

## RESETTLEMENT SCHEMES FOR RWANDA REFUGEES IN UGANDA

At the beginning of August, 1961, some eight weeks before Rwanda's pre-Independence elections, severe fighting broke out between supporters of the ruling Monarchist party and members of the Belgian-inspired Parmhutu party. The Monarchist party drew its main support from the Watutsi tribe which had traditionally formed the ruling class and, incidentally, is closely related to the Bahima dynasties in the Uganda Kingdoms. On a tribalist platform the Parmhutu party had succeeded in winning wide support amongst the Bahutu majority, who made up 85% of Rwanda's 2.5 million population.

The first monarchist refugees entered Uganda in mid-September, others fleeing to Burundi, where the Monarchist Uprona Party had won the equivalent elections, and to Tanganyika and the Congo. This exodus was intensified after the arrest and deposition to Uganda of the Umwami (King) of Rwanda, and continued during the early months of 1962. By the middle of May, 1962, it was estimated that the number of refugees who had fled to Uganda was over 36,000, comprised mainly of Watutsi, but with a significant number of Bahutu Monarchists amongst them.

Uganda Government departments and international and local relief organisations provided temporary shelter, food and clothing on an increasing scale as the number of refugees mounted. It soon became clear, however, that the period of exile was unlikely to be brief and the burden of feeding and supporting such large numbers necessitated agricultural settlements which could become self-supporting in as short a time as possible. In November, 1961, a soil and agricultural survey was carried out in the Oruchinga Valley in Ankole District. This broad trough contains a misfit stream flowing from Lake Nakivali, some 25 miles south of Mbarara, southwards to join the Kagera River which at this point forms the Uganda-Tanganyika border.

Apart from being lightly populated and having relatively fertile soils, (mainly sandy clay loams), the Oruchinga Valley presented another attraction as the location for a large-scale settlement scheme. The valley is one of the main routes by which tsetse fly enter Uganda from Tanganyika, where the fly concentration would present a continuing threat to the successful establishment of a large scale ranching scheme in Ankole. This is planned to follow the expenditure of some £250,000 on a spraying and eradication programme; (see p.31 of this journal). In fact, the Oruchinga Valley was previously the site for a partially successful resettlement scheme which was shelved in 1958 pending the results of a small scale irrigation trial. This scheme, in turn, had been unsuccessful in attracting settlers to the few irrigated plots available. Indeed, drainage rather than irrigation has been the main problem in the last two years and the decision has been taken to close it down in 1963. The establishment of a successful fly consolidation line south of the proposed ranching area is therefore a major aim in the district development policy, (particularly in view of the failure of previous barriers) and the influx of large numbers of landless refugees presented a unique opportunity to achieve this purpose.

In the first stage of resettlement, the refugees were moved from temporary camps near the Rwanda border to a large reception centre towards the northern end of the

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Chingira Valley, whilst several thousand head of cattle were allocated grazing areas near Lake Nakiyali. At the end of November, 1961, the first villages were being constructed, and by the end of the year some two thousand refugees had been settled in ten villages of fifty families each, with 150-200 acres of land to each village. Some food crops had been planted during the short rains, and the main channel of the Oruchinga irrigation scheme was extended southwards to provide a domestic water supply for the new villages.

The settlement pattern assumed that the villages would be occupied temporarily - for three years at the most - since at the time the Ankole Government did not favour permanent settlement, and the refugees themselves were unwilling to forsake the hope of an early return to their homeland. The allocation of only one or two acres of crop land per family would necessitate continuous cultivation, with the probability of serious soil deterioration after three years. Further, these large villages with communal crop land and elected 'leaders' represented a major change from the refugees' accustomed social pattern. Traditionally this had been based on the family 'kraal' system, with several Bahutu families owing allegiance to a specific Watutsi family.

During the first half of 1962, settlement along these lines continued until 36 villages, each housing fifty families, had been constructed. Only 30-40 acres of communal land per village were planted to food crops in the first rains, whilst the major food supply was provided in the form of free rations by the Uganda Government (costing £13,000 per month early in 1962), augmented by food received for working on the farms of the earlier local settlers, or bought with savings.

Two major changes in policy were made in mid-1962 - firstly, the communal farming system, which was providing insufficient incentive to work, was abandoned and replaced by individual blocks of land; and, secondly, the decision was taken to plan further settlement on a permanent basis. This entailed replacing temporary grass huts with more permanent mud and wattle buildings in existing villages, and adopting a less densely settled pattern for the remaining settlers. In the established villages there was a spectacular increase in planting during the short rains period (mainly sweet potatoes and maize with beans inter-planted). As a result, these villages were deemed to be self-supporting in February, 1963. In the new villages groups of ten families were allocated 200 acres of land, divided into 10 x 10 acre plots for cultivation, with the remainder fallow. This would allow a stable rotation of three years' cropping and three years' rest. 38 villages of this type were constructed by the beginning of 1963, giving a total of 12,000 refugees settled in the 74 villages on some 14,000 acres of land. The entire settlement is expected to become self-supporting by June, 1963. Further agricultural development is to be based on groundnuts as a cash crop and expanded planting of bananas as a high-yielding staple food crop.

In 1963, it is proposed to resettle other Rwanda refugees in areas adjoining previous Bakiga settlement schemes at Kahunge in Toro Kingdom and at Nyansimbo in Ankole Kingdom. These areas are also associated with the establishment of tsetse-fly consolidation barriers, but have a considerably higher agricultural poten-

tential.

trial than the Oruchinga Valley, particularly since higher value cash crops — cotton and coffee — can be grown there.

Despite the immense administrative and agricultural achievement which this resettlement project in the Oruchinga Valley represents, its enduring success is subject to two major hazards. Firstly, it is necessary to reduce the population in the older, 50-family, villages by at least 50% in the next two years if serious soil deterioration is to be avoided. However, no more land is available for settlement in the Oruchinga area, and since the process would involve disrupting for a second time the social structure of the unfortunate refugees, there is little likelihood that spontaneous emigration will occur on a sufficient scale before soil fertility begins to decline seriously. Secondly, despite the adequate rainfall received over the last two years, the long run level and reliability of rainfall in the valley is one of the poorest in Uganda. The 20% probability of rainfall is less than 30 inches (Uganda Atlas 1962, p.19, based on all available data to 1961), a situation paralleled only in Karamoja and the trough areas of the Western Rift Valley! The original Oruchinga settlement scheme failed partly on this score, which accounted for the initiation of experimental work on irrigation. However, irrigation of the large resettled area is still a matter of the question, so that the refugees face the probability of severe crop failure recurring with unacceptable frequency. It would be unfortunate if the attraction of building a concrete fly barrier to protect a ranching scheme whose economic viability has to be assessed were to subject these unhappy people to further misfortune — and the Uganda Government to further relied expenditure. It would certainly be regrettable if the necessary impetus were lacking to resettle the great majority of refugees in potentially more productive, but still uninhabited, areas of northern Ankole and Toro to the concomitant benefit of the revenues of the local and central governments, and of the national product as a whole.