

## POTATO BOYCOTT IN 1959

Potato boycott took place in the year 1959, as a result of exposure of atrocities that occurred on farms around Bethal. Government contrived a system that forced blacks to work for farmers, and in the process, potato farm workers were harshly treated and in some cases they were killed, secretly buried and their families were never informed about disappearances of their family members.

Through the production of potatoes, the country generated substantial income, because about 80% potatoes produced, were exported. This is one of the principal reasons why government found it essential to force blacks to provide farm labour.

### EFFORTS TO PROVIDE FARMERS WITH LABOURERS

Through the 1913 and 1936 native land Acts, blacks were dispossessed of land. These acts were consolidated by the proclamation of the labour tenant act. The few blacks who still owned plots were dispossessed and forced to become squatters in land they previously possessed. They were forced to work for farmers in what became known as "voluntary labour", black farm workers in this case were remunerated (paid) with a pocket of potatoes after a week or so.

To provide farmers with abundant labour, blacks were arrested for petty offences such as being outside home after the curfew hour, failure to produce the pass book, being at the wrong place at the wrong time. These arrests, provided in exhaustible resources of farm labour, because arrested people were transported to farms, often without appearing before the magistrate.

In 1932 short-term prisoners were forced to become farm contract workers. A system which forced them to sell their labour to white farmers, without even knowing terms of the contracts they signed. This system became famously known as the six pence a day scheme.

In the war between 1942 and 1943, once more farmers experienced a high labour shortage. To overcome this problem, farmers' organizations pressed the native affairs Department to pass an emergency regulation that would force African squatters and their children to work for white farmers. Government was further persuaded to remove redundant blacks from cities and towns, and channel them to farms, again government was asked to approach Portuguese East African government about the diversion of Mozambicans rejected as unfit for mines to farms.