away from them, which was a common view in those days. By the time we arrived people were very keen to take up coffee, they had had the first pay-outs and it was obviously something that was important to them.⁴³

Benson took enormous care to establish high standards, which he instilled in his officers.⁴⁴ Burke remembered pegging out enormous holes of about three feet by three feet and inspecting to make sure that the soil was mixed properly with manure and put back properly before planting so that the coffee plants really had a chance to get away fast:

We were told later by the research people that our holes were unnecessarily large, but they probably did benefit from this special arrangement and we insisted that all the coffee trees be shaded properly and mulched properly. But Meru was a very favourable district climatically and from the soil point of view for growing coffee. We may have been gilding the lily a bit but it certainly did ensure a remarkably uniform standard of performance in Meru District and the yields were very high indeed.⁴⁵

⁴² V.E. Burke (ODRP 20), interview ff. 19-20.

⁴³ *ibid*, ff. 20-21.

⁴⁴ *ibid*, ff. 19-23; K. Sillitoe (ODRP 138A), interview, ff. 11, 21-22.

⁴⁵ V.E. Burke (ODRP 20), interview, f. 22.

The same standards applied to factory procedures. Benson had produced a basic design for small factories which he modified over the years, and he insisted that only good ripe cherry be processed. Ken Sillitoe, an Assistant Agricultural Officer in Meru, recalled:

These people were dealing with their own products, and all the time there was behind it all – what you do has got to be better than anybody else, or it won't be accepted. Their coffee had to be very very good, and it was most painstakingly picked over. Every time a woman brought in a tray of coffee, it had to go to a particular place and she had to pick out all the unripe beans, and then someone would come along and inspect it to make sure they were right.⁴⁶

The number of coffee growing societies, to which all growers had to belong, and of factories increased steadily and Meru began to produce some of the finest coffee in the world. Burke concluded:

One expects development of this sort to be the result of central policy, but in fact I think that the development of coffee in that district was done almost in spite of official policy in the early days. It was the result of the interest that Benson had in this particular crop and in bringing some sort of benefits to the people.⁴⁷

In the neighbouring district of Embu there was less attention to coffee and less development. William Heaney was posted there as one of three new Assistant Agricultural Officers under Brown at the end of the decade and recalled a very different picture of coffee development:

When the first coffee bushes began to bear fruit, the harvest was small and sporadic. Beans were processed by hand by individual growers and quality was poor, uncontrolled and variable. It became obvious that as the coffee acreage expanded some means of bulk handling and

⁴⁶ K. Sillitoe (ODRP 138A), interview, f. 22.

⁴⁷ V.E. Burke (ODRP 20), interview, f. 23.

processing was desirable. Towards the end of 1952 I held several barazas (meetings) with local farmers to discuss the concept of a co-operative society being formed and eventually agreement was reached to build a small pilot coffee factory.⁴⁸

In 1952 Tom Golding was transferred to Embu from Meru as the first Coffee Officer as part of a new scheme to develop agricultural specialists; with him came Benson's procedures. Coffee was also expanded in Kisii and introduced in Nyeri, Fort Hall, Kiambu, North Nyanza and Teita in small acreages in the early 1950s. Initially it was restricted to about 100 trees per holding, or about a fifth of an acre, with planned increases; it could not be grown within five miles of European estates.⁴⁹

Pyrethrum was first planted in an African district in Kiambu by Peter Gollop, the Agricultural Officer, in 1945 and shortly afterwards in Nyeri by Tom Hughes Rice.⁵⁰ It grew well in Kiambu and produced good yields containing a high percentage of the insecticidal components, pyrethrins. Although it had to be rotated and replanted every three years it was easily propagated from suckers and did not present any major technical difficulties. Farmers built their own driers, and dried pyrethrum flowers were transported to the central processing plant in Nakuru.

However, only a very limited acreage was planted. This was partly because pyrethrum continued to be subject to violent price fluctuations involving high risks. In 1947 African farmers were asked to cease production voluntarily when prices fell, although it was then decided that their output was too small

⁴⁸ W.C. Heaney (ODRP 73), commissioned memorandum, f. 2.

⁴⁹ Kenya Agricultural Department Annual Reports, 1951-1952.

⁵⁰ T. Hughes-Rice (ODRP 84), commissioned memorandum f. 32.

to bother curtailing their production, and by 1949 when prices had stabilised pyrethrum was again proposed as a suitable crop for African areas.⁵¹ However, the fundamental reason for limiting its production was that while Kenya, which then also processed and marketed the smaller Tanganyika and Kivu crops, held a virtual world monopoly, the market was extremely limited due to competition with post-war synthetic insecticides. The Pyrethrum Board had to conform to its international contracts and was most reluctant to apportion quotas to Kenyan African areas.

Coarse jat China tea stumps originally stolen from Limuru estates were already growing in Fort Hall District on small plots. Philip Rimington remembered that when he arrived in the late 1940s there was one experimental plot and one belonging to Chief Njiiri, who had given land for the experiment, each about a quarter of an acre. "The trees were well established. They were real hairy old trees, not pruned or anything. They weren't even table-topped or anything, they were just bushes." This tea was sun-dried on goatskins and pounded in a mortar and pestle. Rimington later stumbled on other farmers growing tea. "I think there were about a handful of people, four or five, dotted around at the top of Location Two."⁵²

Hughes Rice established the first tea scheme in Nyeri in 1948. He had seen the tea bushes in Fort Hall and had the idea of introducing tea commercially. After he was posted to Nyeri he got permission to plant a plot at Karatina, and with the co-operation of the Provincial Forestry Officer, Douglas Leakey, he

⁵¹ KNA Ag 4/80 "Agricultural Conferences and Meetings", 1933-1951, meeting of Senior Agricultural Officers, February, 1949.

⁵² G.P. Rimington (ODRP 131), interview, February, 1983, restricted. M. Cowen, *Rural Development in Tropical Africa*, p. 134, notes that it was first planted in Fort Hall District in 1933.

got forest land at Kagochi set aside for the first tea nursery.⁵³ Tea was well-suited to Nyeri and other African areas and at this stage the Department of Agriculture supported the project to grow sun-dried tea for local consumption; any individual household in the province that wanted to produce it was encouraged to do so. However, it aroused the concern of the major tea growing firm, Brooke Bond, that household production would compete with estate-produced tea on the local market, and even at this early stage there was pressure on the department to encourage production through large-scale units.⁵⁴

Export quality tea offered less hopeful prospects since planting and growing presented numerous difficulties. The land had to be rid of all tree roots, which could be infected with root disease, the fungus *armillariella*; a large number of seedlings, about six times as many as for coffee, were required per acre and pruning had to be done correctly in order to form a satisfactory table for plucking.⁵⁵

But the real difficulty was processing, which required relatively large and costly factories. Green tea leaf, to be of export quality, had to reach a factory within 12 hours of plucking, so a network of all-weather roads and a highly organised collection system were also needed. In 1951 it was suggested that the Colonial Development Corporation produce a state-sponsored scheme for planting and processing tea, but the first tea factory in an African area, on the Nyeri-Embu Border, was not built until 1957. In the interim tea went to the

⁵³ T. Hughes-Rice (ODRP 84), commissioned memorandum, ff. 8, 32.

⁵⁴ M. Cowen, "The British State and Agrarian Accumulation in Kenya", *Industry and Accumulation in Africa*, pp. 160-161.

⁵⁵ Sir Roger Swynnerton (ODRP 150), commissioned memorandum, ff. 16-17; E. Yates (ODRP 183), commissioned memorandum, ff. 9-10.

factory at Limuru in Kiambu for processing.⁵⁶ Swann, who was D.C. Nyeri from 1950 to 1952, recalled:

You tried to get five people all to plant tea so that when you plucked the leaf there was a lorry load which could go off to the factory rather than having it scattered. ... You got through somehow, you put chains on and of course we did have the main road right through the centre of Nyeri District, so you put on your chains until you got to that and then away you whistled.⁵⁷

Finding cash crops for the lower areas of the province was harder. Cotton was abandoned in Machakos and Kitui where the high incidence of pests caused low yields. Sisal, grown widely as boundary fences, became a cash crop in 1950 when a drought coincided with a rise in prices and people began selling leaves to neighbouring European sisal estates. Yet, while processing facilities were established in Machakos, it was not a great success, for when food supplies were plentiful or when the price dropped, people were not interested in selling sisal. Pineapples were encouraged in the low areas of Kiambu and Fort Hall and in the Mua Hills of Machakos for sale to Kenya Cannery at Thika, but again, when prices fell growers stopped producing.⁵⁸ In Embu, Brown experimented with rice at Nguka Swamp in Mwea Tebere; he had the use of a quarter acre of land for a season in 1948-1949 and irrigated it. "On this I grew a crop of just under 4000 lbs of rice paddy per acre. I then knew that we could not go wrong with rice. However, as the local people did not then eat rice, there was no urgency to develop the scheme."⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Sir Roger Swynnerton (ODRP 150), interview with M. Cowen, f. 371.

⁵⁷ Sir Anthony Swann (ODRP 149A), interview, November 1982, f. 9.

⁵⁸ Sir Roger Swynnerton (ODRP 150), commissioned memorandum, ff. 17-18.

⁵⁹ L.H. Brown (ODRP 18), commissioned memorandum, ff. 88-89.

Brown's reconditioning schemes were of broader significance. Re-grassing had been introduced in Baringo in the 1930s; at Embu in 1948, he developed a relatively cheap effective method of restoring grass cover to bare land that influenced subsequent schemes at Machakos and Kitui.⁶⁰ It involved closing land temporarily to grazing, scratching the surface with a plough coulter at three foot intervals on the contour, scattering any grass seed mixed with an ant-repellent, and leaving the wind to blow it into the furrows. When the rains came, lines of grass sprang up, and William Heaney remembered looking out from the hills at "bright patches of green on the valley floor".⁶¹

George Cowley, who worked with Brown at Embu, took the idea to Machakos when he was transferred there as Agricultural Officer. Convinced that the problem lay in land use rather than overcrowding, he established a larger scheme at Makaveti on severely eroded land. Within two years the carrying capacity had been raised from one beast to 30 acres to one in two. Although perhaps with over optimism, as there had been particularly good rains in 1951, the Agricultural staff then embarked on a programme to restore the district area by area.⁶² Hughes Rice, transferred to Machakos in 1951, recalled that a grass cover capable of supporting grazing and with a root growth to revitalise the soil, was quickly established. "The denuded areas no longer looked like a vast bleeding wound, and though the 'grass' was often more weed than good grazing, it was the start up the ladder of fertility."⁶³

⁶⁰ *ibid.*, ff. 107-108.

⁶¹ W.C. Heaney (ODRP 73), commissioned memorandum, f.5.

⁶² G.S. Cowley, "An Outline of the Technical Revolution in Agricultural Practice in Kenya, 1946-1956", found in E. Etherington (ODRP 46), f. 5; *African Land Development in Kenya, 1946-1955: Report by the African Land Development Board*, pp. 28-30.

⁶³ T. Hughes-Rice (ODRP 84), commissioned memorandum, f. 16.

As the Agricultural Department moved over to a cash crop policy, it relied heavily on the Administration for support. In Meru the Agricultural Officers were in a strong position, but in the Kikuyu districts, where the strongest administrators tended to be posted, they were firmly under the Administration's authority. By the end of the 1940s the two services had begun to diverge in approach. The Administration, responsible for preserving law and order, remained committed to underpinning what it perceived as the traditional egalitarian nature of society and supported communal development directed by chiefs and headmen. The Agricultural Officers were increasingly willing to encourage the emerging counter-elite as progressive cash crop farmers. Although the agricultural campaign tended to associate them with administrative policy, they were not essentially politically motivated, and Burke described an attitude common to many of the officers who served for a long time in one district:

Benson and myself never expected to go to any other district but Meru. It was a sort of a life's work. Agricultural Officers didn't have any career ambitions, at least we didn't. We didn't look forward to any promotion, we were just interested in working in Meru. This gave us a profound interest in what we were doing. I remember Jack used to say it was better to leave a mediocre person in the district for a long time than to have a succession of brilliant people there, and there is probably a lot of truth in that. He was very much against radical quick solutions to things.⁶⁴

Despite differences in approach, the Administrative Officers largely supported agricultural development. As Loyd recalled, "If the Administration ... were to be constructive and help the people of Fort Hall, it was essential to

⁶⁴ V.E. Burke (ODRP 20), interview, f. 33.

give every possible support to the Agricultural Department."⁶⁵ Swann, also a long serving D.C. in Central Province, had a similar view:

Kenya was obviously an agricultural country and not an industrial country, so if you wished to help its development and make life more pleasant for its inhabitants to my mind the only thing was improved agriculture.⁶⁶

While district teams, initiated early in Mitchell's administration, never overcame rivalries and differences in the field, they did provide a forum for working together. A team might have consisted only of the D.C. as chairman, the Agricultural Officer and the doctor meeting occasionally to talk about common problems, or it might have met more formally at regular intervals and kept minutes.⁶⁷ Whatever the form, the meetings kept the Administration aware of the departmental officers' objects and helped to avoid conflicting programmes, as Brown illustrated:

I as Agricultural Officer would have been very anxious to see all hut compounds on steep slopes grassed down – planted to grass – so that the erosion would be minimised from these. They did in actual fact act as foci of erosion. But the Health Officer, his view would have been that these should be kept bare because otherwise they might harbour rats that would carry bubonic plague. And in this case we were able to get over this point easily by choosing the right variety of grass that would not grow long and making it desirable for these people to cut it if need be round their houses.⁶⁸

The most complex development problem to which both the Administration and the Agricultural Officers sought solutions was land tenure. Both saw

⁶⁵ Sir Francis Loyd (ODRP 99), interview, f. 17.

⁶⁶ Sir Anthony Swann (ODRP 149A), interview, November 1982, f. 5.

⁶⁷ Sir Francis Loyd (ODRP 99), interview, ff. 5-8.

⁶⁸ L.H. Brown (ODRP 18), interview, ff. 12-13.

fragmentation as the major barrier to development in the agricultural areas, particularly in the Kikuyu districts and to a lesser degree Meru and Embu, but also in heavily populated areas such as Bunyoro, Maragoli and Teita. Successive Agricultural Departmental reports reflected the same discouraging picture:

Particularly in the Central Province land is changing hands under various obscure customary procedures and the position becomes more complicated and difficult of solution every day. In these areas we have almost reached the stage where further agricultural advancement is impossible until the tangle of tenure and fragmentation problems is unravelled.⁶⁹

Of the numerous problems fragmentation caused from the agricultural point of view, the most fundamental was the uneconomic use of time. It could take a woman half a day to harvest a bunch of bananas on a plot three miles from her home, and to have treated a quarter acre field with manure or compost would have taken her weeks. Fragmentation also made it difficult if not impossible for the agricultural staff to visit all her fields or assist with any sort of overall planning. The Agricultural Census of 1950 made the situation more obvious, and Burke, recalling its effect on the Agricultural Officers' thinking, felt that it had opened their eyes to the traditional pattern of agriculture in Central Province:

For the first time I realised the high degree of fragmentation. In Meru there was an average of eight fragments, the maximum was 22. The extreme fragments were as many as 20 miles apart and this was a really shocking realisation. We saw for the first time what the pattern was like. I don't think anybody had appreciated that fragmentation was so significant.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Kenya Agricultural Department Annual Report, 1951, p. 1.

⁷⁰ V.E. Burke (ODRP 20), interview, f. 24.

At the same time land litigation was becoming increasingly common, resulting in a reluctance or inability to invest in improvements. If a man did begin to develop his holding with advice from the Agricultural Department, a counter claim could be put forward, the validity of which the European officers had no means of judging in terms of local land law. People claimed ownership falsely or cultivated beyond their boundaries, and everyone was determined to stake his claim by ensuring, through a court decision, that his rights were established and recognised. Even then cases were appealed or resubmitted under different terms over and over. In Central Province this resulted in an endless number of cases costing thousands of shillings, creating divisions within families and building up resentments between the landed and the landless, particularly as richer men often succeeded in winning disputes. In Kiambu alone, bribes apart, fees paid in African court cases rose from 13,000 shillings to 24,000 shillings in 1951.⁷¹

The Administrators, whose court responsibilities made them acutely aware of the problem in a very direct way, were thus as keen to find a solution as the Agricultural Officers. All too often it was necessary for them to examine boundaries, and as Loyd explained:

It was then that one could see so clearly what were the real problems on the ground of fragmentation and of the variation in size: sometimes quite big, but normally extremely small, and very often one would be deciding a case, which had been extremely expensive to the litigants involved, which was an argument over a piece of land the size of perhaps a small house.⁷²

⁷¹ KNA DC/KBU/1/42, Kiambu Annual District Report.

⁷² Sir Francis Loyd (ODRP 99), interview, f. 10.

Consolidation seemed the obvious answer but while the Administration was willing to go a certain way toward enforcing terracing, they knew that they could not interfere with land tenure. Moreover, in Central Province there was the daunting existence of a large potentially landless class which grew throughout the 1940s as squatters began leaving the European farms and moving back into the reserve. Not only had their wages dropped drastically, but there were much tighter restrictions on the land they could cultivate or the sheep and goats they could keep and they could no longer keep cattle. Most were not fortunate enough to resuscitate long neglected land rights or to purchase rights with stock in Central Province.⁷³

When preliminary efforts at consolidation did commence, the Administration and the Agricultural Officers did not agree on the kind of land tenure reform to pursue. For the Agriculturalists, at least those who supported Brown, granting secure titles to progressive farmers so that they could consolidate, apply for credit and develop their land, was fundamental. The Administration opposed proposals which fostered individual ownership and undermined the community rights it was attempting to recuscitate.

Throughout the late 1940s and early 1950s the Administration tried to find a means of safeguarding community tenure while accommodating the growing desire for individual ownership. From 1948 onward proposals to register titles to selected individuals or groups were put forward at Provincial Commissioners' meetings, referred upwards and downwards and sent to other departments for comment, but no action was taken.⁷⁴ "This was a virtually

⁷³ D. Throup, "The Governorship of Sir Philip Mitchell in Kenya, 1944-1952", see "Chapter Four: The Kikuyu Squatter Problem".

⁷⁴ M.P.K. Sorrenson, *Land Reform in the Kikuyu Country*, pp. 62-71.

intractable problem," Loyd recalled, "and one that with the immense load of work of all sorts on all sides by both administrative and agricultural staff, had to be left aside because there simply wasn't time to get any further."⁷⁵

There was, however, one notable example of consolidation in Nyeri District, supported by both the Administration and Agricultural Department. From about 1945, Chief Muhoya Kagumba initiated a process, first on his own land and then on that of his family and relatives, of measuring and re-allocating fragments of consolidated holdings. This gave him a means of ensuring their claims against the long series of land cases in his location and of introducing new farming methods, which he had observed in the adjacent European farming district. Swann recalled that Muhoya himself had about 150 acres of good land, mostly purchased.⁷⁶

Muhoya was a controversial figure, a loyal chief, highly respected by the Administration, fanatical in his approach to development, respected by those who benefited, but inevitably disliked by many, including those dispossessed as a result of his efforts. He was a prominent member of the Nyeri African District Council, but he did not always see eye to eye with other leading members nor with the more traditionally orientated chiefs. With considerable advice and backing from European farmers in the area and from Administrative and Agricultural Officers, he established a progressive farm on his consolidated holding, to all intents and purposes a copy of a European

⁷⁵ Sir Francis Loyd (ODRP 99), interview, f. 26.

⁷⁶ Sir Anthony Swann (ODRP 149A), interview, November, 1982, f. 13. G. Hampson (ODRP 68), interview, ff. 32-36, remembered that Muhoya had over 1000 acres and that other farmers who lived near the Aberdare forest where the land was less densely populated than in the central parts of the district had consolidated holdings of about four to five hundred acres.

farm in the area. On the basis of having enclosed the land and built cattle dips, he was the first in the area to be allowed to keep grade cattle, and he became a very rich man.⁷⁷

This set the pattern for the area, and by 1952 there were 60 or more farmers operating smaller consolidated holdings, again largely acquired by purchase, in the fertile high rainfall areas of the district. Tony Swann remembered:

They lay in particular areas, around Karatina, a location called Iria-ini where a man called Eliud was chief. a) he was very go ahead, b) they had had a vegetable project there during the war to provide vegetables for the troops and they had had factories and mass growing of vegetables. Muhoya's area, certainly, Nderi's area next door. ... You often found that it was on the edge of the settled area that the consolidation took place, because they saw the European, the size of his holding and the way he farmed it. A lot of them had been ex-headmen on European farms and said, "I want to farm in the same way as I ran the farm 20 years ago."⁷⁸

Terraced and manured, these holdings were farmed at a standard comparable with or better than well-run European farms but on a smaller scale. These were the farmers who planted tea in blocks and shipped it to Kiambu for processing.

Kenya was not alone in its land tenure dilemma. Individual tenure, fragmentation and unregistered sales were emerging themes throughout the crowded areas of Africa as in Ashante in Ghana or Tonga in Northern Rhodesia, and these problems caused considerable concern to officials locally

⁷⁷ G. Hampson (ODRP 68), interview, ff. 32-36.

⁷⁸ Sir Anthony Swann (ODRP 149A), interview, November, 1982, f. 14.

and in the Colonial Office. Were they to face individual tenure and encourage it or leave it in the twilight to emerge on its own? On the whole the Colonial Office steered clear of interfering with the explosive topic, but land tenure, like soil conservation was a preoccupation.

Land tenure and agricultural development were discussed at the Colonial Office Summer Conferences on African Administration, held annually at Cambridge to which each African government was invited to send administrative and technical officers from headquarters and the field. The topic in 1949 was agricultural development in Africa, and in his opening address the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Arthur Creech Jones, urged the conference to concentrate on the problems of small peasant production. What was needed in Africa, he said, was an agricultural revolution.⁷⁹ This theme of intensifying African agriculture incorporated and expanded thinking already emerging in Kenya. The topics discussed included district and provincial teams, marketing, agrarian credit, cash crop introduction, the balance between subsistence and export crops, group farming, land consolidation, land title registration and experimenting with different systems of land tenure for different regions.

Land tenure was also discussed in detail at a Land Use Conference organised by the Colonial Office in 1949 at Jos in Nigeria to which each African colony was invited to send three representatives.⁸⁰ A plane was chartered to take the East African delegations, which included the Provincial Agricultural Officer and Provincial Commissioner from Kenya's Central Province, and from Tanganyika Donald Malcolm, collator of the Sukumaland

⁷⁹ *Proceedings of the Colonial Office Summer Conference on African Administration*, 3rd session, August, 1949, p. 7.

⁸⁰ CO 852/1225/5, "British Land Utilisation Conference, Jos, 1949".

Development Plan, and Roger Swynnerton, Assistant Director of Agriculture. Swynnerton was to be transferred to Kenya the following year as Assistant Director of Agriculture for Field Services.

3. Genesis of the Plan, 1950-1952

The reorganisation of Kenya's small Agricultural Department Headquarters staff in late 1950 marked a turning point in field development in African areas. The expansion of extension and research services throughout the colony in the post war period had made the headquarters organisation increasingly unworkable, and, particularly in the African areas, the officers received little support, as they indicated at a meeting of Central Province Agricultural Officers in 1948:

All felt that the Department was not fighting hard enough for its officers and that Head Office functioned rather as a go-between between the Secretariat and the Provincial Office. Very few visits were made by members of the Head Office to districts and that officers in charge of districts had little or no opportunity to discuss problems on the ground.¹

The head office senior staff had consisted only of the Director and his deputy, with a small supportive staff, who primarily emphasised European farming. As Director, Stuart Gillet spent a large proportion of his time conducting relations with European farmers through the coffee, tea, sisal, pyrethrum and other cash crop boards; he attended the Legislative Council as a nominated member, sat on the Boards of Agriculture and ALDEV and attended annual or bi-annual conferences of Provincial Agricultural Officers. Gilbert Roddan, his deputy, supervised staff postings and finances and co-ordinated crop research and field services. He was also Chairman of the Cotton Lint and Seed Marketing Board, sat on the Maize Marketing Board and the Water

¹ KNA Ag 4/80 "Agricultural Conferences and Meetings", 1933-951, minutes of a meeting of Central Province Agricultural Officers, September, 1948.

Resources Authority and attended District Commissioners' meetings several times a year at the provincial headquarters.²

At the end of 1951 a Colonial Development and Welfare Grant supported the appointment of two new Assistant Directors of Agriculture, Roger Swynnerton to direct field services and Dr. Tom Webster to co-ordinate planning and development of research services. This freed the Deputy Director to give more attention to staffing and finance, with which he was now assisted by an Administrative Officer, John Dearden. With these appointments and the supportive specialist staff that went with them, it was possible for the first time to co-ordinate services to African areas and accelerate the pace of field and research development.³

Roger Swynnerton arrived in January 1951 on transfer from the Tanganyika Agricultural Department. In his seventeen years there he had been closely involved in African coffee and cotton development and had helped design the Sukumaland Scheme, which aimed to encourage African cash crop cultivation and was the most significant integrated development plan in East Africa to date.⁴

As Assistant Director for Field Services, which included the Soil Conservation Service, Colin Maher having taken early retirement in 1950, Swynnerton immediately began touring the provinces to familiarise himself with the staff, conditions and development schemes. Usually he was out for 15 to 20 days of the month, mostly in the African districts, and this, he recalled

² Sir Roger Swynnerton (ODRP 150), commissioned memorandum, ff. 1-2.

³ *ibid*, interview with A. Thurston, f. 344; commissioned memorandum, ff. 1-2.

⁴ Sir Roger Swynnerton (RH MSS.Afr.s.1426), interview with G. Masfield, ff.3-5; (ODRP 150) interview with A. Thurston, ff. 339-340.

was a carry over of his Tanganyika experience:

When I joined the Service in Tanganyika the instruction from the Director of Agriculture, Ernest Harrison, was that any officer who did not spend 20 nights a month on safari was out on his ear, and in fact two or three people were removed because they were not doing enough safari. I did 20 nights a month and I enjoyed it thoroughly. I learnt my Swahili so well that I took the Higher Standard. The only job we were given was to increase agricultural production.⁵

These visits, along with Provincial Agricultural Officers conferences and participation on the ALDEV Board soon acquainted him with development schemes throughout the Colony, and he began working with the field staff to consolidate their ideas as programmes with specific objectives and targets. For the first time there was a direct link between Agricultural Department headquarters and the field. It was not an easy achievement, as Sandy Storrar, then an Agricultural Officer in the Rift Valley recalled:

Like all strangers he was suspect in the beginning. He came from Tanganyika and most of them had never heard of him anyway. ... He came in and it was the first Assistant Director post created and this caused quite a problem because there this man was brought in over all the other people in the provinces, the Provincial Agricultural Officers. I think great credit has to go to him to overcome an initial suspicion.⁶

Similarly, Tom Webster achieved an unprecedented level of research co-ordination. The Kenya Agricultural Department research service had exceptionally high standards, among the finest in the tropical world and the best of any colony in Africa. The European farmers and plantation industries had kept the department under enormous pressure to provide these services and

⁵ *ibid*, interview with G. Masefield, f. 3.

⁶ A. Storrar (ODRP 149), interview, f. 60.

had contributed to them financially. Gilbert Roddan, who had served in the Colonial Office and took over as Director of Agriculture in 1951, was, like Swynnerton, accustomed to thinking in terms of smallholder African production but was struck by the effect of European pressure on the development of research services.

Having served for a good number of years at a field level in a wholly African country, Sierra Leone, I was perhaps in a better position than most to appreciate the value of the European farming contribution to the progress of African agriculture and of Kenya. European farming enterprise, the co-operation and encouragement given to the Department and not forgetting the pressure they could exercise in the provision of finance were undoubtedly very important factors in the provision of excellent crop research centres although it was not until the late 1940s and early 1950s that these were adequately staffed.⁷

Much of the research conducted was more applicable to large farms than African smallholdings, but there was increasing attention to small-scale farming systems and crop development for African areas. In addition to food and cash crop growing trials there were efforts to develop appropriate planting, cultivation and fertilising methods for African producers. Coffee research was emphasised as were small-scale pruning, mulching, nursery organisation and transplanting.

Webster directed this research back to the field officers in a manner never before possible. In addition to developing and expanding the existing research stations for soil science, entomology, plant pathology, sisal, horticulture, coffee, grasslands and plant breeding, he posted an Agricultural Officer for Experiments to each Province to act as a liaison between field and research

⁷ G. Roddan (ODRP 134), commissioned memorandum, f. 1.

station staff. The officers also developed provincial experimental stations and visited experimental farms regularly, usually with the District Agricultural Officer, to supervise and encourage accurate recording of results. In his central position, Webster was also able to cut down unnecessary repetition and to develop integrated investigation planning. He held annual meetings with his research and experimental staff, drew up research schedules and organised a central list of "Research and Experimental Work in Progress" indicating the stations and sites where experiments were being carried out for each crop.⁸

As Webster and Swynnerton began pulling together the multiple schemes for intensifying productivity from the field and co-ordinating them at the state level, political tension was heightening in Central Province, where it was clear to the field officers that a crisis was approaching.⁹ From 1948 there had been a growing number of reports of oath-taking ceremonies among Kikuyu squatters in the Rift Valley, and by 1951 oathing was spreading rapidly through Central Province with intimidation of those who resisted it. Agricultural advice and services were fast becoming impossible, as Frank Loyd remembered:

I was in Fort Hall and this was the time when intimidation increased daily and towards the end the entire district was systematically oathed starting from the south and then also coming in from the north. ... Travelling around the district, you could virtually see where oathing had taken place by the demeanour of the people. The day after a ceremony their whole attitude and appearance was quite different. The result and the effect on life generally was one of sullenness on the part of the people and also fear. Ordinary activities, particularly agricultural development slowed down in many areas. Very little was

⁸ Kenya Agricultural Department Reports, 1951-1953, *passim*.

⁹ D. Throup, "The Governorship of Sir Philip Mitchell in Kenya, 1944-1952", pp. 341-352; B. Berman, "Bureaucracy and Incumbent Violence: Colonial Administration and the Origins of the 'Mau Mau' Emergency in Kenya", *British Journal of Political Science*, pp. 165-170.

done.¹⁰

The solidification of the smallholder concept for intensifying land use was therefore not before time. After Swynnerton's appointment, there was real backing in Departmental headquarters for a policy of rewards and secure tenure for progressive farmers, and gradually the department began to win support from the Administration. But the benefits had been so long delayed that at this critical juncture there was little visible evidence of the change underway. Even in 1952, for instance, there were only 779 acres of pyrethrum, mainly in Kiambu, 35 acres of tea in Nyeri and 383 households authorised to grow coffee in Fort Hall.¹¹

By the early 1950s, particularly after the failure of group farming, there was revived interest in the mixed smallholdings farmed on a rotational balance which had been central to the thinking of the 1930s. At the same time Agricultural Officers in European areas were planning the production of some of the larger farms with significant results, and these ideas were beginning to be applied in the African areas.

The concept of farm planning had been conceived and developed by Sandy Storrar, an Agricultural Officer in the Rift Valley Province. He had worked under Colin Maher in the Soil Conservation Service when he first came to Kenya in 1943 and had been influenced by Robert Barnes, the Soil and Water Engineer, so he was keenly aware of the need for soil conservation. But he believed that on its own it was not a solution. When he was posted as Agricultural Officer of Nakuru District he worked closely with his counterpart

¹⁰ Sir Francis Loyd (ODRP 99), interview, ff. 26-27.

¹¹ D. Throup, 'The Governorship of Sir Philip Mitchell in Kenya', p. 310.

in the Soil Conservation Service, Charles Newton, to evolve field layouts based on a soil conservation survey of topographical features. By about 1947 he had developed a system of equivalents, starting with the stock-carrying capacity of the land and adjusting other factors according to available arable and grazing areas. He was thus able to provide farm development plans for European farmers with year by year field cropping programmes, stocking rates, manuring treatments and farm budgets for purchase and sales.¹²

Subsequently the concept was applied to a demonstration African smallholding at Kapsabet in Nandi District where field layout was again based on a soil conservation survey. The plans were nowhere near as elaborate but did involve a fairly complex equation of cultivation, rotational fallow and permanent grass. While beyond the means of average farmers, it established the possibility of increased productivity through better rotations, better use of rainfall, planting on the contour and crop positioning.¹³

One of the major constraints to the development of the smallholding concept was the lack of suitable cattle. While the Agricultural Department was responsible for developing on-farm animal husbandry, the Veterinary Department looked after breeding, animal health, movement and marketing. It provided outstanding animal research and disease control units, a vaccine service, and one of the world's first artificial insemination services.¹⁴ However, while the Agricultural Department had taken an interest in African agriculture

¹² A. Storrar (ODRP 149), interview, ff. 42-49; G.S. Cowley "An outline of the Technical Revolution in Agricultural Practice in Kenya", 1946-1956, found in E. Etherington (ODRP 46), ff. 7-9.

¹³ *ibid*, ff. 10-11.

¹⁴ Sir Roger Swynnerton (ODRP 150), commissioned memorandum, ff. 18-19; K. MacOwan (ODRP 104), commissioned memorandum, ff. 1-8.

from the late 1930s, the Veterinary Department was still primarily tied to European interests.

From the late 1940s the Agricultural Department began to press for the introduction of grade cattle to African areas on the grounds that this would facilitate the introduction of mixed farming and that African farmers, particularly ex-farm workers, would obtain them in any case, but without advice, if they were not officially permitted to keep them; by 1949 Trevor Moon, as Provincial Agricultural Officer of Central Province, estimated that there were already about 2000 such cattle in South Nyeri.¹⁵ The Veterinary Department, on the other hand, held that African farmers did not have the resources to maintain exotic animals at a productive level and that Europeans were off-loading inferior stock. Instead it bred cattle experimentally to live in conditions in African areas and to produce a milk yield higher than from local Zebu stock. Initially selective breeding was emphasised, but from the late 1930s there was a parallel effort to grade up indigenous Zebu with Sahiwal bulls, imported from the Indian subcontinent, which acclimatised well and, being a Zebu breed, were easily crossed. Even then, propagation was slow, and the improved cattle were more susceptible to local diseases than indigenous animals.¹⁶

The dearth of information about the cash crop potential of the African districts was an even greater problem. The breakthrough came as a result of Leslie Brown's experimentation in the early 1950s, for which his dual training

¹⁵ KNA Ag 4/80 "Agricultural Conferences and Meetings", 1933-1951, meeting of Senior Agricultural Officers, February, 1949.

¹⁶ K. MacOwan (ODRP 104), commissioned memorandum, ff. 2, 6-7; Sir Roger Swynnerton (ODRP 150), interview with M. Cowen, f. 369.

as an agriculturalist and zoologist gave him a unique outlook. He had visited the Rhodes Livingstone Institute in Northern Rhodesia where ecologists C.G. Trapnell, W.O. Allan and others were developing the concept of ecological zones in land use planning, but they had not yet applied the idea to a practical situation as Brown now did at Embu.¹⁷

Initially he was interested in associations between indigenous plants and ecological conditions, to which his practical experience in West Africa had alerted him. The connection had been illustrated dramatically by a Nigerian hunter who was able to guide him, without relying on tracking, to a place where roan antelope would be grazing. Brown thought it was worthwhile going into how this was done and received this reply:

"You can see that this is a certain kind of soil, and on this soil there grows this kind of bush (the gardenia), and at this time of year the gardenia is in fruit and the roan like to eat the fruits of the gardenia, so there will be roan here at this time of year." Well, this was a perfectly good example of applied ecology. In actual fact the chap knew exactly what he was looking for, where to find it and also it showed to me that the particular kind of plant could indicate a certain kind of productive capacity.¹⁸

Later Brown followed this up with similar examples and found that it was generally true that a certain kind of soil in a certain rainfall would support certain plant communities. He then applied these basic principles to agricultural development. It was possible, he discovered, to relate plants, especially grasses, climatic conditions and soils to cash crops and thereby

¹⁷ E. Clayton, discussion, October, 1981; see for instance C.G. Trapnell and J.M. Clothier, *The Soils, Vegetation and Agricultural Systems of North-Western Rhodesia* (1937) and C.G. Trapnell, "Ecological Methods in the Study of Native Agriculture", *East African Agricultural Journal*, Vol. 2, 1937.

¹⁸ L. Brown (ODRP 18), interview, ff. 59-60.

establish a workable knowledge of land development.¹⁹

He looked, for instance, at European areas where coffee or tea grew well, noted the associated indigenous plants, and then looked at African areas for similar plants. The system was not infallible but it provided a good guide for ecological classification zones. These zones, named for the dominant grasses or types of vegetation, could be fairly easily recognised even without ecological training. "A pure ecologist," he said, "would of course tear his hair at the kind of crude ecological divisions that we made. But in fact we weren't far off the mark as a broad method of development policy."²⁰ In late 1950 when Moon went on leave, Brown was Acting Provincial Agricultural Officer in Nyeri for several months. He presented a draft outline of his policy to the Provincial Agricultural Officers' Conference, chaired by the Director of Agriculture, in early 1951. It was well received and he was told to write it up in more detail for the province.²¹

Over the next two years he undertook the definition of each of the seven zones in the province in terms of its potential and of recommended farming systems or interim methods. Moreover, he taught the Agricultural Officers in the province to think in ecological terms. Victor Burke recalled:

Leslie's importance to us can't be overstressed. I remember in 1949 or 1950 asking my first Provincial Agricultural Officer what sort of country we were in and he said, "Well, this is bush". In another sort of country I said, "What is this?", and he said, "Oh, this is bush or scrub we call it". There was no real distinction in the official Agricultural Department mind between the different sorts of

¹⁹ *ibid*, ff. 22-23, 26, 57-61, commissioned memorandum, f. 66.

²⁰ *ibid*, f. 22.

²¹ *ibid*, ff. 18-19.

countryside at all until Leslie used the Mt. Kenya pattern, the eastern slopes of Mt. Kenya, to demonstrate clearly these quite narrow bands of very different ecological conditions and taught us to think in terms of providing appropriate solutions to each different zone.²²

As Brown's theories developed, he emerged as the most influential agriculturalist in Kenya, and in addition to his sympathetic contact with Swynnerton, he was in close communication with Storrar, Kenya's other major agricultural theorist. They met at official agricultural meetings, where there was a continuing dialogue, and both being Scotsmen, they enjoyed carrying on their discussions about land use privately, as Storrar recalled:

In fact our main initial communication was that we were both very keen trout fishermen. We used to fish a lot and indeed we used to have a competition. We used to fish on the Tharasha River which was the river I used to fish near Gilgil and we used to fish on the Nyeri Chania which was the one he knew. And it transpired that most times each of us won on our own home ground, and we talked a lot about that.²³

Although not formally submitted until the end of 1952, Brown's "Revised and Consolidated Agricultural Policy for Central Province" provided a blueprint for intensive agricultural development.²⁴ The various remaining constraints – political unrest, lack of firm support from the Administration, insufficient numbers of improved cattle and fragmentation, kept it at a theoretical stage for another two years, but Brown continually pressed for more definite action. His breakthrough added to a growing sense of frustration amongst the Central Province agricultural staff about the problem of

²² V. Burke (ODRP 20), interview, f. 24.

²³ A. Storrar (ODRP 149), interview, f. 51.

²⁴ L. Brown (ODRP 18A), "Revised and Consolidated Agricultural Policy for Central Province", ff. 85-110.

fragmentation. The issue was raised at the Provincial Agricultural Officers' Conference in 1951, and the Director of Agriculture, Roddan, was urged to pursue it. He instructed Trevor Moon, PAO Central Province, John Booth, PAO Nyanza, and Roger Swynnerton to prepare a memorandum on land tenure, which he intended to submit to Governor Mitchell for a policy decision.²⁵

The paper, "Report on Agrarian Policy for dealing with Population Increase, Land Tenure and Fragmentation in Kenya", was produced in November 1951 but got no response. Mitchell had long since lost touch with the field situation, and though Roddan forwarded the memorandum to the Colonial Office in February 1952 with a suggestion that it be circulated to the Colonial Advisory Council on Agriculture, Animal Health and Forestry Committee on Agriculture, this did not happen until late in the year.²⁶

By this time the situation in Central Province was rapidly reaching crisis proportions, and repeated efforts by the field administration to make Mitchell aware were of no avail. Many felt that there was a deliberate refusal to listen, and Robin Otter, then a cadet in Kiambu District, recalled:

We were all conscious of the fact that the Mau Mau crisis was developing. You would have been insensitive if you could not have realised. There was a minuscule Special Branch attached to the police which were doing their utmost to obtain information on the subject. The District Commissioner in Kiambu was noteworthy in providing a great deal more information than I think the whole of the rest of the Colony put together. His reports were by and large regarded as being to some extent alarmist over the rest of the colony. Mitchell had only

²⁵ Sir Roger Swynnerton (ODRP 150), interview, f. 345; M.P.K. Sorrenson, *Land Reform in the Kikuyu Country*, p. 70.

²⁶ CO 822/192, "Agricultural Policy: Kenya", 1952-1953.

a short time to run before the end of his career and he didn't want there to be any indication that anything was other than "all is well" in his colony.²⁷

Tony Swann too felt that Mitchell was aware of what was going on but did not make it known:

He didn't want the Queen's visit postponed. This is a brutal thing to say, but he wanted his KCVO, which he got, and he wanted to have all the thing of entertaining royalty, and therefore, he was not going to have a word about this. Eric Windley, who is now dead, and myself, who were at Nyeri at the time, said, "But to bring her through the district! You cannot." We had the Special Branch up and the Commissioner up, they all came up. We looked at the route, we looked at the Royal Lodge and we looked at Treetops, and they said, "Well, it's too late now, you know you can't cancel now." By the mercy of God we got away with it, but I was in a cold sweat.²⁸

Of Mitchell's departure that June he recalled:

He was sent on sick leave, suffering from what was announced in the press as "exhaustion neurosis". And I can see him going off in the train going down to Mombasa for I think his boat, just looking straight ahead and not speaking.²⁹

The new governor, Sir Evelyn Baring was injured in an accident and delayed departing for Kenya until September.³⁰ Although the Colonial Office was still not fully informed of the extent of deterioration of law and order, with Henry Potter, the Chief Secretary, as Acting Governor, the import of the

²⁷ R. Otter (ODRP 116A), interview, ff. 16-17; D. Throup, 'The Governorship of Sir Philip Mitchell in Kenya', pp.342-347.

²⁸ Sir Anthony Swann (ODRP 149), interview, f. 51.

²⁹ *ibid.*

³⁰ B. Berman, "Bureaucracy and Incumbent Violence: Colonial Administration and the Origins of the 'Mau Mau' Emergency in Kenya", *British Journal of Political Science*, p. 169.

situation began to get through. In July, while on leave in England, Swann was called in, as were others, to brief Baring. "The message must have come through," Swann noted, "for them to lay on Baring to meet me at the Colonial Office to tell him what was happening and what he would find there." Yet even in September Swann got a stiff reprimand from Nairobi for being an alarmist when he wrote in his intelligence report, "Blood must flow shortly."³¹

Baring arrived at the end of the month and immediately set out on a tour of Central Province to appraise the situation, as Frank Loyd remembered:

The first thing he did was to come round the districts himself, and he was in Fort Hall within a fortnight of arriving. He went round the district and talked to me and talked to people and picked our brains and went to Nyeri and went to Kiambu and had a look himself and made up his mind in two or three weeks and the Emergency was declared. Mitchell never came to have a look.³²

³¹ Sir Anthony Swann (ODRP 149), interview, February, 1983, f. 52-53; D. Throup, "The Governorship of Sir Philip Mitchell in Kenya", 354-356.

³² Sir Francis Loyd (ODRP 99), interview, f. 30.

4. Revolution and Development Strategy, 1952-1953

With the declaration of the Emergency British military units were immediately moved to Kenya, but the colony remained under civil administration, a factor which was to have a major bearing on African Agricultural development. Even during the war that ensued, martial law was not imposed, and military field operations were co-ordinated by the Governor through his Provincial Administration. In Central Province, all semblance of indirect rule was abandoned to re-establishing control through much heightened administrative powers and a vastly expanded administrative network.

Initially the enhanced powers of the Administration and the military back-up brought a semblance of order to the Kikuyu districts. Frank Loyd remembered that things changed immediately:

At the beginning of the Emergency we were able to re-establish the normal work pattern that had slipped a long way down as a result of the intimidation of the previous year, and things like communal gangs on soil conservation were re-established. There was in a sense a feeling of relief on all sides that the situation had become far more clear and everybody knew exactly where he stood.¹

However, the decision in late 1952 to expel Kikuyu squatters and labourers from European farms brought a dramatic change. Tactically it was disastrous, for it removed the safety valve which the Rift Valley had provided. Some Kikuyu immediately left the farms for the forests nearby, while others returned to the districts with which they had a connection. Thousands more were loaded

¹ Sir Francis Loyd (ODRP 99), interview, f. 27.

into lorries or trains and delivered to the charge of the Central Province Administration.

Tony Swann, then DC at Kiambu, was inspecting the aftermath of the Lari Massacre early the following morning when the first squatters arrived;

Up to the station there drew a train and 1000 people got off. This was the labour coming back from the Rift Valley. I almost burst into tears. I did actually get one thing done. Oliver Lyttelton, Oliver Chandos that was, came out at that time shortly afterwards and I said, "If you wish me to settle this and do now want a really inhuman scene just outside Nairobi in Kiambu, please no more movement for two months." And for two months there was no movement into Kiambu.²

However, by the end of 1953 the Annual Report for Central Province noted that about 37,000 people had been returned to Kiambu, not including those evicted from Nairobi, and John Golds, a District Officer, estimated that ultimately Kiambu's population increased by about 50% from the European highlands and from Nairobi. The report estimated that 20,000 people were returned officially to Fort Hall and the same number for Nyeri. Some had maintained contact with their relations, but many had been born in the Rift Valley and never seen Central Province.³ Loyd recalled lorries full of people arriving at Fort Hall and the nightmare of trying to sort out what to do with them:

The local people were not prepared to take them on and feed them or look after them. Life was bad enough for themselves without having to cope with a whole lot of total strangers. The young men among them got together, took off, formed gangs, went off and lived in the forest and lived off other people, stealing crops and the rest of it. This

² Sir Anthony Swann (ODRP 149A), interview, November, 1982, f. 18.

³ RH Micr.Afr.515, Central Province Annual Report, 1953; J. Golds (ODRP 60), commissioned memorandum, f. 1.

is how a lot of the gangs were formed without any doubt.⁴

The numbers leaving to join gangs was not easily assessed, but Robin Otter, then a District Officer at Fort Hall, remembered the enormous accretion of membership:

There was no room for them, there was no employment for them, and they were the natural target and natural recruitment area for the gangs, and the young men and many of the young girls disappeared in large numbers to join the gangs. The gangs became immediately very much more active.⁵

Hereafter the gangs became a significant force and military manoeuvres on both sides were intensified. By the beginning of 1953 a network of administrative and police posts was under construction throughout the province.⁶

Closer administration, as a means of re-establishing control and as a basis for development, had been discussed before the Emergency, particularly following the expansion by the Agricultural Department to the divisional level. In September, 1951, Jim Pedraza had been the first DO to be posted to a division, to Kangundo in Machakos District, where he remained throughout 1952.⁷ Machakos was considered a progressive district and there were numerous development schemes, to which Pedraza's presence contributed noticeably. By the end of the year three other sub-stations had been established, in Machakos, Kithimani and Makueni Divisions, and the Central

⁴ Sir Francis Loyd (ODRP 99), interview, ff. 36-37.

⁵ R. Otter (ODRP 116A), interview, ff. 20-21.

⁶ RH Micr.Afr.515, Central Province Annual Report, 1953.

⁷ J. Pedraza (ODRP 118), interview, no transcript; RH Micr. Afr.515, Central Province Annual Report, 1952.

Province Annual Report recorded:

There is no doubt that the policy has paid handsome dividends, as a glance round the agricultural work will show, not to mention the improvement in law and order and the generally cheerful co-operative spirit of the people.⁸

Pedraza himself recalled:

A lot of older members of the Administration were inclined to say, "Well, we put a young DO in the bush like that he won't do any work. He'll just take life easily and so on." I was put out and the experiment succeeded and as a result the policy of dividing districts up into divisions was spread to other provinces as well.⁹

With escalating security risks, this experience served as a model to extend divisional centres throughout Kiambu, Fort Hall, Nyeri, and to a lesser extent Embu. During 1953 District Officers were posted as rapidly as possible to divisions, three or four to a district, initially with companies of troops from the Kenya Regiment. The network was then strengthened by a large number of junior DOs, or DO Kikuyu Guard, on two-year contracts, who were posted to locations within each division. By 1954 in Nyeri alone there were 48 administrative officers, nine of whom were on permanent appointment and only five of whom had more than two years service.¹⁰

Chiefs and headmen, their powers greatly enhanced, were given battle training and extended the tight administrative cell to the sub-location level. They in turn were re-inforced by the loyalist members of the Home Guard who, by the end of 1953 numbered 4000 in Kiambu, 4700 in Fort Hall and

⁸ *ibid.*

⁹ J. Pedraza (ODRP 118), interview, no transcript.

¹⁰ RH Afr.Micr.515, Central Province Annual Report, 1954.

7000 in Nyeri.¹¹ The Home Guard units were organised around fortified guard posts in the sub-locations under the DO Kikuyu Guard who visited the posts, organised patrols and controlled weapons, equipment and food supplies. There was a parallel rapid extension of police posts, and as far as possible the boundaries of their areas coincided. Co-operation was often difficult as the police did not always respect the chiefs' and headmen's authority or recognise the loyalists' position, but the Administrative network was the dominant authority.

Inevitably the forest fighters, seeking arms, ammunition and supplies, began to raid the newly constructed posts as well as the Kikuyu communities along the forest edge. Robin Otter, DO Kandara Division in Fort Hall District, watched helplessly as night after night guard-posts and houses went up in flames on nearby ridges, making self-defence an urgent necessity:

I think what we didn't understand in the very early days of the Emergency was that when you had night after night houses being burned in one particular area you had the feeling that this must be an area that was terribly full of Mau Mau. What we didn't realise was that the areas that were quietest were generally quiet because virtually the whole of the population had taken the Mau Mau oath and were being dominated by the Mau Mau gangs.¹²

To cut off supplies to the gangs and for security the Administration began building protected villages around the guard posts. It started, Otter remembered, by trying to bring people into areas around headmen's villages for security:

Their natural protection was to cut thorn branches and make a boma

¹¹ *ibid*, 1953.

¹² R. Otter (ODRP 116A), interview, ff. 28-29, see ff. 21-29.

for themselves, a secure area around. They were all right against one or two isolated gangsters, but against a gang they became an absolute death trap. They could be surrounded and caught, [and] set alight to. And so very rapidly developed the concept that you had to build a homeguard post or fortified place. The early ones were put into construction on the ridges in a dominant position and time and again you'd spend a week slowly building up a fortified area, only to have the gang move in and burn it down the night you were about to move in.¹³

Soon Home Guards, their families, people returning from the Rift Valley and those displaced when a mile wide buffer zone was cleared along the forest border were clustered around the Home Guard posts.

Agricultural Officers were called upon to assist the Administration and the security forces in regaining control and keeping the repatriates busy on the land. In the circumstances practically no agricultural development took place.¹⁴ William Heaney, an Agricultural Officer at Embu who was called upon to liaise with the military units serving in forest areas and to lead patrols through the district, recalled:

My experiences were repeated by others throughout Central Province, and, as can be imagined, agricultural development in the normal manner came to a sudden stop. Projects were shelved as it was unsafe for officers to go off on safari and the local population was being indoctrinated against Government policies and refused to co-operate in many schemes.¹⁵

Yet, despite this initial lull in agricultural activity, agriculture was increasingly seen, at all levels of government, as the means of achieving the

¹³ *ibid*, f. 21.

¹⁴ Sir Francis Loyd, (ODRP 99), interview, f. 27; V. Burke (ODRP 20), interview, f. 27.

¹⁵ W. Heaney (ODRP 73), commissioned memorandum, f. 10.

most speedy economic recovery and a return to order and control. In the Colonial Office the memorandum by Swynnerton, Booth and Moon was rediscovered soon after the declaration of the Emergency and circulated to the Colonial Advisory Council on Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Forestry, while in Kenya Governor Baring took a keen interest in agricultural development.¹⁶ His contact was with the Minister for Agriculture and Natural Resources, Ferdinand Cavendish-Bentinck, rather than the Director of Agriculture, Gilbert Roddan, but on the few occasions that he did meet Roddan, he was avid for information, which he supplemented by touring the field whenever he could get away from Emergency matters.¹⁷ Philip Rimington, as Agricultural Officer at Fort Hall, remembered several of Baring's visits early in the Emergency:

There was a proper laid-on safari for him. I was District Agricultural Officer, and we had to go round with him everywhere for three or four days. Then he would push on to Nyeri and do the same there. He was quite interested in the field of development.¹⁸

Thus, while not intimately acquainted with the content of agricultural thinking, Baring was aware of the Department's aims and was sympathetic. Faced in the long term with the political necessity of swinging the mass of the Kikuyu away from the fighters and maintaining their collaboration and in the short term with occupying the tens of thousands of Kikuyu repatriates in Central Province, he turned to agricultural development for solutions. Tony Swann thought that this seemed the most obvious answer to all involved and remembered it being discussed at Government House meetings of the Central

¹⁶ CO 822/192 "Agricultural Policy: Kenya", February, 1952-October, 1953. The Memorandum was circulated on 10 November, 1952.

¹⁷ Sir Roger Swynnerton (ODRP 150), interview with A. Thurston, f. 346.

¹⁸ G.P. Rimington (ODRP 130), interview, February, 1983, restricted.

and Rift Valley provincial Administration and senior military personnel which Baring chaired:

At the meetings we already had started to discuss post Emergency and what one should do, to try to be a little constructive and look ahead, not just always think of tomorrow's battle, try and look long. I think it was generally accepted as more and more people talked it over, that really there could be no argument against this.¹⁹

Mitchell's prediction to the Colonial Office of a shocking disaster unless there were large scale state intervention had proved correct, and Baring was now in a position to negotiate a major Colonial Development and Welfare grant to develop African agriculture. He worked out the amount to be requested with Cavenish-Bentinck and his Financial Minister, Ernest Vasey, probably in August, 1953, and Vasey was sent to London to negotiate.²⁰ The Colonial Office was now the focus of increased national and international attention, and a large expenditure on accelerated development was a means of counteracting criticism and protecting Britain's long term relationship with Kenya. Vasey, who had close contacts with British ministers and members of both political parties, was thus in a position to secure the possibility of a five million pound grant which, although perhaps not the desired amount, represented one of the largest development allocations ever made:

With Baring's backing, I was able to persuade the British Government to let us have some money to help in this work and, although we didn't get too much, at least it was sufficient to enable us to start on what has proved a very successful experiment.²¹

¹⁹ Sir Anthony Swann (ODRP 149A), interviews, November, 1982, f. 20, February 1983, f. 29.

²⁰ Sir Ernest Vasey (ODRP 159), letter to B. Beaver, March, 1979.

²¹ *ibid*, f. 4.

Toward the end of September, Baring met his Provincial Commissioners to discuss the outline of a development programme and then asked Cavendish-Bentinck to provide a scheme. Although reasonably well informed about agricultural development in African areas, Cavendish-Bentinck was not aware of the detailed problems on the ground; he gave the assignment to Swynnerton who, as Assistant Director for Field Services was most closely in touch with agricultural development thinking throughout the colony. Swynnerton recalled:

Cavendish-Bentinck was much more European-orientated, having fought for European interests all his time in Kenya. I think for this reason, also, he insisted on being involved in Emergency matters, and I think it was he who got my own involvement in the Plan set up the way it was. He was very conservative and right wing, certainly up to when he was appointed Speaker of the Legislative Council and, later, with constitutional development. He saw the problems of the African areas but I think, in handling them, he looked at the need to keep pressures off European lands.²²

Thereafter, Swynnerton was left to himself to construct the scheme. An experienced field officer, he knew that its success depended upon integrating the thinking and experimentation of the previous 20 years. "My role was, therefore, to act as a catalyst to draw the evolving situation into a coherent plan for which the UK 5 million pound grant was the golden goose."²³ With two and a half months to complete his assignment, Swynnerton had begun within two days of receiving it. From his own travels, from the study with Booth and Moon and from the provincial agricultural planning exercises in Central Province, he had a clear idea of the available lines of development in the fertile and the pastoral areas and used this in eliciting contributions from

²² Sir Roger Swynnerton (ODRP (150), interview with A. Thurston, f. 346.

²³ *ibid*, f. 348.

the field upward.

Initially he sent out circulars and questionnaires to all Provincial Commissioners, provincial departmental officers and heads of departments setting out the information required and he then conducted a field survey in two phases. The first was to gather information as background for setting up agricultural employment schemes and relief works in Central Province, the Rift Valley, and Southern Province, which had been separated from the Central Province the previous year. The second was to go through the proposals put forward by each province.²⁴

The field staff from the provincial down to the divisional levels were all involved in preparing these proposals. They were asked to project schemes for cash crops, livestock, farm management and land reform and to consider back-up facilities such as extra staff, housing and offices; in the semi-arid lands they looked at irrigation projects, water supplies, grazing schemes, tsetse control and afforestation. Swynnerton remembered:

I think probably the main impact I had on their proposals was to say, "Are you being ambitious enough?" In other words, "If you really had all the resources you need, what could you achieve?" To set development targets, I asked them to assess what they might achieve in 15 years and then to establish targets for five years, 10 years, 15 years ahead. The problem was that, in 1953, they were starting from a situation, particularly in Central Province, of chaos and considerable uncertainty.²⁵

Storror, then the Assistant Director for Agriculture in the Rift Valley, recalled

²⁴ *ibid.*, f. 347, *A Plan to Intensify the Development of African Agriculture in Kenya*, Appendix I.

²⁵ Sir Roger Swynnerton (ODRP 150), interview with A. Thurston, f. 347.

the effect of Swynnerton's encouragement on their thinking:

I can still remember the first meeting I went to with Roger on this. He set out a few examples of his ideas. I can remember them absolutely clearly today. He said, "Well look, whatever you do we've got to work it through. If it's a livestock project what I want to know is what is the cost and what the actual production would be." And this, outside straightforward farm planning which I was doing in the European areas, this had never really been done in any of our work in the Africa areas, not on a broad scale. I was trying to do this with farm planning, but I had not applied this to the thing as a whole.²⁶

The provincial officers in turn took the request out to the District Agricultural Officers and asked for suggestions from the field. As Assistant District Agricultural Officer Fort Hall, for instance, Rimington went to each of his divisional officers in turn to work out their requirements and then amalgamated their proposals.

We were all involved in this, and we worked day and night for about a week or 10 days. It took us quite a long time to work it out. We had all the divisional officers in, we would discuss it with the Administration and then we draw up a district plan. In fact all the districts had them. The Swynnerton Plan couldn't have been developed without them. In fact, it really was an amalgamation of all the district plans put together.²⁷

From mid-November to the first week of December, Swynnerton worked in Nairobi, meeting heads of departments, departmental specialists and members of ALDEV and calling in various individuals to clarify ideas; by December the 8th he had completed and costed the plan. Its content had not been dictated by anyone to any great extent, but there was one significant area in which he was

²⁶ A. Storrar (ODRP 149), interview, f. 64.

²⁷ G.P. Rimington (ODRP 130), interview, February, 1983, restricted.

influenced to change his recommendations. He had intended to recommend that responsibility for land consolidation and title deed registration, now fully accepted as part of the agricultural programme, should lie with the Agricultural Department, as advocated in his paper with Booth and Moon. "This was made in the light of the pre-Emergency lukewarmness of the Provincial Administration towards land reform and the fear that it would continue to drag its feet."²⁸

However, during the preliminary consideration, the Member for African Affairs and the Administration wanted the recommendation reversed and ALDEV supported their view that the Administration should be responsible for consolidation and registration while the Agricultural Department should look after farm surveys and plans. This was, Swynnerton accepted, "a correct allocation of functions." He anticipated that it would be carried out as in Chief Muhoya's area through the piecemeal process of creating consolidated holdings through buying, selling and exchange of fragments.²⁹

With this proviso, the Plan was approved and went to the Treasury in London, where Vasey completed the final negotiations. It took effect in April 1954 for a five year period. The most comprehensive development programme ever funded by the Colonial Office, it was financed by a Colonial Development and Welfare grant of 5.7 million pounds, subsequently increased to 7.95 million pounds, and by Kenya-voted expenditure under the existing development plan.³⁰ Financial contributions were also subsequently received

²⁸ Sir Roger Swynnerton (ODRP 150), interview with A. Thurston, f. 349.

²⁹ *ibid*, f. 349.

³⁰ D. J. Morgan, *The Official History of Colonial Development: Changes in British Aid Policy, 1951-1970*, Vol I, p. 154; R. Swynnerton, *A Plan to Intensify the Development of African Agriculture in Kenya*, pp. 56-57, 63.

from the United States International Co-operation Administration (later USAID), the Rockefeller Foundation, the Hindocha Foundation (a philanthropic Kenyan Asian foundation) and the Colonial Development Corporation.³¹ But even this unusually high expenditure on development was surpassed by the cost of the military operations, as Swynnerton noted:

The Emergency operations were going on year by year, and probably far more than the five million was going in in any one year whereas the five million for the Plan was over five years. While, to meet the cost of the Emergency, there were severe cutbacks in the Kenya ordinary and development budgets. Baring and Vasey visited London once or twice a year to negotiate HMG funding of Emergency costs.³²

The title, "A Plan to Intensify the Development of African Agriculture in Kenya," reflected the fact that it represented the collective thinking and practical experience of the Agricultural field staff. Yet Swynnerton went well beyond intensifying existing thinking to create for the first time a national strategy for economic development in the African areas. Its aim was to break the cycle of land deterioration and rural poverty by moving the greatest possible proportion of the society from subsistence to commercially-oriented farming as a base for future development. Designed to be in operation for five years, the Plan was intended to be only the first of a series of development plans for intensifying land use in African areas.³³

It delineated two basic development zones – the high-potential and the semi-arid. The high-potential lands, where four fifths of the population was

³¹ Sir Roger Swynnerton (ODRP 150), interview with A. Thurston, ff. 349, 352, 357.

³² *ibid.*, f. 347.

³³ *ibid.*, f. 347-348; *A Plan to Intensify the Development of African Agriculture in Kenya*, see p. 1 and long term targets throughout the plan.

concentrated, received priority, but the Plan also made provision for the semi-arid/pastoral areas. Swynnerton estimated that together the grazing, settlement, water development, livestock marketing and tsetse control schemes received over 30% of the total allocation³⁴

The aim in the high-potential zone, based on Leslie Brown's policies for Central Province and subsequently for Nyanza Province, was to encourage smallholdings of an economic size, at least seven to 10 acres, for families of six to eight people. It was proposed to raise their income from produce sales from between five and 20 pounds to 100 pounds a year over and above the family's basic needs. These smallholdings were to be consolidated in the fragmented areas, surveyed, registered and developed over a period of 15 years as freehold farms with indefeasible titles. The recommendations, Swynnerton noted, were based on two things:

One was that in the crucial areas like Kikuyuland, the land already was virtually owned and freehold and in the western enclosures, the people also had individual tenure in mind. Secondly, farmers required security of tenure if they were going to embark on any form of permanent development. The days of there being enough land for shifting cultivation were over. If a man was going to invest in planting a tree crop (tea would be in the land for a hundred years, coffee 30 or 40 years), if he were going to put in hedges, plant permanent pastures, undertake bench terracing on steep land and apply manure and fertilisers, he required permanency of occupancy.³⁵

The available fertile land in the African areas was capable, the Plan projected, of providing 600,000 such holdings, enough to support 5,000,000 people, which was then the estimated size of the African population at the

³⁴ Sir Roger Swynnerton (ODRP 150), interview with A. Thurston, f. 348.

³⁵ Sir Roger Swynnerton (ODRP 150), commissioned memorandum.

proposed economic level. Swynnerton could not foresee Kenya's tremendous and sustained population growth, but he expected that the spread of cash crops, more labour-intensive than maize or subsistence food crops, would result in more employment for farm labourers or in derivative occupations, such as tradesmen or artisans, and that the industrial labour force would grow in line with the population.

At the time no one knew what the size of the holdings would be, but it was clear that land ownership was already stratified, and no one, least of all Swynnerton, doubted that consolidation would accelerate the development of a landless class. However, every effort at development based on community tenure had failed. Swynnerton was not, therefore, out of line with his contemporaries in his underlying assumption: "In future, if these recommendations are accepted, former Government policy will be reversed and able, energetic or rich Africans will be able to acquire more land and bad or poor farmers less, creating a landed and a landless class. This is a normal step in the evolution of a country."³⁶

The projected development depended upon a large build-up of European and African staff to work with farmers. Every district had asked for more staff, and every district got it. The staff expansion was sketched out in the Plan, and although the projected establishment was not fully achieved until 1961, the staff grew rapidly and was Africanised earlier than most areas of Government.³⁷ Even when the Plan commenced, agricultural staff was massive

³⁶ R. Swynnerton, *A Plan to Intensify the Development of African Agriculture in Kenya*, p. 10.

³⁷ Sir Roger Swynnerton, interview with A. Thurston, ff. 351-353; Kenya Agricultural Department Annual Reports, 1955-1961, *passim*.

by colonial standards. For each Agricultural Officer in the field there were four Assistant Agricultural Officers and for each of them six Agricultural Instructors. In all there were 50 Agricultural Officers, 48 research specialists, 209 Assistant Agricultural Officers, 63 Lab Technologists, 138 Lab Assistants, and 12,000 Agricultural Instructors and Assistant Instructors. Ten Agricultural Officers were to be recruited as specialists in irrigation, coffee development, horticulture, general investigation, pasture research, entomology, soil chemistry and soil survey, and 43 new Assistant Agricultural Officers were to be employed as regular field staff and cash crop officers to assist in supervising nurseries, organising processing plants and marketing crops, with a parallel build up of junior staff. The coverage was thus increased from one officer to 83,000 people to one to 50,000 people.³⁸

The established field staff were initially somewhat cautious about the Plan, but once it got under way they accepted it enthusiastically, precisely because it was an amplification of field policy rather than an imposition of policy from the centre. As Philip Rimington said, "I know that the Swynnerton Plan was really ours. It wasn't Swynnerton's Plan."³⁹ And Victor Burke explained:

I think the good thing about the Swynnerton Plan was that it really did derive from district experience. Prior to the Swynnerton Plan, directors in Nairobi had a concept of field work which was entirely out of date. They didn't understand what was happening in the districts, but Swynnerton and particularly Leslie Brown did understand. ... Where people knew what they were doing they were enabled to get on with their own thing instead of having a pattern imposed from the top. The Swynnerton Plan took great care, I felt to

³⁸ R. Swynnerton, *A Plan to Intensify the Development of African Agriculture in Kenya*, pp. 12-13, 65.

³⁹ G.P. Rimington (ODRP 130), interview, December, 1982, restricted.

reflect the awareness of district staff of what was required.⁴⁰

Leslie Brown commented:

I think virtually every one of us who had to do with it might have written it somewhat differently ourselves, but basically I don't think we had any quarrel with the Swynnerton Plan. I think Swynnerton had to tailor it himself to some extent to the political needs which he was better able to see than those of us who were in the field.⁴¹ ... While it was not quite what any particular officer might have liked, and had a political slant, which few liked, we all seized on it gratefully and basically worked like maniacs to ensure its success. From its inception until 1961 every officer worked at full tilt 7 days a week and all day to make the best of the chance.⁴²

Swynnerton continued to be involved after the Plan was approved. Implementation was largely controlled in the provinces, but he guided certain aspects through the central bureaucracy. In 1954 when he became Deputy Director of Agriculture, recruitment and staffing were among his principal responsibilities, and from 1956 to 1960 he was Director of Agriculture. Between 1960 and 1962 he was an Agricultural Adviser to the Commonwealth Development Corporation, which invested in African agriculture in Kenya, particularly tea development. Leslie Brown, too, continued to play a significant role. He was Deputy Director of Agriculture under Swynnerton, and between 1961 and 1963, as Chief Agriculturalist, the direction of field services in the African areas was his most important duty.

⁴⁰ V. Burke (ODRP 20), interview, f. 35.

⁴¹ L. Brown (ODRP 18), interview, f. 27.

⁴² *ibid*, commissioned memorandum, f. 24.

5. Administrative Control, 1954-1956

The Swynnerton Plan was implemented in Central Province in conjunction with the re-establishment of administrative control. During the first two years there was still almost no agricultural development, but direct paramilitary control was imposed, and this then became the vehicle for implementing development schemes. In other provinces, notably in western Kenya, agricultural development took place steadily but without the same tight control and intensive staffing levels, and ultimately less dramatic results were achieved. During the second half of the Swynnerton Plan, when security had been established, the Central Province districts surpassed all others in cash crop and dairy production. Agricultural development in Central Province needs, therefore, to be examined in the light of the establishment of control. As Gilbert Roddan, Director of Agriculture, observed as early as 1953, "A period of civil strife and difficulty such as Kenya has suffered seems, somewhat paradoxically, to act as a stimulus to progress."¹

By the time the Swynnerton Plan was approved in December 1953, the movement off the land into villages, which provided the basis of control, was well underway in Fort Hall where fortified villages were being built around Home Guard posts. Otter recalled that at about this time there was a sudden enormous rush to build strong posts on the best sites:

Organisation would be laid on by your headmen and all the people would be involved. You would dig out a surround ditch and make a pallisaded wall, thick enough to withstand not only rifle bullets but

¹ Kenya Agricultural Department Report, 1953, p. 1.

machine gun bullets, and would probably only complete the whole building later on. You would have, sometimes a moat, sometimes a drawbridge, sharpened bamboo stakes in the moat round, and four sides with their firing embrasures on opposite corners. There were a whole variety of designs, but the basic design was that probably of a Norman keep, with a high tower in the middle which would give you a firing advantage.²

Most of the Fort Hall guard posts were established by the beginning of 1954 and the next several months were spent on improving the haphazard villages which had grown up around them and were becoming a health problem.

Some villages were also being built in the other Kikuyu districts, but in Nyeri where there had not yet been the same level of intense combat, villagization was only beginning, while in Kiambu, where there was overall relatively little gang activity, Swann, as DC, resisted it:

I thought the proximity to Nairobi and the European farms made it very much more difficult geographically, because obviously you didn't want an enormous village just on the outskirts of Nairobi. So what we compromised was, we started off in the area next door to the forest, which was the sensible thing. That's where the danger lay of the gangs coming out of the forest in order to gather food. So, we villagized the locations round the forest edge of the Aberdares and left till later the bits around Nairobi, around the European farms and coffee estates, which was a jolly difficult problem as to where you sited them.³

However, in April, Loyd returned from a study tour in America and was posted to Kiambu, while Swann went to the Rift Valley for a short time before becoming PC Central Province. At this time there was a sudden increase in gang activity in Kiambu and Loyd was summoned to the War Council, told

² R. Otter (ODRP 116A), interview, ff. 21-22.

³ Sir Anthony Swann (ODRP 149A), interview, February, 1983, f. 27.

that they thought Kiambu ought to be villagized for security reasons and asked his views:

I said I wanted to have a look first as I had only just arrived and I would report back. I don't think it took me very long having visited Fort Hall and toured round Kiambu to be totally convinced that if we were going to deny food to the gangs and generally deal with what was fast becoming a very bad situation we had to villagize. I told the War Council so, who were delighted and told me to get on with it as fast as possible.⁴

The security situation was generally poor. Despite large-scale sweeps and screening operations, Kikuyu fighters in many areas had virtually gained control of the whole population, particularly in Nyeri where large armed gangs moved about freely. Moreover, many Home Guards had taken oaths while chiefs and headmen were helping the fighters. In Ndia Division of Embu District the DO noted that three out of five chiefs and 75% of the headmen had been detained and replaced because of their involvement.⁵

In June 1954 the War Council decided to enforce villagization throughout the Kikuyu, Embu and Meru Reserves.⁶ Initially at least it was used as a punitive measure. "I always answer that we are villagizing steadily in the order of badness", John Pinney wrote as DC in 1955.⁷ Direct force was not usually employed, but there was considerable pressure by the Home Guard and Police, and it met resistance. In Embu, for instance, R.A. Wilkinson, the DC noted,

⁴ Sir Francis Loyd (ODRP 99), interview, f. 31. See ff. 31-35 for a discussion of villagization in Kiambu.

⁵ RH Micr.Afr.517, Handing Over Report, Ndia Division, Embu District, F.R. Wilson DC to E.D. Gordon DO, July, 1956.

⁶ M.P.K. Sorrenson, *Land Reform in the Kikuyu Country*, p. 110. Pinney to R.G. Wilson, April, 1955.

⁷ RH Micr.Afr.517, Handing Over Report, Fort Hall District, J. Pinney to R.G. Wilson, April, 1955.

"Villagization is contrary to the Kikuyu way of life and when we started to concentrate people in the earliest villages as a punitive measure, there was considerable opposition and the villages were burnt down."⁸ At the same time, as Swann recalled, there were reasons for not resisting:

If you were loyal you didn't want to live on your own because you wanted the safety and if you weren't loyal, really what could you do by staying out on your own and being an obvious target for the security forces as a sympathiser and a feeder of gangs? Your house would have been ambushed all the time in case gangs came out to contact you. So I think really they had very little option. ... Nobody was really keen to live by themselves out. I mean, let's face it, the Emergency was used by the Kikuyu for paying off a lot of private old scores, particularly over old land cases.⁹

By early 1956 the entire rural population of Kiambu, Fort Hall, Nyeri and Embu, except Mbere Division, was in villages.¹⁰ Virtually no one was left on the land, and Swann remembered, "I cannot think of one single soul. I can visualise driving through these districts endlessly, flying over them, and once it got underway, I cannot think of people remaining outside."¹¹ A census that year showed 272 villages in Kiambu, 235 in Fort Hall and 169 in Nyeri, with an average of about 1200 people in each, although the villages in Fort Hall were larger than in the other districts.¹² The process of extending these villages across the Kikuyu districts and the degree of administrative control varied, within a general pattern, from district to district, division to division and location to location. Nevertheless, an account of the process in Nyeri District,

⁸ RH Micr.Afr.517, Handing Over Report, Embu District, R.A. Wilkinson to F.R. Wilson, July, 1954.

⁹ Sir Anthony Swann (ODRP 149A), interview, February, 1983, ff. 30-31.

¹⁰ RH Micr.Afr.515, Central Province Annual Report, 1956.

¹¹ Sir Anthony Swann (ODRP 149A), interview, February, 1983, f. 31.

¹² RH Micro.Afr.515, Central Province Annual Report, 1956.

where the DC, Jim Pedraza, took a firm line which probably influenced the rest of the province, and of Othaya Division in particular, illustrates how this was achieved and some of the results.

At the end of 1954, administrative and military control of Nyeri was tenuous. The DC, O.B.E. Hughes, noted in his handing over report that there was a stalemate and that war-weary officers and chiefs might succumb to apathy.¹³ One of his DOs, John Grayburn, who had been at Othaya Division for several months recalled:

I won't say we were quite mutinous, but we were getting bloody fed up with this sort of slowly slowly stuff because all it was doing was making the thing worse, and we weren't carrying the thing. You were still having gangs at the beginning of '55 of two and three hundred running around.¹⁴

Pedraza's arrival as DC in early 1955 reversed the situation. His background had prepared him well for a decisive approach. He had been born in Kenya where his father was in the Administration from 1912. Like many of his contemporary administrators he had a military background, having been educated at Sandhurst and served in Kenya with the King's African Rifles from 1947 to 1949. He then joined the Administration, spent two years in the Secretariat, and was the first administrative officer posted to the divisional level in the Machakos experiment in 1951. Immediately before being posted to Nyeri he was a Divisional DO in Fort Hall and spent a few months as Secretary to the Joint Intelligence Committee in the Secretariat.¹⁵

¹³ RH Micro.Afr.517, Handing Over Report, Nyeri District, O.B.E. Hughes to J.M.B. Butler, December, 1954.

¹⁴ J. Grayburn (ODRP 118), interview with A. Thurston and J. Pedraza, no transcript.

¹⁵ *ibid*, J. Pedraza.

In his first few weeks in the district, Pedraza listened to his divisional and locational DOs but said little. Hughes had not favoured villagization for the district as a whole, and many people were still on the land. Pedraza realised that Nyeri was a passage between Mt. Kenya and the Aberdares and that the fighters were not confined to living in the forests but were established throughout the district; they slept in the fields, sometimes in furnished underground dugouts, where the local population fed and assisted them. To break the stalemate which was resulting in enormous loss of life and vast expenditure, he decided that immediate co-ordination and full control were essential.¹⁶

In a paper "Closer Control of the Population" he set out a plan for moving everyone to villages as quickly as possible and only allowing them out to work in the fields under guard. He presented the paper to the PC:

This paper was produced by Tony Swann and slung at all these assembled DCs for the whole of Central Province who'd all been at the game. They all read it through and they sniffed a bit and so on, and there was no comment passed. I don't think anybody took any notice of it. Here was this bloody young new DC producing papers and "we'd been at the game for a long time". What I'm trying to get at is, I don't think any other DC adopted this policing, this control of the population.¹⁷

His staff, however, received it gratefully. Grayburn recalled first hearing of it at a DOs' meeting. These meetings, he remembered, had tended to go on unresolved for hours, as everyone was afraid to take definite action, until Pedraza took control:

¹⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁷ *ibid.*

One day he just turned around and said, "Why don't you lot shut up and just listen to what you're told to do." We all said, "Christ, you know, this is marvellous." And then the plan appeared and we said, "Right, now we know what we've got to do."¹⁸

Thereafter people were steadily moved off the land to new sites, taking their building materials with them, and the old houses were demolished. Grayburn recalled that most people did what they were told, but that in one sub-location, after extending the deadline three times he had to send in the tribal police. "I suppose it must have been about a hundred huts I should think probably went up, but otherwise ... you didn't have to do it. ... I can remember thinking, my goodness, I do hope somebody at Nyeri doesn't see that smoke."¹⁹

Once in villages the people were told that they would stay there until they stopped feeding the fighters. All private vehicle movement stopped, market places and shops were shut and anyone found on his own outside a village could be picked up for screening and sent to a detention camp. They did communal agricultural work such as terracing and bush clearing two days a week, public works such as road building two days a week and farmed their own land the other three days. The Kikuyu Guard organised long "school crocodiles" to take the residents, primarily women, out to work in the fields, as Douglas Johnston, then DO Mathera Division, remembered:

They would plod around very inefficiently in groups, the idea being that there should never be a woman by herself, and there should never be a group of women without some kind of protection. So they would work on shambas one by one. Since this was before land consolidation it was a highly inefficient system because of the

¹⁸ *ibid*, J. Grayburn.

¹⁹ J. Grayburn (ODRP 63), interview with A. Thurston and M. Jones, no transcript.

scattered nature of the holdings, but inefficient though it was agriculturally, administratively or militarily if you like, it had precisely the effect that was intended.²⁰

Such tight control was possible because the Administration had expanded to the division level, as Othaya illustrates. Its population of about 40,000 lived in 40 villages around Home Guard posts in three locations. Each location was under the control of a Kikuyu Guard DO who reported to Grayburn as the Divisional DO. He co-ordinated their operations through informal meetings three or four times a week and reported once a week to a District Intelligence Committee meeting and a Divisional DOs' meeting.²¹ With his junior officers, he made the Administration's presence felt "every day and half the night". They organised their Home Guard patrols to lay out nightly ambushes along the paths leading down from the forests and during the day Grayburn drove around the division constantly, monitoring everything that was happening, from bench terraces to security procedures:

People knew that if they didn't do what they were told that raving lunatic in Othaya would come up there and make their life unpleasant, shouting and waving his arms about. It was probably easier to make a minimal effort, but on the whole they made a jolly good effort.²²

Despite this continual movement, he was never harmed. As Johnston recalled, "If anyone had really applied themselves to the job of killing District Commissioners or District Officers it wouldn't have been difficult. But for some reason nobody ever did it."²³

²⁰ D. Johnston (ODRP 87A), interview with A. Thurston, April, 1983, f. 8.

²¹ RH Micr.Afr.517, Handing Over Report, Othaya Division Nyeri District, H. Galton-Fenzi, June 1958; J. Grayburn (ODRP 63), interview with A. Thurston and M. Jones, no transcript.

²² *ibid.*, J. Grayburn.

²³ D. Johnston (ODRP 87A), interview, f. 10.

The Kikuyu Guard DOs moved about the locations on foot, supervising the villages, taking on many of the chiefs' and headmens' responsibilities and organising the construction of new roads needed to drive landrovers between the villages and up and down to the forest. Mike Jones, the Kikuyu Guard DO at Chinga, a small Othaya location on the Fort Hall border, recalled:

I spent an awful lot of time walking. There wasn't very much of it you didn't know when you were planning roads to all these Home Guard posts, and all the operations we did the first year when we were chasing terrorists, all on our flat feet. ... By the time I'd been there two years, there wasn't a kid recognisable that didn't know who I was and I didn't know who he was. Because I was among them all day and every day.²⁴

In addition to the Administration, there were Army units, Red Cross workers, Agricultural, Veterinary, Public Health, Community Development and Prisons Officers moving around Othaya Division. There were also six police stations, with two European inspectors and a unit of tribal police in each. All were theoretically under the Administration, but in practice, in Othaya, as in many other divisions, the alliance with the police and the military was never easy, for neither wanted to be subject to the Administration. Nevertheless, it was a measure of the Administration's power that for the most part it retained the upper hand. At one time, Grayburn recalled, he had a Brigadier sitting on his Divisional Security Committee. "No way was I going to give way to him. I didn't care how senior he was."²⁵

After a few months of Pedraza's policy the tide began to turn, hastened by a provincial surrender programme and long confessional meetings. Within six

²⁴ M. Jones (ODRP 63), Interview with A. Thurston and J. Grayburn, no transcript.

²⁵ *ibid*, J. Grayburn.

months the fighters' hold on Nyeri had collapsed. Many had been killed, large numbers had been sent out of the district to detention and hundreds of others, for whom support had been cut off, had surrendered. Moreover, people were tired of being in villages and wanted to get back to their land. Pedraza remembered:

In Nyeri within a matter of two or three months literally thousands of terrorists came out of their holes and surrendered. The collapse of the terrorist movement in general in Nyeri, this sudden collapse when they were giving up in their hundreds, might have affected the terrorists in the other two districts.²⁶

As physical resistance ended, directed economic development began. The prohibition on movement in Nyeri was not formally lifted but was less strictly enforced and gradually it was ignored. By about October there were practically no fighters left, or their influence was negligible. Then the whole paramilitary administrative cell established to secure control was translated to the new goal. "As the Emergency side died down," Pedraza recalled, "the positive side grew in our weekly meetings."²⁷

Pedraza and his officers turned to the Swynnerton Plan with the same deliberateness with which they had imposed control, and they took overall charge of its implementation. "Those at the top", he recalled, "realised that without the backing of the Administration the Swynnerton Plan wouldn't get very far, because we controlled the backbone, the chiefs and the population."²⁸ Their unprecedented authority, particularly with their most vocal Kikuyu

²⁶ J. Pedraza (ODRP 118), interview with A. Thurston and J. Grayburn, interview, no transcript.

²⁷ *ibid*, J. Pedraza.

²⁸ *ibid*.

opponents out of the way, gave their approach a new boldness. They had become accustomed to taking risks and were prepared to continue doing so.

Communal labour, for instance, which had provoked so much dissent in the 1940s, could now be mobilised on a mass level. Pedraza recalled using it to build one of the first dispensaries in Nyeri. There was no suitable land available at Mukereni where they wanted to put it, "so we got over a bulldozer and communal labour and knocked the top off a hill. And there was a nice flat area, the size of a football pitch, on which we built a health centre straight away." This applied across the board, he noted, whether to building schools, roads or coffee factories:

We were not averse to the policy on the quiet of starting a thing which we didn't think was going to get the money on a free communal labour basis. And when we got into a hell of a mess someone in Nairobi would come in and rescue us with some money, thereby getting where we wanted to, or getting round the lack of money. Because you couldn't get sacked you see, they wouldn't sack you for a thing like that. You'd get transferred at worst.²⁹

Moreover, the Administration in Nyeri had begun working more closely with the expanded network of Agricultural and other departmental officers. "We weren't necessarily doing each others' jobs," Pedraza remembered, "but talking each other's language, with one central purpose, and that was basically agriculture."³⁰ Garry Yates' arrival as District Agricultural Officer toward the end of 1955 contributed to this atmosphere. Yates had the same dynamic approach to development and "interlocked" immediately with the administrative structure. Pedraza recalled, "We worked absolutely together", while Yates

²⁹ *ibid.*

³⁰ *ibid.*

remembered of Pedraza:

You could go to his office, or he would pick up the telephone and say "Let's talk about this problem, let's know what you are doing. Forget about having the whole thing on a formal basis, we just want to know, you get on with it."³¹

Yates began an accelerated campaign to introduce tea and coffee and worked closely with the expanding dairy industry in the district. He also got the first farm school built with the Administration's support as the basis for improving animal husbandry.³²

Most significantly, Pedraza's officers worked closely with the Agricultural Department in starting up the land consolidation programme. The Central Province District Commissioners' meeting in November 1955 had made it provincial policy, for tight administrative control made it feasible and everyone was already off the land. Swann, then Provincial Commissioner recalled, "This was a wonderful chance for consolidating because it would mean people would not have to move twice or three times, in other words they could move from the village on to their consolidated holding."³³ Pedraza decided to get the whole district consolidating at once, for with only a limited time before the fighters returned from detention, he wanted to advance consolidation to a stage that would be hard to reverse. "That's why we bashed on very hard," Pedraza recalled. "The pilot schemes had been done already ... but instead of just trying things gently, a pilot scheme here and a pilot scheme there, all we did

³¹ E. Yates (ODRP 183), interview, f. 59.

³² J. Pedraza (ODRP 118), interview with A. Thurston and J. Grayburn; E. Yates (ODRP 183), commissioned memorandum, ff. 13-14, interview, f. 59.

³³ Sir Anthony Swann (ODRP 149A), interview, November, 1982, f. 21.

was to say, right we'll make the whole bloody district do it."³⁴

When Pedraza was transferred to Eldoret in October 1956, consolidation and a whole range of development projects were in progress; administrators in the other Kikuyu districts were usually less forceful, but there were similar trends. Resistance collapsed across the province in roughly the same period and the 1955 annual report noted that by the end of the year 90% of the population was prepared to deny food to the fighters and to secure their capture, while the following year it was reported: "'56 has seen the end of the violent stage of the Emergency, rundown of military activities and start of reconstruction and land consolidation." Official numbers of hunted fighters declined dramatically: 5450 at the beginning of 1955, 1400 by the end of the year and 272 by the end of 1956.³⁵

The degree of administrative control in the province had not gone unquestioned and was increasingly under the scrutiny of the Secretariat, the Governor, the Colonial Office and others in England. Even in May 1955 the DO Kikuyu Division noted, "... the despotic quasi-legal power which we had and to which a blind eye was fortunately turned we have *no* more; we *have* a great amount of *legal* power, quite adequate to deal with any situation with the support which readily comes from the D.C."³⁶ And in November the DC Fort Hall wrote in his handing over report:

With the rundown of the effectiveness of Mau Mau, search lights are being turned on all aspects of Administration and a number of ill wishers in the United Kingdom, especially after the case of the DO

³⁴ J. Pedraza (ODRP 118), interview.

³⁵ RH Micr.Afr.515, Central Province Annual Reports, 1955-1956.

³⁶ RH Micr.Afr.517, Handing Over Report, Kikuyu Division, Kiambu District, J.D. Campbell to E.D. Fox, May, 1955.

and two police inspectors in Nyeri, would delight in tripping up the Administration and proving that they were not complying with the law.³⁷

Nevertheless, control had been firmly established and remained an important factor until independence. As late as 1958 Brigadier P.M. Hughes wrote as District Commissioner Nyeri:

I have, for the last 18 months, explained fully and without any 'frills', that if they start Mau Mau or KKM again in this area, all progress will stop and I will be the first to recover my gun from the armoury and be tough. This is the line I want you to take. Security first, then other progress will follow.³⁸

While Agricultural Officers were grateful for the support for their programmes, and many worked well with the Administration, some would have liked to get on with agricultural development sooner and with less paramilitary control. Philip Rimington served in Fort Hall and then Nyeri during the fighting. By the end of 1955 he and some of his colleagues were convinced that it was time to get the people back working on the land and the Agricultural Instructors back in the field. "But we got our knuckles rapped":

Perhaps unknown to us the degree of Mau Mau was still very strong, perhaps stronger than the Agricultural Officers who were working in the field had realised, because after all we were working with people who were more peace loving, they were more concerned with producing food for their families, whereas the Administration were more wrapped up with the Army, the gangs and this sort of thing. ... The agriculturalist has a more passive approach to things, more a person wanting to develop, and feeling the need to develop.³⁹

³⁷ RH Micr.Afr.517, Handing Over Report, Fort Hall District, T.G. Wilson to J. Pinney, November, 1955.

³⁸ RH Micr.Afr.517, Handing Over Report, Nyeri District, Brig. P.M. Hughes to J.J. DelMage, November, 1958.

³⁹ G.P. Rimington (ODRP 130), interview, February, 1983, restricted.

In Meru in particular, where the fighting was less severe, where the Administration had resisted villagization and where the agricultural staff remained in charge of agricultural policy, the situation in the Kikuyu districts was viewed with concern. Ken Sillitoe, an Agricultural Officer in Meru recalled:

None of us were enamoured of the methods that we understood were operating in Kikuyuland. ... We were quite outsiders as far as this was concerned. Kikuyuland was different and to us it was horrifying to go through it and see what was happening; those villages were pretty appalling, and we didn't question that perhaps it was necessary to do what they were doing there, but we felt and hoped that it wasn't necessary in Meru. And so we reacted against it; we didn't want to be, as it were, taken over in this way.⁴⁰

From a different perspective, Ronald Robinson, touring East Africa in 1956 for the Colonial Office to study the land tenure situation, recorded another incisive assessment:

Tone of the Administration: Tremendous enthusiasm and faith in the land revolution. Intensive close administration and policing employing immense European staffs and large sums of money; African population under strictest discipline. Official attitude to Kikuyu, perhaps naturally, strongly dictatorial, somewhat aloof and without cordiality; the Kikuyu attitude to the official reciprocated this indifference in Nyeri although attitudes of officials and Africans towards each other seemed healthier in Fort Hall. ... From the results to be seen on the ground, one might think that with close administration almost any of the major problems of Africa today could be solved by simply concentrating enough European staff and money on the area and elimination of political activity.⁴¹

⁴⁰ K. Sillitoe, (ODRP 138A), interview, f. 14.

⁴¹ R.E. Robinson (ODRP 133A), *African Tour Journal*, summer 1956, ff. 32-33.

6. Implementation, 1956-1963

Between 1956 and 1960 Central Province experienced the most comprehensive land tenure reform and intensive development programme ever attempted in a British African territory. It comprised two main but overlapping phases along the lines which were emerging in Nyeri before Pedraza's departure: firstly consolidation of fragmented land holdings, basically an administrative exercise, and secondly large scale introduction of cash crops with processing and marketing schemes and monitored upgrading of dairy cattle, all essentially controlled by the Agricultural Department but with administrative backing and veterinary support.

By 1956 land consolidation had become the major thrust of administrative effort despite there being no basis in law.¹ Discussions about the possibility of issuing titles and the form they might take had continued unresolved from the late 1940s, and in 1953 Kenya and Colonial Office Legal Advisers had reviewed the question in the light of the Native Lands Trust Ordinance of 1938 and the Kenya (Native Areas) Order-in-Council of 1939, which were enacted to implement the Land Commission recommendations. This legislation gave the Lands Trust Board technical ownership of the Native Lands and required that they be administered according to traditional land tenure; there was no provision for modification.²

¹ Sir Anthony Swann (ODRP 149A), interview, February, 1983, f. 40; R.E. Robinson (ODRP 133A), see Colonial Office confidential draft memorandum on Kenya land legislation, July, 1956, f. 1.

² *ibid.*, ff. 1-6 and comments by F.D. Homan, African Land Tenure Officer, ff. 7-8.

When the Central Province Administration committed itself to the policy of mass consolidation at the end of 1955, no decision had been taken about how the legislation might be changed; the Resettlement Committee of the Council of Ministers backed the decision in December and the Administration proceeded regardless. In 1957 a working party was appointed to recommend substantive legislation to provide for consolidation, registration of titles, form of titles, succession and related matters, but not until 1959 did the Native Lands Registration Ordinance make private ownership in the African land units and freehold titles legal. In the meantime landowners on consolidated units were issued with quasi-legal documents.³ "One was taking a risk to go ahead on the ground," said Tony Swann. "But I think by that stage everybody had been through so much that they really didn't worry about taking risks."⁴

Besides, the officers were well aware that to delay was more dangerous, for the returning detainees might turn the scheme to chaos. A man whose consolidated holding did not include the land he had previously purchased could, for instance, have demanded that it be restored to him.⁵ It was therefore proposed that there be a moratorium on all land cases for three years until new legislation could be passed to extinguish the old rights under custom, and although the Colonial Office considered this legally indefensible it recognised

³ M.P.K. Sorrenson, *Land Reform in the Kikuyu Country*, pp. 184-191; A.M.F. Webb, (ODRP 168) "Report of the Working Party on African Land Tenure, 1957-1958", with related papers; R.E. Robinson (ODRP 133A), "The Native Land Tenure Rules", 1956, Africa tour journal, ff. 36-42.

⁴ Sir Anthony Swann (ODRP 149A), interview, February, 1983, f. 40.

⁵ J. Pedraza, "Land Consolidation in the Kikuyu Areas of Kenya", *Journal of African Administration*, p. 66.

that in effect a moratorium was already in force.⁶

The number of administrators in Central Province dropped from 228 to 176 in 1956, but it was still the most intensively staffed province in Kenya or in any other British territory, and this made it possible to monitor land consolidation closely.⁷ Not only was each division now essentially a mini-district, but many of the Kikuyu Guard DOs stayed on and provided another administrative layer. As their paramilitary role gave way to one of civil administration, they became District Assistants and gradually ceased to function as white chiefs, although even in 1957 the Divisional DO Kangema noted, "The backbone of peacetime administration is the chief in his location and the chiefs have for too long now had their work done for them by temporary European DOs."⁸

Consolidation in the three Kikuyu districts proceeded at different speeds. It was complete in Kiambu in 1958 and in Nyeri in 1959. In Fort Hall, where administrative and agricultural efforts were not coordinated, much of the measuring had to be redone and it was still not finished at independence in 1963.⁹ The use of staff varied from district to district, but consolidation procedures were broadly the same. Once an area, usually a sub-location, was selected, each man's fragments were established by local elders' committees. The fragments were measured and the total acreage computed. At the same

⁶ M.P.K. Sorrenson, *Land Reform in the Kikuyu Country*, 182-183; R.E. Robinson (ODRP 133A), Colonial Office confidential draft memorandum on Kenya land legislation, July, 1956.

⁷ RH Afr.515, Central Province Annual Report, 1956.

⁸ *ibid*, 1957

⁹ For a detailed discussion of land consolidation in each of the three Kikuyu districts, see M.P.K. Sorrenson, *Land Reform in the Kikuyu Country*, pp. 135-181.

time plane tablers produced topographical maps of the area, marked in succession with soil conservation contours, areas for new villages and roads and, finally with the new holdings.¹⁰

A closer examination of consolidation at the field level in Kiambu, where the programme was the most dynamic and ultimately influenced the other districts, illustrates something of how consolidation was achieved. The major difference between Kiambu and the other districts was that in Kiambu one officer, John Golds, was in charge of all consolidation work. Golds, who had been a farmer at Lessos joined the Administration in 1953 as a DO KG. Within a year he had joined the permanent Administration as Divisional DO Githunguri. In 1955 he asked the DC, Frank Loyd, for permission to start consolidation in his division, having estimated on the basis of talking to the residents, that approximately 60% would agree to it.¹¹ Loyd, who supported him and ultimately put him in charge of all consolidation work in the district, recalled:

He had an enormous enthusiasm which communicated itself to the people. He was immensely fair, extremely hard working and totally interested. He obviously had an innate flair and ability to cope with this incredibly complex and detailed project and he certainly was highly successful at it.¹²

¹⁰ For descriptions of the land consolidation procedure, see J. Pedraza, "Land Consolidation in the Kikuyu Areas of Kenya", *Journal of African Administration*, and L.H. Kolbe and S.J. Fouche, "Land Consolidation and Farm Planning in the Central Province".

¹¹ M.P.K. Sorrenson, *Land Reform in the Kikuyu Country*, pp. 153-163; J. Golds (ODRP 60A), commissioned memorandum, ff. 1,3, 13-20, 23, 26.

¹² Sir Francis Loyd (ODRP 99), interview, ff. 45-46, see also discussion of Golds procedures in Kiambu, ff. 39-46.

" In the other districts Administrative and Agricultural staff became part of the land consolidation teams, but in Kiambu, Golds had his own organisation, including European Officers seconded from other departments or Kenya Regiment men and African assistants; in the early phases virtually all of the Agricultural staff were temporarily assigned to him. He noted that at the peak of consolidation he employed 14 senior staff with 600 survey assistants and over 1000 labourers:

It was indeed a very powerful section, employing a great many ex-Kenya regiment and DO KG staff and also a number of agriculturalists who I steadily released to the farm planning service and who were actively planning consolidated holdings of an economic size (4 acres) in the area. Clearly a major job, the Kiambu African District Council supplied a large amount of additional staff and, in effect, as the Emergency drew to an end every spare Government servant in Kiambu was concentrated on firstly land consolidation and secondly agricultural planning.¹³

In the initial phases consolidation tended to be a reward to loyal areas. However, when it was decided to consolidate the entire district, the team started at one end and worked through to the other. "We would jump areas which did not have majority support for consolidation," Golds recalled, "but basically we did not select loyal or anti-Government areas after the first experimental area."¹⁴ Golds spread consolidation location by location through discussions in open meetings. "My staff," he said, played a leading part and we would often go on and do five or six of these barazas each day, explaining the need for land consolidation and farm planning and what we intended to

¹³ D. Johnston (ODRP 87A), interview, ff. 11-12; J. Golds (ODRP 60A), commissioned memorandum, f. 3.

¹⁴ J. Golds (ODRP 60A), commissioned memorandum, f. 23.

do."¹⁵ He also used some of the farms as demonstration centres which farmers could visit at regular intervals to see the results of consolidation and farm planning.

Golds himself recognised that there was hardly a spontaneous demand for consolidation but like most other officers felt that it could not have been pushed through against the people's will. Douglas Johnston, then DO Kikuyu Division, acknowledged that the Administration was too powerful to ignore: "It was very difficult not to agree with a body which had the kind of powers which they had seen illustrated over the previous two or three years". But he found it hard to believe that had there been wholehearted opposition from "one of the most vigorous and intelligent tribes in Kenya" consolidation could have been achieved in such a short time:

If you have looked at any of the court records of land suits in the Kikuyu country before the Emergency, you'll have some idea of the brass neck of suggesting to Kikuyu, who couldn't agree where the boundary line was between two patches of land a few square feet in size, that at high speed the boundaries of each of those two bits of land and thousands of other pieces of land should be measured and that there should be agreement as to where the boundaries were, and this should be recorded, added up, then converted into a single consolidated piece of land.¹⁶

Lloyd too felt that, "If the people had not wanted to go along with it to a very considerable extent ... it could not have been done against their wishes."¹⁷ A few divisions did reject consolidation initially, but within two or three

¹⁵ *ibid*, f. 11.

¹⁶ D. Johnston (ODRP 87A), interview, f. 12.

¹⁷ Sir Francis Lloyd (ODRP 99), interview, f. 40.

months they had requested it.¹⁸

Once they had agreed, the local chief and headmen were involved.¹⁹ John Longhurst, Land Consolidation Officer in Limuru, recalled that he and his colleagues were well aware that this created a great potential for bribery as well as a danger of the fighters being excluded and, while under pressure to consolidate many thousands of acres a week, they tried quite hard to ensure that it was done fairly. They found it very difficult to get the loyalists to accept this:

There were chiefs and headmen who lined their pockets with land, quite definitely, and the Land Consolidation Officer had to be alive to this the whole time. ... We were being very much more liberal than the populace. You know, "If you want to do it, get on and do it, we'll support you" sort of thing, "Just steam roller over them." A lot of us were bending over backwards to make sure that it worked.²⁰

Influential though the chiefs were, the local elders' committees had considerable power. They were men recognised as having knowledge of local land tenure elected at the village level, one village sometimes being affected by several committees. Through a long series of detailed arguments about the history of the land and negotiations for compensation, the committees settled disputes and determined each person's holding, in meetings and then on the ground with measuring teams. For the most part their decisions were accepted as fair, but inevitably younger sons and less powerful individuals had a weaker voice in the negotiations and tended to lose out.²¹ Longhurst recalled:

¹⁸ J. Golds (ODRP 60A), commissioned memorandum, f. 14.

¹⁹ J. Longhurst (ODRP 96A), interview, March 1983, f. 10.

²⁰ *ibid.*, ff. 12-15.

²¹ K. Sillitoe (ODRP 138A), interview, ff. 42-48.

... somebody would just be dismissed. You picked that one up and said, who's that? And ten to one they'd say, "Oh, he's away" wherever it was or that he doesn't matter. And there were deals being done with the existing members of families that one had to be very careful about. Suddenly you'd find somebody with an enormous acreage and wonder how on earth he'd got it, and a few subtle enquiries as to whether he'd been a big landowner before, and you'd discover that he hadn't been.²²

Politicians and fighters away in detention or in the forests also lost out. The committees were under some pressure to deprive them of their land, and some of it was gazetted. Golds noted, that "land confiscated was put in as part of our common areas and used whenever possible specially for schools and for markets and other public purposes where we could show how land had been used." However, most of the fighters' holdings were too small to warrant gazetting and the chiefs, headmen and elders decided who was to be excluded.²³

In Longhurst's experience the committees were inclined to try to deprive fighters of their land, but in Nyeri Sillitoe recorded a different and significant impression:

The Administration's wish to deprive active gang members of their land rights was deliberately, as far as I can make out, consistently undermined by the elders ... They did not see it as being moral for them, in their position as elders - they took that position seriously - to deny men of their land rights. These to them were sacred. That's one side to it. The other, we have to acknowledge, that the Administration might have thought these people who were in the forest to be dreadful, the Kikuyu didn't, at least a lot of the Kikuyu didn't, and therefore the elders were being perfectly practical

²² J. Longhurst (ODRP 96A), interview, f. 12.

²³ *ibid*; J. Golds (ODRP 60A), commissioned memorandum, f. 24.

politicians, as well as being conscientious custodians of their people's tradition and land, in resisting the Administration's demands.

So what they did, in effect was, in all the cases that I examined, the land that belonged to terrorists that was supposed to have been denied them was in fact allocated to children and to women who, which ... every Kikuyu would understand, was in fact merely putting it in reserve, in their temporary custody.²⁴

Even if not deprived of their land, those in detention or in the forest were at a disadvantage. Longhurst recalled that "the rocky rough slopes were always the ones that were given to the terrorists or unloyal people",²⁵ while Sillitoe indicated other difficulties:

You can well appreciate that the loyalists at the time were in an advantageous position for two reasons. One, they were there, whereas the people in detention couldn't represent their cases; the loyalists were there and they could argue their case, or they could go to their elders and say: "Now, look. You know more about this. You go and represent my case." And so they had that advantage. In addition to which, not only were they there, but they were employed, for the most part, so they had the means whereby to top up payments to acquire, or to finalise their acquisition of pieces of land.²⁶

Whatever the complaints about the adjudication committees, there were more about the surveyors and measurers. The steep uneven country would have been a surveyor's nightmare even for professionals, but as it was, the surveying was done by untrained members of the Land Consolidation Team, using a simple method of dividing the fragments into triangles, measuring them with link chains, totalling the area of fragments and marking it on a

²⁴ K. Sillitoe (ODRP 138A), interview, f. 45.

²⁵ J. Longhurst (ODRP 96A), interview, f. 12.

²⁶ K. Sillitoe (ODRP 138A), interview, f. 47.

topographical survey map. Many problems arose when the Land Consolidation Officers plotted the new holdings on maps in their offices rather than in the field. Longhurst saw little point in allocating a holding without getting the committees' full consent on the ground, but his colleagues tended to disagree: "Their argument was once you got into the field you'd never make a decision at all because everybody would be at you and you'd have so many variables to think of you'd blow your mind."²⁷ Longhurst himself was only 23 at the time and most of the others were equally inexperienced:

I don't remember any of the Land Consolidation Officers at my field level as being people who were trained. They were, some of them, pretty obscure people with pretty obscure ideas, you could say almost real cowboys. I can remember one or two, I was absolutely horrified. These were Kikuyu Guard contract DOs who had got in because of National Service, or they liked the frontier bit, toting the gun, being in charge, ordering people, it was exciting.²⁸

By August 1958, although the teams were still demarcating plots in permanent villages and developing locational centres, consolidation in Kiambu was essentially complete. Golds recalled:

By that time we had measured up probably in excess of half a million fragments, the demarcation of 50,000 consolidated holdings, the setting aside of 1,860 miles of road, 285 schools, 225 church sites, 110 cemeteries, 85 social centres, 45 tea and coffee nurseries, 93 cattle spraying sites and 110 permanent villages. During this operation we had 98 committees working with over 2,750 members none of whom received pay.²⁹

²⁷ J. Longhurst (ODRP 96A), interview, f. 13.

²⁸ *ibid*, f. 8.

²⁹ J. Golds (ODRP 60A), commissioned memorandum, f. 13 (as quoted in M.P.K. Sorrenson, *Land Reform in the Kikuyu Country*, p. 160).

In Kiambu and the other Kikuyu districts the final distribution of holdings was unforeseen. The average holding was just under five acres, and in some areas a very high proportion were smaller.³⁰ It was Provincial policy for those with economic holdings to return to their land once the security position had improved and those with smaller holdings to live in permanent villages with allotments nearby. In July 1957 the War Council had allowed 100 farmers in each district, chosen by the Administration, to move to their new holdings, and the numbers moving back increased steadily over the next two years.³¹

The Agricultural Department advised that units under about seven to 10 acres were subsistence holdings from which it would be futile to expect a much improved economic return, and at first only farmers with seven acres or more were permitted to move. However, when the number of very small holdings and the danger of unfeasibly large villages made this unviable the Administration pressed for three acres as the minimum size. The Agricultural Department finally compromised on four but only achieved it in Kiambu; in Fort Hall and Nyeri the limit was three.³² Loyd recalled:

We did in fact have quite a strong argument about this question of where the line should be drawn, the line between those who would go and live on their holdings and those who would stay in the village ... the reason why we the Administration insisted on three was simply practicalities. If we hadn't done that the villages would have been far too big and half the point of consolidation would have been lost.³³

³⁰ *Kenya Agricultural Sample Census, Part I*, pp. 19-27.

³¹ M.P.K. Sorrenson, *Land Reform in the Kikuyu Country*, p. 163.

³² *ibid.*, p. 214.

³³ Sir Francis Loyd, (ODRP 99), interview, ff. 42-43.

Particularly in the light of the distribution of the holdings the drive behind the land consolidation programme did not go unquestioned. The objective was generally described as providing the basis for rapid agricultural development, and there was a genuine commitment amongst the field officers to development for its own sake. But inevitably the programme had broader political overtones, which Ronald Robinson's journal summarised succinctly:

There would seem to be important political objectives behind the land reforms and agricultural drive to Kikuyu rehabilitation.

(a) to smother political discontent with economic prosperity a la Congo, and I doubt whether this ever works

(b) to reward the loyal Kikuyu – or at least the least disloyal

(c) to create a prosperous class of contented and cooperative African landlord farmers who will have everything to lose in the face of political disturbance. It is really the policy of developing a contented and loyal middle class of African as a barrier against the African extremists such as that of S. Rhodesia. In the case of Kenya the land reforms are the colony's insurance against a repetition of Mau Mau or worse.³⁴

Especially in Meru where the Agricultural Officers were in a position to apply more flexible solutions, there was concern for the way the programme was carried out in the Kikuyu districts.³⁵ Victor Burke felt that many of the difficulties which arose could have been avoided had the officers taken greater account of the ecological and topographical limitations of the region. It was practically impossible, for instance, for a family to live off a small holding allocated entirely in the high bracken zone. In Meru this could be accommodated:

³⁴ R.E. Robinson (ODRP 133A), *Africa Tour Journal*, ff. 43-44.

³⁵ K. Sillitoe (ODRP 138A), interview, ff. 14-15; and V. Burke (ODRP 20), interview, 1983, ff. 24-29.

We developed a settlement approach as a precursor of consolidation. We had two areas of settlement which were designed to draw off people who were keen for more land or for one reason or another were prepared to live outside the rather congested central residential area. The first was the lower area, the grass woodland zone, which was very good from a crop-growing point of view, but we had to do tsetse clearance and malaria control to make those areas acceptable. ... The second was the Kibirichia Settlement, which was in a very healthy area, a very desirable area indeed, but there was no permanent water. So we put water into that area and it became possible for people to live there permanently.³⁶

His colleague, Ken Sillitoe felt there were many grounds upon which consolidation should have been more closely examined:

I was never persuaded that consolidation of itself was a solution to all this. I could see the argument in favour of it, I could also accept that possibly even some degree of compulsion might be necessary. What always bothered me was the fact that we knew so remarkably little else about them. We knew far less than we ought to know about the other constraints and it was very difficult, I found, in the role of an Agricultural Officer, as a Government official, to break through these barriers and to begin to understand what other constraints there were upon agricultural development.³⁷

Unable to find answers, he went to the London School of Economics to read anthropology and came back to Nyeri at the end of the decade to study consolidation for the East African Institute of Social Research.³⁸

Sillitoe's work raised three major questions about consolidation as it was carried out. Firstly, the Kikuyu districts were already so overcrowded that the

³⁶ *ibid*, Burke, ff. 27-28.

³⁷ K. Sillitoe (ODRP 138A), interview, f. 5.

³⁸ *ibid*, ff. 5-6.

consolidated holdings were not, in large measure, viable units. Wages were so low that most people from these districts had to continue to depend on land as a subsidy, and it was unlikely that employment and subsidiary occupations would relieve the pressure in the immediate future; nevertheless, there was no effort to link consolidation to a major settlement scheme. Secondly, alternative methods of encouraging production, particularly on a regional basis, had not been explored, as for instance a tea industry supplied by surrounding fragmented holdings or schemes along the lines of the communal vegetable factory established at Karatina during the war.³⁹

Finally, Sillitoe felt that the outcome of consolidation violated agricultural principles. Often a person's sole land holding was on a steep slope which according to agricultural rules ought not to be cultivated, and it was, moreover, demarcated in long thin strips extending from the top of the ridge to the bottom in order to give everyone access to roads and water. Thus after years of trying to teach people to cultivate on the contour, the Agricultural Department had to plan the consolidated holdings on the opposite pattern. In fact, much of the land would have been most effectively used as forest or grazing land, but it was consolidated as though it were arable:

Nowhere else would you, for a moment, think of dividing up non-arable land in that fashion. It doesn't make sense to an agricultural economist. It's nonsense. ... I felt that this was now the action of an administrator, not the action of an agriculturalist. An agriculturalist would not have done that. He would have looked at the land first and thought in terms of land use. ... When consolidation took place, I always felt myself, I mean I wasn't in Nyeri, but I could never understand why the Agricultural Officers didn't get up and say: "Stop

³⁹ *ibid.* f. 17.

it." or "Do something else besides this." Because when they saw what the situation was, every agricultural instinct in them should have risen up and said, "This is absurd." But nothing was absurd in the Emergency, was it?⁴⁰

Most of the officers in the Kikuyu districts knew the importance of economically viable holdings and the Agricultural Officers had argued for units of the largest possible size. The Provincial Agricultural Officer, Graham Gamble, reinforced their view in a memorandum in 1958 suggesting that the Kikuyu districts should be divided into four ecological zones with minimum subsistence holdings: eight acres in the high bracken zone, five acres in the Kikuyu Grass zone, four acres in the Star Grass zone and three to five acres in the grass-woodland zone. An economic holding, he said, should be twice the area of the subsistence acreage.⁴¹ But population density, the land on very steep slopes and the fact that many of the loyalists owned considerable acreages made viable units impossible for most people. The East African Royal Commission Report, published in 1955, recommended that tribal and racial barriers to land ownership should be broken down and consolidation linked to resettlement schemes, which would have enabled viable units. However, the sanctity of the White Highlands was preserved until 1959.⁴²

The officers therefore found that their only real option was to try to make Central Province economically viable internally through consolidation, cash crops and grade cattle. Douglas Johnston, then a Divisional DO in Kiambu, recalled a view common to many in the Administration:

⁴⁰ *ibid.* ff. 43-44, 51-56, 58-59.

⁴¹ M.P.K. Sorrenson, *Land Reform in the Kikuyu Country*, p. 224.

⁴² *East Africa Royal Commission, 1953-1955: Report.*

It's authoritarian, and I'm not at all saying that the end justifies the means, but it's very difficult to see what other action could have been taken at that time. To have gone through the considerable trauma of the Emergency and to have finished up without an attempt to provide a sound basis for agricultural improvement would have been irresponsible, it seems to me. I imagine that that's a fairly widespread view among the District Officers. And by that time it was widely accepted that agricultural development wasn't possible until a sound cadastral basis was there.⁴³

Many Agriculturalists, too, felt that problematic though it was, consolidation was nevertheless vitally important to Central Province's economy. Leslie Brown, then Deputy Director of Agriculture, noted that it "placed the Central Province farmers in the position that they were able for the first time in their history to make sound economic use of their total land holding if they wished to do so", but he admitted:

... one has to face the fact that when it was done it was done rather too suddenly and in too much of a hurry because the opportunity arose and one had to do something about it while the opportunity existed; because one didn't know how long it would continue. And the fact is that it was probably done in too much of a hurry without adequate planning and perhaps without the fullest knowledge of what results might be.⁴⁴

Yates as District Agricultural Officer at Nyeri was also pragmatic:

I took the attitude that there was going to be inequality, there was going to be a certain amount of skullduggery, for want of a better word. But who were we to interfere too much with it, as long as we could get a reasonable amount of certainty that the holdings were going to be reallocated and that there weren't too many irregularities.

⁴³ D. Johnston (ODRP 87A), interview, f. 10.

⁴⁴ L.E. Brown (ODRP 18), interview, June, 1979, f. 4.

Then the benefits which would accrue to virtually the majority of the population were so great that I adopted the attitude that, let us get it done, let us get on with the farm planning and let's see the thing to a situation where we could see cash crops and coffee and pyrethrum and tea flowing out of these districts.⁴⁵

The agricultural follow-up to consolidation was well under-way by 1957, and was carried out with administrative co-ordination from the provincial level downwards. As PC, Frank Loyd took an active interest and strongly supported the agricultural staff, with particularly effective results in Nyeri, as Yates recalled:

I was lucky enough to be the Agricultural Officer in Nyeri when he was the Provincial Commissioner. Maybe rightly, maybe wrongly we had several joint, completely unorganised, ad hoc safaris into the district, just himself and myself. He would say, "how can we speed this up, what do you need, what do you want?" And it was all done, it all happened. ... Nyeri had always been a show district, I think it's true to say that, and he wanted this to continue.⁴⁶

A Special Commissioner for Central Province, 'Monkey' Johnston, co-ordinated consolidation and rehabilitation until he became Minister for African Affairs in 1957. John Pinney, DC Fort Hall, then became Loyd's Special Assistant to oversee consolidation, and Eric Gordon, Loyd's Personal Assistant, co-ordinated the agricultural and veterinary follow-up. Gordon, who had been a DO at Kerugoya in 1955 and 1956, had then done a postgraduate diploma in agricultural economics at Oxford and helped bridge administrative and agricultural views; with support from Swynnerton and Brown, he encouraged statistical monitoring of agricultural returns. He also promoted the team

⁴⁵ G. Yates (ODRP 183), interview, f. 68.

⁴⁶ *ibid*, f. 9.

approach at all levels as the basis for development:

I spent half my working time with the Provincial Veterinary Officer and the Provincial Agricultural Officer and his deputy tying up what was going on in the field, agreeing what our policy on, say, AI, should be and how it would be implemented, what effects that was going to have, how it was actually going to work in the District, liaising with divisional District Officers through DCs about what was actually happening in the field ... so that hopefully Government spoke with one voice not with many on these issues, which again is not very easy, particularly when you get a number of fairly strong-minded individuals with very clear ideas of how something ought to be done.⁴⁷

With the release of agriculturalists from consolidation work and the build up of numbers of agricultural field staff, farmers received more attention than ever before.⁴⁸ Although unable to achieve meaningful results during the height of the Emergency, the Department had nevertheless evolved a more effective field structure, paralleling that of the Administration at the district, division and location levels. The newly constructed divisional centres, with stone and tiled roofed offices and houses, provided a base for their expanded activities. Whereas previously schemes had tended to be centred around district headquarters, they now had a broader spread, and the District Agricultural Officer tended to become a supervisor who visited the divisions on a routine basis to monitor technical standards, encourage new programmes and help set cash crops and terracing targets.

The Divisional Agricultural Officers in turn supervised a hierarchy of Agricultural Instructors, one in each division and location with several

⁴⁷ E. Gordon (ODRP 62), interview, ff. 178-179.

⁴⁸ RH Micro.Afr.515, Central Province Annual Report, 1957.

Assistant Instructors in each sub-location. Normally the Instructors had two years training and could draw up farm plans and layouts or recognise coffee diseases; Assistant Instructors, with secondary education and field training, provided more general support, such as measuring holes for coffee or checking bench terraces.⁴⁹ The Divisional Officers kept the whole process moving. "There was a sort of ripple effect down to the Agricultural Instructors," Yates recalled, "And you would get a lot of people who in the past had been no good suddenly coming out of their doldrums, and they would become very good Instructors."⁵⁰ Rimington agreed:

Follow up, follow up, pressurise, pressurise. If you let up on anything it would just fall back. If you left out, at any time, visiting one of the smallholdings, after a time you would find that the smallholding, the standard was slipping back. And as of course you got more and more smallholdings, you couldn't visit them all, so there was bound to be a deterioration. You just couldn't follow it up and you had to rely very much on your Agricultural Instructors to keep up the pressure and to let you know if one fellow was falling back.⁵¹

At first it was hoped that the agricultural teams could provide and supervise farm plans for about 10% of the holdings. They re-surveyed the land, enlarged the boundary maps and plotted the use of every square yard. The farmer then received detailed advice including rotation charts, a phased scheme for expanding crops and a stock development programme. Thereafter he got constant advice and assistance on technical problems. With their other work load, Instructors could supervise about 10 to 15 farm plans at various

⁴⁹ Sir Roger Swynnerton (ODRP 150), interview with A. Thurston, ff. 252-253; G. Yates (ODRP 183), interview, ff. 83-86; G.P. Rimington (ODRP 130), interview, February, 1983, restricted.

⁵⁰ G. Yates (ODRP 183), interview, ff. 83-86.

⁵¹ G.P. Rimington (ODRP 130), interview February, 1983, restricted.

stages of development.³² As the pace of consolidation increased, it was clear that the plans were not appropriate for very small holdings and were available to too few farmers. Yates remembered, "It took up too much time and was too expensive."³³ The officers therefore worked out a more flexible approach available to more farmers, and even in 1957 layouts were done for 2527 holdings covering 24,311 acres against 909 full farm plans, in the same year, covering 10,473 acres.³⁴

Until the demand became too great, layouts were available to anyone who wanted them for a small fee. An Agricultural Instructor could do one in a couple of days, including siting the homestead, permanent cash crops, fields, fences, hedges and farm buildings, and since consolidated holdings ran in perpendicular strips down the ridges, layouts could often be drawn for all the farms along the side of a valley. Instructors visited the farmers at intervals and supervised up to about 50 layouts a year. The rest of the farmers received more simplified advice. Soil conservation contours were marked out and permanent crops delineated on the steepest land, most subject to erosion, leaving the least steep ridge and valley land for subsistence crop and grass ley rotation.³⁵

In all its forms, farm planning was a means of getting the right crops on the optimum pieces of land on each holding, stabilising production and stabilising the landscape itself; the Agricultural staff hoped it would deter refragmentation. Soil conservation remained a strong element in the

³² Sir Roger Swynnerton (ODRP 150), interview with A. Thurston, f. 353.

³³ G. Yates (ODRP 183), interview, f. 79.

³⁴ Kenya Agricultural Department Annual Report, 1957, p. 38.

³⁵ Sir Roger Swynnerton (ODRP 150), interview with A. Thurston, f. 354.

programme and Yates recalled that planning cash crops provided a means of achieving it:

We were always and I think with justification, although I found it a bore because I was more interested in the straight farming aspect of it, continually pushed to report on how many bench terraces we had dug, how many narrow base terraces and miles had been put in etc..⁵⁶

Storror, who originated the concept of farm planning, remarked, "I think we shouldn't look at this so much as farm planning, rather it was a question of supplying services for cash crops and development of cash crops."⁵⁷

Initially plans tended to be done for chiefs, headmen and loyalists for whom increased privileges and assistance were seen as a reward and who in any case tended to have larger holdings. Yates observed that there was "a certain amount of loyalty to the people in power."⁵⁸ Later the Agricultural staff was primarily concerned with raising agricultural productivity as quickly as possible and took little interest in politics. The farmer's response determined the assistance he got, and Yates remembered that:

One tried to get hold of a co-operative farmer who was not necessarily the richest, but who was a respected individual, who had shown some form of initiative, and you gave all the assistance possible, and by that means you then made some form of example. It was difficult not to make him appear to be a Government stooge. He received considerable assistance in loans, in visits, in advice, and one had to try to resist the problem of him being looked upon as someone who was a mouthpiece for government and therefore not altogether

⁵⁶ G. Yates (ODRP 183), interview, f. 73.

⁵⁷ A. Storror (ODRP 149), interview with B. Beaver and S.A.G. Risvi, f. 2.

⁵⁸ G. Yates (ODRP 183), commissioned memorandum, f. 3.

acceptable to other farmers.⁵⁹

"We gave to everybody who was interested in doing it and showed some energy in doing it," Rimington recalled, "Because we were wanting these people to be the advertisers."⁶⁰ Grayburn, who returned to Central Province at the end of the decade noted:

By the time I got back to Nyeri it didn't matter whether the chap had been in detention, the criteria was whether he was prepared to look after it. And if he was, he could have been in Athi River for four years, it didn't matter.⁶¹

The essential problem was not who should receive agricultural assistance but how to meet farmers' demands and still maintain high standards. Rimington remembered that the Agricultural staff "just couldn't work quickly enough".⁶² Very little coffee had been planted during the Emergency, and much of what there was had been destroyed by chiefs' and loyalists' opponents. Now coffee became the major thrust of development in Central Province. Farmers were so keen that the officers found it hard to maintain control of distribution. Agricultural Instructors could be bribed to report that holdings were ready for planting and coffee seedlings were stolen from nurseries. Yates recalled that if a person applied for 500 coffee plants then really 700 would be planted. "I'm sure there was an overplanting and that people realised that this was a means of a very substantial source of income which of course it proved to be. They could see this."⁶³ Despite all efforts to

⁵⁹ *ibid*, f. 40.

⁶⁰ G.P. Rimington (ODRP 130), interview, February, 1983, restricted.

⁶¹ J. Grayburn (ODRP 63), interview with A. Thurston and M. Jones, no transcript.

⁶² G.P. Rimington (ODRP 130), interview, February, 1983, restricted.

⁶³ G. Yates (ODRP 183), interview, f. 73.

stock the nurseries there was a constant shortage, and the officers made numerous trips to European areas to buy truckloads of seedlings.⁶⁴

As far as possible, numerous controls were imposed along Meru lines, to get the coffee started under optimum conditions and to prevent the spread of disease. Before a farmer could have seedlings his land had to be inspected by the local Agricultural Instructor. It had to be bench terraced, holes had to be dug to a certain standard and mulching grass and farmyard manure had to be available. The Instructors then monitored planting methods, and, as Rimington described, they were constantly re-trained at divisional headquarters:

... the digging of the holes, the filling in of soil, the manure, how to get the root system in. You put the tap root right down to the bottom, you put your feeler roots along the side, press in the soil and get the tap root fixed. We'd have a stick across to try to keep the thing upright. Quite a lot of them planted their trees below ground level, so that when the soil subsided like that, the tree went down in, the rainy seasons filled up in this dip, and the tree rotted, it died. What a waste of money, what a waste of time.⁶⁵

All farmers who planted coffee had to join co-operative coffee societies, and each society had one or more factories, again as in Meru. Coffee Officers appointed under the Swynnerton Plan planned the factories, constructed with ALDEV loans recovered from members' profits, and trained the employees to pulp, ferment, wash, dry, grade and process the parchment coffee. It was then sent in batches to the Coffee Marketing Board for an initial payment and hulled in Nairobi by the Kenya Planters' Co-operative Union. Each society became a member as if it were an estate, and when KPCU sold the coffee at

⁶⁴ G.P. Rimington (ODRP 130), interview, February, 1983, restricted.

⁶⁵ *ibid*

auction the society received a second payment which it paid out to its members.⁶⁶

In 1957 the last of the Coffee Board restrictions, preventing Africans from growing coffee within five miles of European estates was lifted, although even then Kikuyu growers in Nyeri and Kiambu had to plant special varieties along European boundaries so that theft could be monitored. The growth of the marketed value of coffee in Central Province until the imposition of restrictions under the International Coffee Agreement in 1962 was dramatic as departmental figures show.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Sir Roger Swynnerton (ODRP 150), interview with A. Thurston, f. 358.

⁶⁷ Kenya Agricultural Department Annual Reports, 1957-1962, *passim*.

	1957	1958	1959	1960	1961	1962
Total Planted Acreage:						
Value to Growers in £'s:						
Kiambu	603	737	1290	3197	5418	7857
	2,013	12,240	42,262	83,514	16,502	61,457
Fort	1138	1339	1911	2436	4038	8047
Hall	32,708	49,367	86,803	179,151	256,000	297,942
Nyeri	1207	1590	2275	3021	3945	7019
	44,648	76,617	157,899	114,733	254,651	209,082
Embu	3118	3680	4638	5507	7272	9864
	157,099	206,173	640,000	537,557	779,260	871,909
Meru	5841	6889	8066	8766	11,251	19,475
	468,000	512,579	862,000	747,127	835,073	976,267

Much less pyrethrum was planted, but co-operative societies were organised along the same general lines. Each was allocated a quota of dried flowers, and farmers either dried their own or delivered them to a co-operative drier. Once a week the flowers were weighed and railed to the Pyrethrum Board's extract factory at Nakuru, and the society was paid on the basis of a composite sample for the consignment.⁶⁸

⁶⁸ Sir Roger Swynnerton (ODRP 150), interview with A. Thurston, f. 360.

With a limited international market, the Pyrethrum Board was reluctant to expand African growers' quotas, and Swynnerton recalled battles at the quota meetings. "We had enormous pressure from the Board to reduce our demands but we just dug our heels in and insisted on our request."⁶⁹ Much of the first pyrethrum planted in Central Province had been uprooted during the Emergency, but when planting picked up again more went in than in any other African area until 1958. There were then 20,400 licensed acres in European areas, 2,726 in Central Province, mainly in Kiambu, 100 in North Nyanza and 140 in Elgeyo.⁷⁰ In 1959 Victor Burke, as Agricultural Officer in South Nyanza, so inspired the Kisii farmers that there was massive over-planting, which far surpassed the Central Province figures.⁷¹ But pyrethrum was widely over-planted in Central Province as well, and in 1960 the Agricultural Department estimated that there was about two and a half times as much pyrethrum in African areas as was licensed.⁷²

Tea developed more slowly. The small Nyeri scheme remained the only real tea development in any African district until planting began again in 1955, and even in 1958 there were only 691 acres, mostly in Nyeri and Embu.⁷³ However, when Graham Gamble took over as Provincial Agricultural Officer in 1956 he gradually pushed tea out to all the Central Province districts. Having been to India and Ceylon to study its development, he became the Agricultural Department's tea specialist and principal developer. He had

⁶⁹ *ibid*, f. 360, commissioned memorandum, f. 14.

⁷⁰ Kenya Agricultural Department Annual Report, 1958, p. 16.

⁷¹ *ibid*, 1959, p. 16; Sir Roger Swynnerton (ODRP 150), interviews with A. Thurston, f. 361, interview with M. Cowen, f. 371.

⁷² Kenya Agricultural Department Annual Report, 1960, p. 13.

⁷³ *ibid*, 1958, p. 17.

observed that smallholder tea in Ceylon had failed when unsupervised and was determined that this would not be the case in Kenya.⁷⁴

His views formed part of a controversy within the Agricultural Department over the form of manufacture and quality of tea produced; high-quality greenleaf tea grown in carefully supervised conditions as Gamble advocated would realise the highest export prices, while home-produced tea required no factory for processing and no supervision. Gradually the emphasis shifted to large-scale production, reinforced when the tea factory opened on the Embu-Nyeri Border in 1957, serving about 500 acres of tea, with money advanced by the Colonial Development Corporation.⁷⁵ The Tea Board doubted smallholders' ability to make the sustained efforts required for plucking, pruning and weeding, but in fact African smallholding tea was as good and often better than estate tea since the estate workers, paid by the pound, tended to pluck heavily, taking three leaves and a bud instead of two as they were encouraged to do on smallholdings. In 1958 good quality African tea was sold in the Nairobi tea auction for the first time and fetched among the highest prices in Kenya.⁷⁶

Thereafter high quality tea went in fairly quickly. Roads surrounding the factory were up-graded and maintained to an all-weather standard and fixed collection times were established at three mile intervals. But whereas a coffee factory could be constructed for about 3000 pounds, a tea factory could cost about 200,000, and there were no funds for more factories until toward the end

⁷⁴ G. Yates (ODRP 183), interview, with A. Thurston ff. 65-66.

⁷⁵ M. Cowen, "The British State and Agrarian Accumulation in Kenya", *Industry and Accumulation in Africa*, pp. 161-162.

⁷⁶ Kenya Agricultural Department Annual Report, 1957, p. 12, 1958, p. 6.

of the decade when Swynnerton convinced the Colonial Development Corporation to put up the money. Thus when coffee planting was curtailed in the early 1960s, the Agricultural Department was already prepared for a major expansion of tea growing.⁷⁷

Sun-dried tea had continued to present an attractive alternative. It was dried openly from the plucking of five leaves instead of two and this, with the fact that interest charges on the loan fund for the factory were borne by deductions from the price paid to tea growers, caused sun-dried tea to realise a higher revenue per acre than high quality tea. However, it represented a threat to commercial estate control of the market and to central control of production, and after 1962 an administrative decree enforced by legal action rapidly eradicated its production and sale.⁷⁸

European grade cattle were also introduced legally in this period, starting in Central Province where high-altitude grazing made tick disease less severe. Moreover, after land consolidation it was easier to protect the cattle from reinfection after dipping or hand spraying by fencing and to plant better grass. The debate over Sahiwal cattle was still unresolved, but while the Veterinary Department remained committed to developing an improved cross breed, it could not supply anywhere near the numbers required. Swynnerton and the Director of Veterinary Services, Ken MacOwan, finally sought a decision from the Minister of Agriculture, Michael Blundell, who ruled in favour of exotic

⁷⁷ Sir Roger Swynnerton (ODRP 150), interview with A. Thurston, f. 357, interview with M. Cowen, f. 371, commissioned memorandum, ff. 16-17.

⁷⁸ M. Cowen, 'The British State and Agrarian Accumulation in Kenya', *Industry and Accumulation in Africa*, p. 161.

stock but with safeguards for purchasing and introduction.⁷⁹

Thus like cash crops, grade cattle were subject to strict supervision and controls. The large numbers of grade cattle in Central Province before the Emergency, particularly in Nyeri, had declined as many had been slaughtered as rations for security troops or fighters and many had died of disease in the villages. Dip tanks had been sabotaged, so the cattle that survived tended to be debilitated. Yates, who devoted himself to promoting grade cattle in Nyeri and Kiambu remembered that in the initial stages he and his team made innumerable visits to all the farmers who had better cattle to see that they were provided, on loan, with adequate amounts of concentrated food, and that there was hay and grazing:

The whole thing was very closely supervised, because it was obvious to my mind that if we were to get it to succeed we had to get to make quite sure that the death percentage was kept to an absolute minimum. We managed to do so, but through very close supervision which was essential.⁸⁰

Grade cattle were a major investment, and many farmers depended on credit; the Agricultural Department used this to enforce husbandry standards. Before a farmer could get credit, his land had to be consolidated and delineated by a farm plan or layout, with grazing areas fenced and planted

⁷⁹ *ibid*, commissioned memorandum, f. 19, interview with A. Thurston, f. 360, interview with M. Cowen, f. 369, interview with E. Clayton, f. 396; K.D.S. MacOwan (ODRP 104), commissioned memorandum, ff. 6-7. See also R.O. Hennings (ODRP 76), commissioned memorandum; I.G. Gibson, (ODRP 57), commissioned memorandum; G. Yates (ODRP 183); M.P.E. Durand (ODRP 44), commissioned memorandum; M.D. Butler (ODRP 22), commissioned memorandum; (ODRP 184), partial transcript of tape recordings made at the Colloquium on Development of Agriculture in Kenya.

⁸⁰ G. Yates (ODRP 183), interview, f. 94.

with productive species of grass; he had to castrate all male cattle over three months, the farm had to have an adequate internal water supply and he had to institute a regular spraying programme to reduce the tick population; he or his wife also had to attend a short course at the district farmers' training centre. There were similar requirements for artificial insemination services which the Veterinary Department now began providing to African areas.⁸¹

The numbers of grade cattle introduced officially remained relatively small. In 1961 an Agricultural Sample Survey indicated that there were 2000 exotic cattle in Nyeri District, 1300 in Kiambu and none recorded in Fort Hall.⁸² However, by this time European farmers were selling large numbers of grade cattle to Central Province farmers, some of whom had already started stud businesses. Dairy products, like tea and pyrethrum, were marketed through co-operatives to the Kenya Co-operative Creameries, and while the controls were less effective than had been hoped, the dairy industry developed rapidly, with some of the higher areas, unsuited to arable cropping due to acidic soils and a wet climate, emerging through dairy, tea and pyrethrum farming as among the most well-developed agricultural areas in Kenya.

With the official end to Emergency regulations in 1959, the completion of consolidation in Kiambu and Nyeri and the enactment of the Native Lands Registration Ordinance, more credit facilities opened up. There was a surge in farm development, for a farmer could often multiply his income many times over for a relatively small investment which Leslie Brown calculated to be

⁸¹ K.D.S. MacOwan (ODRP 104), commissioned memorandum; I.G. Gibson (ODRP 57), commissioned memorandum; M.P.E. Durand (ODRP 44), commissioned memorandum; (ODRP 184), partial transcript of tape recordings made at the Colloquium on Development of Agriculture in Kenya.

⁸² *Kenya African Agricultural Sample Census, 1960-1961*, Part II, p. 10.

about 20 pounds an acre for fencing, buildings and purchase of stock, implements and equipment. The funds, which came from several sources, including the United States International Co-operative Administration (later USAID), ALDEV and the banks, were nowhere near enough for all farmers, but between 1959 and 1960 more credit was available, channelled through co-operative societies and African District Councils, than in the previous five years, mostly in goods and services.⁸³

In 1959, the last year of the Swynnerton Plan, the intensive staffing levels and availability of funds began to wind down, just as the accelerating process of smallholding development created an increasing demand for services. The agricultural staff was cut by 15%, and with the announcement in 1960 that independence would soon be granted, Kenya entered a period of political and economic uncertainty.⁸⁴ "One was sitting there," Leslie Brown noted, "waiting for the Swynnerton Plan to come to an end and not knowing quite what would happen afterwards."⁸⁵ Credit became more difficult to administer, farm layouts were harder to supervise, and Administrative and Agricultural Officers gave up trying to do anything unpopular. The DO at Othaya wrote in his handing over report:

Since the lifting of Emergency regulations and the subsequent formation of the KANU Branch in Nyeri it has been increasingly difficult to carry out any programme started prior to the ending of the Emergency. Every man woman and child is waiting for 'Uhuru' when everything will be dished out free of charge.⁸⁶

⁸³ L.E. Brown (ODRP 18F), "Agricultural Change in Kenya, 1945-1960".

⁸⁴ Kenya Agricultural Departmental Report, 1959.

⁸⁵ L.E. Brown (ODRP 18), interview with B. Beaver, f. 28.

⁸⁶ RH Micro.Afr.517, Handing Over Report, Brooks to Anderson, October 1960.

Nevertheless, in Central Province the momentum was such that most European officers felt they were no longer pushing out ideas and standards; in large measure the people had seen the benefits and were doing it themselves.⁸⁷ Locally elected officials of coffee and tea societies were monitoring standards and tended to refuse licences if holdings were not properly prepared; they went after members who neglected their crops and would not permit inferior harvests to be processed. Grayburn recalled that he was quite startled by the difference he found when he returned to Nyeri in 1960. "There were well-established individual tea plots, masses of coffee going in; the coffee co-operatives were well-established and very tight on their discipline." He remembered particularly a group of farmers returning from a visit to Uganda. "They were shocked as hell when they came back and they saw the way Uganda coffee was cared for, and they said, 'This is terrible, it's frightful stuff.'⁸⁸

Even as the Swynnerton Plan ended, the Agricultural Department embarked on accelerated programmes of coffee and tea expansion. Representatives from Kenya had attended international discussions on coffee quotas in Washington in 1958 and 1959 and although Kenya had not entered the coffee pact by Latin American producers, it had signed a declaration of intent to set up quotas. Brown, as Chief Agriculturalist, knew that this would be based on existing acreages and pressed the Agricultural Officers and co-operative societies to expand planting as fast as possible. When the ban did come in 1962 it was terribly difficult to put over to African farmers the need to bring the planting

⁸⁷ R. Otter (ODRP 116A), interview, ff. 35-36.

⁸⁸ J. Grayburn (ODRP 63), interview with A. Thurston and M. Jones, no transcript.

programme to an abrupt halt.⁸⁹

The end of the Swynnerton Plan coincided with the first efforts by the Kenya Government to implement the Royal Commission's recommendation that racial and tribal barriers to land ownership should be progressively removed. By 1961 large scale Kikuyu settlement schemes were underway in the highlands for which the Agricultural Department was supplying technical advice drawn largely from experience gained in Central Province in the Swynnerton Plan years. Ironically the schemes came too late to maximise the opportunity the Plan had offered to shift agricultural development in Central Province significantly beyond subsistence farming.

⁸⁹ Kenya Agricultural Department Report, 1962, p. 1; (ODRP 184), partial transcript of tape recordings made at the Colloquium on the Development of Agriculture in Kenya.

Conclusion

Although some officials hoped that the Swynnerton Plan would achieve miracles, it was not designed to do so. While implemented in the context of revolution, it was essentially a realistic agricultural programme based on field experience. It aimed to intensify land use but could not override the basic problems of population pressure and poverty due to land shortage nor create economic land units where they did not exist. Not until the end of the decade when the Government turned of political necessity to the solution of resettlement and removed racial restrictions in the Highlands, was the pressure on Central Province relieved. Had this not been done the gains under the Swynnerton Plan would have been rapidly undermined by population pressure.

What levels of cash crop production might have been achieved in the second half of the 1950s without the Plan is conjecture, but it is unlikely that production would have increased as rapidly or at such a high standard. Not only were the projected phased levels for cash crop development reached, but some were exceeded; the 1963 target for coffee, for instance, was 43,000 acres whereas by the end of 1962 69,780 acres had been planted in African areas.¹ In fact, the official agricultural statistics show steady growth in farm output and income on Kenya's smallholdings from the Plan's inception in 1954 through the first decade of Kenya's independence. Gavin Kitching has calculated that the gross farm revenue of African smallholdings rose from under eight million pounds to over 34 million between 1958 and 1968, an

¹ R. Swynnerton, *A Plan to Intensify the Development of African Agriculture in Kenya*, p. 15; Kenya Agricultural Department Report, 1962, Vol. I, p. 23.

increase of 425%.² The Swynnerton Plan had initiated a shift in emphasis in Kenya's agrarian policy from large-scale European farming with subsistence African agriculture to commercial peasant agriculture; its programmes have continued to form the basis of policy for Kenya's small farm sector.³

Inevitably the inequities of size and quality of holdings resulted in unequal distribution of these benefits, as Sorrenson and Kitching have analysed. However, on smallholdings of an economic size in Central Province and other areas of Kenya the Plan achieved its objective of an intensified level of marketable production balanced with subsistence requirements. There is as yet little local data, but Michael Cowen has done detailed work on milk and tea production in Nyeri and provides significant observations. He notes that commonsense assertions by Colin Leys and many Institute of Development Studies Nairobi publications suppose that the Swynnerton Plan must have led to growing inequity between producers in Central Province by promoting the formation of an indigenous class of capital. In fact, he asserts, the reverse can be shown, i.e. that sales of coffee, tea and milk on middle holdings increased at a faster rate than from large producers dependent upon wage labour; he suggests, moreover, that state sponsored schemes intervened against a spontaneous course of accumulation by an indigenous class of capital.⁴

² G. Kitching, *Class and Economic Change in Kenya*, p. 317.

³ See J. Heyer et al, *Agricultural Development in Kenya* for discussions of the Swynnerton Plan's influence on post independence agricultural development in Kenya.

⁴ M. Cowen, "Concentration of Sales and Assets: Dairy Cattle and Tea in Magutu, 1964-1971", IDS Working Paper 146, Nairobi, March 1974; "Commodity Production in Kenya's Central Province" in J. Heyer, P. Roberts and G. Williams, eds., *Agricultural Development in Africa*, pp. 122-138. See also R. Swynnerton (ODRP 150), interview with M. Cowen.

Central Province was affected more by the Swynnerton Plan than any other part of Kenya. The growth rate of acres planted and marketed value of specific cash crops for Central and Nyanza Provinces between 1951 and 1962, when provincial boundaries were redrawn, provides a basis for comparison:⁵

Coffee

Central Province			Nyanza Province	
Total Planted Acreage:	Marketed Value in £'s: (annual)		Total Planted Acreage:	Marketed Value in £'s: (annual)
1951	40,326			14,538
1952	40,020			6,982
1953	128,342			18,611
1954	254,863			35,680
1955	257,621			49,756
1956	353,965			130,560
1957	11,907	704,468	4258	198,247
1958	14,235	856,976	5188	219,793
1959	18,180	1,788,964	6579	340,477
1960	22,927	1,662,082	8180	474,611
1961	31,294	2,285,485	8987	460,285
1962	42,398	2,516,657	16,148	509,872

⁵ Kenya Agricultural Department Annual Reports, 1951-1962.

Pyrethrum and Tea

Marketed Value

(Annual Totals in £'s)

	Central Province		Nyanza Province	
	Pyrethrum	Tea	Pyrethrum	Tea
1951	8620	-	-	-
1952	12,765	-	-	-
1953	29,680	-	190	-
1954	36,671	-	747	-
1955	49,985	-	1775	-
1956	72,446	-	4800	-
1957	42,682	-	17,810	-
1958	70,176	-	18,984	-
1959	68,322	27,789	74,824	1465
1960	164,000	60,946	182,180	3846
1961	142,956	62,397	279,975	7690
1962	208,438	43,235	128,908	16,397

However, the most striking figures are for the total marketed products from the two provinces. For the first two years of the Swynnerton Plan, Nyanza Province earned more than Central Province, but by 1956 when control had been established in Central Province, cash crop production began to increase

rapidly, and by 1962 when the harvests of coffee and tea planted during the Plan period began to be reflected in the figures, the overall Central Province income was nearly twice that of Nyanza Province:⁶

Total Value in £'s of More Important Marketed Products
(Estimated)

	Central Province	Nyanza Province
1953	1,349,487	1,427,675
1954	1,820,314	2,728,173
1955	1,877,744	2,506,442
1956	2,030,944	1,750,862
1957	2,109,195	2,032,478
1958	2,580,565	1,997,331
1959	3,138,120	2,406,977
1960	3,433,302	2,665,989
1961	4,038,057	2,607,273
1962	4,134,041	2,209,749

Moreover, these trends have continued. While maize yields have remained far higher in the western region, Central Province has produced the highest yields of smallholder coffee, tea and pyrethrum, as illustrated by the acreages on small farms by province for 1969-1970, ten years after the end of the Plan:⁷

⁶ *ibid*, 1953-1962.

⁷ Statistics Division, Ministry of Finance and Planning, quoted in *Kenya Into the Second Decade: World Bank Country Economic Report*, 1975, p. 513.

	Central	Nyanza	Western	Rift Valley	Coast	Eastern
	(thousands hectares)					
Coffee	27.0	10.4	4.2	0.3	1.6	19.1
Tea	6.6	3.8	4.2	3.9	-	1.1
Pyrethrum	16.3	6.9	-	0.4	-	4.5

Field officers who served in both Central and Nyanza Provinces during the Plan period were in general agreement about the reasons for the difference. They felt that it was partly numbers and resources, because Central Province was better staffed from around 1950 and intensively staffed during the Emergency, partly the degree of close administrative control and partly the reaction by the Kikuyu as an enterprising people to economic opportunity. Whereas in the 1940s the increased presence of administrative and agricultural staff exacerbated a difficult situation, by putting pressure on the population without clearly offering economic benefits, in the late 1950s, when the Administrative and Agricultural staff had benefits to offer, the programme established its own momentum.

In Nyanza Province the situation was quite different. Grayburn recalled that it was a nasty shock to be transferred there:

One had been behaving like a little Hitler, but you were getting something done, and apparently people wanted to do it. The only thing they didn't like was bench terracing. ... But whereas in Kikuyuland you'd almost infallibly get someone saying "I'll try", with the Luo, you'd have to bribe them practically to try. I mean, even if there was a cast-iron certainty. There wasn't the same sort of drive to

do something.⁸

Eric Gordon remembered:

They would talk about it, and they were quite pleasant, and there'd be a certain amount of singing and fishing, and life went on, but it was a different world, much more akin to the speed and workings of bits of Uganda or Tanzania, which was quite different. ... The momentum was quite utterly different, and I didn't conceive it as my job to stir up that momentum because there wasn't the desire for it, and there wasn't the sheer economic necessity for it.⁹

The circumstances which engendered directed development in Central Province were unique and cannot serve as a model for development policy elsewhere. Nevertheless, its agricultural history over a 30 year period illustrates aspects of colonial development and development generally. While the broad lines of policy were discussed in London and Nairobi, the content of development in Central Province was evolved by the men in the field. When political restrictions at the centre prevented them from being able to either extend the land unit or offer economic benefits, they were unable to work effectively. When they could offer incentives, with technical and administrative backup, they achieved high standards rapidly. Though it has been argued that equivalent or better results could have been achieved with less control, the yields in Central Province and in Kenya generally compared to those in the neighbouring territories do not support the claim. Moreover, when standards and controls have slipped in Kenya, production has dropped, as a more recent note in the *Kenya Standard* indicates:

According to a World Bank report, tea production by small-holders in Kenya has dropped both in quality and quantity, which presents a

⁸ J. Grayburn (ODRP 63), interview with A. Thurston and M. Jones, no transcript.

⁹ E. Gordon (ODRP 62), interview, f. 186.

grim future for this vital industry unless urgent steps are taken to improve production. The report blames poor production, plucking, weeding and fertiliser application as the reasons that have led to a decline in greenleaf production by small farmers, while commercial tea estates are doing well.¹⁰

Perhaps the most crucial lesson to be drawn from the Swynnerton Plan is the importance of the field officer's role in development. Local solutions did not solve national problems, but when Swynnerton was able to draw them together and amplify them, with backing from the centre, there was a breakthrough. Mistakes were made, and in the short period of the Plan only a limited percentage of the population was affected. But the Plan succeeded in a way that present international projects often do not, because it was rooted in the field. This, concluded Storrar, who went on to become a senior agricultural adviser to the World Bank, is one of the most essential problems of development today:

I think that one of the reasons why the African development scene has altered, I'm afraid not for the better, especially in the field of agriculture, is that so much of the multinational development projects or whatever you like to call them, are being pushed out from the centre by people who really don't know Africa. How the hell do you expect it to work? ... And this is one of the problems that we have in the world today, including this estimable organisation at which I work, that so much of this is not brought up from the grass roots, and that is why we have all the problems. It does not respect the views of the people on the ground.¹¹

The Swynnerton Plan did.

¹⁰ *Standard*, 5 January, 1983.

¹¹ A. Storrar (ODRP 149), interview with A. Thurston, ff. 63-64.

Bibliography

A. Archival Sources

Kenya National Archives, Nairobi:

Agriculture Deposit One

Agriculture Deposit Two

Agriculture Deposit Three

District Commissioner Kiambu

Public Record Office, London:

C0 533 Kenya Original Correspondence

C0 822 East Africa Original Correspondence

Rhodes House Library:

Private Papers:

T.G. Askwith (RH MSS.Afr.s.1170)

V. Liversage (RH MSS.Afr.s.510)

E.M. Chilver (RH MSS.4.204)

C.E.V. Buxton (RH MSS.Afr.s.1103)

E.E. Biss (RH MSS.Afr.s.1069)

S.H. Fazan (RH MSS.Afr.s.1153)

R.O. Barnes (RH MSS.Brit.Emp.t.1)

E.B. Worthington (RH MSS.Afr.s.1425)

Sir Roger Swynnerton (RH MSS.Afr.s.1426)

Kenya Provincial and District Annual Reports (RH Micr.Afr.515)

Kenya Provincial and District Handing Over Reports (RH Micr.Afr.1517)

Oxford Development Records Project Intensification of Smallholder
African Agricultural Development in Kenya Collection (RH
Mss.Afr.s.1717)

B. Unpublished Sources

M.P. Cowen, "Concentration of Sales and Assets: Dairy Cattle and Tea in
Magutu, 1964-1971", Institute of Development Studies Working Paper,
No. 146

R.M. Maxon, "Cash Crop Innovation Among the Gusii in the 1930s",
Cambridge Conference on the Political Economy of Kenya, 1975

I.D. Talbott, "The Politics of Agriculture: Rural Development Planning in
Kenya in the 1930s", Cambridge Conference on the Political Economy
of Kenya, 1975

D.W. Throup, "The Governorship of Sir Philip Mitchell in Kenya, 1944-
1952, Ph.D., Cambridge, 1983

C. Published Sources

Official Publications:

Kenya Agricultural Department Annual Reports, 1920-1964

*The Kikuyu Lands: The Relation of Population to the Land in South
Nyeri*, N. Humphrey; and *Memorandum on Land Tenure in the Native
Lands*, H.E. Lambert and P. Wyn Harris, Nairobi, 1945

*Proceedings of the Colonial Office Summer Conference on African
Administration, 3rd Session, August 1949*, Colonial Office, 1950

A Plan to Intensify the Development of African Agriculture in Kenya, R.J.M. Swynnerton Nairobi, 1954

East African Royal Commission, 1953-1955, Report, Cmd. 9475, 1955

African Land Development in Kenya, 1946-1955: Report by the African Land Development Board, Nairobi 1956

African Land Development in Kenya, 1946-1962: Report by the African Land Development Board, Nairobi, 1962

Land Consolidation and Farm Planning in the Central Province, L.H. Kolbe and S.J. Fouche, Nairobi, 1959

Kenya African Agricultural Sample Census (Part I), 1961, Nairobi, 1962

Kenya into the Second Decade: World Bank Country Economic Report, Johns Hopkins U.P., 1975

Articles:

B. Berman, "Bureaucracy and Incumbent Violence: Colonial Administration and the Origins of the 'Mau Mau' Emergency in Kenya," *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 6, 1972

R. Bunche, "The Land Equation in Kenya Colony", *Journal of Negro History*, Vol XXIV, No. 1, January, 1939

M.P. Cowen, "Commodity Production in Central Province", in J. Heyer, P. Roberts and G. Williams (eds.), *Rural Development in Tropical Africa*, London, 1981

M.P. Cowen "British State and Agrarian Agriculture in Kenya", in M. Fransman (ed.), *Industry and Accumulation in Africa*, London, 1982

J. Pedraza, "Land Consolidation in the Kikuyu Areas of Kenya", *Journal of African Administration*, Vol 8, 2, 1956

Books:

- E.A. Brett, *Colonialism and Underdevelopment in East Africa: The Politics of Economic Change, 1919-1939*, London, 1973
- J. Heyer and others (eds.), *Agricultural Development in Kenya: An Economic Assessment*, Nairobi, 1976
- G. Kitching, *Class and Economic Change in Kenya: The Making of an African Petite-Bourgeoisie*, London, 1980
- L.S.B. Leakey, *The Southern Kikuyu Before 1903*, Vol. I, London, 1977
- D.J. Morgan, *The Official History of Colonial Development: Changes in British Aid Policy, 1951-1970*, London, 1980
- M.P.K. Sorrenson, *Land Reform in Kikuyu Country: A Study in Government Policy*, Nairobi, 1967
- R.D. Wolff, *The Economics of Colonialism*, Yale, 1974



Cambridge African Monographs

Uganda's First Republic: Administrators and Politicians, 1967-1971

(Cambridge African Monographs, No. 1) edited by A.F. Robertson

ISBN 0-902993-089 £5.00

Response of Some Rural Communities in South-East Ghana to Economic Recession 1982

(Cambridge African Monographs, No. 2) by N.G. Chisholm

ISBN 0-902993-09-7 (out of print)

Irrigation in Tropical Africa: Problems and Problem-Solving

(Cambridge African Monographs, No. 3) edited by W.M. Adams and A.T. Grove

ISBN 0-902993-10-0 £5.50

Villagers, Villages and the State in Modern Tanzania

(Cambridge African Monographs, No. 4) edited by R.G. Abrahams

ISBN 0-902993-11-9 £4.50

Conservation in Sub-Saharan Africa: An Introductory Bibliography for the Social Sciences

(Cambridge African Monographs, No. 5) compiled by J.A. Seeley

ISBN 0-902993-12-7 £5.00

Talking With Ewe Seine Fishermen and Shallot Farmers

(Cambridge African Monographs, No. 6) recording and editing by Polly Hill

ISBN 0-902993-17-8 £5.00

Teaching Conservation: Proceedings of a Seminar on Teaching Conservation Overseas

(Cambridge African Monographs, No. 7) edited by Simon Albrecht and Janet Seeley

ISBN 0-902993-18-6 £4.50

Smallholder Agriculture in Colonial Kenya: The Official Mind and the Swynnerton Plan

(Cambridge African Monographs, No. 8) by Anne Thurston

ISBN 0-902993-19-4 £5.00

Cambridge African Occasional Papers

Famine in Africa: A Guide to Bibliographies and Resource Centres
(Cambridge African Occasional Papers, No. 1) compiled by J.A. Seeley
ISBN 0-902993-13-5 £3.00

Annual Reports of Bende Division, South Eastern Nigeria, 1905-1912
(Cambridge African Occasional Papers, No. 2) by G.I. Jones
ISBN 0-902993-14-3 £4.00

Famine in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Select Bibliography (Excluding the Sahel) From 1978
(Cambridge African Occasional Papers, No. 3) compiled by J.A. Seeley
ISBN 0-902993-15-1 £5.00

H.R.G. Howman on Provincialisation in Rhodesia 1968-1969 and Rational and Irrational Elements
(Cambridge African Occasional Papers, No. 4) edited by G.C. Passmore
ISBN 0-902993-16-X £4.00

Copies of Centre publications can be obtained from the Secretary, African Studies Centre, Free School Lane, Cambridge CB2 3RQ, England.