AFRICA'S COLONIAL EXPERIENCE: A REVALUATION

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Introduction: The Problem

Like the Atlantic Slave Trade the impact of colonialism on African society has become a matter of heated dispute. Most African and European writers believe that colonial rule was 'either a blessing or at worst not harmful to Africa'. They point to the staggering difference in the life-style of Africans at the beginning of imperial domination in the 1880s and at the time of decolonisa-tion some eighty years later. Basing herself on western standards which she assumes to be the norm, Margery Perham reminds us that when the colonisers appeared on the scene African peoples were disease and poverty-stricken often naked and possessing neither any permanent buildings nor the wheel and the plough. 'They were illiterate, fragmented into vast numbers of independent and often warring groups'.[1] It was only the intrusion of Europe, she suggests, 'which caused the full awakening of the latent poten-tialities of Africa, the dark sleeping beauty, even though the intru-sion was a rape rather than a kiss'.[2]

Unlike Margery Perham the late Oxford historian Dr. Richard Pares admits without any equivocation that 'there is a huge heap of evil in the scale' but draws comfort from the hope that the misdeeds may be outweighed by an even larger heap of good which was not always intentionally done for its own sake, but good nevertheless'.[3]

For left-wing scholars, among them the distinguished Guyanese historian, Dr. Walter Rodney, colonialism amounted to a scourge that wreaked unmitigated havoc on Africans. The title of one of his best known works *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, (Dar es Salaam, 1972) is illustrative. Rodney rejects the claim, of which Richard Pares' view is a typical example, that on the one hand there was exploitation and oppression and on the other hand much that benefited African peoples. Rodney insists that 'colonialism had only one hand - it was a one-armed bandit'.[4]

The clash of opinions stems largely from the failure of professional

historians to live up to their own prescriptions. In theory they state that History is concerned with the activities of human beings and that its study 'comprehends everything that men have said, thought, done or suffered.'[5] But in practice the same historians tend to focus attention on only the material aspects of man's development. Human yearnings of a subtler and higher nature are either denied or at best deemed unworthy of notice. Hence Karl Popper's perceptive remark that when people speak about the 'history of mankind', what they mean and have learnt about in school is the 'history of political power'. 'There is no history of mankind', he laments, there is only an indefinite number of histories of all kinds of aspects of human life. And one of these is the history of political power. This is elevated into

> the history of the world. But this, I hold, is an offence against every decent conception of man- kind. It is hardly better than to treat the history of embezzlement or of robbery or of poisoning as the history of mankind'.[6]

As if in full agreement with Rodney, Popper dismisses the history of power politics as 'nothing but the history of international crime and mass murder ... This is the history taught in schools, and some of the greatest criminals are extolled as its heroes'.[7]

The discrepancy between the avowed subject matter of History and what scholars produce is due to a misunderstanding or denial of the true nature of man or both. No doubt men regardless of their race, nationality, sex, class and religion need dwelling, clothing, food and tools. But this is not enough because man is not just the physical body nor does he live by bread alone. Man con-sists of body and soul or better said spirit. The real man is the inner or spiritual core sheltered by the physical body. The spiritual nature of man is attested to by the existence of religious shrines in every part of the world from time immemorial. Despite this glar-ing fact historians appear reluctant if not ashamed to admit to a spiritual experience. In any case now that eminent scientists are beginning to reject matter as the ultimate reality, it no longer makes sense for humanistic scholars to continue to sneer at spirit-uality as medieval superstition. Any meaningful historical analysis must therefore not underplay let alone omit the spiritual dimen-sion. This essay is an attempt to reassess Africa's colonial

experience from the standpoint of this wider and more balanced perspective.

Up to 1880 less than a fifth of the land mass of Africa was controlled by foreigners. During the ensuing decades European powers laid claim to some eight million kilometres of African territory supporting a population of over 60 million spread over a thousand polities at various levels of economic and political advancement. By 1900 about nine-tenths of the continent had been occupied by the Europeans. With the Italian conquest of Libya in 1911 and the partition of Morocco by France and Spain the follo-wing year, the entire continent excepting Liberia and Ethiopia fell under colonial domination. The ease with which the invaders over-ran the continent was due largely to their superior technology exemplified in the maxim gun. Like the Incas of America, Afri-cans apparently forgot there were hungry lions across the border seeking whom to devour. And they paid dearly for their negli-ge-nce. Of course one can point to several cases of occupation by peaceful negotiation with African chiefs as in Central Africa. But few if any African rulers intended to surrender their sovereignty permanently to the new comers. Europeans justified the dismem-berment of Africa in terms of a civilising mission, the so-called White Man's Burden, which found a classic expression in a claim of 1876 advanced by King Leopold of Belgium before a 'geogra-phic conference' held in Brussels. According to the king "To open to civilization the only part of our globe where it has not yet penetrated, to pierce the darkness which envelops whole popula-tions, is a crusade, if I may say so, a crusade worthy of this century of progress".[8] In the absence of an international machinery to carry out the rescue operation colonial subjugation was deemed the quickest and most peaceful method.

The claim that Europe's task was 'to train Africa without brutality and without pretending to treat the African as the equal of the white man in any way'[9] understandably led to the portrayal of Africans as children.

But there was a difference in the approach of

> different European powers: some believed that the children they watched over could grow up into

> good Europeans; others believed they were permanently children, or rather immutably separate and inferior to the Europeans.[10]

Kobina Sekyi, a Gold Coast (now Ghana) philosophy student at University College, London conveyed his resentment in a series of articles written in 1918 and entitled the 'Anglo-Fanti'.[11] He observed that it did not take an African long to discover that he was considered a savage even by the starving unemployed in the metropolis who begged him for alms. Amusing questions were frequently put to him as to whether he wore clothes before his voyage to England; whether it was safe for Europeans to visit Africa since its climate was unsuitable for civilised peoples and whether wild beasts roamed about in his village.

The view that pre-colonial Black Africa was backward and static is untrue. This myth was strongly encouraged by the tend-ency of economists, political scientists and sociologists to discuss development in terms of 'tradition' and 'modernity', the 'before' and 'after' models. Under the scheme 'before' represents tradition-al society assumed to be virtually changeless and primitive; while 'after' refers to the process of modernisation brought about by European influence or presence.

Actually no human society is changeless for movement is a law of nature. That African communities are no exception to this universal law is borne out by the numerous references in their oral traditions to migrations, conquests and social unrest all of which imply change. Before the onset of European imperialism men in Africa lived in well-organised polities sustained by a clearly articulated world outlook.

Two Opposing World Views

A world view is usually made up of several beliefs which taken together provide the individual with a meaningful explana-tion of his place in the cosmic scheme. The component ideas are transmitted from parents to children by example and instruction. In societies lacking the art of writing,

such values and notions are embedded in proverbs, myths, stories, customs, names, prayers and ceremonies.

A philosophy of life may include beliefs about the origin of the universe, the purpose of human existence, the relation between man and his Creator, between man and fellow-man and between man and nature. Because the physical environment and historical experience vary from region to region, cosmological concepts differ from people to people and from age to age. Thus with the onset of the Scientific Revolution in the seventeenth century and the Age of Reason in the eighteenth the European world system which hitherto had been religious became essentially atheistic, intellectual and materialistic. Similarly in societies without the script, rebellions, invasions and intrigues may well lead to a modification, however slight, of the existing world outlook.

Despite the variety of African cultures the African world system at the time of colonial conquest - whether in Arab or Negroid Africa - was and still is religious, In many ways the colonial encounter may be seen as a contest between two opposing world views.

The traditional African political system is essentially democratic. Leaders were aware that authority was not concentra-ted in them but shared out to structures which they merely co-ordinated and supervised. It was their duty to defend the principles of discussion, disagreement and dispersion of authority. Under the system every section of the community participated in the process of decision making. After debates a consensus was reached. The absence of legalised opposition does not detract from the merit of the system. After all, opposition is opposition; whether it comes from below or above; from within or without is beside the point. Safeguards for redress also formed an integral part of the judicial process. The individual had the right to be heard, the right to appeal against judgement and even the right to oracular adjudica-tion.

At the heart of African cosmology is the concept of an absolute

moral order sustaining creation. This order may not be upset or disregarded with impunity.[12] This philosophy of life especially south of the Sahara may not have led to the production of a sophisticated technology but in general it provided relatively peaceful, contented and stable societies which over the millennia evolved the institutions of state in places. The Baganda of East
Africa, and the Asante, Edo and Yoruba in West Africa establish-ed states in response to their spiritual, economic and political needs. And because the African traditional arrangements did not resemble what the Europeans were used to, the imperialists declar-ed them non-existent or, at best, primitive.

Colonial Practice and the Africans' Response

Having awarded themselves vast tracts of African territory the new comers proceeded to rearrange matters to suit their own world outlook. Surely it would be naive to expect adventurers in search of material wealth to love strangers of another race more than themselves. Cecil Rhodes, the great British empire builder, let the cat out of the bag when he confessed that "pure philan-thropy is very well in its way, but philanthropy plus five per cent is a good deal better".[13] He might have said seventy-five per cent! 'And he used the "philanthropy plus" method, not only for him-self, but in dealing with those who were necessary tools in the realisation of his dream of empire'.[14]

Chiefs who challenged the intruders were either deposed or exiled while those who accepted the new order as a *fait accompli* were reduced to mere agents. In the last analysis little or no fundamental difference really existed between the methods of Britain and France. Both imperial powers combined direct rule through an European officer and indirect rule through indigenous rulers and other local agents willing to collaborate in their own private interests. Because it was not economical to engage Euro-pean functionaries in large numbers - for their wages and expenses had to be met from local taxation - nominated chiefs, interpreters, local police men and assistants of every description became the men to whom 'pacified populations' were increasingly subjected.

The British system was absolutist on the spot, but it was an absolutism tempered by the existence above the governor of a metropolitan liberal democracy which could receive and air grievances and which occasionally insisted, often without success, upon the exercise of civil liberties within the colony. The governor himself was responsible not to the legislative council in the colony but to the Colonial Secretary in London who was in turn responsible to the metropolitan parliament there.

Among the notable features of the Belgian colonial adven-ture in the Congo (Zaire) were the concession system and forced labour. From 1885 to 1908 the Congo Free State (so named beca-use it was supposed to be free of discriminatory taxes for all the interested European nations) constituted a private property of King Leopold II and was in no way subject to Belgium. One of the first philanthropic measures taken by the new Free State in 1885 was to declare all 'vacant lands' throughout the Congo its private property. By this decree the inhabitants were left with only patches of land actually cultivated by them or occupied by their huts for the 'vacant lands' included forests containing countless herds of elephants whose tusks provided ivory and also rubber vines which grew in great abundance. 'King and businessmen reaped their rich harvest of profits, at least after 1895, from the export of rubber and ivory collected by forced labour and costing little more than the expense of transport and military administration',[15]

When in 1908 the Belgian Government took over the Congo Free State, which henceforth became known as the Belgian Congo, that Government introduced reforms by reducing the scale of concessions and revising the terms upon which they were pre-viously awarded. The reforms also restored to the Congolese peo-ple the right to sell their labour freely and handed back a consider-able measure of local autonomy to the traditional rulers.[16] But vested interests still remained and mining and agricultural conce-ssions which needed labour that was not forthcoming continued to be awarded. According to a Report of 1919 issued by an official Belgian Commission, the population of the Belgian Congo had

been 'reduced by half' since the beginning of European occupation in the 1880s.[17]

The concession system was also applied in French and German occupied Africa. In 1900 forty French Companies were granted concession rights for thirty years in the *Afrique Equatoriale Francaise*. Two years earlier the South Cameroons Company received nearly 20 million acres where it could collect rubber free of charge for ever.[18]

Large scale appropriation of native lands also occurred in Central and East Africa where particularly in Kenya and the Rho-desias (Zambia and Zimbabwe), the best lands were taken over as Crown lands and distributed among white settlers. As in the Congo the seizure of the native lands was defended on the ground that they were undeveloped no man's land. The fierce revolts these confiscations provoked throughout colonial Africa and Jomo Kenyatta's warning at the time 'that every inch of the Gikuyu territory had its owner, with the boundary property fixed and everyone respecting his neighbour's serve to knock the bottom out of the rationalisation.[19] The presence of European settlers and the one-sided allocation of fertile lands gave rise in these regions to parallel societies in which the indigenous population and the immi-grant community lived in a state of mutual suspicion and hatred.

To attain greater economic and political control, the colonisers attacked the African cultural environment. European culture was assiduously promoted and transmitted through formal schooling. The educational institutions encouraged their pupils/students to detach themselves from the greater African society. The ability to read and write was deemed more beneficial than the African cultural heritage. Once the pupils left school the villages could not keep them. So irresistible was the idea of becoming clerks.

In general the training given to Africans was not directly related to the priorities of their own communities. Whatever service they were able to

render to their people had first to conform with the designs of the invaders or their agents. The aim of education was to make colonial exploitation more efficient rather than prepare the African for self-government. Consider the lack of men trained for politics, administration, technical service. Perham must have spoken on behalf of all the modern European imperialists when she retorted that 'the British had not annexed Africa with the single purpose of disannexing it at the earliest possible moment'.[20]

Although the original intention of the European colonisers was not to withdraw from the continent as soon as possible, their actions unwittingly served that purpose. To facilitate the political domination and the economic exploitation of the territories they had occupied by force of arms, the colonial masters introduced western-style political, social and economic infrastructures. They established a bureaucratic form of government, banks, modern forms of currency, western-style medical science and education, pipe-borne water, electric light, postal and telecommunication services. A system of motorable roads, railways, air and sea ports linked distant regions together and thus helped the movement of people and produce.

Italy's invasion of Abyssinia (Ethiopia) in 1935 amounted to the last straw that broke the back of Africans' forbearance. Admittedly the League of Nations disapproved of Italy's adven-ture. Nevertheless it failed to enforce economic sanctions on the culprit. The readiness with which European leaders accepted and even aided Italy's aggression forced Africans at home and abroad to conclude that European leaders were immoral and unscrupulous politicians united by instinct and interest against Black men. This view is illustrated by the following passage from an editorial comment in the *Gold Coast Spectator* (May 15, 1936):

Force, the white man's god, is again supreme. Addis Ababa is occupied. Poison gas, British oil and the white man's duplicity all combined to make the Italian advance victorious ... This is the Christian nation at work!

Having learnt their bitter lesson, Africans and persons of African descent began to press unequivocally for an end to Euro-pean colonial domination. The case was ably argued by the emi-nent African-West Indian economist W. Arthur Lewis in his re-view of Margery Perham's book *Africa and British Rule* (1941).[21] Basing himself on conditions in Eastern and Southern Africa as well as his native Caribbean, Arthur Lewis contended that as a boy the African discovered that his school was a shamble compar-ed with what was reserved for his white counterpart. As the African grew up he noticed the inadequacy of the land on which his people depended for their livelihood and learnt how they had been driven into infertile 'native reserves' to make room for white settlers. His father was not only obliged to become a tenant on an European farm but even compelled, like a medieval serf, to work for at least three months every year on his farm in lieu of rent.

When the African went from his village to work in mines he discovered that however competent he showed himself to be, he was denied a skilled job because of his complexion. And if he tried to organise any protest he was branded a communist agitator and jailed. Africans were seeking an explanation for these irregu-larities which clearly contradicted the avowed philanthropic moti-ves of the colonisers. Rejecting Margery Perham's claim that the European occupation of Africa was a historical necessity destined to last for a long time to come, Arthur Lewis felt that the sub-jugation and exploitation of Africans could never be justified on the mere assumption that they were inferior and barbarous.

Neither the present haphazard development in Africa by European adventurers nor the measures envisaged in the Statement of Policy on Colonial Development and Welfare (1940) could bring 'civilisation' to 'savage' Africa except as a slow and uncertain by-product of private profit. And if this was all the development the colonial subjects should hope for, then Miss Perham must be right in saying that Africa was bound to remain backward for many generations. In that case Africans would have every

right to question whether this uncertain fringe benefit was worth the price they were paying. Finally Arthur Lewis dismissed Margery Perham's book as a rationalisation of European racial arrogance and colonial intrusion.

Equally lucid and persuasive is Kwame Nkrumah's *Towards Colonial Freedom* printed in London in 1947.[22] Like Arthur Lewis he drew attention to the wide gulf separating coloni-al rhetoric from the reality. Nkrumah warned that the future development of West Africans as well as other colonial peoples could only take place under conditions of self rule; 'the people will certainly not prosper under colonialism and imperialism'.[23]

The most sophisticated anti-colonial political theory was produced by the Ewe physician Dr. S.D. Cudjoe. Born in Lome on 7th February 1910 in French occupied Togoland and trained at Mfantsipim Methodist College (Gold Coast), he went to Britain in 1932 to study medicine at Edinburgh University qualifying at the outbreak of war. In his scarcely known booklet *Aids to African Autonomy* (London, 1949) he rebuked the conquerors and their 'collaborating clique of educated Africans or chiefs'. Cudjoe argued that where a government failed to implement its policy of liberty and equality, it was the duty of the people to take any measures they considered necessary to secure those aims. He wondered how the British overlords hoped to produce African members of the Commonwealth by first robbing them of political and economic freedom. 'The sacred trust was self-conferred and self-regulated; it did not necessarily command the trust of the native Africans.'[24] None of the British occupied African territories, he pointed out, belonged to the Crown either by natural right or by the willing sanction of African traditional law. Cudjoe con-ceded that some African countries notably Basutoland (now Lesotho), Bechuanaland (now Botswana) and Swaziland sought British alliance against incursions of other European adventurers, 'yet they had no desire to abandon or cede their independence to British, or to any other European power.'[25] With the anti-Nazi and anti-fascist war propaganda in mind, Cudjoe thought it hypo-critical if not amusing for the British authorities who deprived other people of their independence to pose before the rest of the world, not as

conqueror, but as the champion of freedom and just-ice.'[26] He regretted that 'British rule in Africa is too preoccupied with gold to dig up past African civilisations, too conscious of its own achievements to respect the culture of those upon whom it tramples; and too certain of its own despotism to feel the need for personal relationships.'[27]

Cudjoe conceded that British rule introduced education and science, built roads and railways on a modest scale and brought a measure of prosperity to some Africans. All the same no self-respecting African he maintained would accept such so-called benefits of foreign yoke as adequate compensation for the loss of political autonomy 'because those benefits are necessarily inciden-tal.' Moreover 'an enlightened African Government can achieve these things too.'[28] For these reasons 'African freedom must always remain more desirable to them than the economic or politi-cal success which British rule makes or intends to make of their country.'[29] Only credulous Africans believed in the promises of the British administration 'to prepare them for self-government when at every turn the authorities are so obsessed with consolidating their own power.' It was not through being the servant of Europe that Africa would advance,

> nor does the basis of a genuine Afro-European co-operation consist in her acceptance of her present servitude. She will not regain her freedom merely by imitating or attaining identity with the white race, but by achieving a goal for herself which is of equal value with what is good in the civilisation of the West.[30]

Margery Perham was rebuked for pleading with Europeans not to write off the Black man as an inferior human being until he had been placed in really good conditions under the influence of civilisation for at least 500 years. If a capitalist economy and indirect rule were an integral part of her conception of civilisation, 'then it is a great wonder that she postpones for 500 years a deci-sion which is so glaringly self-evident.'[31]

Cudjoe reminded imperialist apologists who talked piously about 'native misgovernment' of the dismal record of modern European statesmen notably the two terrible world wars they infli-cted upon mankind. He agreed with E.D. Morel that the First World War, for example, brought more suffering to a far larger proportion of humanity than the alleged misrule of any native tyrant had ever managed to unleash. Cudjoe warned that a limited conception of liberty as exemplified in colonial bondage would ultimately destroy European civilisation whether in Africa, Asia, the U.S.A. or Europe itself. 'For bad civilisations soon perish, and perish they must of their own evil'.[32]

In 1951, that is barely three years after Cudjoe's warning, Margery Perham repeated her long-held view that Africans cannot do without foreign rulers for a long time to come. She contended that the disparity of material power notwithstanding, the meeting of the West with Asia would have to be on the basis of equals. But the dealings between tropical Africa and the West must be differ-ent. 'Until the very recent penetration by Europe the greater part of the continent was without the wheel, the plough and the trans-port animal; almost without store houses or clothes except for skins, without writing and so without history.'[33]

In common with W. Arthur Lewis the late Kenneth Onwuka Dike rejected Margery Perham's thesis as an apologia for imperialism adding that so long as the African was regarded as a man with neither culture nor history, 'doubts concerning his ability to govern himself will find evidence.'[34]

Despite Margery Perham's assurances of the unassailability of the colonial edifice, most of the imperial powers soon commit-ted themselves to a speedy withdrawal from the continent thanks to the mounting agitation for self-determination. This campaign was reinforced by the experience of the Japanese in China, the British in Malaya and India, the Americans in the Philippines and the French in Indo - China. The humiliation of France

and Britain in the Suez Crisis (1956) and the independence of the Gold Coast (Ghana) under the leadership of Kwame Nkrumah added impetus to the 'wind of change' so that by 1960 alone no less than seven-teen African states regained their freedom.

Colonial Legacy and Impact

If Africans gained and lost from colonial subjugation, did the credit outweigh the debit? Or was the whole affair more of a curse than a blessing? How far did the imperialist nations succeed in laying a solid foundation for political stability and economic and cultural development? To what extent did they integrate the conti-nent with the modern world?

The view that the partition of Africa amounted to a balkani-sation of the continent cannot be sustained by the available eviden-ce. The European colonial adventurers reduced to about forty colonies the one thousand old polities that characterised nineteenth century Africa. In this way they created larger African political entities which alone can endure in the post-war world. It is true that the imperialists did not always respect linguistic boundaries and that from time to time they attempted to divide in order to facilitate their rule. But their very act of ruling in the end tended to unite. It was the British for instance who tried to weld together the 250 cultural - linguistic groups in Nigeria. It was they who gave these disparate groups the common name 'Nigeria' and a common language as well as a common central administration.

At the Wellesley College Symposium on Africa in 1960 Julius Nyerere rightly contended that the sentiment of oneness among Africans, was something imposed from outside. 'Africans, all over the continent, without a word being spoken either from one individual to another or from one African country to another, looked at the European, looked at one another, and knew that in relation to the European they were one'.[35]

Not only did European partition and colonial rule have the unintended effect of establishing larger territorial groupings and fostering a

feeling of solidarity among African peoples throughout the continent; European colonial regimes also unwittingly brought Africans closer together by improving the existing means of com-munication. Although these and many another colonial reform were not inspired by altruism, they nevertheless put Africa in a position to participate more fully in international politics. This does not mean that the colonial interlude was a historical nece-ssity. Africa, as the late Professor Michael Crowder argued, contained the seeds of its own modernisation. What colonialism did was to quicken or destroy certain tendencies already at work.

For many Africans and certainly for most in East and Central Africa the new colonial order proved more autocratic than pre-colonial societies. As rulers of Africa, the conquerors main-tained that representative democracy was bad for the 'natives'. Only when they found that the Africans were bent on regaining their sovereignty did the former offer the latter their own political system to mimic. And Africans were expected to succeed in barely ten years with a system that took over a thousand years to evolve in Europe.

Not surprisingly the first decade of African independence witnessed the collapse of the western parliamentary system of government bequeathed by the departing imperial authorities. In West Africa alone at least twelve countries had become by 1965 one-party states either in law or in practice. Among them may be mentioned Dahomey (now Benin Republic), Ghana, Ivory Coast, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal and Togo. Between 1966 and 1990 Nigeria suffered no less than six military coups, three failed coups relieved by a brief return to a two-party system of government that made mockery of liberal democracy. In Mobutu's Zaire the ubiqui-tous secret police has been described rightly as 'the sole arm of the Zairean state that operates effectively'.[36] Few if any knowle-dgeable African will contest the truth of the perceptive editorial comment of the *Daily Telegraph* (London, 28 January 1986) that Uganda

> can fairly be described as having become a symbol of everything that has gone wrong in that continent

> over the past 20 years. Since independence it has experienced violence (with hundreds of thousands killed), poverty, misgovernment on an enormous scale, and terrible suffering. Steadily the pillars of government, of law and even economic life have been destroyed.[37]

The colonial legacy is largely responsible for the way Africa has developed in the past three decades. The colonial state was not only conceived in violence, it was also sustained by the free use of it. If the conquerors provided any model for their successors, it was that government rested on force, not consent. Africans had little or no opportunity of participating in the machinery of the colonial state until a few years before its demise.

Zaire remains the most notorious example of the lack of preparation for transfer of political power. If the departing Belgians merely prescribed the medicine of democracy for their erstwhile colonial subjects, the Portuguese and Spanish imperial overlords insisted that this type of medication would do no people any good. And in Guinea (Conakry) the French actually tried to destroy the foundation of that state before they handed over power to Sekou Toure reluctantly.

Similarly the roots of rural poverty and of a disarticulated economy are traceable to the colonial inheritance. The colonial state was not organised and run for the benefit of its indigenous populations. Not only was industrialisation deliberately neglected, such crafts that existed in pre-colonial Africa were discouraged if not destroyed. Through taxation, compulsory crop rotation and forced labour the African farmer was obliged to produce the cash crops that the multi-national companies required even if this meant impoverishment of the land and famine in the dependencies.

Although agricultural crops soon became the major source of income for most African colonies, no serious attempts were made to diversify the colonial agricultural economy. On the con-trary 'the

production of only single or at best two cash crops had become the rule - cocoa in the Gold Coast, groundnuts in Senegal and The Gambia, cotton in Sudan, coffee and cotton in Uganda, coffee and sisal in Tanganyika.'[38] Whatever credit colonialism may claim for the integration of African economies with the main-stream of the global economic order was robbed of much force by the exploitative manner in which this was done. The result is that since the dissolution of the colonial empires, most African terri-tories have been saddled with monocrop economies operating at the mercy of the international terms of trade formulated by the industrialised nations of the West.

The prices of the agricultural products have been falling steadily since the mid-1950s. And because Africa could not earn enough foreign exchange to pay for its essential exports the region's dependence on external help tended to be on the increase. Technical assistance alone accounts for as much as 25% of this aid but little or nothing of this finds its way to the continent for most of the experts prefer to keep the salaries overseas. The deteriora-ting social and economic condition of the people eventually forced many an independent African state including Nigeria to apply for external aid programmes designed by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

In two perceptive studies published in London as early as 1973 David Wall (*The Charity of Nations: The Political Economy of Foreign Aid*) and Tibor Mende (*From Aid to Recolonization*) demonstrated that the United States and Japan as well as the ex-colonial powers have found in aid and trade the most convenient means of protecting and promoting their national self-interest in the Third World. Thus external assistance, commercial and invest-ment policies are designed not to enhance but to reduce self-help and self-reliance in the Third World. Not surprisingly

> Between 1980-87 the net transfer of resources from the poor countries to the rich countries amounted to $287 billion. Since 1984 the IMF and World Bank

> have been net earners from the indebted countries at the annual rate of $3 billion for the IMF and $1.9 for the World Bank by way of debt servicing alone.[39]

What all this shows is that colonial domination can not escape responsibility for the dependency burden under which emancipated Africa now labours.

Conclusion

To see development solely in terms of factories, railways, air ports, computers, steamboats and Gross National Product is to miss the point. The point is that, though important, material values are neither the only values nor even the most important. There are values of a subtler and higher nature which stand in greater need of nourishment. These are religious or spiritual values. They have no absolute connection with technological sophistication. Thus a community that is technologically backward may possess a richer inner life than a highly industrialised society. Despite its primitive technology, compared with the contemporary European, traditional Africa managed to achieve a satisfactory and therefore durable balance between material and spiritual pursuits. It also succeeded in harmonising the interests of the individual and those of the wider society. Instead of building on this time-tested foundation and making modifications only here and there to suit the exigen-cies of the contemporary world, the colonial masters destroyed it. They imposed their own world view which as already noted is in the main atheistic, materialistic and above all excessively indivi-dualistic and legalistic.

Self-government afforded African leaders the opportunity to return to the mainstream of their traditional life and culture by adapting or abandoning disruptive foreign ideas and practices. The chance was not used in any meaningful manner partly because of neo-colonialist pressures and largely because the African leaders themselves, with a few exceptions, seemed quite content with aping their white conquerors. Western

civilisation resembles an oak tree that looks healthy but whose interior has already been eaten away by rot. A child could push such a tree over. The spectacular scientific advancement of Europe since the eighteenth century reinforced by the glittering splendour of western metropo-lises as well as the parochialism and cultural arrogance of many western writers - all this has the combined effect of concealing from the superficial observer the fact that western society itself has entered an advanced stage of decay. Leaders of modern African nations appear unaware of their right to find their way to achieve the greatest happiness for the greatest number in the context of their own culture and the wider and more recent historical experience. Taking something over is not progress, for progress shows itself in the improvement of what already exists.

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