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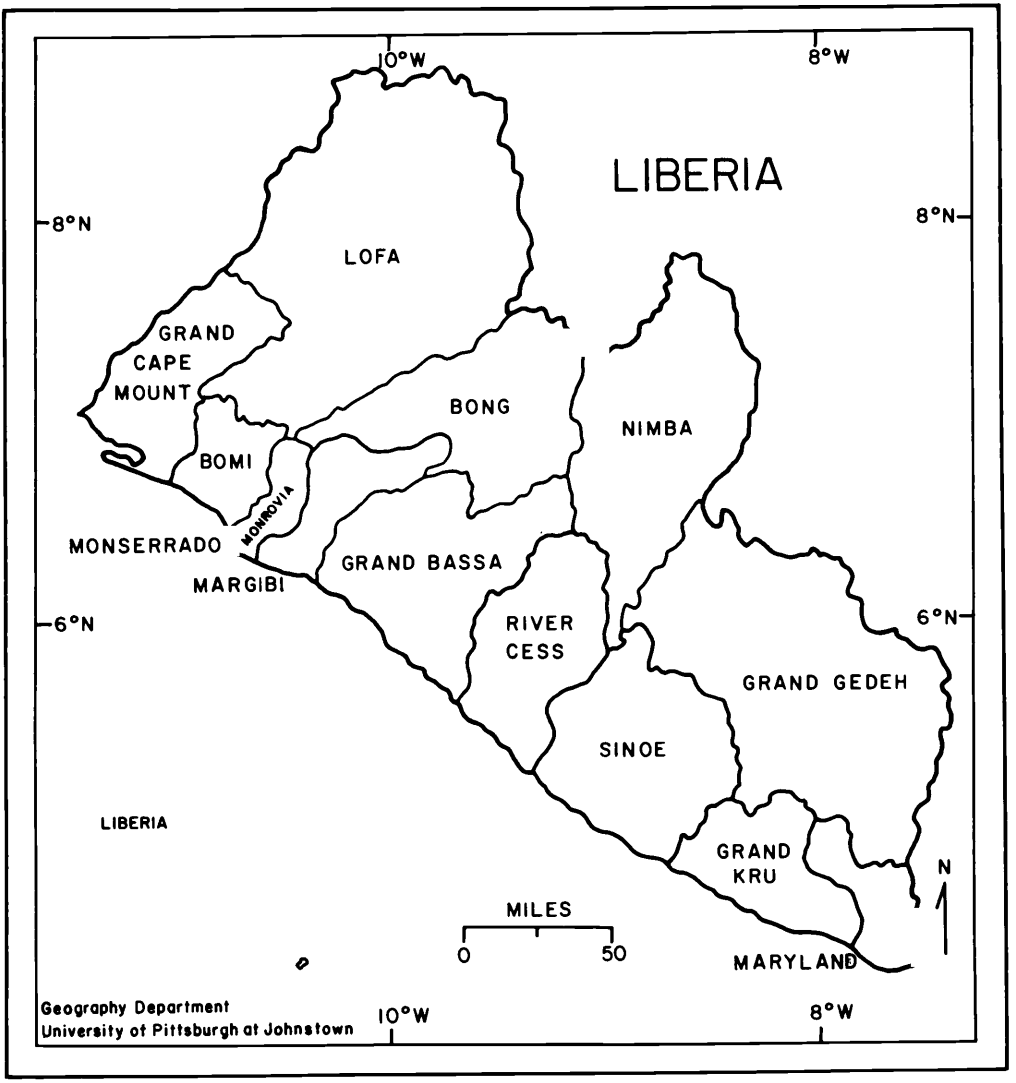

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The United States–Liberia Operational Experts Project

Frank B. Kimble

The Origin

In January, 1987, Secretary of State George Shultz visited Liberia for a few hours. Economic and financial concerns were at the center of the agenda. The U.S. had been a strong supporter of the Samuel K. Doe Administration, providing over $500 million in aid since 1980. The U.S. had also leaned on the International Monetary Fund (I.M.F.) and the World Bank to provide relatively large sums as well. The money had not been well invested; Liberian public administration had been lax at best and corrupt at worst. It was becoming clear that Liberia was heading for serious economic and financial problems.

President Doe took the occasion to make an unusual request. He professed that he really did want to straighten matters out but that he could not trust his own people to do so. He said he needed outsiders to provide him with the technical expertise to run the financial affairs of his government.

The following month U.S. AID Administrator M. Peter McPherson reached agreement with President Doe on the details of the Operational Expert Project.

The five point policy agenda contained the following reform measures:

> 1. Prohibit the practice of borrowing against traditional sources of offshore revenue (maritime, royalties, and corporate taxes) and do not utilize such offshore revenues to pay onshore expenditures. Halt extra–budgetary expenditures (i.e., expenditures not approved or recorded in the Government of Liberia GOL budget). All salaries will be in the budget and every effort will be made to comply with this budget. It must be understood by both governments that employees' salaries must be current in December. Priority will be given in the coming months to reducing salary arrearages.
>
> 2. By June 15, 1987, develop and publish a realistic budget for GOL budget year 1987–88. The budget will reflect expected revenues and encompass all expenditures and show no un–financed gap. The budget will be based on a revised fiscal plan in the Economic Recovery Program to be completed by May 15, 1987. In executing the budget, the GOL will permit no net budget overruns, nor permit extrabudgetary expenditures to occur.

3. As part of the 1987–88 budget process, develop a budget of all offshore revenues, which will include a priority list for external debt payments. Brooke–sensitive debt payments should be made in full and on time.

4. Contract by April 30, 1987, with internationally recognized firms for preparation of current financial statements of Liberia Petroleum Refinery Corporation (LPRC) and Liberia Produce Marketing Corporation (LPMC). Liberian owned and controlled firms will be able to participate in these studies as subcontractors. Conduct annual financial reviews thereafter. Develop a plan of action to better manage and restructure LPRC and LPMC. Collect and deposit into government revenues excise taxes levied on imported petroleum products.

5. The GOL will carefully review the recent IMF currency study and work with the IMF on overall economic reform. No release of new Liberian coins will be undertaken without prior consultation with the IMF and the U.S.

Economic Background

What had brought Liberia to this state of affairs? In the 1960's and 1970's the rates of economic growth in Liberia had averaged a strong 4–6% per annum. This was due to large increases in output and value–added in the rubber and iron ore sectors. In the mid 1970's the dramatic increase in energy prices and the resulting recession in the industrialized world weakened the demand for iron ore and rubber. In 1974–1979, Liberia's economic growth rate was less than 1%.

Two government decisions in the latter half of the 1970's also adversely affected future economic growth rates. First, government expanded inefficient public sector enterprises. On a net basis the cost to the economy has been heavy as the enterprises became an increasing drain on scarce budget revenue. The second decision was to finance the facilities for the OAU Conference of 1979. This was done with short term and high interest loans contracted in 1977 and 1978. The estimated costs of $230 million occurred at the expense of foregone productive investments. The budget deficit which was $4.3 million in 1975 mushroomed to $137 million in 1979 while external debt more then tripled.

The Doe government which took power in 1980 increased these problems by raising the wages of the military forces by 200% and by doubling the size of the civilian workforce. Per capita income declined from $620 in 1980 to $480 in 1986. Taking into account the increase in the official consumer price index for this period, per capita purchasing power declined by about 40%.

From 1980 to 1985, Liberia's monetary economy registered an annual average decline of 2.3% in real terms while population grew at over 3% per annum. Monetary gross domestic product in 1971 factor costs declined from $366.2 million in 1980 to $318.5 million in 1985.

The contraction in the monetary economy was caused by bad domestic policy, government managerial deficiencies, high budget deficits and unfavorable external markets.

The IMF Standby Agreement was suspended in December 1984 because of non–compliance and debt servicing arrears. The World Bank and the African Development Bank (ADB) also suspended disbursements in early 1985 for the same reasons.

The government was able to finance its budget deficits in a number of ways. First, they minted additional Liberian coins. Next, they forced borrowing from domestic banks through a buildup of excessive reserves which brought the bank clearing system to a standstill. Commercial banks refused to accept checks which led to a lack of confidence in the Liberian financial system. Then there was excessive borrowing from the National Bank. To add to its problems the government mortgaged offshore earnings. Drawing down offshore assets for onshore expenditures increased the debt arrears problem.

The Liberian monetary system was debased because of the large infusion of coins. Liberian coins could only be converted at a discount. Coins as a percentage of total liquidity increased from 11% in 1983 to 37% in 1986. This was due in part to flight capital and in part to budget deficits.

Thus, Liberia faced a severe debt and growth crisis. The traditional supporters of the Liberian economy, the U.S., IMF and World Bank were running out of patience. The problem was seen as being one of financial mismanagement and the request of President Doe for foreign experts to manage the finances of the country was a last straw chance to rescue a bad situation.

It seemed that everyone agreed on what needed to be done; they just could not implement it. With donor assistance, the government issued an Economic Recovery Program in September, 1986. This program called for enforcing budgetary discipline; strengthening administration of revenue collections; awarding contracts and leases on a competitive basis; recording all domestic and foreign debt and monitoring concession agreements. The government never made a serious effort to do any of this.

Getting Started

The five point policy reform agenda signed in February, 1987 by the Liberian and U.S. governments called for seventeen operational experts to be placed at the Deputy Minister level in various financial ministries and agencies.

Over the next six months the project was approved in Washington, the selection process for the experts was started and the Project Agreement was signed by the two governments. However, this was not accomplished without serious reservations on both sides.

In the U.S. Congress, the House Subcommittee on Foreign Operations was particularly concerned. They felt that the Doe government had a history of financial mismanagement and corruption as well as abuse of human, political and civil rights. They believed the project would indicate a close relationship with a government which did not share U.S. values. They further believed that the project purposes were too optimistic and that the experts would have little chance of changing Liberian institutions or ways of doing business. The administration defended its proposal aggressively and in the end the Subcommittee reluctantly went along. They did, however, place a condition on their approval which was that funding would only be for one year after which the project would have to be reviewed by them again.

On the Liberian side, some political parties made sovereignty an issue.The basic question was, how can any country accept such a large foreign presence in the daily management of its financial affairs and still claim it is not engaged in the compromise of its sovereignty? Other political interests pointed out that the need for such a project only showed how desperate matters had become. In order to demonstrate some degree of resolve, the Liberian government fussed a great deal over the wording of the final agreement.In the end, the only real change was to substitute the word "endorsement" for the phrase "co-signatory authority".This was cosmetic as the experts wound up physically controlling the checks anyway. The agreement was signed by the two governments on August 26, 1987.

In the next three months a contract was let to a consortium of U.S. consulting firms which included Louis Berger International, Arthur Young & Co., Robert R. Nathan Associates and The Aries Group. The experts then began to arrive quickly and by January 1, 1988 the project became operational.

The seventeen experts were located as follows: nine in the Ministry of Finance, two in the National Bank, one in the Bureau of the Budget, one in the Civil Service Agency, one in the General Services Agency (GSA), one in the Ministry of Commerce, one in LPMC and one in the General Auditing Office (GAO).

Each expert had a detailed job description. For example, the Senior Financial Expert for Expenditure Control and Chief of Party had the following scope of work:

A. Objective: The primary objective of this position is to act as Senior Financial Expert at the level of Deputy Minister for Expenditure and Debt

Management in the Ministry of Finance. The Expert will work closely with the Bureau of General Accounting to ensure that budgetary control is maintained within the government of Liberia. The Senior Financial Expert will function as the Chief of Party for the contract team to effectively carry out his tasks. The employment period shall be for a two year period beginning September 30, 1987.

B. Statement of Work: To accomplish the objective stated above, the Senior Financial Expert will fulfill the operational, audit and reporting, and training functions outlined below:

1. Operational Functions:

(a) Endorse all new and renewed leases, contracts and purchase orders entered into by the government of Liberia including, but not limited to, construction, supplies, personnel services, travel authorization, regular payment vouchers, and special purchase order vouchers. Oversee postings to appropriation and allotment ledgers to ensure availability prior to signature and release. Review computer generated reports to verify above once the system has been implemented.

(b) Ensure that all extra–budgetary transactions are eliminated including the closing of extra–budgetary accounts (e.g., 627, reentry and driver license accounts) to ensure conformity with budgetary controls. This will be performed jointly with the Senior Cash Expert.

(c) Endorse partial payment of domestic arrears whose authenticity with regard to pricing and delivery of goods and services is not questionable. Jointly suspend other domestic arrears payments pending formation of special committee to authenticate delivery and pricing of goods and/or services. The actual study will be performed by government personnel assigned to the task under the direction and supervision of the Senior Financial Expert.

(d) Jointly disallow all payment requests that fail to follow the standard procedures, i.e., direct purchases without GSA approved purchase orders, construction payment requests without contracts,etc.

(e) Supervise the implementation of the Automated Budgetary Accounting system to ensure compliance with budgetary control and timely reporting of transactions. Present manual system does not provide adequate controls and timely reporting.

Systems and pr 'ng support will be provided by the Senior Systems Expert and Computer systems Pro .

2. Audit and Reporting Functions:

   (a) Institute and implement comprehensive payroll audit of all governmental ministries and agencies for the purpose of eliminating personnel not employed by government. Audit will be performed by government auditors under the supervision of the Senior Financial Expert.

   (b) Provide timely financial reporting to the Minister of Finance and members of the Economic and Financial Management Committee on the status of the budget and violations thereof including attempts to deviate from the budgetary control process.

3. Training Functions:

   Initiate training program for Bureau of General Accounting personnel in the areas of Pre–Auditing, Accounting Control, Batch Processing, File Maintenance,and Financial Reporting in coordination with Financial Expert (Pre–Audit control) and Senior System Expert.

This degree of detail was also present in the job descriptions of the other experts.

Reporting

Each month the Operational Experts (OPEX) team provided both governments with a report of progress or lack thereof in each of their assignments. Each three months a quarterly report was written.

The project started out optimistically as the experts were well received by their counterparts and generally accepted as part of the decision making process. In the Ministry of Finance a series of projects were getting underway in the areas of check control, revenue collection, auditing, management information systems, civil service reform, budgetary control and bank and parastatal supervision. From the beginning OPEX limited expenditures to cash available. This put great pressure on everyone to establish priorities. By operating on a cash basis, expenditures were below pro forma budget, however excessive allotments by the Bureau of the Budget created increased government commitments. About 60% of cash resources were allocated to payroll. It was clear from the beginning that the various ministries were not used to working with each other. A functioning expenditure control program required interlocking relationships among National Bank of Liberia (NBL), General Services Agency, Bureau of the Budget (BOB) and the Finance Ministry.

Early problem areas were identified in domestic arrears, external arrears, off–shore budget, earmarked revenues and payroll.

The First Quarterly

The first quarterly report reflected both progress and problems. It stated: "Steady progress to restore sound financial management continues to be made at the Ministry of Finance (MOF), where nine OPEX are operational." Most line ministries are cooperative as well. The OPEX members are increasingly able to coordinate initiatives between several ministries and agencies, and to implement financial controls that are consistent with directives issued by the MOF and BOB.

Nevertheless, certain developments have served to undermine a few OPEX efforts. On more than one occasion, the NBL has committed GOL offshore revenues to purposes other than those specified by the MOF. Similarly, the LPMC has committed its own foreign exchange earnings to make payments abroad on behalf of the government without specific instructions from the MOF. The recent operational status of OPEX members in the NBL and LPMC may help to reduce the incidence rates of such transfers, but it is too early to tell.

Public corporations other than the LPMC, such as the LPRC and Forestry Development Authority (FDA) have also been used as conduits for financial transactions avoiding MOF controls. This is a more difficult problem with no short–term solution.

OPEX control over the foreign currency account is not yet established. We are still in the early stages of establishing a off–shore budget, without which controls are impossible. The current GOL listing of sources and uses of foreign exchange is not in balance, and decisions on priority uses of foreign exchange — such as meeting PL–480 payments — have yet to be made. As a further problem, MOF access to statements for off–shore government accounts in one commercial bank has been cut off, but this disruption is hoped to be temporary.

Information gaps also remain in the government's accounts with the NBL. MOF account balances do not agree with NBL balances, and a detailed account audit will be required to trace the differences. These differences may have accumulated over a period of years. In order to address this and other operational issues in the domestic (commercial) operations of the NBL, OPEX may enlist short–term help to complement the project's work in the foreign and bank supervision areas of the bank.

If the PL–480 bridge financing agreement goes through, all foreign exchange resources will be committed to the PL–480 account through the beginning of June. And if the agreement does not go through, Liberia will face more urgent

and greater financial problems — both domestic and foreign — than it does even now.

A larger issue is that of not just controlling current government spending habits, but of changing ways in which government financial management and budgetary controls operate. Even with OPEX in place, budgetary irregularities, both small and large, and offbudget transactions (often involving non–governmental institutions) will continue. Until a more unified budgetary approach is incorporated and accepted, the success of the OPEX approach will be incomplete. In the meantime, however, it appears that the OPEX management approaches, computer systems, training, and audit recommendations are generally well–received and valuable.

Of necessity, the OPEX project still has a relatively short–term time horizon. Each undertaking has a sense of urgency and a desire to achieve tangible results within each three–month quarter. There remains some uncertainty over how long the project will continue—in spite of its progress to date—due to (a) the PL–480 crisis, (b) the upcoming U.S. Congressional review in the summer, and (c) the upcoming GOL review at the end of the year. Each major project sub–component, from the installation of computer systems to civil service reform, is scheduled to be partially completed by the end of the next quarter."

Second Quarter Report

By the time of the second quarterly report there were more problems to report with less progress. It stated: "The second quarterly report is written after the OPEX project has been operational for six months. During this period, some progress has been made in introducing expenditure controls within the Ministry of Finance. Progress in related areas, such as foreign exchange budgeting, revenue enhancement, customs, auditing, civil service controls, bank supervision, computer systems, and financial reporting, has also been made.

However, several problems—extrabudgetary expenditures, tax offsets, special guarantees, irregular loans—threaten to undermine the success of the entire OPEX effort. These problems are critical, first, because they show a lack of GOL commitment to economic reform and sound financial management. Second, they show that significant financial commitments are being made by the GOL without OPEX endorsement, and third, that the OPEX project agreement with the GOL is being undermined.

Since the beginning of January, all MOF checks, vouchers, warrants, and debt repayments have been endorsed by OPEX. Within the MOF, OPEX has contributed to ensuring that:

—civil service and military payroll and pension payments are current;

—GOL checks are being accepted;

—millions in vouchers for goods and services have been audited, and arrangements have been made to issue promissory notes to meet the remaining outstanding domestic arrears for goods and services;

—the PL–480 arrears have been paid, paving the way for continued U.S. financial and food assistance in FY 1988;

—a foreign exchange budget has been drafted, with increased controls being enforced in the allocation of foreign exchange;

—a more rigorous enforcement of the 25% foreign exchange surrender requirements has been put into place; and

—significant progress towards designing the MOF's expenditure control and revenue tracking systems has been made.

In spite of the above, OPEX has been bypassed on a number of nonroutine GOL loans, tax offsets, financial guarantees, and offshore payments. These transactions and agreements have undermined our control over GOL expenditures. As a rough estimate, OPEX now controls only 60–75% of government expenditures.

OPEX has detailed in its monthly reports and in letters to senior GOL officials over half a dozen specific violations of the OPEX agreement involving non–routine transactions of these types. They have involved the Hotel Africa, Monrovia Breweries, St. Joseph's Construction Company, YONA, LPMC, and LPRC. In light of these violations, OPEX has appealed to the highest levels of authority for a change in GOL procedures. The major policy decisions that we recommend be made by the President include:

—that extra–budgetary expenditures be ended and brought on–budget. These expenditures cannot be incorporated unless explicit decisions are made, with due process, on what should not be funded.

—that the practices of revenue encumbrances, tax offsets, GOL backed bank guarantees, and domestic borrowing payable in foreign exchange be ended.

—that there be strict controls of public corporations, including the implementation of Auditor General reports, the transfer of taxes to the MOF, and tax audits, and the inclusion of their

budgets in the general government budgets in the general government budget process.

Recent actions within the MOF, the NBL, and the LPMC have undermined the operational authority of the OPEX team over expenditures. Unless actions are taken along the above lines, we consider that the operational aspect of the project will have failed.

In light of the above—the fact that OPEX has been prevented from exercising its operational authority in key areas—a formal appeal has been lodged at the highest levels of the government of Liberia, as per the dispute resolution procedures outlined in the OPEX project agreement. This appeal calls for changes in current GOL financial practices and a renewed commitment to the OPEX agreement."

Third Quarter Report

With the issuance of the third quarter report for 1988 it was clear that the central purposes of the project were not being met and that the Doe government probably had no intention of changing its ways. The report stated: "The third quarter of 1988 has seen extensive deterioration in the fiscal situation of the Government of Liberia and extensive circumvention of the policy recommendations of the OPEX team. As a result, the fiscal imbalances, which are much greater than they appeared a mere three months ago, will be still worse in 1989.

The OPEX monthly reports have increasingly identified what we consider are misguided GOL decisions as well as violations of the basic OPEX agreement. We feel that in spite of our efforts, the GOL has not improved its ability to:

—manage its deficits,

—undertake a meaningful budget process,

—regulate expenditures, procurement,contracting, foreign exchange transactions, and other kinds of commitments,

—direct its resources towards those items that have received budgetary and development priority, and

—make sustained commitment to significant economic policy reforms, such as in the areas of civil service, public corporations, contracting and auditing.

The lack of concrete progress in these areas has called into question the rationale for continuing the project."

The report did note that there had been some progress in specific area such as:

—government payroll and pension payments were current,

—GOL checks were being accepted and the bank clearing system was working well,

—audits of domestic areas had been completed, significantly reducing total amounts due,

—accountability for MOF expenditures had improved,

—the deficit had been financed by private sector loans and not the NBL,

—debt payments to the U.S.were current enough to allow continued USAID disbursements to continue,

—a foreign exchange budget had been prepared and

—computerization of MOF's expenditure control system had been made.

While GOL finances were in a sorry state, the economy did not appear that affected. The report noted that: "The Liberian real economy continues to perform fairly well in 1988. The output of the iron ore industry has declined, but this is more than offset by increases in rubber and timber output." The reason for this was judged to be that: "Either by decision or indecision, the role of the GOL in the real economy has declined in recent years—and this has probably helped encourage economic growth. Government expenditures are a smaller percentage of GDP than they were five years ago. Liberia has a market–oriented economy relatively free of regulations. The only price controls are on gasoline, rice, and public services. Investments, particularly in the rubber and gold industries, are being made."

Project Termination

It was not any particular event which brought an end to the OPEX project but rather an accumulation of negative experiences. Chief among these was the frequent circumvention of OPEX controls by the Executive Mansion and outside businessmen, most of whom were foreign. The main ways to bypass OPEX were:

—the Mansion would issue direct letters of assignment to commercial banks which would be in lieu of OPEX endorsed checks,

—the MOF would authorize tax offsets without OPEX endorsement,

—the Mansion would establish bank guarantees in favor of contractors who would not repay their loans causing the banks

to debit the GOL tax accounts they were collecting,

—the Mansion would divert funds from public corporations such as FDA, LPRC and LPMC before they arrived at MOF,

—the Mansion diverted funds from public banks,

—the Mansion ordered favorable foreign exchange transactions for its friends at the NBL and

—special accounts were opened within the MOF for purposes previously rejected by OPEX.

By November 1988 the U.S. decided to terminate the project and by December most of the experts had left Liberia.

Lessons Learned

What can be learned from this experience? It would be easy to say it was all a mistake and never should have happened in the first place. But it did happen and it wasn't all bad.

The first and most important lesson is that difficult fiscal policy reform such as contemplated by this project needs very strong political leadership for implementation. The President never became positively involved in the project once it was under way and in fact, undercut it on numerous occasions. No one else was strong enough politically to carry the day.

The second lesson is that administrative reform at the technical level can be well carried out and even popular with the technocrats who see their skills and possible power increasing. It can also be popular with the public if they believe they are going to be treated more fairly or at least less harassed.

The third lesson is that the international donor agencies need to break from traditional project patterns at times. They need to experiment and learn just as much as their clients do.

Founding the Liberia Action Party*

Byron Tarr

Politics is like waking up in the morning . You never know whose head you will find on the pillow.
Winston Churchill

g in earnest in 1981 and ending in 1984, Jackson F. Doe, Samuel K. Doe, Peter A. Johnson, Samuel D. Hill, J. Bernard Blamo, and Augustus F. Caine, in violation of applicable decrees of the military government clandestinely consulted among themselves and with others, for the purpose of organizing a political party . During July and August, 1984, the consultations eventuated in separate declarations by two groups then suspicious of the commitment to democracy of the other, of intent to form the National Democratic Party of Liberia (NDPL) and the Liberia Action Party (LAP) . On October 15, 1985, Liberians, arguably for the first time in their history, went to the polls under universal suffrage to elect a president, a vice president and 90 members of the bicameral legislature . Over 800,000 eligible voters[1] eventually chose among candidates proposed by LAP, the NDPL, the Liberian Unification Party (LUP) and The Unity Party (UP).[2]

The 1985 elections had been preceded by intensely competitive, and sometimes violent, campaigns across the country. The NDPL, headed by S. K. Doe, considered itself the party in power; the military government headed by the same Doe accorded the NDPL not only that status, but made state resources available to the NDPL to assure that it remained in power . The election process was stifled; the government transparently disguised its efforts to prevent the legalization of LAP, LUP and UP. Applications to register the Liberia People's Party (LPP) and the United People's Party (UPP) were illegally denied, and their leaders banned in violation of the constitution. Violence by NDPL partisans and their hired thugs against members of other parties seemed to have been supported by state military security apparatus, or was at least condoned. Access to the media and public places of assembly was denied all the other parties and their supporters. Freedom of association was suppressed. Members as well as other parties' candidates for public office were harassed and intimidated. Many candidates were forced to resign their offices; only the NDPL fielded candidates in Grand Gedeh County.

The tainted process inevitably produced an unwholesome outcome, in that the people elected LAP to lead but the government selected the NDPL to rule.[3]

The 1985 elections in Liberia were potentially a positive exercise in democracy whose subversion became manifest only on October 29, 1985. The will of the Liberian people had been subverted earlier, however, by their government, by its American patrons' shortsighted decision to protect its perceived national interests unencumbered by commitment to ideals of freedom, and by the opposition to the military regime that seemingly sought to provide alternatives to Liberia's historical experience of an oligarchy husbanded by a single party. How the activities of diverse, usually rival, groups effectively conspired to produce their worst nightmare – confirm Doe in power – is the backdrop of this personal account.

Prior to 1985, eligible Liberian voters as defined excluded the majority of residents. For example, throughout most of Liberian history, only propertied and lettered repatriates and a few assimilated persons could vote. Most residents otherwise deemed citizens were excluded from eligibility. Furthermore, because the outcome of an election was essentially determined before the first votes were cast, often even those eligible opted not to exercise their rights. The elections of 1985 were perhaps the first multiparty elections in Liberia since the Commonwealth period, and certainly since formation of the True Whig Party (TWP) in 1869, evidencing victory of darker–skinned blacks over mulattos in the politics of pigmentation, and the initiation of an over–centralized bureaucracy in which winners–take–all, denying the "minority" all rights and access to opportunities.[4] Prior to the unlawful establishment of the vote counting commission, it appeared possible for any participating party to win the elections.

According to tallies signed at polling stations in six counties with over 90% of eligible voters, LAP received some 67% of all votes cast. However, on October 29, 1985, Emmett Harmon, surpassing his father Lafayette, Liberia's elections commissioner in 1929 notorious for supervising the most fraudulent election in history, announced the NDPL had captured the presidency, the vice presidency and over 80% of the seats in both houses of the legislature.

The following pages record some personal recollections of one who did not participate in the secretive, hypocritical consultations, initially among friends who later split into two contentious groups; the activities of the S.K. Doe group eventuated in the formation of the NDPL, while that of J.F. Doe gave birth to LAP. However, I was elected LAP's first secretary general. Johnson and Jackson F. Doe (JD hereafter, to avoid confusion with Samuel K. Doe, not a relative) were the only participants in those consultations to become members of LAP. Doe, Blamo, and Hill with others formed the NDPL.

This is not a scientific study; its goal is not an "objective" analysis of the events nor of their interactions and correlations. My aim is not to propose a grand design or theory, but to record some of the observations only someone in my position and with my background could make. I hold that pondering upon the relevant past gives guidance in days to come. We ought to lay the lessons of the past before the future. Political historians may use these observations in constructing theories to explain the character of post coup Liberian politics. Recording these recollections within the historical context of the political culture seeks to place in perspective the circumstances that were midwife to LAP. I believe that the ambience described here defines traditional Liberian politics, its value system and how that peculiar culture inhibits compromises and the contestation of ideas, for it sustains personal rivalries. I hang the tale on the absence of, and antipathy to, a forum to debate issues, existing and emerging.

II

The present usually incorporates characteristics of the past, and is pregnant with those of the future. That is why to appreciate these recollections, we might discern the leit-motiv of the emerging opposition to the TWP in the Tolbert years, 1971–1980.

A material difference between Tolbert era opposition politics with its organizational potentials and those of earlier periods is to be noted. In the 1970s, the political opposition did not see the presidency as an immediately obtainable goal, and therefore did not pursue it exclusively, nor regard its attainment as the immediate and exclusive object of its existence. The opposition was prepared to pursue the presidency gradually and systematically. This is not to deny opposition interest in and claim of qualification for the presidency. Rather, that it better understood the psychology of a status starved society such as Liberia.[5] It correctly determined that in view of prevailing sycophantic optimism in the TWP and its ancillary institutions, including the freemasony, traditional christian Churches and the officer corps of the military, the path to power was to consistently question the credibility of institutions and slogans that nurtured the hegemony. It sought to first establish a constituency. In effect, the emerging opposition was prepared to gradually undertake activities whose results would erode the basic source of TWP power. Aided by the deteriorating economic situation, the strategy seemed to have been designed to create doubts about the validity of the Open Door and Unification policies. As the economy slumped in the 1970s, highlighting inequity in income and wealth distribution, state control over industrial relations, for example, could be challenged successfully, for patronage plums became insignificant crumbs.

Isaiah Berlin observed years ago that democracy specifies means, but never prescribes nor mandates an end. As the TWP hegemony crumbled, its

most prized achievements: economic growth and the resultant expansion in human capital formation, became forces that illustrated the faults of the process that was assailed. Development of individual initiatives as always, inevitably resulted in revolt against authoritarianism.

While social mobility through assimilation was always possible in Liberian society, the system maintained a rigid distinction between those who were in, those seeking entry, and those who were out. Furthermore, full establishment status required combining social and financial success. With minimal domestically owned or controlled economic activities, achievement of financial success was highly correlated with senior positions in government, current or past. The virtually unlimited leverage the system gave patrons over clients created a condition in which elites not only had to be distinct in dress, speech and standard of living, but they also had to be seen enforcing the distinction. Consequently, Liberian elites, especially detribalized ones, have had to exploit natives and other powerless members of society, to maintain and display their status.

To the emerging opposition, this trait provided a basis for questioning the usefulness or the value of economic growth unaccompanied by revision of the power structure or by increased political responsiveness and social accountability. The opposition demonstrated that inequity in wealth distribution had increased while these policies were in effect. The fast growing, rapidly urbanizing, marginal population was made aware of the widening disparity in wealth and income; 90% of the population that earned less than 20% of the income was told repeatedly, often by their children, that the widening disparity would further restrict already controlled access to opportunities. On the plantations, at mines, and in the army, this message proved believable. Students of rural origins at the sub–standard public schools became enthusiastic messengers to their majority, illiterate parents.

Opposition to the TWP was systemic in Liberia in the 1970s; opposition was fashionable, justified, and pervasive. The goals of the disunited opposition were not obvious to observers, beyond ending the hegemony. It was organized in the sense that TWP methods, plans and response options were analyzed and programmed. The opposition assessed the range of actions likely to follow alternative behavior patterns, and was capable of sequencing its activities so as to confuse the complacent TWP. President William R. Tolbert, Jr., for twenty years vice president of Liberia under Tubman and former president of the Baptist World Alliance, was enigmatic, indecisive and vacillating; excitable, Tolbert contended with the novelty, deprived of the counsel of three senior politicians better endowed than he to manage the fortunes of the hegemony. The dependable reliability, strength and pragmatism of the deceased politicians may have offset the prevailing sycophantic optimism that was the curse of the

regime. One recalls T. S. Eliot's lament, "I had not thought death had undone so many".[6]

McKinley A. DeShield, general secretary of the TWP under Tubman, was a blunt, experienced politico. Pivotal in Tolbert becoming president, he had no need to kowtow to Tolbert, for Tolbert could neither make nor destroy him. He was dead. E. Jonathan Goodridge had also been a chairman of the TWP. Like DeShield, he hailed from Montserrado County; had status independent of Tolbert, and could stand up to him. He, too, had died earlier. But perhaps most missed was Stephen A. Tolbert, the president's younger brother and finance minister, killed in the crash of a light plane in 1975. Driven, decisive, ruthless and cynical but a competent manager, he was unpopular but effective. To replace these departed pillars of the establishment, the hegemony's, and Tolbert's advisers included Richard A. Henries, E. Reginald Townsend, and Frank E. Tolbert.

Henries, furtive speaker of the House of Representatives, was insecure; during critical moments demanding his independent judgment he was overheard to ask, "You find any other Henries in Liberian history?" He would avoid all risks to remain a member of the establishment. All decisions and opinions other than those of the current manager of the hegemony, Henries regarded as risky. Townsend, promised the vice presidency then bypassed by Tolbert, endured insults and earlier virtually turned the position of minister of state for presidential affairs into a clerkship. He was in effect a camomile. He became chairman of the terminally ill TWP. As opposition to Tolbert grew, he entertained the hope of succeeding him, and joined the fray. Frank Tolbert was, especially to reformers in the TWP, not to mention the opposition groups, what Richard Nixon was to the Americans for Democratic Action.

But being disposed to postpone its quest for the presidency did not unify the opposition; in fact, it inspired the evolution of three disparate groups.

The Progressive Alliance of Liberia (PAL) became the Progressive People's Party (PPP), which still later became the United People's Party (UPP); it was an outgrowth of the Union of Liberian Associations in the Americas (ULAA). Organized by Gabriel Baccus Matthews and other officers of the ULAA, it initially distributed in Liberia materials printed in the United States. In a society in which any criticism of the government or of its officials was sedition, PAL's news organ, *Revelation* became an event. It mostly reported misdeeds of government and of its officials; sometimes photocopies of official acts or transactions considered wrongful were printed as documentary evidence of their allegations. Cornered, Tolbert entered into a dialogue with PAL, then invited its leadership to Liberia for a "fact finding" visit. Following their visit, PAL gradually set up shop in Liberia. Eventually, PAL was to transform itself in early 1980 into the PPP, becoming the UPP in 1986.

PAL and its successor organizations were organized, beholden to the personal ambition of Matthews. He was a grandson of a long-serving secretary to the Tubman era Senate, a graduate of the College of West Africa (CWA). As a means of enabling him to pursue university education in the United States, he was appointed to the Liberian Counsel General's Office in New York. He did not pursue that goal; later, he was dismissed by Finance Minister Stephen Tolbert from that position in 1972, allegedly for tampering with consular invoice fees, then collected by Liberian consuls abroad. His associates were Liberians who had also gone to the United States ostensibly to study, but some ended up in factory jobs in major American cities, especially New York and Newark, New Jersey.

The production cost of the *Revelation* was funded by members of the establishment such as Emmett Harmon and William V.S. Tubman Jr.; despite a presumptive ban on its circulation in the country, the monthly tabloid was carried to Liberia by these same persons, whose luggages were not subject to customs and security inspections. The membership of PAL, as of PPP and UPP later, was dominated by unskilled plantation and iron ore mine workers and the unemployed of urban centers.

The Movement for Justice in Africa (MOJA) was the other organized group opposing the TWP; it unsuccessfully sought to become LPP in 1985. At formation, MOJA's stated objective was to educate Liberians about the African independence struggle, especially as being waged in Southern Africa. MOJA's first public organizational meeting was held in late 1972 at the Sinkor residence of University of Liberia economics Professor Togba Nah Tipoteh.

MOJA's original and primary constituency was and remains students, lecturers and graduates of academic and training institutions; the average officer has more formal education than his compatriots. In a country where fewer than 20% of the population is functionally literate, MOJA officers and members often listed academic degrees. In a country that despises intellectualism but is preoccupied with adopting its formal garbs, MOJA was ridiculed.

Although headed by Tipoteh, MOJA was effectively led by Dr. Amos Claudius Sawyer; Dr. H. Boima Fahnbulleh was the preeminent ideologue of MOJA. Prof. Dew Theophilus Walter Mayson, who later discovered the plums of capitalism, was another MOJA ideologue.

Sawyer, an academic whose candidacy for the mayorship of Monrovia tested his theories of TWP vincibility and confirmed the viability of organized political opposition to the establishment in Liberia in the 1970s, was a "foreigner". He had not attended CWA; his father, a revenue agent in the "leeward counties", was of Sierra Leonean origin. The family, even if well connected in Sinoe County on the mother's side, was on the periphery of

power and status. The volatile Fahnbulleh's maternal grandfather was Nete Sie Brownell, an assimilated Grebo tribesman. A lawyer, Brownell was implicated in several "coup attempts" against Tubman, but apparently dealt his way out of trouble. Fahnbulleh's father, an impetuous and difficult man, was a Vai and a diplomat. In 1968 Tubman's security network manufactured evidence resulting in his dismissal from the Liberian ambassadorship to Kenya, and conviction for treason. Mayson was a representative settler–Liberian; his father was chairman of the local branch of the TWP in Sinoe County. He espoused lofty principles, although later he chose the pursuit of wealth over ideology.

The third element constituting the opposition to TWP hegemony was amorphous, unorganized, and unco–ordinated. If there was a common, identifying element for members of this group, it was that most belonged to the establishment. They were professionals, trained abroad. Most had held senior positions in TWP governments. Members included W. V. S. Tubman, Jr., son–in–law of Tolbert. Tubman was undisciplined and unreliable, flaws which undermined his natural political instincts and the glamor of his legacy. In the 1970s in Liberia, affiliation with Tubman was insurance against petty reprisals, harassments and intimidation.

Professionally trained government officials, such as Winston Richards, deputy minister of public works and confidante of the ambitious, scheming minister, Tubman son–in–law Gabriel J. Tucker, successfully frustrated Tolbert's decision to name an Oldest Congotown street in his wife's honor. This group also included the likes of Emmett Harmon, who had personal grievances. His father was once a senior elite, but his quickness to "deal" lost him status. Harmon himself sought Tubman's blessings to be appointed a Montserrado county senator, but was rebuffed.

This third group may not necessarily have wanted the TWP hegemony ended; it was unorganized. This element of the opposition sought to end Tolbert's rulership of the hegemony. It is arguable that its objective was political reforms designed to make the system accountable and responsive, and reduce inequality in access to opportunities by restructuring power relationships. Its lack of cohesion suggested that its reform goals would evolve gradually and that the instruments appropriate to achieving those goals would only be identified and employed over a longer time span.

Inter–group consultations were nonexistent, inhibited by several factors. Foremost was mutual distrust. MOJA and PPP were competitors in a game each perceived as zero sum, in a society so starved of status that any government position was coveted. Any position in government conferred status and for most, was the only means to a decent standard of living. Both truly were products of Liberia's historical experience. Moreover, no institutions existed to

assist them evolve or prescribe the framework for a national agenda; there was no forum to negotiate and even agree on the framework of an agenda, or the parameters for selecting items to include on it. Each group therefore saw its potential gains in terms of losses by the other. Further, MOJA's pedantry had created a class barrier against the PPP. MOJA and the establishment perceived the PPP as lacking the capacity to develop a world view, as incapable of evolving and effectively managing a policy process, as lacking the capacity to identify appropriate policy options, and specify instruments. Later, all would regard the UPP as opportunists. The PAL and each successor organization was a monolithic body created and committed to advance its founder's personal ambitions. The PPP and disaffected members of the establishment were offended by the apparent rigidity of MOJA's seeming disposition to simplistic solutions.

The political developments of the 1970s fueled existing distrust. Universal assessment of the Sawyer mayoral campaign was that the TWP emperor wore no clothes. Ironically, incomparable access to resources and control over institutions punctuated and magnified the TWP's vulnerability; electoral victory against it became a possibility. MOJA's success increased pressure on PAL, possibly influencing the timing of their decision to become a political party, the PPP, in January 1980.

MOJA'S achievement may then be juxtaposed with the misguided midnight march on the Executive Mansion in March, 1980. The march and its timing was to be viewed, meanwhile, as a test by "radicals" of their insidious plans to overthrow the constituted government. To PPP supporters, MOJA was an instrument of the establishment, so the PPP decided to widen its perception of the opposition to include this upstart.

Be that as it may, Matthews was uncertain of both the nation's and government's response to his call for an anti-government demonstration against a near 25% increase in the price of rice announced by the government. Besides the size of the increase, the argument supporting the price hike — that it would stimulate domestic rice production — was universally held to be invalid. So, during the weeks preceding the rice riots of April 14, 1979, Matthews deputized Oscar Quiah, later an NDPL secretary general but then the PPP organizer, to liaise with MOJA, towards obtaining a commitment for joint sponsorship of the demonstration. At a crucial meeting between PPP and MOJA leaderships, Sawyer and Fahnbulleh concluded the PPP had failed to incorporate protection of or safeguard for marchers in their plans. (Tipoteh was out of Monrovia, in Grand Gedeh, when MOJA had to make this crucial party decision.) Since it was likely the government would fulfill Tolbert's pledge to be "mean" in the event the opposition staged a mass demonstration, MOJA held that protection and safeguard for demonstrators and political objectives of the demonstration had to be planned concurrently. But a few "safe house" arrangements for the

top PPP leadership constituted the only consideration this "mass" party saw fit to program. MOJA concluded that PPP's call for a mass demonstration, like their earlier march at mid–night on the Execution Mansion when Tolbert was out of Monrovia, was foolhardy; MOJA not only refused to call its supporters out to join the demonstration; it confirmed its views of PPP as slovenly.

Estimates of demonstrators killed ranged between multiples of tens and a couple of hundreds. Led by Matthews, the PPP leadership publicly "repented", and offered public apologies to Tolbert for their "uninformed" misbehavior.

Observers agree that the TWP government fell on April 14, 1979; its mortal remains were disposed of by the group that styled itself, the People's Redemption Council. PPP was perceived as achieving a political victory greater and potentially more durable than MOJA had in forcing the TWP to effectively concede the mayoral election, even though its leadership was jailed. On the other hand, it firmed its view of MOJA as a gutless, vacillating collaborator of the foe.

For the third element of the opposition, Tolbert's rejection of the Nete Sie Brownell Commission conclusions as to the causes of the rice riots, especially its recommendation that Tolbert's son–in–law and defense minister Burleigh Holder be dismissed and specified officials reprimanded, incensed all. The Commission was summarily discharged, while the Ministry of National Security was created in the President's office and Holder appointed to head it. However, for a time, Tolbert had appeared conciliatory and seemed poised to undertake the most far–reaching reform of the political system and its culture. True to his nature, however, in a major address not long afterwards, he promised to crack down on the opposition and disaffected TWP members.

MOJA and PPP confided in members of the establishment; often, both consulted the same individuals. Some of these persons not only financed some anti–establishment activities, but were sounding boards as well as conduits for communication, especially during crackdowns on the opposition. Rivalry inhibited both from seeking to engage their common patrons in the task of unifying the opposition or institutionalizing reforms, around a common agenda. The common patrons behaved like the proverbial ostrich, believing they hid their roles from either group, from each other, and from the establishment. They thus failed to mediate or broker the construction of the agenda.

In the twilight of the TWP, Tolbert offered JD, then a senator, the vice presidency. But as he always did, Tolbert reneged on the agreement. Some believed the offer of the vice presidency to JD did not materialize because he was the ward, not son of a pioneer; others thought his foster brother relationship with J. Rudolph Grimes, Tolbert's nemesis, explained the situation. Tolbert's failure to designate JD his running mate provided the emerging opposition useful propaganda materials. After all, H. Too Wesley, a Grebo tribesman,

served, albeit briefly, in that position. His rejection of JD cost him political capital among the second largest tribal group, indeed, among all tribes. His eventual choice, Bennie D. Warner, did not compensate by improving Tolbert's relationship with the elites, for Warner was an upstart pastor, possessing no particular constituency or reputation.

The inability of the opposition to unify itself carried into the PRC government. Civilians representing the three elements of the disunited opposition served the soldiers, but failed to evolve and adopt a national agenda; each seemed to have geared its efforts to displacing the other in the dubious esteem of their illiterate bosses.

This failure suffused relationships after the ban on politics was lifted, as we shall see. Tipoteh, in exile in Holland, did not support Sawyer's efforts that had resulted in a de facto LAP/MOJA merger; Matthews decided he was better off collaborating with Doe's than with any other party. Doe then determined Matthew's loss of credibility following his failure to cooperate with the opposition offset any threat he may have presented. Doe rightly concluded that Matthews compromised his values and that he was therefore not a formidable foe. He was deemed not to be a valuable ally. Realizing he had lost, Matthews left for the USA. Later, Edward Perkins and the US State Department would dress him up as the opposition to Doe; he again lost when Doe reneged on his promise to assign him a seat in the senate in 1986. Again, Matthews had been outsmarted by Doe. LAP only pursued a court battle against government surrogates because the UP leadership insisted that party's presidential candidate was anointed when its founding was announced. UP refused to accept any of various proposals aimed at democratizing the process of selecting a merged group's presidential candidate, including a primary system.

MOJA and PPP were the two organized elements of the emerging opposition to the TWP hegemony. The two groups were perceived as radical "socialists".

III

The method of consultation preceding every declaration of intent to form a political party was informal; prior to 1984, it is unlikely that meetings were called specifically to discuss political issues, such as the objective of a political party. In fact, membership in the group derived from or was secondary to other relationships and existing alliances. This seems to explain why, for example, Dr. George E.S. Boley and John G. Rancy apparently did not play important roles in the consultations. Boley, although de facto head of government in 1980 and 1981, failed to win Doe's respect; in 1981, Rancy was a struggling deputy minister under egotistical commerce minister, E. Sumo

Jones. In contrast, Johnson's refusal to accept any offer of appointment intrigued Doe, and as a puzzle, kept him a confidante.

It seems therefore unlikely that anyone could precisely date the first meeting, or name all founders. The objective of identifying a group of "responsible persons" to whom Doe would transfer power evolved gradually, dictated by domestic and external pressure, the former exerted by students and workers. Until early 1984, at the earliest, membership in the group could not have been constant. Persons fired from positions that once gave them access, or who had lost favor due to real or imagined causes, theirs or their extended families', lost membership in the Doe group as well.

Participants included Master Sergeant Samuel K. Doe, commander-in-chief of the armed forces of Liberia, chairman of the PRC and head of state. Doe probably was neither the inspiration nor focus of the initial meetings; he was its beneficiary, but not its linchpin. Things were done for him, in his name and for his benefit. His interest in the group's objectives initially may have arisen from fears, inspired by his acknowledged inadequacy to the tasks imposed on him on April 12, 1980, by his relative seniority among the noncommissioned officers in whose name Tolbert was killed, as well as rumors fanned by the likes of Boley that educated persons in the government, with the support of elements in the army, sought to overthrow him. He probably assumed undisputed leadership of the group in late 1982 or 1983.[1] For the years between 1980 and 1983 saw Doe master the nuances of Liberian political culture and how to placate the accommodating Americans.

Dr. J. Bernard Blamo, removed from the presidency of the University of Liberia by Tolbert in response to faculty and student demand but appointed minister for education by him, probably coordinated the group. His role was determined by being minister of state for presidential affairs. A non-Krahn, he could not have played any significant role in the formative stages, nor determined its course. Son of an assimilated Kru retired general, he lost credibility and was humiliated before the coup when he confessed to having expended the education ministry's resources on his mistress. Doe appointed Blamo managing director of the National Port Authority (NPA) upon releasing him from detention following the coup, then minister of state for presidential affairs and still later, foreign minister. He was sufficiently cowed to do his master's bidding.

Samuel D. Hill, a former Tolbert minister for local government, erstwhile TWP politician and Baptist Church elder, was a participant. Hill became one of Doe's hatchet men in the "civilian" government, as Speaker of the House of Representatives; having been on the TWP periphery, he was prepared to assume any role that promised that same or greater function. Thus, although the Bomi County NDPL rejected him as its candidate for the 1985 elections

during the county convention, Doe transferred the local party's choice to another job, to facilitate Hill's appointment. He endeared himself to Doe by decrying the injustice of the TWP, which he contended kept him a sinecure. Goodridge, his mentor and predecessor at the Tolbert local government ministry, had power second only to Tolbert's, he told Doe.

Hill did not, presumably, repeat to Doe Tolbert's promise to him that had made him so immensely pleased earlier: "Hill, I will make of thee a mountain"!

Dr. Augustus F. Caine, then a University of Liberia anthropologist, was a former Tubman secretary of education. Caine was at best on the periphery of any group and even then, a late comer. His relationship with Rancy, another of Doe's frequently reshuffled ministers of state for presidential affairs, was his passport. He and Rancy were married to sisters, a connection that earlier procured him the secretary generalship of the Mano River Union, even though nothing in his background nor experience qualified him for management of an incipient customs union among structurally identical economies. He became the third of the NDPL in 1987.

Rancy, although a Krahn and author of the infamous Nimba Strategy that personified the brutish politics of conquest of the regime, was probably not a principal player in the consultations. He was formerly Tubman's press secretary. Rancy's marriage to the mother of two of Tubman's children confirmed his assimilation, and had no doubt influenced Tolbert to appoint him Grand Gedeh County superintendent. When sacked later in response to complaints from the county, the system next secured him a sinecure job at LAMCO in Nimba county. Contiguity of Grand Gedeh and Nimba, as well as his brief residence when he worked at LAMCO, exposed Rancy to the Dan (Gio) and Mano, tribes he convinced Doe to suppress and subdue to remain in power.

The enigmatic Boley, an assistant minister of education under Tolbert and Doe's first of many ministers of state for presidential affairs, probably did not participate in the consultations. It seemed the consultations became more intense after Boley's removal to the education ministry in one of the early, public indications of rupture within the PRC. Doe apparently regarded him as a jester and opportunist, and neither respected his views nor trusted his relationship with Matthews. Boley was detested by members of the PRC. He and Johnson were barely civil to each other. While Doe's chief of staff, and to spite Blamo, Boley resurrected attention to Blamo's misuse of public resources, reminding Doe that he was a Blamo aide when the impropriety was committed. But his influence on the course of Liberian political developments following the coup was profoundly negative. He inspired a reign of terror, including flogging and violation of basic human rights.

Boley was a ward in the Tolbert household when he became a "scholarship" student at Ricks Institute, a Baptist school run by Tolbert. Upon graduation

from Ricks, he was granted a government scholarship to pursue an under–graduate degree in education abroad, when government grants for undergraduate studies were proscribed except to those pursuing studies in fields not offered by universities in Liberia. Three universities offered the bachelor's degree in education at the time! He was a member of the PPP and was jailed following the rice riots. With Doe unable to converse in standard English, Boley was de facto head of government in 1980. As the gate keeper to Doe, he conscientiously exploited Doe's distrust of educated people, especially if they were non–Krahns.

Boley and I collaborated in aspects of opposition politics prior to the coup. Prior to reporting to the National Security Agency in response to their visit to his house while absent and their "invitation" to him to visit their office, he found me to report those developments. After he was picked up in front of the German Embassy in Monrovia and sent to jail in 1979, his black American wife and their children moved into our house. I had her close their joint bank account at Chase Manhattan, re–opening another in her maiden name at the same bank, to prevent the government from confiscating their "savings" in the event he was charged with treason.

One example of Boley's negative contributions to Doe's development, and the unwholesome course of Liberian politics, might suffice. Doe, of course, was an illiterate soldier lacking any vision and concept of modern governance. This example is Boley's abortion of efforts to have Doe appoint J. Rudolph Grimes an advisor to the PRC.

Grimes' father had been secretary of state and chief justice of Liberia; the Grimeses were close relatives of the Barclays, two of whom had been presidents of Liberia. A graduate of Harvard Law School and Columbia University, the younger Grimes was Tubman's secretary of state for more than a decade. In that position, he was architect of the Monrovia Powers, the "moderate" sub–regional grouping whose draft was later adopted as the Charter of the Organization of African Unity. He was highly respected internationally. He would later draft the 1985 constitution Doe would so thoroughly abuse.

Grimes and Tolbert served Tubman for many years in the two most senior positions in the government, but they were not fond of each other. He therefore remained in the government after Tubman's death in July, 1971, only until January, 1972. He rejected every Tolbert offer to return to government, except to chair a commission that drafted a code of conduct for public officials; Tolbert characteristically failed either to reject or implement the draft code. Grimes was untainted by the Tolbert legacy.

On April 12, 1980, when 17 illiterate soldiers announced the overthrow of the civilian government, Grimes was in Switzerland. After April 12, but before the disgusting execution of thirteen former government officials on April 22,

I proposed to Doe that it would be beneficial to the government's credibility locally and abroad to invite Grimes to accept appointment as an adviser. At Doe's request, therefore I telephoned Grimes from Doe's office; subsequent to as detailed a brief as one could provide under the circumstances, I passed the telephone to Doe. Daunted by Grimes' reputation, and in halting English, Doe chatted with Grimes, ending with an invitation to "old man, come home and help us". The plea seemed genuine.

On many occasions following Grimes' return to Liberia, I sought to arrange a meeting between him and Doe, but was unsuccessful. Much later, after Boley and a friend had flogged former Traffic Court Judge Napoleon Thorpe because he overtook their car which had stopped in the street to off–load a couple of young ladies, evidence surfaced that Boley squelched every effort to expose Doe to "Congo" people, advising that their reempowerment would be tantamount to digging his grave.

Doe, Blamo, Hill, Caine, Rancy, Boley, the military brass and others eventually organized the NDPL. Johnson and JD spearheaded the formation of LAP. Johnson, fluent in French and English was a career diplomat. He was undoubtedly the most distinguished Krahn tribesman in Liberia. Disgusted with the Tolbert regime, he resigned his ambassadorship to become an independent businessman in Grand Gedeh. Following the coup, he rejected every Doe offer to appoint him, among others, foreign minister, ambassador to the United States or to the United Nations. Johnson, however was at the inception perhaps the most important member of the group that set out to organize the party which the military government would favor in the process of return to civilian rule.

Johnson's relationship with Boley was strained, but excellent with his University of Liberia classmate, Blamo. He justified his rejection of Doe's offers by advising that any attempt by Doe to contest the ensuing election would correctly appear as an effort to transfer power to himself, and would undermine the credibility of the election process. He urged Doe to pursue further education, abroad. This advise clashed with that offered Doe by Boley, Rancy and others, and gradually irked him. But even after Doe had turned to Rancy and Edwin Tay, another Krahn, Johnson remained his confidante, paradoxically because Doe could not fathom him.

Semi–literate, Tay was Doe's commissioner of immigration, controlling the grant of residency and work permits to Indians and Lebanese, an office with unlimited potentials for illegally generating cash.

The last member of the group profiled is Jackson F. Doe. JD was the son of a Dahn chief who had facilitated earlier TWP governments' interior administration efforts; he became a ward in the Grimes family at an early age. Like two of the senior Grimes' natural children, he was educated at the CWA

and the University of Liberia. Upon graduation, he returned to the future Nimba county, successively becoming a high school principal and then supervisor of schools. He was admitted to the legal bar, made a major general commanding the local militia regiment, and chaired the county TWP. He would later be Tolbert's minister for education and a TWP senator.

Officials of the government on April 12, 1980, Blamo, Hill and JD were jailed, as were many others. Presumably with Thomas G. Quoiwonkpa's intervention, JD was released and appointed Doe's adviser on national and international affairs, and later managing director, NPA. Possibly through the Quoiwonkpa connection, the Americans "discovered" JD as the civilian to whom Doe should transfer power. Whether the "anointment" was in fulfillment of a pledge to Quoiwonkpa, or was in recognition of the perceived importance of Nimba county, or reflected the Americans' evaluation of JD, is not clear.[8]

JD and Johnson separated from the initial group. They seemed to conclude that they could organize another "responsible" group that would compete with Doe's; to form such a group, JD and Johnson recruited from an amorphous opposition group. As with the initial group, early consultations were informal; recruits had other relationships. In the beginning, membership in that group was also not stable. When new recruits learned that the group came into being following a disagreement with Doe, many dropped out. Initial organizing meetings, prior to the lifting of the ban on politics in July, 1984, were held at various locations , surreptitiously. These always were disguised as social functions. A stable group coalesced by the time the ban was lifted. This group declared its intentions to organize the Liberia Action Party in August, 1984.

IV

The consultations and deliberations preceding the split of the group and the eventual formation of the NDPL and LAP were clandestine for several reasons. First, they contravened the law. They were held while students and workers were being arrested for demonstrating against the public flogging of their relatives, for example. The consultations were among senior officials of the PRC Government, when PRC decrees unequivocally banned political meetings and civilian political activities.

By 1981, the Doe regime had lost its popularity. It had given wider reins to corruption, and failed to arrest decline in the standard of living. It was more inept than the government it overthrew. Liberians realized with discomfort that illiterate soldiers lorded over vaunted educated people, as well as over other illiterates, for no reason other than the pursuit of personal enrichment. Brutish suppression public flogging and torture of all classes of citizens were widesp rsonal wealth of the deposed elites, including homes, cars, rubber estates and stocks in companies, were possessed by the

new rulers. Public knowledge of the consultations—in effect undertaken to abort a pristine process possessing the potentials to reform an archaic, decadent political system—could have aroused public uproar, for it was still believed that Commanding General Thomas G. Quoiwonkpa was a force to be reckoned with.

The primary objective of the consultations was to form a "conservative" political party to thwart "socialists" in the government and at the University of Liberia. The participants appeared, as did most Liberians, to accept as fact that the "socialists" had not only a constituency, but a functioning organization, with great organizational potentials. Both the Doe and JD groups acknowledged they lacked these. Some participants may even have held that "socialists" were well funded, from abroad. Their strategy was therefore to outsmart the "socialists", considered perfidious. Participants' immediate aim may have been to transfer power from the "free enterprise" PRC to a kindred spirit civilian professional group; the original group's long term goal probably was to create a hegemony in which socialists perforce would be incapacitated to mount an effective electoral challenge. In effect, the original group's approach insulted PPP in that it effectively regarded MOJA as the more formidable opposition.

Participants attributed the political disturbances of the 1970s to the "socialists". However, MOJA appeared to have been singled out as capable of inflicting more enduring disturbances, as they would think their actions through; PPP, on the other hand, was deemed to lack any but brutish capacity and would presumably be forcibly suppressed.

Generally, all "socialists" were viewed not only as possessing the capacity to destabalize the government, but also that they were perhaps currently so engaged. Had not this group hastened the demise of the TWP by its interlocking strategy of undermining Liberians' confidence in their government, and of their government's in its officials, process and institutions?

Another inspiration for the clandestine consultations may have been the belief within the PRC that the "socialists" were incompetent technocrats and that the government's ineptness was due to their appointment to senior diplomatic and economic positions. Put differently, it was assumed that the "poor performance" of the diplomatic and economic agencies (headed by Matthews and Tipoteh, respectively) was prima facie evidence of their organized efforts to destabalize the PRC. These views were reinforced by the performance of the enigmatic Tipoteh as minister for planning and economic affairs. The mercurial Matthews as foreign minister not only failed to "end" ostracism of the PRC abroad, he began talking about the high price of rice again. Moreover, Tipoteh did not establish a friendly working relationship with bankers, foreign or domestic, private and multinational. He led a Liberian delegation to a

meeting with the vice chairman of Citibank arranged by the US State Department, dressed unconventionally and arriving very late. The Americans, who had dramatically increased aid, began to openly express concerns not only about his "socialism", but they contended that he was too prone to simplistic comments and observations.[9]

Within the PRC, concerns about Tipoteh's interests in "security matters" intensified, identifying him as inclined to usurp power and function. His noticeably close association with vice head of state Thomas Weh Syen, proponent of a strong relationship with Libya, was taken as proof that the Kru (Tipoteh) and the Sapo (Weh Syen) were to be the vehicle of a suspected "socialist" counter–coup.

The consultations seemed energized by Tipoteh's flight into exile at the end of an official visit to the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, Ethiopia. His decision followed the arrest of Weh Syen and others for treason. That Tipoteh was in Socialist Ethiopia when Weh Syen allegedly planned to effect his coup was presumed not coincidental. In the wake of the arrests, at least two MOJA associates, including a senior official of the Planning Ministry, flew to Abidjan specifically to intercept him and prevent his return to Monrovia. This decision was based on the conclusion that Tipoteh in Monrovia would be arrested and probably killed.

Another possible inspiration for keeping the consultations secretive was American. Weh Syen's public admiration for and pledge to establish a strong alliance between Liberia and Libya was pivotal. His patronage of a Libyan People's Bureau in Monrovia, as well as his invitation to Kadafil[10] to visit Liberia, were seen as designed to nullify American efforts that had forced Doe to reverse his earlier decision to pay state visits to Ethiopia and Libya. Libya and Ethiopia were among the first countries to recognize the PRC. When Doe accepted an invitation to visit Ethiopia, Lannon Walker, deputy assistant secretary of state for Africa in the Carter Administration, became the point man to thwart these developments. Undoubtedly the prospects of Libyan influence in Liberia inspired dramatic increases in United States aid to Liberia, beginning in US fiscal year 1981.[11] It is unclear, however, whether Libya and Ethiopia in recognizing the PRC and inviting Doe acted spontaneously, seeking to recruit Doe, or whether "socialists" working for the PRC in any way initiated the contact.

The inspirations were intertwined; operating, they reinforced each other. Given subsequent alliances, participants in the early consultations to ensure a hegemony undoubtedly perceived the importance and relevance of the outlined factors differently.

The arrest, trial and execution of Weh Syen and several other members of the PRC established the pattern Doe was to follow the next ten years: allege

capital crimes against likely competitors, order their arrest, manufacture evidence, then suborn, bribe and intimidate judges to convict. Punishment for the obstinate, experienced for example by the first panel of judges constituting the Supreme Military Tribunal, dismissed en masse after an unacceptable judgement, was swift. But Doe also contrasted swift punishment with disproportionate rewards, usually of senior jobs in government, public enterprises, or at an iron ore mine, disregarding training and experience. Like Tubman before him, he learned that patronage and manipulation, combined with ruthlessness, can enable easy perfection of a personal dictatorship.

The seed of destruction of all hopes to institutionalized political reforms in post–coup Liberia germinated at this time, even if unheralded. In fact, the execution of Weh Syen, the most detested member of an unpopular, brutish, corrupt and inept military regime, was applauded. Tipote's resulting flight was perceived to signal the beginning of the end for "socialist" destabilizers and was also welcomed by the old establishment. The establishment regarded Tipoteh as a traitor to his benefactors, and class. Born to an assimilated Kru tribesman and christened Rudolph Lorenzo Roberts in the very Methodist Church Tubman served as lay leader, he was educated at CWA, the secondary school attended by Liberian elites. He was a popular athlete in high school, a student leader and a cadet employee of the Treasury Department. Only children or exceptionally promising wards of the establishment received such assignments and recognition. All of his post secondary education was obtained abroad.

The establishment, and its coterie of beneficiaries blamed Tipoteh, his followers and the scorned PPP for the virtual anarchy in Liberia. The PPP was scorned by the establishment because its leaders and members were uneducated, unemployed members of a society that prided itself on formalism. The establishment also believed that a putsch normally feeds on itself and so the fall of these individuals and their organizations had been joyously awaited.

This abortion of democracy was mis–perceived as the obliteration of the house that the "socialists" built, both by the Carter Administration and by elements of the domestic opposition. "Uncle Sam" concluded that demonstration of a strong support for the regime was the message; increased aid to Liberia, negotiated by Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Richard Moose and administered by Walker, was the medium. Major American newspapers as well as human rights organizations would document human rights abuses, in relative terms on the scale of those committed by Amin and Obote in Uganda, but Democratic and Republican administrations would continue their support of the regime. It would appear that the decline in American economic assistance which the United States government reported was purely in response to Congressional pressure. Perhaps the racism which

had in part originally inspired the 19th century founding of the Liberian state prevailed.

Perhaps also not a coincidence, the American military mission in Monrovia at this time "discovered" Gen. Thomas G. Quoiwonkpa. Tobacco chewing, prone to curse but taciturn, the former corporal was embarrassingly pro-American. But he did not commandeer a mansion of the overthrown elites, as had all other members of the PRC; he lived in the barracks with his men. The Americans regarded him as the most powerful member of the PRC. He was believed disciplined, while Doe was not. The Americans began preaching that Doe was performing the functions, but that Quoiwonkpa wielded the power; that Doe was a corrupt weakling.

Doe's mastery of potentials the Americans and his domestic opponents thought he did not possess eventuated in his ruthless alliance with dispossessed, marginal members of the overthrown TWP. These persons were schooled in styming reforms; from the periphery of the TWP, they did not necessarily believe it likely to attain power themselves, but were prepared to violate any laws to confirm those who countenance them in power, or to prevent independent minded persons who might reform the system from acquiring power.

Prior to 1983, Doe could not overtly seek to become civilian president. Quoiwonkpa's opposition to a disguised military regime was presumed powerful and supported by the Americans; sadly, he would wait until he had lost power and means before attempting to overthrow the Doe regime. For example, at the time of the Nimba raid, Quoiwonkpa did not have unrestricted access to men, arms and ammunitions any longer. Essentially, the Nimba raid was the first of many occasions during which Doe dispatched Krahn soldiers into Nimba, traditional home of the Gio and Mano tribes, who massacred unarmed civilians. The initial raid was said to be in response to alleged discovery by Doe's forces that Quoiwonkpa had arms caches, and that he planned to mount a military action from Nimba against the regime.

Doe's drive to become president began full throttle perhaps as early as 1981; then, others initiated the action, and appealed to him to seize what they termed an opportunity. He developed a distaste for the MOJA/PPP rivalry and ostracized both. He suppressed dissent in government and with unsurpassed brutality. Public institutions and pressure groups, including the press, were suppressed. He employed schemers such as Ernest Eastman, Rancy and Kekura Kpoto (first chairman of the NDPL), to plan and implement details of a program that suited his "lumpen proletarian" instincts: "you destroy me, or I destroy you". Eastman, brought in from the secretary generalship of the Mano River Union in Freetown as Doe's third foreign minister in as many years, was believed to have collaborated with Kpoto in

hiring Sierra Leonean thugs. His primary claim to fame was that he was a former aide to Grimes. Succeeding the "socialist" Fahnbulleh who resigned when Liberia reestablished diplomatic relations with Israel, Eastman was supposed to improve relations with the Americans, and to assure them of Doe's client status. However, Liberian–US relations under Eastman fell to a level only as low as when Herbert Hoover severed diplomatic relations for Liberia's unilateral declaration of moratorium on repaying the Firestone loan of 1926; Eastman was also to be Doe's primary conduit to the old establishment.

Next, Doe learned to hide his inferiority complex vis–a–vis educated people. Later, he transformed it into disdain and arrogance, enhanced by his dreadful disregard for the sanctity of human life. In the meantime, his desire to imitate those he seemingly despised provided grounds for firing the University of Liberia administration that had refused to award him an honorary doctorate degree.

The prevailing assumption that the US would not countenance Doe's disavowal of his pledge to return Liberia to constitutional government later proved unfounded; a promise to protect US security interests, protect private American investment and ensure constant contacts with his government was satisfactory for the Americans. Weh Syen's execution vitalized Doe's efforts to publicize his interests in seeking the presidency. The removal of PRC committee chairmen from exercising routine administrative functions in government was further evidence that Doe was not first among equals; he now personified power. The flight of Tipoteh into exile; the arrest and detention of J. Nicholas Podier, successor to the executed Weh Syen, himself also later to be killed by Doe; the not infrequent arrest, disgrace and detention on Doe's orders of "senior" members of the PRC, assured him an uncontested status. Besides, civilians he once venerated, just like his PRC colleagues, flocked to him for financial aid and advice. At least two of the major established churches campaigned to have him become a member; he later became a Baptist. His opinions decided weighty issues, personal and national, technical and mundane. He became generous with public money, in his personal name. If Doe could enable a family to own a car, travel abroad or bury its dead in "style", he did not let onlookers forget that what he could offer, he could also withhold from them, including access to status as well.

The MOJA/PPP rivalry relieved Doe of any necessity to build consensus. Moreover, independents opposed to the regime neither identified with MOJA nor PPP, nor enhanced their power vis–a–vis Doe or the army. Despite his apostasy and the recency of his status, each group perceived Doe as the "big chief" of traditional Liberian politics.

Savoring these developments, Doe moved swiftly to consolidate power. He appointed his cousin, G. Alvin Jones, minister for finance to, among other

assignments, remove any necessity of documenting his removal of funds from government accounts. A former church bookkeeper lacking knowledge or experience in finance and economics, Jones rejected any necessity for distinguishing between public and personal resources. The Krahn governor of the National Bank of Liberia, a former Citibank bookkeeper, would perform similar functions that involved the bank, without records. The necessity of political consultations were removed; the NDPL was created purely as a formal conduit of power, from Commander–in–Chief Doe to "Dr." Samuel Kanyon Doe. Like Hitler after he became Reich Chancellor, Doe believes the party and its membership need him, not he them.

V

The political culture of Liberia gave LAP birth, and nurtured her. That culture and its value system sustained a peculiar political system. Liberians' response to unprecedented economic growth in the 1940s and 1950s which was unaccompanied by revision of the social structure, was delayed until inept management of the system and of the economy highlighted the "dysfunctional patterns of the past". The various episodes in founding LAP told here should be judged and understood in terms of the source, nature and character of opposition politics in the twilight of the TWP.

LAP's roots lie in clandestine, hypocritical plans by Doe and others to create a "responsible group" to whom he would surrender the functions of president, but not its imperial powers. The intent was to improve on the Barclay–Tubman arrangements, ensuring that Doe would deny his successor access to the power and patronage Tubman seized to thwart Barclay.

While the purpose of this section is to recollect some of my experiences with contemporary Liberian political developments, it might be useful at the outset to raise the issue of whether or not LAP was the TWP, reborn. One's view is influenced by his perception of the roles of LAP officials and personalities who had been influential in the TWP, of their perceived or real adherence to TWP practices and beliefs, and/or ability to transfer, impose or introduce TWP practices and beliefs on the new organization they joined (LAP) once the TWP was banned. Granted other criteria could influence a fair evaluation of the question, whatever those criteria may be, it seems that in sum, an objective basis for a fair conclusion is the comparative influence in LAP and on LAP positions and practices, of persons who had been influential in the TWP. A second consideration might be the identity of LAP practices and programs with those of the TWP. Had its victory not been sabotaged, LAP's relationship with a government formed by it after the elections, as well as the similarity of its governmental process with the TWP would have been bases for a determination. Yet another objective criterion would be the identity of LPA practices and programs with those of the TWP.

JD and Harry A. Greaves Sr. were the only members of LAP's Organizing Committee, and later of its National Executive Committee to have been officers of the TWP. Both are profiled elsewhere in this paper. One can conclude that neither was an overbearing force in formulating the party's policies, nor in devising its strategy, nor in managing the party nor its campaign. While many influential LAP members had held senior positions in TWP governments, that fact simply reflected the TWP's monopoly position in Liberia. Some of these persons had been in open conflict with the TWP before the coup in 1980. As to influence of LAP members who previously were officers of the TWP, because none of these dominated the new party, one can conclude that LAP was not the TWP reborn. JD's role in the party derived primarily from consideration that he was a very decent man who had been unfairly treated by the TWP. His preference for consensus could not possibly lead to the conclusion that he would seek to impose his will on the party.

The Doe regime cheated history out of a basis for an objective view on the second issue. Had LAP had a normal development, analysis of the process and outcome of its convention, for example, would have shown similarity or otherwise with TWP decision processes. Had the party's victory not been hijacked, its performance, especially in creating or maintaining sinecures as means of retaining and expanding patronage, would also have been a revealing variable.

Members of the group that formed LAP had much in common, yet were totally dissimilar. Not any two of them had shared a common background or a critically unique experience. The only glue cementing their association prior to 1985 when they were carted to jail was their dislike of the Doe regimes' subversion of the promise of an emerging opposition to reform a decadent system. To casual observers, LAP's founders belonged to the same class; actually, beyond the similarity of education, work and travel experiences, the founders had no common, binding experiences. There were no tribal bonds; there were no world view illuminated by a unique experience to which their common backgrounds pledged them. The purpose and potentials, relative to empowerment of the powerless masses, of decentralizing the basis of political power as well as inspiration for the free enterprise philosophy, may not have been the same for founders. Assimilated, detribalized elites, each was perceived as his collaborator's competitor in a presumably zero sum game. Group members probably did not perceive the causes of Liberian under–development from the same perspective; they would probably have advocated conflicting instruments to fight it.

Tuan Wreh, later expelled from the party but its first chairman, saw a LAP electoral victory both as creating a situation to revenge his torture under Tubman and enlarging his law practice. Harry A. Greaves, Sr., initially preferred by most organizing members to become LAP's chairman, opted not to attend

the election meeting, held at this house. Greaves scurried away when the meeting following the elections was to invalidate Wreh's election and elect him. A product of TWP culture, LAP learned later that Greaves could hardly imagine political behavior different from what he had learned as chairman of the TWP in the future Nimba county. Emmanuel S. Kromah resigned the associate justiceship of the Supreme Court under Doe; he was recruited for the LAP vice presidency for his independence, after Greaves' attempts to recruit Peter Amos George and J. Emmanuel R. Berry failed. He consistently maintained he had no interest in party politics. He agreed to become a candidate for vice president only after assurances that subsequent to a LAP victory, he would resign the vice presidency, and be appointed chief justice.[12] JD and Johnson may have had different objectives. Among Johnson's goals might have been earning respect and acquiring enough "IOUs", thereby positioning himself to minimize the wrath that might descend upon the Krahn after Doe. Despite repeated suggestions that he seek office, Johnson refused to consider any elective position, claiming that immediately following the horrors and mismanagement of the Doe regime, a Krahn candidate for national office was ill-advised.

JD is one of the most decent men ever born a Liberian. His integrity and loyalty to associates are unbounded. Yet, there were questions as to whether he really ever wanted to be president. He did not appear driven or consumed by power—whether as a coercive force, as an instrument to create beliefs, or as a means to self-enrichment. He failed to demonstrate that consuming ambition that is characteristic of politicians. He was pained when he had to make a decision that would injure one of the parties to a dispute, as when a crucial national executive committee (NEC) meeting determined that party chairman Wreh henceforth had to consult and obtain the NEC's approval before making and publishing major policy decisions, otherwise LAP would never be democratic, or he would have to resign his position. The most famous example of Wreh acting unilaterally perhaps was his claim that the party constitution empowered him, as its chief executive officer, to unilaterally expel all other members of the NEC.

While there is no question about JD's decency and unbounded admiration for his unbreakable will and capacity to suffer rather than compromise principles, one wonders if his role in postcoup politics was unduly influenced by others. Was he the civilian substitute for Quoiwonkpa, in which case his role resulted perhaps from a naive belief in American commitment to ideals of democracy everywhere? As had others before us, Liberians learned to their sorrow that America has no commitment to any ideals but its interests, the range of which is narrow.

Be that as it may, the internal dynamics of organizations create their own momentum. As Doe distanced himself from some members of the group, those

marginalized regrouped, redefined their goals and perspectives, and began recruiting, especially from the amorphous group of technocrats and former TWP government officials.

When the split occurred can only be conjectured; it was gradual and therefore each member knew that he had been excluded from ongoing consultations. One group focused its recruitment efforts on members of the establishment, and became the nucleus of LAP. The other, on officials of the PRC government and officers of the armed forces, becoming the NDPL.

The split reflected conclusion by Doe and his cronies that Doe's rights it was to allocate the functions of the presidency to whomever he chose. They queried the wisdom of creating a "responsible group". Could they with certainty vouch continual loyalty to the master of such a group? Would such an heir preserve Doe's pre–eminent role in Liberian society and politics? Why risk the divorce of function and power? The transfer of function, as of power, might be attended by diminution of prospects to increase newly tasted wealth; wealth already acquired in 1984 estimated at US $25 million on a US$35,000 annual salary might be questioned, or retrieved. The schemers heightened his fear that loss of political function in Africa goes hand in hand with loss of power, and, inevitably, status.

Neither JD nor Johnson sought to become officers of LAP, and neither was elected to any of the posts provided for in the party's by–laws and constitution. Wreh, who as legal adviser to Doe may have known of the clandestine consultations, but not invited to them, was elected party chairman; Greaves, vice chairman; Tarr, secretary general, and David M. Farhat, treasurer. JD and Johnson, as were all other members of the Organizing Committee, became members of the NEC. Later, JD was elected LAP's presidential candidate; Kromah, vice presidential candidate. Johnson became campaign manager.

In the weeks leading to the announcement of plans to form a political party, the organizers of LAP spent a lot of time (a) debating a draft party constitution, (b) adopting a party name, (c) and choosing a party symbol. The constitution was drafted by Wreh, a lawyer; it emphasized purely legal issues affecting a voluntary association as prescribed by the laws of Liberia, and did not break new grounds on political ideology. It did not outline means of effectively integrating a divided population, nor specify approaches towards equalizing access to opportunities. The abortion of the process of evolving a party platform was perhaps the single most important, potential impediment to a future democratic government under LAP.

Among the many names proposed and rejected before LAP was adopted were Action Group and National Action Party (NAP). The founders rejected Action Group, claiming it was "Nigerian"; NAP was rejected on the grounds it was a propaganda bonus for the opposition: the party that sleeps. The

Rooster was chosen as the party symbol because it epitomizes action. LAP would act to reform and revitalize the economy, and restructure society.

Immediately following the declaration by the Organizing Committee at the Ducor Hotel of its intent to form LAP in August, 1984, NDPL and the government revealed their plan to frustrate the process. A person not in any way connected with the party, and who could not be injured by its legalization, filed a suit, asking the courts not to permit the registration. It should be recalled that Doe had announced his intent to form the NDPL in the same speech in which he lifted the ban on politics. All preliminary arrangements essential to legalizing the party, such as procuring the signatures of 500 prospective members in each of six counties, had been made when the ban on politics was still imposed. Because the group to form LAP knew what Doe and his supporters were capable of and disposed to do, it had to thread carefully. Doe's government was on the rampage, intimidating and harassing prospective competitors. The future LAP had to be particularly careful, for Doe knew of the existence of its embryo, having split from it. Moreover, some of the thirteen or so groups that published their intention to become political parties decided, after consultation, that although the NDPL had forged names of persons published as wishing to become members of the party and violated most other provisions of the elections law, they would not file objections to its registration, as the law provided. The two rationale for this decision were (a) unwillingness to antagonize the NDPL, since it controlled the government and (b) mistrust of the judicial system. Perhaps this decision was a fatal error, in that such a test—of the legal system and of Doe and his American backers' intentions—early in the game would have registered the opposition's unwillingness to accept fraud. Besides, it would have come before the many episodes of massacre of the 1980 decade, when people power was more readily available to opposition political leaders.

The NPDL's formal registration was over in a whammy. With public resources and state radio, newspaper and television at its disposal, it monopolized the field. On the other hand, the suit to deny LAP's registration reached the Supreme Court, wasted resources and delayed the beginning of a campaign; it established that the judicial system would willingly lend itself to abuse to permit subversion of the process and stifle reforms, once individuals were enriched or empowered.

A week before SECOM's deadline, and less than two months before the general elections, LAP was legalized. The delay explains the failure to evolve a party manifesto. While justice was being abused to frustrate LAP's rights to be legalized, the Organizing Committee and its members were barred from canvassing for party members, and from undertaking any political activity. When LAP finally became a legal party, the recruitment exercise became a

subfunction; there was no time to consult the existing membership as to what its manifesto should be.

The inability to produce a party manifesto had fueled the misleading impression that LAP was basically the TWP, reborn. But while the impression was misinformed, it probably helped LAP in attracting adherents and supporters. For the majority of Liberians, deterioration in the economy under the military government, as well as its brutish violation of human rights, created the condition that rendered more than palatable the presumed rebirth of the TWP, by a new name. To most Liberians, literate or not, and irrespective of formal party affiliations, the attractive characteristic of this misinformed impression was the fact that LAP, even if the TWP reborn, was manned by persons reputed to be reform minded, knowledgeable, and not tainted by the legacies of Tolbert or Doe. However, for a significant element of the population, the absence of party platform led to straddling the fence. But although LAP did not publish a manifesto, certain tenets of its domestic and foreign policy was known, or presumed.

LAP made an undisputed claim to capacity to reconstruct an ailing economy; no other party had members with the range of national and international experience in finance and economics. The party promised an orthodox economic recovery program, based on recognition and stimulation of individual initiatives. It appeared set to reduce the size of the public sector, both by divesting government of public enterprises, by reducing public sector employment, and by reducing and limiting public sector usage of domestic credit capacity. To create jobs and improve productivity, it seemed poised to design and implement an incentives structure conducive to investment; it promised to implement a consistent, reliable economic policy, especially to improve domestic savings as well as increase public sector capital formation. It regarded foreign private investment as the *sine qua non* of Liberian economic growth, but seemed unprepared to perpetuate the tragedy which created enclaves divorced from national policy control and influence. Essentially, LAP believed that a rationalized public sector expenditures program was indispensable to an improved investment climate; improvement in those expenditures would be pursued, for more than any other economic policy variable, it was regarded as applicable to diversifying the economy. Finally, LAP perceived that a reasonable working relationship with multinational financial institutions was possible, and seemed committed to foster it.

Did LAP have a political program? Accepting the risks inherent in guessing, I think the party believed and assumed that once economic recovery started and equality before the law of all Liberians, including the head of state, was demonstrated, adequate constitutional and statutory laws existed to ensure more democratic institutions and practices. Its political program therefore was expressed by the slogan, "responsibility and accountability". What would it

have meant in terms of dismantling the centralized administration of government which led to monopoly of power in a few hands? We will never know.

The NDPL and its government controlled the media and employed public resources in Doe's campaign; yet in a way, published reports about the party and government reinforced its unsuitability to govern in a democracy. News about the government's suppression of rights; sponsorship of thuggery; continuing deterioration of the economy helped to counterbalance LAP's lack of resources with which to undertake public relations campaigns.

We shall never know whether the economic and political programs LAP appeared to promise, were feasible. Organizers had been frustrated in their efforts to build a democratic institution; it is even not known if there would have been a consensus on the presumed manifesto outlined above, especially on its essential details.

Perhaps more important than the NDPL and its government's harassment and intimidation, under–funding of LAP incapacitated it from running a more vigorous campaign, and from obtaining international support to ensure a more democratic political process.[13]

No Liberian businessman of stature joined LAP; there was no external financier. Liberian businessmen presumably shared LAP's philosophy, but the business community failed to invest in the democratic future of Liberia. As a result, LAP was the least well financed of the registered political parties; its access to funds was more constricted than LPP's and UPPs'. In fact each time a businessman, Liberian or foreign, contributed to LAP, he made a larger one to the NDPL. Moreover, before they were banned, UPP and LPP could raise money more easily than LAP. LPP, UPP and UP were prepared to satisfy SECOM's unreasonably harsh $150 thousand escrow and security requirements for registration before LAP did. LAP's hopes floundered when the International Trust Company of Liberia offered Wreh, its lawyer, a $50 thousand facility intended to enable LAP to satisfy the requirements, then withdrew it, yielding to government pressure. LAP obtained most of the required cash escrow when a co–maker guaranteed a loan to LAP at the Chase Manhattan Bank.

The collateralized loan was retired from dues, special levies on Organizing Committee members, and contributions by the rank and file. The properties offered to satisfy the $100 thousand security deposit requirement were those of various, "no name" partisans. This situation can be contrasted, for example, with an offer by a former Tolbert minister for lands and mines, of $50 thousand to UPP to enable it to register. He seemed unconcerned about the prospects of losing it, should the government seize UPP's bank account. Or the offer and delivery, without solicitation, of $10 thousand to LPP by former vice head of

state Podier, through the author. Sawyer, in my presence, rejected and returned Podier's personal check for the amount.

Sawyer was de facto a member of the NEC; he drafted most of the party's public statements and participated in strategy sessions, and generally helped run the party. In fact, as Wreh became increasingly irascible, and JD less willing to make the requisite decisions, Sawyer's role in and influence on the party expanded. It included effecting the de facto merger of LAP and LPP, even if it was understood that individual members of LPP, not the organization, joined LAP. He withstood pressure to disengage himself from the campaign from his MOJA colleagues. He was a principal negotiator for LAP with UP's Dr. Edward B. Kesseley in the unsuccessful drives to field a single slate of candidates, and with Matthews to establish a relationship with the UPP, similar to what existed between LPP and LAP.

Sawyer disavowed interest in an elective position; he believed that democratic institutions were impossible without an appropriate value system. He seemed to have held the view that only those not seeking to enhance their personal power emanating from reforms could credibly demand such reforms. His outlook contrasted sharply with those whose altar of personal ambition required daily sacrifices. Lastly, he deputized his senior LPP associates to assume important roles in the campaign. Thus Dr. Levi B. Zangai became LAP's assistant secretary general, and the closest advisor and personal assistant to JD. John Karwhea (who became chairman of LPP after the arrest and detention of Sawyer's successor in that position) spearheaded LAP's recruitment drive.

The bond that developed among certain individuals during and since those trying days provides a reliable basis for a stronger, unified political party. In the years since, character and real motives have become manifest, creating or destroying in the process the basis for implicit trust.

In view of the phenomenon and achievements of people power in the Philippines and in Eastern and Central Europe, one's memory of late 1985 and after is embittered by LAP's failure to declare itself the legitimate government. As secretary general of LAP, I was regularly informed and provided documentary evidence of burned ballots and of ballot boxes switched. Moreover, copies of telexes between government operatives and Doe were regularly delivered to me. The evidence and information in turn were brought before the NEC. Harmon's refusal to accept signed tallies notwithstanding, tally copies bearing verified signatures of all party representatives, including the NDPL's, were also delivered to LAP; these showed that LAP won. When Harmon aborted the process and appointed an illegal commission to count substitute ballots marked by his agents, the NEC met, but failed to enlist the people. In fact, Liberians, across party lines, threatened to prevent an NEC

meeting from dispersing until it had authorized citizens to strike, to demonstrate, and to proclaim a LAP government. The NEC prevailed upon the crowd not to engage people power; it persuaded the crowd to disperse.

In hindsight, I must conclude that people power might have confirmed the LAP victory. Factors which support the foregoing conclusion include the following. Doe was very depressed by the people's rebuke of him; he most likely would not have recovered from his depression to muster support in the army to suppress people power. After the rebuke, especially while Harmon was still framing his infamous "Ballot Counting Commission", Doe neither had the support of the army nor the basis for inducing it. A number of Doe's later, most ardent supporters, including Justice Minister Jenkins Scott and Defence Minister Gray Allison, had begun exploring means of their escape, which was seen to lie only in abandoning Doe. These and others, personally and through emissaries, during the period preceding Harmon's announcement of the creation of his commission, sought to establish contact with LAP and to inform the party that they had in fact, voted for LAP.

Any claim to extraordinary influence over the party by the author would be unfounded. Yet, given his position and role, it might be useful to rationalize the failure to enlist people power. Presumably, my motives and the factors which influenced them were not unique, since the NEC was unanimous in its unwillingness to appeal to the people to reverse the subversion of the LAP victory.

Two factors influenced my role in urging the people away from proclaiming a LAP victory. Each factor was underlined by concerns for a possible pogrom. I knew that Doe had told his cabinet on several occasions, especially in 1981 while rebuking Health Minister Martha Belleh for declaring her opposition to killings, that he would kill as often as necessary to stay in power, for he was head of government only because he and his associates had killed.

The first factor influencing my decision had to do with UP Chairman Carlos W. Smith's contention on a television program moderated by Charles Gbenyon before he was murdered, that my claim of LAP victory after the election was preposterous. Harmon quoted Smith for days afterward. Although all the opposition parties that had participated in the election had met on several occasions following the elections and prior to the television program, and despite LAP availing to UP and LUP tallies by their own poll watchers confirming the LAP victory, each of UP and LUP persisted in its claim that its candidate had won the presidency.

The second influencing factor was less public and occurred first. SECOM changed the rules governing the elections as the campaign progressed. One major issue was whether or not representatives of parties would be allowed to observe the vote counting process; this issue arose long before Harmon's

fraud. In a heated discussion that was televised, speaking for LAP I stated that LAP would boycott the election. I ended with the statement, "this is not an empty threat".[14]

In a meeting between the parties and SECOM, the UP leadership castigated me and apologized to Harmon, claiming that my behavior was both di to an "honorable gentleman", Harmon, and unpatriotic. Moreover, US Ambassador Edward Perkins sought me out at a social gathering to warn me that my voice was "intemperate and too strident" and could harm the process if I did not lower it.

On reflection, these are inane excuses; yet, they perhaps provide a context for the failure of leadership to harness people power—power that was available.

What was the proper purpose for political reforms in Liberia? Did LAP's unwholesome beginnings inherently incapacitate it as a vehicle for reform? Could the emerging opposition, comprising PPP, MOJA and disaffected TWP members and independent technocrats, have institutionalized political reforms? Was the failure of the opposition parties to field a single slate of candidates against Doe in 1985 inevitable, given the rivalry of personal ambition and the character of Liberia's political culture? Did this failure need to have doomed the opposition and its stated goal of reforms? How significant are these compared to other factors and influences on the social, political and economic backwardness of Africa's oldest independent republic?

How did hypocritical, clandestine deliberations undertaken to perpetuate the flaws and unresponsiveness of a decadent political culture with a dubious value system, at least partially, eventuate in stimulating the Liberian people and itself ascribing to become a beacon of hope and an avenue to social and economic progress?

These questions require answer. This article was not intended to answer them, however; it sought to contribute to history by reflecting on happenings from a perspective that might prove useful to those seeking to answer such questions.

VI

The coup of April 12, 1980, betrayed a promise of political reforms in Liberia; without political reforms, corruption and other maladies have multiplied, and economic reforms, when social stability returns, shall be more costly and impose harsh conditions on the people. It inspired the still-birth of democracy and resulted in a reign of terror in Liberia. However, the political culture provided Doe the means and incentives to usurp the highest office of the land and to dishonor the presidency. But individual episodes are merely a link in a continuum with co-optation, disenfranchisement, gobbling of

businesses, a long aftermath of a day of riots, of a mid–night march and of a postponed mayoral election; of a suffocating, over–centralized bureaucracy. In it, the "chief" is the only digit in the sum of things; associates and institutions are cyphers whose function is to follow and multiply his value. Liberian politicians have always behaved as if in an oriental court, as attendants jestering for positions. To insure against loss, participants in the political process were predisposed to co–optation.

Every member of the establishment was a member of the TWP, or presumed to be a member; every member of this group belonged or aspired to belong to certain social groups, the "right" religious denominations and so on. None of these groups had independent status. Status was bestowed by coterminous leadership or membership in associations with senior positions in government. The value of membership in an association derived from how many members of such associations were in senior government positions. Social, political, religious and professional groups became indistinct; no arms length transactions were possible among them, for memberships were interlocking.

The re–empowerment in 1989 of the Ancient Free and Accepted Masons, as well as Doe's admission into it and into the Baptist church, completed the reincarnation of a tribally controlled, more corrupt TWP hegemony.

Was there a standard, an anchor of value in the society that would have facilitated reforms? The large group of "assimilados" was insecure, and in fact claim to this status was tentative. Effective integration meant total detribalization; to belong, the aspirant had to renounce his background. This assimilation process did not really intensify competition between "assimilados" in terms of positive performance; instead, it enhanced the powers of patrons. The stimulus was virtual incestuousness of society. Thus, by the 1970s, most members of the core group were related by blood, marriage, or concubinage. But ubiquitous control led to loss of industry and ambition, costing the core group the justification for its privileges – superior education. In the 1860s Liberian agriculture and therefore trade declined because the offspring of enterprising men opted not to emulate their forebears; in the 1950s and after, scions of the elites despised hard work, intellectual pursuit and professional training. Even those trained adopted peculiar ethical norms. Their sense of duty and obligation was all but replaced by a drive for wealth, most often from providing bogus "professional" services. Thus, for example, Winston Tubman, partner in the Tubman Law Firm while legal counsel to the government agency having overall responsibility of evaluating and approving investment applications, ingenuously denied the possibility of a conflict of interest in his roles; he saw a "confluence of interests". The Tolbert Law Firm became de rigueur for potential investors in the 1970s. Their Krahn equivalents dot the landscape today.

The history of Liberian political development over the past two decades, we have seen, manifests the inevitable failure of an oligarchy. Tubman's authoritarian reign, albeit benevolent, ended and was followed by an incompetent management. A mixture of adverse economic developments, greed, and increasing political awareness of a disfranchised majority hastened the demise of the old order, but before a sustainable one had emerged. A phalanx of opposition groups, inexperienced and unwilling to submerge differences and pursue the principal objective of creating conditions that would facilitate the birth, growth and development of democratic attitude and institutions, reviled against each other. Moreover, ignoring developments across the African continent, the opposition groups ignored the armed forces, an untrained group of persons incapable of conceiving modern governance, but with the power to end the hegemony.

The opposition groups failed to realize their errors after the coup; the semi-literate dictator the coup installed was ruthless in his pursuit of power and wealth. Human life, international opinion and judgment of history would not deter his pursuit of personal power; embryonic institutions were actively subverted in the process, and devastated. The history of the Liberia Action Party is truncated, for the system's onslaught prevented the confirmation of the party's victory; it had earlier undermined the process by which observers would have been enabled to determine whether it was the old wine in a new bottle. Denial of the popular will of the people could be sustained only by increased suppression and brutality; the result has been exacerbated economic and social chaos, including development of that malady of African politics, tribalism.

Cultural identity in pre-coup Liberia was spurious as well as specious. In pre-coup Liberia, quest for private or family gains replaced nationalism; in post-coup Liberia, largesse was no longer the privilege of an elite band of "children of pioneers". Instead of Tubman's "recycling" of members of the elite on whom his long tenure depended, Doe killed or exiled his erstwhile collaborators, and anyone that appeared a threat to his regime. Assimilation had required disavowal of "heathen" practices of the "barbarous" natives. Callous contempt for the lives of members of major tribal groups led to periodic uprisings during the decade of the 1980's, and massacres comparable in per capita terms to those Amin and Obote wrought on Uganda. Moreover, the society continues to despise critical intellectualism but dresses its members in pseudo intellectual garbs: every "honorable" is awarded an honorary doctorate by the complaint University of Liberia, but one by a Monrovia secondary school would entitle one to being called "doctor" just as well. Without a critical intellectual tradition, the culture failed to question concurrent adherence to Western, Eastern and African cultures. For example, no incongruity was perceived to exist between the concurrent practice of fundamental

christianity, aspects of traditional secret societies, voodoo and witchcraft. Not only did status derive from membership in all, higher status was conferred by concurrent leadership of all. In this society in which nothing was sacred because there is no legacy, conspicuous consumption has become the right of the privileged few, and the aspiration of the subjugated many. Capital flight, depleted iron ore deposits, pillage of forests, and socio–economic collapse have made theft of public resources the only game in town. Meanwhile, shortsighted American pre–occupation with the protection of its "national interests" and investment, perhaps not uninfluenced by racism, expanded Liberia's problems as she entered the 1990s.

Endnotes

* The author acknowledges comments on an earlier draft of the paper by Christopher Clapham, John H. Gay and D. Elwood Dunn.

[1]The constitution provides for an autonomous Special Elections Commission; SECOM, however, never published an elections report, so voter turnouts and other details of the 1985 elections remain unknown. Voters turnout was estimated at two thirds.

[2]There were 92 elective offices to fill: a president, a vice president, 26 senators and 64 representatives. Only the NDPL "contested" all seats in all jurisdictions. Opposition candidates were harassed to resign, including all races in Grand Gedeh County.

[3]Independent observers that reported the fraud include, Lawyers Committee for Human Rights (1986) *Liberia: A Promise Betrayed.* (New York: Lawyers Committee for Human Rights). Various issues (especially October–December, 1985) of these major papers: *The Washington Post; The Los Angeles Times,* and *The New York Times.* Also the weekly magazine, *West Africa.* Se also, J. Gus Liebenow, *Liberia: The Quest for Democracy* (1987). Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, and Michael Massing (1986). *Best Friends: Violations of Human Rights in Liberia, America's Closest Ally.* New York: Fund for Free Expression.

[4]The logic is inverted. Considering that natives were not citizens when J. J. Roberts was elected, the "minority" denied all rights was the majority.

[5]In Liberia, ". . . traditions of patronage and favoritism focused upon and emanating from the small elite group that dominated the society". Public Administration Service, confidential document, dated 1987. The bureaucracy is centralized and the president's tenure, de facto, is indefinite; power is hierarchical, with him at the apex. The standard bearer of the TWP (NDPL) who is president of Liberia, approves all candidates for elective office; as

commander in chief, he approves promotions in the military. He appoints his cabinet and all judges.

[6]See D. Elwood Dunn and S. Byron Tarr, *Liberia: A National Polity in Transition.* (Metuchen, New Jersey: Scarecrow Press, 1988); Amos Sawyer, *Effectively Immediately.* Liberia Working Group, Paper No. 5, (Bremen, West y, 1986). Many informed persons hold that the coup of 1980 interrupted and delayed the prospects for political reforms in Liberia. The T.S. Eliot quote is from William Manchester, *The Last Lion: Winston S. Churchill.* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1984), p.667.

[7]The first PRC cabinet comprised soldiers, officers of the PPP and MOJA, and three holdovers from Tolbert. The evidence is strong that the cabinet did not have Doe's imprimatur; its composition reflected the diffusion of power then. As Doe's stature developed, and irrespective of how recently he may have reshuffled the cabinet, he continuously sought to entice those he considered formidable foes into it. Even as recently as 1988 he offered Jackson F. Doe the ambassadorship to the USA and the chairmanship of the NDPL.

[8]In early 1981, while in New York City on a private trip, Moose called and invited me to meet him early the next morning in the offices of the absent US Ambassador to the UN. Predicated on information he said he had that I planned to resettle in the United States, Moose stated his purpose for the meeting was to dissuade me. He intimated to me that his government had Doe's "word" that return to civilian government would be on schedule, or earlier; that premature relocation of professionals might undermine the process and harm the objective of a "democratic and responsible government" Independently and unknown to me until later, Jackson F. Doe also visited the United States that year. Edward J. Perkins, who between his service as deputy chief of mission and US Ambassador to Liberia, was director for West Africa in the Africa Bureau, frantically traced JD to a New York City hotel to obtain JD's résumé, saying it was needed for an important purpose.

[9]Tipoteh's first official statement upon becoming minister for planning & economic affairs, was his observation that the PRC government "found only $5 million in the central bank's vault". Did he forget "don't hold idle balances"?

[10]Prior to Weh Syen's execution, there were at least three power centers: Doe, as head of state; Weh Syen, as manager of the PRC's daily affairs,including its legislative activities, and members of the PRC as individuals. Decisions and activities were uncoordinated, with the three centers acting independently of each other, resulting in confusion and paralysis.

[11]United States direct assistance to Liberia between 1847 and 1980, in current dollars, amounted to $400 million; between 1980 and 1985, to $500 million.

[12]Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was the likely candidate for vice president until, as part of the arrangements to register the party, and in view of the constitutional inhibition against persons who had not resided continuously in Liberia for ten years prior to the elections, Kromah emerged as the most appealing candidate.

[13]Sirleaf contacted both TransAfrica and the National Democratic Institute, imploring them to field elections watchers in Liberia. Most such trips, and the follow-up trans-Atlantic telephone discussions, were paid for by individual members of LAP.

[14]Quoiwonkpa's forces were overpowered in the afternoon of November 12, 1985. Presumed supporters of the coup, members of the opposition, and many innocent citizens—especially of the Gio and Mano tribes—were massacred by Doe's soldiers during the next few days. During the night of November 13 Boley relayed a Doe instruction to Major Alfred Zeh of the Executive Mansion Guard to kill me. Two truckloads of soldiers of the Executive Mansion battalion came to my house that night, but I was not at home. Consequently, the soldiers burned my house, with all its contents, bound the caretakers, and took them to jail. On November, 15, before Doe ordered leaders of opposition parties to be taken to Monrovia's infamous military prison, he asked me where I had been hiding, even though there had been no published indication that I was wanted by the government. He contended that my statement, "this is not an empty threat", "proved" that I had planned the unsuccessful coup. See Sawyer, p.32.

Fatima Massaquoi Fahnbulleh (1912–1978)
Pioneer Women Educator

Raymond J. Smyke*

Known all of her life as Fatima, later "Madam", she was among the most influential indigenous women in mid-twentieth century Liberia, and played a key role in higher education. On the faculty of the University of Liberia from 1947 until her retirement in 1972, she taught in several disciplines, mainly in the social sciences.[1] In 1956 she became Director, and four years later, Dean of the College of Liberal and Fine Arts. She also founded and served as Director of the Institute of African Studies. A creative person, she authored a number of monographs on Liberian culture, including an early autobiography.[2] She also wrote a historical drama to celebrate the University's centenary, helped to found the Society of Liberian Authors and made a significant contribution to the standardization of the Vai script. In addition to an honorary doctorate from her University, she received a number of foreign honors.

During the First Republic, the period between the two World Wars was difficult for educated women. But, for an educated indigenous woman it was doubly so. Fatima had some advantages: family pride, brain power, languages and tenacity, yet the frustrations took a toll. Her father, Momolu Massaquoi (1870–1938), served as Liberia's first Consul General to Germany from 1922 until 1929, when he returned to Monrovia to contest the Presidency.[3] Her mother was Madam Massa Balo Sonjo from Bandajuma in Barri Chiefdom, Sierra Leone. Fatima was born on 25 December, 1912. There was a stroke of lightning and thunder at her birth–an unusual omen in December. She later joined the Sande in Njagbacca. We are informed of her childhood years because Fatima was a gifted communicator, with a powerful sense of recall. Before the age of forty she wrote an autobiography. A steady correspondent with a large number of people, she had the habit of saving all of her letters.[4]

Fatima made several important contributions to Liberian historiography. They include the following:

... She left a detailed, personal record, covering a significant period of time, viewed through the eyes of an indigenous person.

... She served as a mentor for several generations of young indigenous boys and girls striving for education, understanding, and equality in Liberia.

... Fatima and her brother Nathaniel[5], were gifted in languages – Vai, Mende, English, German, French, Italian, and used these effectively while representing Liberia abroad.

... Her University faculty career was a near record in longevity and service, in areas of instruction, administration and research.

... Her early inter–University communications, reports, memoranda and correspondence provide an intimate glimpse of the institution.

... She was Founder and Director of the Institute of African Studies.

... She organized and chaired a unique "Seminar on Standardization of the Vai Script".[6]

Her father had laid out a program of education from the moment she was born. Later, he even chose a university for her to attend in the United States. Fatima graduated B.A. in Sociology from Lane College in 1938; M.A. in Sociology and a second one in Anthropology from Fisk University in 1944. She completed the requirements for a Ph.D. in Social Studies at Boston University but never submitted the dissertation. She had earned her own way throughout her university career. At Lane she taught French and German, while at Fisk, Momolu's old friend W.E.B. DuBois looked after her. There, in addition to languages, she taught African and European folk dancing and violin. These lessons were usually given at the Bethlehem Center in Nashville, Tennessee. Like her Father, Fatima was an accomplished violinist despite a hand injury sustained as a child. In addition to the above, at Fisk she assisted with organizing the African Studies Program, compiled a Vai dictionary with Prof. Mark Hanna Watkins and taught at a settlement house. Short of money, just before he died, Momolu did what he could. He arranged with his son Ciaka to send his daughter quantities of Liberian artifacts, including masks, cloth, ivory and the like. To support herself, she would lecture on Liberia at churches and schools in the South, and sell these things after the lectures. A half century before, this is exactly how Momolu earned his way through Central Tennessee College. His mother, Queen Sandimannie, sent him cases of what must have been extremely valuable Liberian artificats which he sold on lecture tours throughout the South[7].

Early Life

Her early life had several significant influences. As a child she lived at her birthplace, Njagbacca, Gawula District, Grand Cape Mount County with Momolu's sister, Mama Jassa, then the oldest member of the Massaquoi clan. Fatima spent seven years with her. It was a two–way arrangement. She was placed there, as was the custom, for early formation. As Mama Jassa aged and became forgetful, it was Fatima's task to remind her where she left things – glasses, keys and the like, but also to whom she loaned household items. Fatima learned a great deal from the old woman, including a lifelong respect for traditional and herbal medicine. She recalled the sad farewell, when Momolu came to take her to school, knowing she would never see Mama Jassa again.

This influence on young Fatima was immense.[8]

She began in an elementary school organized by Ch Grimes, then went to Julia C. Emery Hall at Bromley Mission. In 1922 at the age of ten she went with the family to Hamburg, Germany where she earned the Abitur and attended university.

Her formative years, before the family moved to Germany, were dominated by a special sense of family inculcated by her father. Momolu had five wives by traditional marriages, and one "official" marriage in 1915 to Rachel Johnson. Madam Massa was the last of the five dowered women or traditional wives, with whom Momolu had children. In addition to the children from these marriages, he had sired several others, most of whom made up the Massaquoi family which he looked after throughout his life.[9] These people never lived together, under the same roof, but there was constant communication among them. This was done in the traditional Liberian way of travelers carrying a message, occasional letters and visits. But primarily, it was Momolu seeing that everyone was informed of family matters. He was an indulgent father, spending much time with each one. While trading in Sierra Leone, and later traveling for the Liberian Department of Interior to the hinterland, he always took some of the children with him on trek.

Like a large family anywhere, he loved them all, but still had favorites. In the listing of children shown in endnote nine, it is clear that Fatima is the only daughter around during his prime years. The influence of her father was a very important theme running throughout her whole life, even into her advancing years, long after he died. This father–daughter relationship has to be understood in order to understand Fatima herself. On meeting Fatima for the first time at the home of her mother, he said in Mende, "so this is my daughter and mother".[10]

A word about Momolu. His own childhood was spent under the eye of an indulgent mother, Queen Sandimannie. She was a powerful woman in her own right. In addition to the stories that Momolu told of his mother, there is ample documentation on her from other sources, all testifying to her greatness.[11] The theme of his mother runs all through his life, often mentioned in private correspondence and in public speeches.[12] He had the annoying habit of holding up his Queen mother for others to emulate, particularly Fatima. He mentions it often in letters to her. He did the same thing to his wife, Ma Sedia, while they lived in Germany, but this admonition fell on deaf ears. She was a strong person and did not need to emulate anyone.[13] Beginning at a very impressionable age, her grandmother became the model for Fatima. Indeed, from the pattern and frequency of reference, it appears that he truly believed Fatima was his mother returned to earth to be with him. An extremely difficult burden for a child to carry! She tried to excel in everything in order to please

him. He, in turn, placed all of his hope, and much of his trust in her. He spent a good deal of money to ensure that she had the finest education available. Fatima was favored more than the other children.

A typical exchange of correspondence, in 1928, went like this. He congratulated her for being 10th in her class, "but before you leave that class you must be the *first. First* was always my place in every class I have ever entered and post I have ever occupied. God bless you and give you the will to reach the top. Don't think of failing — hundreds, yea thousands are looking upon you." Her reply, "My darling papa.... You need not worry about my doing anything which I know will not please you. I will make you happy in your old age, that you can rely upon". Perhaps he showered this love and affection on her because she was the only girl. But his belief in the connection between his mother and Fatima gave it all another dimension. I believe that he was trying to show the whole world, but particularly the settler–Liberian community, that an indigenous person could rise to any heights, given an equal opportunity in life. When he returned to Liberia, after the German assignment, he was chagrined that he could not support her financially, yet he continued to shower her with advice, up until several days before he died. Her brothers showed little or no jealousy at all. They were most supportive of her, particularly AlHaj, the oldest. After Momolu died, Ciaka carried on with the good advice.

Nathaniel and Fatima grew up together. They both benefited from, and excelled in, their German education and remained lifelong and close friends, each involved in Liberian education. Nathaniel's mother, Julia Cecilia Harris,[14] was the woman in the family closest to her. Not surprisingly, Fatima's marriage to Earnest Ballah Fahnbulleh, on 26 July 1948, did not endure. If her hero was Momolu, then probably not many men could live up to his image.

The family therefore was very close. After Momulu's fruitless effort for the Presidency, the victor, Edwin Barclay, began a campaign of victimization against him that aimed to crush his great spirit. It lasted up to the day that he died, indeed, reaching beyond the grave. These years, from 1931 until 1938, were extremely difficult ones for Liberia, and its people, including the Massaquoi family. Fatima remained in Germany, working at the Consulate for a time. She continued her schooling until the Nazi menace began to make life uncomfortable for black people. She left Germany for Lane College without coming home. The period was doubly hard for Momolu. He felt that he let his "darling Müttchen" down, having no money at all to send her. However, he used his vast network of contacts to pave the way for her to go to the United States. In the meantime, Fatima was maturing into a bright, articulate and independent person. It was undoubtedly a good thing that the two were separated when they were, otherwise it would seem that his love would smother her.

Family Life in Germany

Fatima was enrolled in a primary school, St. Anschar Hohere Mädchenschule in Hamburg. She learned the language very quickly and of course had tasks around the Consulate which also served as the family residence. The family knew sadness in the new setting. A daughter born to Ma Sedia shortly before they departed for Germany and called Leona Kenujah Germania, died on board ship and was buried in Hamburg. A family photo shows the burial. Fatima's stepsister, Sarah Koboh, died of pneumonia and is buried at Ohlsdorf Friedhof (Cemetery) in Hamburg.

Actually, Momolu took a number of young people to Germany and assured their education. In this group were Mary McCritty Bright Fiske, Maima Beysolow, Mai Roberts who died and is buried at Ohlsdorf, George Flomoyan, Edward Gray (Moipisi) as well as others. Placed in different schools around Europe, these young people kept in close touch by frequent correspondence. Many of them came to the consulate on school holidays. There are many stories and remembrances about this period. Being the first black diplomatic family was not easy.[15] Baby Fritz seems to have expressed the innermost feelings in a story that Fatima frequently told. She was walking the baby one day and when a German came right up to him to stare, Fritz said to his sister "Tita, sag' ihnen doch, ich bin kein Neger, ich bin ein brauner deutscher." (Fatima, tell them I'm not a negro, I'm a brown German.)

Her lifelong interest in the Vai language began with Mama Jassa and was continually enhanced by Momolu, a Vai scholar in his own right. In Germany he was engaged as a Vai instructor at the Seminar für eingeborene Sprachen (The Seminary for Native Languages at Hamburg University.) The Germans had done some extensive work on Vai through Professors Ernst August Klingenheben, Carl Meinhof and A. Damann. Momolu and Klingenheben had prepared a Vai grammar. On one occasion when Momolu was out of town, Fatima, then 15 years old, had replaced him as an instructor at the Seminary. She later taught Vai on a regular basis. This interest in her own language prompted her to hold a Seminar on the subject 30 years later in Liberia and described in detail later. She was fond of recounting that the Nazis used Vai as one of their code languages during the second world war. She told of one of the regular German students coming to class with his uniform on. She did not give it too much thought at the time, but later while in America, learned that Vai was used as a code and that some of the Germans she taught must have been in her class for that purpose.

In addition, other persons had a significant impact on her particularly during the formative years in Hamburg. The visitors who sat around the Consul General's table at 22 Johnsallee were an incredible array. During the heady days following the first world war and before the general economic

decline of the 1930s, there was a great deal of travel to and fro by Liberians. Some stayed at the Consulate, a large and spacious villa three minutes' walk from the Alster, a lake formed by the Elbe River. Those who were accommodated at the city's Atlantic Hotel were frequently shown there by the energetic Massaquoi children. They very quickly learned German and were willing informants on Hamburg and things German. Visitors included W. E. B. DuBois on numerous occasions. He always stayed at the villa. Also black singer Roland Hayes, whom Momolu first met in London in April 1921, when Hayes gave a Royal performance before King George and Queen Mary. Fatima obtained her 1945 scholarship to Boston University through him. Marcus Garvey's lieutenants James H. O'Meally and William Strange visited Momolu since they knew each other before his diplomatic career. It was Momolu who issued their visas to proceed to Liberia to begin the 'back to Africa' movement. Fatima noted in her autobiography that "she fell in love with O'Meally". Momolu's classmates and friends from the United States came from time to time. A frequent visitor was Uncle T. E. Besolow, Associate Justice of the Liberian Supreme Court, also Senator W.V.S. Tubman on his way to a 1925 church conference in the United States, plus missionaries and others being cured at the Hamburg Institute of Tropical Medicine. President C. D. B. King, during his term of office, and lesser lights also visited from Liberia and West Africa. Momolu was open, gregarious, and a keen listener. He was an excellent host, even when the Republic had little money for entertainment. Fatima was a young girl when all of this was going on. Her father was so proud of her he made sure that all of the visitors knew his Müttchen. Later, as a teenager, having met some of the visitors on several occasions, she participated in the ranging dinner table conversations.

The person who kept Momolu, the family and the Consulate functioning from the beginning until the end of their nine–year stay, was a devoted private secretary, Fräulein Gertrude von Bobers. Tall, slender and blond, she was the last of a line of German–English aristocracy originating in Hanover. Born in England, schooled in Lausanne, fluent in four languages, she became part of the family and kept in contact long after they had left Germany. Indeed, the pleasant memories of the decade were due in large measure to her. She was Fatima's friend, confidant, mentor and model. Their rooms were on the third floor of the villa at Johnsalle. Everything was new when they arrived in Hamburg. The sea of white people, school, the language, society and culture. Ma Sedia was very supportive, but was herself, trying to adjust to the new world. Gertrude von Bobers was part of the new world. She always wore sports clothes, was accomplished at tennis, skiing and swimming and became Fatima's guide and ideal. She helped her choose the right schools, showed through example how a young lady should act, but most important, she was someone Fatima could confide in, with whom she could share her deepest secrets. She served as a counterbalance to the sometimes oppresive love of her

father. After Fatima went away to school in Switzerland – the same school that Fraulein von Bobers had attended – their correspondence was intimate and affectionate, with supportive, unobtrusive and practical advice. Thus, Fatima knew strong and loving women throughout her life – her own mother, Mama Jassa, Ma Sedia, Frauline von Bobers, Julia Cecilia Harris and others. They all influenced her in a mature and caring way, perhaps recognizing the difficult life she had chosen as a pioneer among native women, who wanted to be educated and independent in an African society that knew women only as wives appended to husbands. This also explains, to some extent, why her marriage never worked. It was not easy for a man, coming from a conservative West African environment to understand and cope with a marriage partner who was her own person.

The man who was closest to her in age and affection throughout her life was Kolli Tamba whose grandmother was Mama Jassa. He was distantly related and called "cousin". Momolu liked him very much. It would have been perfectly acceptable to him if Fatima and Tamba were eventually married. In a 10 November 1932 letter Momolu advised Fatima that her cousin Tamba was sailing for Hamburg on the SS WAHEHE. He was, Momolu wrote, his right hand, doing all of his typing and "following up all my life's work". He was greatly missed. Momolu recommended him as a gentle man worthy of confidence. He tried him for many years and Tamba had done better than most of his sons. Tamba was on his way to Russia to study.[16] Nat, Tamba and Fatima grew up together. The correspondence between Tamba and Fatima is most affectionate. They were together as much as possible before he went to Russia. But for some reason, perhaps the degree of kinship, they never married. She was a very devout Christian. If her kinfolk Bishop Momolu Gardner advised her that they were too closely related to marry that would have been reason enough for her. I feel that he was the great love of her life.

She had a large number of friends, her own age, call on her when they traveled to Europe. Others were professional people who came in increasing numbers as the case concerning Liberia, at the League of Nations, began to get serious. Her brothers were ever concerned about her love life and tried to help in their own way. Jaiah wrote to her on 31 August 1929, interalia, "Mohamodu Dukely of the Mandingo tribe" a former school and classmate, graduate of the College of West Africa, Attorney–at–law, and chief of the money order bureau at the post office, came to inquire about her photograph. "He is thinking about you and confidentially wants you as a future companion." While Jaiah was in favor of the union he referred the matter to her "as a young woman, you have your choice". She chose not to pursue it. Dukely (Momolu Dukuly) later became Secretary of State under President Tubman.

In assessing this aspect of her life it is quite obvious from her personal papers, family correspondence, recollections of her daughter and in knowing

Fatima personally that many men were attracted to her. This relates a great deal to her personality. She once told me that at birth she was given a special Vai name that signified a soft and kind personality. The nearest English version would be "lamb child". How these traditional birth attendants could pinpoint a new baby's dominant personality trait is beyond me. However, it was an absolutely accurate description. Fatima had an inner beauty and a personal charm that refracted her personality. She held strong opinions and expressed them in a direct and forceful way. Logical to a fault, her professional and personal observations were rooted in severe intellectual discipline , I believe, in the three year period between 1932 and 1935 when she studied for and earned the German Abitur at the Helen Lange ule.[17] This forceful germanic way of hers masked the real Fatima – the "lamb child". At times angry and resentful at people who did not do as instructed, she was nevertheless, at heart, totally without guile, as if unable to comprehend duplicity much less engage in it. The men in her life, of course, saw the "lamb child". Two men in particular stand out.

Richard Heydorn was the oldest son of Pastor Heydorn, Rector of St. Michaelis Church in Hamburg and founder of the Menschheits Partei, one of the early opposition parties in Nazi Germany. He had been a friend of Momolu and the family almost from their arrival in Hamburg. Richard and Fatima became friends. Both were accomplished musicians and in the course of time gave many recitals together. They shared a number of interests including languages and linguistics. Out of affection for the family and love for Fatima, Richard made an extended visit to Liberia and Sierra Leone in the late 1930's. In addition to visiting Fatima's mother, he traveled and lived in the hinterland of both countries. He was able to learn Loma, Kpelle, Mende, and Vai; he also wrote a Gbandi grammar. Momolu liked the boy very much and was able to pronounce on the quality of his African language skills. Richard was obliged to return to Germany for military service at the beginning of World War II. However, before joining the army he married and shortly after had a son, Baby Richard. In the very first weeks of the war Richard, on a volunteer assignment, disappeared and was ultimately declared missing in action. During the period when they were in Germany and keeping company, it was very difficult for both of them. Although the Heydorn family was known in Hamburg to be in opposition to Hitler's policies, the Pastor's son seen with a black person drew pointed barbs. Momolu, then in Liberia, feared for both of them and was doing his best to get a scholarship for his daughter in the United States.[18]

Another individual who was very keen on Fatima and indeed, the prospect of marriage with Momolu was Prince Christian von und zu Lippe Biesterfeldt, a widower with a small son. He too was very fond of Momolu and the family but particularly Fatima. He had a castle in Oberlausitz in Upper Silesia, today in East Germany. A member of the old aristocracy from the same

line as Prince Bernard of the Netherlands, it must have been difficult for both Momolu and Fatima to be nice to the Prince and yet to convey that marriage was out of the question. There were others, but there was no doubt in her mind that she would marry an African.[19]

Professional Life

Fatima remained away from Liberia for almost a quarter of a century, from 1922 until 1946.[20] Her return was at the invitation of the President-elect of the Republic, William V. S. Tubman, when he and President Edwin J. Barclay visited the United States in May 1943. The two leaders were invited by American President Franklin D. Roosevelt, when he stopped in Robertsfield, Liberia enroute from the wartime Casablanca conference. The Liberian Presidential election was held in May 1943, but the term of office began on 1 January the following year. It was customary for Liberian students in the United States to greet the visitors from their home country. Mr. Tubman was so impressed with Fatima that he invited her to teach at Liberia College, now the University of Liberia. This gesture was full of meaning.

Tubman knew of the unforgiving hatred that Barclay had for Fatima's father after Momolu had challenged him in the 1931 presidential election. Barclay began by ordering him prosecuted for alleged embezzlement of funds from the Post Office Department. As soon as Momolu was cleared of that charge, another was brought against him. This continued up until the day that he died in 1938:

> Even after Momolu's death, President Barclay would not relent. John Henry Cooper, a relative by marriage, went to the mansion to ask the President what he should do. Barclay asked 'What do you mean?' Cooper suggested that the army turn out for the normal courtesies extended to a former Cabinet officer. The reply burned into the heart of the family: 'Get out of here or I'll kick you out!'. He did not want offices to close and people to go to the funeral. Next, Cooper went to hire the Frontier Force Band, a common practice. An agreement was reached but later had to be cleared with the President of the Republic. When the delegation went to the mansion, the reply this time was,'If you pay me in diamonds they are not going anywhere'. With that, Momolu was buried in a simple ceremony in his beloved country; his name and deeds were buried with him.[21]

After this, some of the Massaquoi brothers and their friends began to circulate anti-Barclay tracts for which the President had them charged with treason and imprisoned. Along with Fatima's brother Nathaniel, was Tamba, and a cousin James Wiles, who succeeded Momolu as Consul General in

Hamburg. Fatima did not have to express her fears about returning to the land of her birth while Barclay was in power. She preferred to be an expatriate. I believe that Uncle Besolow, a retired Associate Justice of the Liberian Supreme Court, spoke to Tubman, a serving Associate Justice on the same court, asking him, while in the United States, to see his niece. But Tubman lived under the Barclay regime, he did not need much prompting. Shortly after his inauguration he had Nathaniel and Tamba released from prison, appointing Nathaniel to be Stipendary Magistrate (Judge) at Bondiway, Firestone Plantation.[22]

Fatima returned to Liberia on 13 October 1946, just six weeks before the ground breaking ceremony for the new University of Liberia buildings on an impressive 26 acre site. During her conversation with the President in the United States, she thought that she heard him invite her home to "help me establish a university". Thus she was very excited upon reaching Monrovia after such a long absence and with the prospect of a bright future. Indeed, important things were happening in Liberian higher education, but in the meantime she had to find work. The following March she took up appointment as Professor of French and Science at Liberia College, concurrently teaching in the Laboratory High School until 1952 when the University opened. These were all components of the same institution. Liberia College was then located in a structure situated where Demonstration School now stands on Clay Street. Classes were held downstairs and the boys dormitory was upstairs. The building burned down in January 1949 and when rebuilt was incorporated into the University. Laboratory High School offered the standard secondary school curriculum. It was considered to be among the best secondary schools in the country and was used as a feeder for the degree program of Liberia College.

The "higher education fever" included the reopening of the Episcopal, Cuttington College in 1949 at Suakoko, closed since 1928. A few years later in 1953 the Roman Catholic, Our Lady of Fatima College started in Harper. Construction at the University site took nearly five years. The first University faculty list, in 1952, included Prof. Fatima Massaquoi Fahnbulleh as a teacher in the Liberal Arts College whose Director was T.O.Dusumo Johnson. In addition to the basic funding provided by the Government of Liberia, generous financial assistance came from the United States Technical Cooperation Administration and from UNESCO; both sent teachers. Fatima was initially under the UNESCO budget. Institution building is always an exciting time and the Liberian experience was no exception. The new University President was the American, J. Max Bond, a distinguished educator whose brother, Horace Mann Bond, was President of Tuskegee Institute.

Fatima had many adjustment problems during the period after her return. Professionally, she probably knew more about different education systems and teaching, per se, than any other Liberian. She was a product of German,

Swiss–French and American education having taught in both the and American systems. She had a sharp tongue and a quick 'soto voce' rejoinder to things that did not please her. It was not initially the academic aspects of Liberia that bothered her, but the quaint old habits of mind and practice that she saw separating her countrymen. A number of important changes were made when the University of Liberia was established. Diplomas for graduates were written in English instead of Latin, daily use of gowns and other formalities in dress were abolished, married people were allowed to attend and so on. Fatima was particularly vocal against the need for students to wear academic robes to school daily. Her point was that those who could not afford academic robes could not attend school. The practice may have been taken from Fourah Bay College in neighboring Sierra Leone or brought by E. W. Blyden in his 1881 –84 tenure as President of Liberia College. In any event she convinced other colleagues until eventually, as noted, it was abolished. One suspects that President Max Bond supported her as the daily wearing of gowns is not an American university tradition. She was tough minded, sure of herself and proud and a relentless adversary in a struggle. In later years she mellowed.

Another issue that concerned her was the old discriminatory practice of native students having to change their names to sound Anglo–Saxon or "civilized". After all, her father's "school name" was Albert Thompson which he quickly discarded and never used. Many persons after leaving Liberia College changed back to their own names. Fatima encouraged her students to be true to themselves and to be proud of their original names. Practicing what she preached, she had her husband change his name from Freeman to Fahnbulleh the day before they were married on 26 July 1948. She was fond of recalling other experiences. For example, how she was asked to teach science but the school had no test tubes. She brought this to the attention of the President of the Republic during one of his visits and some basic equipment was provided for the labs. Along with many others she worked hard on the project to get the Harvey S. Firestone Science Building constructed at the University.

Perhaps because of the racial discrimination that she experienced in y and in the United States, she was extremely sensitive to prejudices of any kind against the indigenous people. Enshrined in family tradition, but like stories in any family, lacking rigid corroboration, she told her daughter about a Kpelle man who was Valedictorian of his class in the early 1950's, probably in a high school graduation. Paulita Coleman, the daughter of late David Coleman, came second in academic ranking. However, Paulita refused to march behind the fellow in the academic procession because he was a **"heathern"** – Fatima would always laugh when she mimicked the girl's pronounciation. Yet, it was a serious matter at the time. Fatima, as usual, dug in her heels and insisted that the procession should proceed on the basis of

tradition or be scrapped altogether. Her colleague and friend Dr. Doris Banks–Henries sided with the Colemans. Fatima never said how it turned out. She was more concerned with the fact that the incident led to an exchange of angry letters between the two faculty members that finally had to be resolved in President Tubman's office. The two of course, remained friends. They co–authored a number of books and Mrs. Henries was the godmother of Fatima's daughter. Her original handwritten notes show the academic curriculum she prepared for the institution which remained in place for a long time. She introduced and taught many of the courses in social sciences, humanities and the natural sciences.

In 1958 Fatima served as Acting President of the University while Angie Brooks served as the Acting Head of State. This came about when President Tubman was traveling in Europe and Rudolph Grimes was away at international conferences. A joke making the rounds in Monrovia said that the "country was being run by women" – at the time an unthinkable proposition.

Her normal day began at 6:00 in the morning and often ended at 4:00 the following morning. She taught a full 40 hour week, ran her office, advised students, attended faculty meetings with little or no administrative help. Her reliable secretary for many years was J. Bernard Blamo. She grew very fond of him, encouraging him to go on to higher studies. In addition to her professional tasks she took care of both the Massaquoi and the Fahnbulleh clans, intellectually, spiritually and financially. While she belonged to many organizations, Fatima refused to join any political groups or parties and never became a member of the Sisters of the Mysterious Ten or the Eastern Star because she felt that these institutions held Liberia back.

Fatima's linguistic skills were very much in demand. In her personal papers is a letter "requesting her to proofread and edit the first edition of the Liberia Law Reports and the Liberian Statutes." While the Department of State employed a full–time translator, it made many requests to translate political or technical documents from *both* German and French. But not only government, some companies like Bong Mines called on her for language services. There is no record that she ever charged for any of this work. In 1955 when President Tubman invited a delegation of French Deputies to Liberia to celebrate 26 July, she served as the group interpreter for the whole two–week period. Her daughter recalls this period as a blur – her mother coming home only to prepare for the next event. She was decorated with the "Tricentenary Bust of Mollère" by the French Government for this service.

In 1956 she was appointed Director and in 1960 Dean of the College of Liberal and Fine Arts. She founded a Program (later Institute) of African Studies and became its first Director. From October 1963 to April 1964 she toured the United States on a scholarship arranged by the U.S. Office of

Education. The aim was staff development, specifically to see different fine arts colleges, but also to visit departments of anthropology and sociology as well as programs of African studies. She was able to visit a large number of institutions in the East and the mid-Western parts of the country. I had the pleasure of spending a good deal of time with her during that visit.

When Fatima returned from the United States in 1964 she was 51 years old and at mid-career. The University in that year consisted of five degree granting colleges: The College of Liberal and Fine Arts, formerly Liberia College, The Louis Arthur Grimes College of Law and Government, the William V.S. Tubman Teachers' College, The College of Agriculture and the College of Forestry. Four non-degree granting schools were also part of the University: Benjamin J.K. Anderson School of Commerce and Business Administration, Mary Ann Chesseman School of Home Economics and Applied Science, Thomas J.R. Faulkner School of Engineering and Applied Science, and Laboratory High School. The University did not enjoy a good reputation internationally. But, great efforts were being made to raise standards and to improve the quality of instruction. Admission was open to every Liberian high school graduate who could pass a mathematics and English test. In effect, this liberal admissions policy resulted in only one-third of the admitted students eventually graduating. During this period the teaching staff was predominantly Liberian, but Forestry and Science were staffed by expatriates through a UNESCO program. There were other limitations to be overcome. Shortage of books and equipment, no student housing at all, the need for 90% of the student body to work to support themselves, adjunct faculty who were absent for long periods of time. In the same year, 1964, physical plant was being improved, a contract was made with Cornell University aimed at staff improvement and some progress was made in reducing the intolerable political influence in University decisionmaking. Fatima was in the middle of all of this activity. She was a gifted teacher and very student oriented, helping, listening, assisting financially those many students who came to her in addition to the administrative duties of Dean, and the countless meetings and committees that make up life at any University. It is important to note that she was not just another faculty member, but among the most highly educated indigenous women of her generation; certainly the only one actively engaged in higher education. She was special to the increasing number of students who came from the hinterland and from the tribes of Liberia. As a one hundred percent Vai with royal lineage on her father's side, she was the symbol of what the majority in the country could aspire to. Yet, the tension between the immigrant community and the tribal people existed and it was not always creative. Fatima served the University, the students and her country, for twenty-five eventful years. During this whole period she was concerned about her example to the younger generation. Perhaps without knowing it, her rigorous honesty to herself and to others was the hallmark that colleagues and students most respected.

Fatima always wore African attire—even in the 1950's when it was not fashionable to do so. Later when it became vogue in Liberia she was recognized as a pioneer in this transition. Always particular about her appearence, using perfume and lipstick tastefully, she admonished – in her direct way – that girls must be neat and clean. She would often say to any small group of students, "people judge you by your appearance. They do not know when they see you whether you are rich or educated – they can only see if you are clean or dirty!"

The end of her tenure was described in a personal communication to the author, dated 1 July 1972.

> ... There are numerous manifold changes in Liberia, especially in my case. I have been forced into retirement this year and in fact my pension recommended by the Legislature is beginning today, July 1. 1972, so that I will now have a lot of time to devote to only writing and research... The question of my retirement does not hurt me because I am tired and need the rest. Only I am missing the University facilities such as typewriter, stationeries, secretary, etc. It was a headache to run the African Studies without funds and people were entrusted with the funds who never released it. Besides that, the fundings were too small. I only spent in four years $3,000 (Three Thousand Dollars) out of the $12,000 appropriated and USAID spent $16,000 in 1968 and $20,000 in 1972 doing research in one of the same areas that I had covered. So you can see that this was a headache.

The University sent her off in grand style with an honorary degree of Doctor of Humanities, while the President of the Republic awarded her the Grand Star of Africa with the rank of Grand Commander.

Among the many artistic, civic, educational, literary[23] and professional accomplishments in her life, one may be selected for emphasis. Fatima had a great love for the Vai language. In addition to teaching it in Germany and the United States, there was a deep personal as well as an intellectual dimension to her mother tongue. Those familiar with Liberia will have a notion of the origin and evolution of Vai. In the briefest overview, a precursor to the language was identified as early as 1594 (A.A. D'Almada) and 1668 (0. Dapper). Its modern origins or 'discovery' are dated from 1823/24 when it was believed to have been invented. The first written texts were collected in 1848.

The scholarly "Bibliography of the Vai Language and Script" compiled by Gail Stewart and P.E.H. Hair[24] provides a brief and valuable summary of work in this field with 124 entries between 1594 and 1968. Subsequent writing has, almost without exception, relied on one or more of the above. Thus, while interest in the language continues among some linguists, little new ground has

been plowed. Stewart and Hair point out:

> The Vai people themselves have a reputation for cooperation with visiting scholars: in the present century, the Massaquoi family has been preeminent in efforts to interest foreign scholars in the language and script. Half a century ago, Momolu Massaquoi issued an impassioned appeal on behalf of the Vai language. 'All tribes and all languages should be allowed and encouraged to live until the world has heard what is buried in their bosom... The Vai may have a song to sing, a parable to utter, a prayer to offer or a law to interpret – all of which may be necessary elements in the progress of the enlightenment of mankind.[25] '

Massaquoi noted in 1890 that a large proportion of the male Vai could read the script but lack of standardization is a problem. Stewart writes that "Today (1967) it is certain that the script is in constant use" in all kinds of dealings among Vai, although its widest application is in religious writing.[26]

It was noted earlier that Fatima learned the language from her mother and from Mama Jassa, had it perfected through her father's personalized instruction and then made a lifelong study of it. Prof. August Klingenheben, renowned Vai linguist, acknowledged that his interest in Vai began through contacts with Momolu in Hamburg.[27] As noted earlier he, Momolu and Fatima all taught the language. It was in this context that Fatima believed that the Germans were using Vai as a wartime code language. Father and daughter spoke Vai when together, but they corresponded in English. A significant number of non–Africans and non–Liberians have written about the language and the script since the 1850s, for example: S.W. Koelle, J. Büttikofer, M. Delafosse, F.W. Migeod, D. Westermann, A. Klingenheben, R. Ronnefeldt, R.W. Heydorn, D. Dalby, P. Hair, G. Stewart and others, but only a very few Liberians were engaged in the same task. These included M. Massaquoi, G. Vaanii, E. Boima, G. Gonda, S. Jangaba M. Johnson, Zuke Kandakai and C. Kei. Kandaki. Needless to say that the first group were informed about the language from indigenous Vai who only later were authors in their own right. Much of this came about through the work of the late Bai T. Moore. Fatima's role in all of this was teaching the language and helping her father to promote it, and after he died to carry on that aspect. This was particularly true while she was at Fisk University. Stewart and Hair noted in 1968 that the "last thirty years have seen a virtual halt in scholarly study of the Vai language".[28]

In 1962 Fatima attempted to fill this void. While Dean of the College of Liberal and Fine Arts and Chairman of the Program (later Institute) of African Studies, she planned and conducted a SEMINAR ON STANDARDIZATION OF THE VAI SCRIPT. The first, and alas, the last of its kind ever held, the 15

to 17 August meeting was called because of "1. the historical significance of the script and 2. the artistic, educational and anthro–sociological concomitants of the standardization project."[29] The idea for the project and the seminar evolved from discussions between Fatima and her brother Nathaniel (1905–1962) who, for a decade, 1952 to 1962, was Assistant and later Secretary of Public Instruction, a cabinet position. He was the first African to serve (1953 to 1958) on the 30 member Executive Board of UNESCO – the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, based in Paris.[30] From this vantage point he had an African–wide view of education and was aware that interest in African languages was a growing concern to UNESCO. He hoped to secure funds for an in–depth study of Vai – thus promoting it as one of the major languages on the continent. Though unsuccessful in finding the money, he encouraged his sister in the project and the seminar and was able to provide some modest funding from his Department. They both, of course, had an unspoken aim of honoring their father whom they felt was the greatest Vai scholar of all.

Another important reason for Fatima was that Prof. Klingenheben was getting old and she felt that should he pass away, standardization would be practically impossible. The eighty–three participants came from every "district, chiefdom and clan of the Vai country, from Bassa and from Hamburg University".[31] Two hundred observers from the greater Monrovia area and from the University community were also involved. Prof. Klingenheben was accompanied by his wife. He was introduced to the Seminar by Fatima as "the only living foreign expert on the Vai Script". A Consultative Working Committee made up of indigenous Vai experts: Zuke Kandakai, S. Jangaba Johnson, Bai T. Moore, Fatima Massaquoi Fahnbulleh were the final arbiters on intellectual content, but clearly Fatima was in charge. The Program of African Studies was also involved through Fatima as Chair, Ingeborg Jaenicke, Izetta Roberts Cooper, Oscar S. Norman, Joachim Wiercimok and Elsie Wilkenson, Secretary. Two plenary sessions were held, one under Prof. S. Jangaba Johnson, the other under Prof. Klingenheben. These were two very strong–willed linguists who were not prepared to budge far on their individual understanding of fine points. In the refreshing words of the Seminar Report "Because some murmurings and arguments arose at this time..." committees were formed to debate. These consisted of the following persons from the locations named:

TOMBA: Momolu Seinwa, Momolu Golo;

TEWO: Ismaila Fahnbulleh, Jusu Fahnbulleh;

DEI: Vaani Gbese;

GOLA: Zuana Coleman;

GERMANY: Prof. Klingenheben;

MANI (MANDINGO): Siaka Selifu;

GAWULA: Sondifu Sooni, Boima Galii;

KONEE: Momolu Jemi Zolu, Dowa, Suko Kane.

The debate was lively, animated and at times difficult for the Consultative Committee to contain. Finally, in the spirit and tradition of a grand palaver, agreement was reached on three points:

> 1. All committees agreed that 'since the 1927 chart prepared by Momolu Massaquoi and Dr. Klingenheben had been accompanied by a written appeal to the chiefs, elders, and others, and at that time had been accepted as the standard script and has been in use since that time, all characters contained in it should remain intact. They saw no reason to alter or variate the symbols.
>
> 2. The Seminar agreed to utilize two dots under the characters to indicate nasal sounds. This does not, however, mean that characters having dots either over them or on either side should indicate a nasal sound, expecially when they have been in use of over a hundred years.
>
> 3. Characters not known in the Vai language, which had been introduced by Dr. Klingenheben and Momolu Massaquoi (the rolling r as in Arabic, French and German) were accepted. Also the sh, sz,th, as introduced by Kandakai and Klingenheben were accepted.[32]

Fatima not only knew Vai in its spoken and written forms, she was current on Vai literature owning much of the material that was extant. She expressed an ongoing concern that the language was getting away from its roots. She pointedly introduced Klingenheben as the "only living foreign expert on the Vai Script" because she did not think much of what other foreigners were writing on the subject. Her often pithy remarks on this point posed the rhetorical question "I wonder who the African was who led Livingston to Victoria Falls so he could discover it?"

The Seminar's "hidden agenda" was to carry on the work of her father, to pay tribute to "old man" Klingenheben as she called him in private conversation, and above all, to honor the Liberian Vai scholars by bringing them to the nations's University for a grand palaver on what they knew and loved to do best of all – discuss the fine points of their maternal language. She was particularly concerned that S. Jangaba M. Johnson be given a place of honor for all the work he had done in Vai studies including linguistics.[33]

But she was also living out a personal tragedy at this time. Nathaniel and Fatima had been very close all of their lives. Born to different mothers, he was seven years older and she worshiped him as a child and looked up to him in adult life. When Momolu was Chief Clerk in the Department of the Interior before World War I, he often took the two of them on trek with him to the hinterland. They were fond of telling stories of being carried in the same hammock and "humbugging" the porters.[34] They were in Germany with Momolu and Ma Sedia and for a time attended the same school. In the heady days of 1960 and 1961, when he was in the Cabinet and she was Dean at the University they were living life fully – the peak moment in both their lives. It was unusual at the time for two indigenous persons from the same family to occupy senior positions in the country. They were aware of this and of the example it meant to all native Liberians. Whenever they would meet, even on the street, the conversation would often turn to national or international education policy and practice frequently ending in animated discussion in German, a language they both felt comfortable in.

1962 started out with promise. During the January State visit of Dr. Heinrich Lübcke, President of the Federal Republic of Germany, he decorated Fatima with the Grand Meritorious Cross – First Class (Grobe Verdienstkreuz erster Klasse). Things began to unravel a short time later when Nathaniel was ignominously sacked from the Cabinet by President Tubman. It was done while he was away and his deputy, Dr. John Payne Mitchell replaced him. Sacking at this level is not unusual in Liberia, but with it went the very clear message of being in Tubman's disfavor. This was a powerful punishment in Liberia of the day, particularly for someone who had been the Presidents 'boy' since 1944.[35] After the event Nathaniel was confused and despondent. The family urged a visit to relatives in Sierra Leone where he remained for a time, but his health was deteriorating. Arrangements were made for him to have medical treatment in Germany where he died on 2 October the same year.

Fatima was crushed at the loss of the brother that she knew the best. She was comforted by her Vai friends and the indigenous people who were there. These humble folk could understand her suffering; it did not have to be expressed.

Retirement

In the six years of her retirement, before she died, I had visited and stayed in her home on six occasions. This was in connection with research for the biography of her father. Fatima was a chain smoker and drank gallons of PepsiCola while pacing up and down talking about the past into my tape recorder. We had a very cordial relationship. I would often cook her favorite dish of chicken piri piri, after which we would go down to Water Street and visit with her brother Uncle Abe, who retired as Commissioner of Maritime

Affairs the same year that she did. They would discuss the old days, while I would pose questions of clarification, all of which was being recorded. On other occasions we visited the hinterland together, to see where she and Abe were born, where Mama Jassa and Fatima lived, where Momolu's umbilical cord was buried and to talk to the "old people". On still another occasion, I spent three days reading to both Fatima and Abe the whole four hundred page manuscript on the life of their father, noting corrections and amplifications on different events. These were pleasant and enjoyable days.

Fatima wrote to me from Nigeria on 20 December 1973. She was there with her daughter Yatta Vivian, whom everyone knew as Püppchen, visiting her son-in law's family. She was married on 25 August the same year to a Nigerian medical doctor, Moses Seton. Fatima had suffered her first stroke in June of the same year. She made a good recovery, but lamented that the doctors at Kennedy Hospital told her to stop smoking and to cut down on her beloved Pepsi. She had a second stroke in 1974 which slowed her down some, but perhaps most of all frightened her into giving up smoking finally and for good. She lived with her daughter, son-in-law and two grandchildren in a house near the Ministry of Agriculture. In a sense these were some of her happiest days, being taken care of in a devoted and selfless way with the noise of grandchildren in her ears. I visited her several times in 1975, but could not stay at the house. We went to see Fatima's stepmother, Ma Sedia, up on Mamba Point. I took numerous pictures of Ma, Fatima, Abe, Püppchen, Moses and the grandchildren which were presented to both Ma Sedia and Fatima on subsequent visits. By 1977, Fatima was physically debilitated. One could only sit with her and hold her hand. She would smile in a beatific way but was unable to say much. A cable from Püppchen announced her passing on 26 November 1978.

Mary Antoinette Brown Sherman, the first and only woman to serve as a President of a university on the African continent, spoke a tribute to Fatima on behalf of the University of Liberia. Herself part Vai, Fatima was a dear friend. The simplicity and truth of the brief message is a fitting tribute:

> ..'Therefore, whenever one undertakes anything, let it be great or small, he should never forget God's will in it.' In these words end the story titled, 'Put God First,' adapted by Fatima Massaquoi Fahnbulleh and contributed to one of the early issues of the *University of Liberia Journal*. The striking truth and the philosophy communicated in these simple words are characteristic of the distinguished educator whose mortal remains lie before us. One of Liberia's best educated and an individual of remarkable versatility, 'Madam' as she came to be affectionately called during her long period of unbroken service

to the University of Liberia in particular and Liberian education in general remained simple and unaffected all her life.

Hers was a life of dedication to the Liberian nation and to the cause of education when few of our own men or women had the rich background or the opportunity of as wide and varied education as she. Hers was an earnest effort to inspire appreciation of our rich Liberian cultural heritage. Hers was an investment in students, relatives, and the many who needed her. Indeed, her life and work bear tribute to her brilliance, integrity, devotion to duty, openness of heart, and warmth better than anything that could be capsuled in these brief minutes.

The University of Liberia proclaims a great educator, scholar, mother – an outstanding Liberian citizen – is dead. We have come to mourn her loss, but even more to rejoice and give thanks to God for her life. She has handed the torch which she held high for enrichment of the lives of people and we will bless her memory if we let it continue to shine.

May God grant her rest eternal, strengthen and comfort her loved ones in these sad hours and give us all grace to so live that we at our lives' end may be numbered among His faithful servants.[36]

Endnotes

[1]She joined the faculty of old Liberia College in October, 1946. In early 1951, the University of Liberia was established by merging Liberia College and several other schools.

[2]Microfilm: "Writings and Papers of Fatima Massaquoi – Fahnbulleh, Institute of African Studies, University of Liberia, Monrovia, Liberia". Autobiography, p. 100; (no date).

[3]"Massaquoi of Liberia 1870–1938", by Raymond J. Smyke, in *Geneve–Afrique*, Volume XXI – Number 1 (Journal of the Swiss Society of African Studies).

[4]The personal correspondence that Fatima shared with me, as well as letters from her brother's widow, Winifred Massaquoi, totaled over 200 individual pieces. They begin in 1922, grow in volume, length and interest from early 1927, when Fatima left the family home in Hamburg for boarding school, until March 1938, three months before Momolu died. The correspondence between father and daughter often ran to five and six pages. Fatima also corresponded with Madam Sottile, in French, the wife of the

Liberian representative to the League of Nations. She lived in their home while studying in Geneva. Others included her brothers, AlHaj, Ciaka, Jaiah and Arthur, Bishop Momolu Gardner and school friends, some of whom became prominent in Liberian public life. The steadiest writer was her stepmother, Rachel Johnson Massaquoi, known by her Sande name "Ma Sedia". My own correspondence with the family begins in 1959 with her brother Nathaniel; in 1963 with Fatima and her brother Abraham, continuing up until the time that all three died.

[5]See "Nathaniel V. Massaquoi: Liberian Educator" by Raymond J. Smyke, paper presented to the 17th Annual Liberian Studies Conference, Beloit College, 28 – 30 March, 1985.

[6]"The Seminar on Standardization of the Vai Script", by Mrs. Fatima M. Fahnbulleh, in *University of Liberia Journal*, Volume III, Number One, 1963: pp 15 – 38. Published by the Research Bureau, University of Liberia.

[7]*Massaquoi of Liberia* by Raymond J. Smyke. A full length biography seeking a publisher. Manuscript Chapter VI.

[8]Ibid. Microfilm.

[9]Ibid. *Massaquoi of Liberia* (biography) MS. Chapter XV, Geneology. A list of those considered family who survived to adulthood follows:

	BIRTH	*NAME*	*OCCUPATION*
1.	1897	AlHaj	Enemy property custodian WWI; Tubman Administration; business.
2.	1897	Jaiah	Interior Department, District Commissioner; Chief Government Surveyor.
3.	1897	Manna	Left for Nigeria 1919, retired and pensioned as marine engineer.
4.	1898	Jawa	Revenue Agent Interior Department; Bong Mine.
5.	1903	Bei James	Firestone, pensioned.
6.	1905	Abraham	Commissioner of Maritime Affairs.
7.	1905	Nathaniel	Director of Education; first African on the Executive Board of UNESCO
8.	1910	Ciaka Sam	Bong Mine; business in SierraLeone
9.	1912	Fatima	University of Liberia, pensioned.
10.	1921	Arthur	Director, Bureau of Mines
11.	1926	Fritz	LAMCO.
12	1928	Fasia	LAMCO.

[10]Ibid. Microfilm.

[11]Johann Büttikofer made two trips to Liberia while curator of the Royal Zoological Museum in Leiden. He stayed with Queen Sandimanie on both occasions. The first trip was from 1879 to 1882, the second from 1886 to 1887. A Bernois Swiss, he was a botanist by training employed by the Dutch government. He lived until 1927. While in Liberia, his scientist's eye missed no detail. In his two volumes *Reisebilder aus Liberia*, he recorded observations on everything and everyone he met, including the Queen. Among other things, his presentation of Liberian flora and fauna are among the best up to the present time. The two volumes, together with his other published works, deserve to be translated professionally into English. In addition to Büttikofer, Massaquoi's uncle, Thomas E. Besolow, who became an Associate Justice of the Liberian Supreme Court, was brought up by Queen Sandimanie and wrote about her in an early memoire, *The Story of an African Prince*, Boston, 1890. These, of course, are in addition to, and corroborate, the family stories about his mother that Momolu shared with the children. I was able to record this oral tradition as it was recounted to me, by Fatima, Prince Abraham, affectionately known as Uncle Abe, Ma Sedia and of course Nathaniel, as well as others.

[12]*The Globe*, Toronto; from Friday 10 July 1891 to Saturday 18 July 1891, inclusive; and Addresses and Proceedings of the National Education Association, Toronto, Canada, 1891. "IN SEARCH OF AN EDUCATION, by Momolu Massaquoy, Prince of the Vey Nation, Africa".

[13]Ibid ., "Massaquoi of Liberia 1870 – 1938", *Genève–Afrique*. This details the critical years before, during and after his attempt for the Presidency in the 1930 election. It was very clear that Ma Sedia and he were in opposite political camps, but even before this estrangment, the marriage was on shaky ground. Dabbling in Americo–Liberian politics had taken a physical toll on his health and well being. This was reflected in their home life. While interviewing Ma Sedia on several occasions between 1974 and 1977, she was bright, articulate and mobile for her age. She walked daily from her home in Mamba Point, to Waterside and back, but, "allowed as how", the hill now seemed steeper. She told me, in some detail, about her work and social life in Hamburg. Ma had many German friends and made more effort to learn German than did her husband.

[14]Ibid. "Nathaniel V. Massaquoi: Liberian Educator".

[15]It is difficult to imagine today, the role played by the first African diplomat in Europe. As an indigenous person, familiar with colonial oppression, he became a magnet attracting the young men and women, from all over Africa, studying in England and elsewhere. The Consulate became an unofficial clearing house of ideas, thoughts and aspirations for Africa. It could not be otherwise. Fatima recalled W.E.B. DuBois, sitting on the sofa, relaxed, cigar in

hand, sharing his thoughts on Pan–Africanism and the future of the race, with visitors. I am presently developing this line of research to show the influence that Massaquoi had, at the time, on young Africans studying in Europe. It is my view that he was as important, or more important, than the so–called "West African nationalists" from British territories, all of whom were contemporary with him.

[16]The story of the contacts that a number of the Massaquoi boys and their friends had with Russia is very interesting and I am developing this aspect in detail. Some helpful background on the Soviet courting of black students and militants in the 1920's and the 1930's may be found in Harry Haywood's BLACK BOLSHEVIK (Liberator Press, Chicago, 1978).

[17]Of all the European secondary school leaving certificates (English "A" levels, the French "Bac", the Swiss Maturité etc.) the German Abitur is among the most demanding, rigid and difficult to earn even today. In the early 1930's, the "old" ABITUR was even more so. Its purpose was to funnel a small group of select students to German universities. Instruction in the classics and science, in arts, logic and critical thinking were forged together in the mind. Fear and corporal punishment were a part of the learning environment because a teacher whose students failed was often considered a poor teacher. I believe that Fatima's early education in German schools linked to her inate intelligence and ability gave her the toughness of mind and intellectual discipline resulting in her direct "germanic" way of arguing or presenting her arguments. Her American higher education gave some breadth to her knowledge base but the habits of study and thinking were formed earlier. When she ultimately returned to Liberia she was the scourge of the education community as noted in the text. She probably knew more than most educators at the time (1946) in Liberia because of this German formation. Her "germanic" ways often clashed with her American educated colleagues.

[18]*The Churches and the Third Reich*, Volume One, 1918 – 1934, by Klaus Scholder, Fortress Press. 715 pp. made its original appearance in 1977, but has recently been translated into English. It provides some of the background and context in which Pastor Heydorn functioned and indirectly the risk that his son and Fatima were running in being seen together in Hamburg. In 1934 Richard wrote about Vai for a thesis at the University of Hamburg (see entry in the Bibliography by Steward and Hair, Op. Cit.) and was accomplished in the language. If, indeed, Vai was used as a German code language as Fatima related, the family story of Richard's disappearance in the opening days of the War should be examined by an enterprising scholar to determine if he disappeared 'officially' to run the Vai – code program.

[19]I am extremely grateful to Fatima's daughter Mrs. Vivian Fahnbulleh Seton, affectionately named "Püppchen" by her mother. She followed in many

of her mother's footsteps regarding a German education and has her gift for languages. She has worked for the Department of State in Monrovia as an interpreter and has done a number of creative things with languages. She is currently a doctoral candidate in Washington, D.C., where she lives with her husband, Dr. Moses Seton, M.D., and their four children. Dr. Seton, a Nigerian, is a graduate of the A.M. Dogliotti College of Medicine, University of Liberia. Vivian presented the first version of this paper to the 18th Annual Liberian Studies Conference (1986) and has been helpful in providing many thoughtful and personal insights on her mother.

[20]Her formal education consisted of the following:

SCHOOL AND LOCATION	FIELD	DATE	
Ecole Supérieure de Genève	French	1932	Diploma
Helene Lange Oberrealshule, Hamburg	German	1932/35	Abitur
Hamburg University	Medicine	1935/37	——
Lane College, Tennessee	Social Science	1937/38	B.A.
Fisk University, Tennessee	Social Sciences	1939/40	two M.A.'s
Boston University	Social Studies	1943 and 1945/46	—

[21]Ibid. "Massaquoi of Liberia" 1870–1938, *Gèneve Afrique.*

[22]Ibid. "Nathaniel V. Massaquoi: Liberian Educator"

[23]Among her publications are the following: "From Bush to Boulevards – The Autobiography of a Vai Noblewoman", Unpublished Typescript, c. 1944. "The Leopard's Daughter", Bruce Humphries, Boston, 1944 (reprinted 1961).

"Fatu's Experience – A Liberian First Reader", Co–authored with A. Doris Banks–Henries, Frederick Fell, New York, 1953.

"Africa's Turning Wheel", (A Play in One Act), n.d.

"One Hundred Years of Struggle" (A University Pageant), 1962.

"A Thousand and One Tales From Africa", (A Collection), n.d.

"The States of Africa", (An Introduction), n.d.

"Songs from the Dark", (An Anthology of Poems), n.d.

"The Origin of the Stone Alligator", in Anthology of Liberian

Literature, Society of Liberian Authors, Monrovia, 1974.

"Seminar on Standardization of the Vai Script", in University of Liberia Journal, 1963.

Other manuscripts and writings turn up from time to time and are being collected by her daughter. For example, Fatima wrote and directed "The Pageant of Cape Palmas" at the request of President Tubman, for the centenary of Maryland joining the Republic of Liberia.

[24]"A Bibliography of the Vai Language and Script" by Gail Steward and P.E.H. Hair, Journal of West African Languages VI, 2 (1969), pp. 109–124.

[25]Ibid., p. 110.

[26]Ibid., p. 110

[27]Ibid., p. 110.

[28]Ibid., "Seminar on Standardization...", p. 15. The same point is made in "Honorable S. Jangaba M. Johnson", *Liberian Studies Journal, Op.Cit.* Some interesting work of course is being done, for example: "A Three Script Literacy Among the Vai, Arabic, English and Vai", by Mohamed B. Nyei, LSJ, IX, 1 (1980–81). A point for separate consideration is this. A 1962 entry in the Bibliography by Stewart and Hair, notes that "The romantic beginning of the Vai as a written dialect", which appeared in the *Liberian Age* of 30 July, first appeared in a 1956 UNESCO publication. The authors could not confirm this. The date correlates with Massaquoi being the Liberian representative on the Executive Board and my own information from him that he had "something" on Vai published. Perhaps a more thorough search is needed at the UNESCO Archives in Paris.

[29]Ibid., "Seminar on Standardization...", Introduction.

[30]Ibid., "Nathaniel V. Massaquoi – Liberian Educator".

[31]Ibid., "Seminar on Standardization...", p. 20.

[32]Ibid., "Seminar on Standardization...", p. 22; this and the three foregoing quotations.

[33]"Honorable S. Jangaba M. Johnson" by Warren L. D'Azevedo in *Liberian Studies Journal*, Volume V, Number 1, 1972 – 1974. This is a well deserved tribute to the Vai scholar.

[34]Ibid. *Massaquoi of Liberia*, (biography).

[35]Ibid., "Nathaniel V. Massaquoi – Liberian Educator".

[36]"A TRIBUTE TO THE MEMORY OF THE LATE FATIMA MASSAQUOI FAHNBULLEH...", by Mary Antoinette Brown Sherman, President, University

of Liberia, Monrovia 5 December 1978. Dr. Brown deserves a biography on her own distinguished life. Her mother, whom I had met, was a humble Vai woman, while her father was the distinguished Louis Arthur Grimes for whom the Law School of the University is named, one of Liberia's greater lights. According to UNESCO there are about 95 full degree granting institutions in continental Africa. Some, of course, are very old, others date from the colonial period. Mary Antoinette is the first and only woman to head an African institution of higher learning. This is a distinction in itself. More important, is the record of her valiant efforts to extend leadership to the whole University of Liberia community during its critical years, a saga well worth telling.

Soaring Above the Cloud of Mediocrity: The Challenges of the Liberian Press in the Nineties.

C. William Allen

All other things being equal, Liberians will be voting to elect a president and vice president in November 1991.

The Liberian press has a vital role to play in this democratic process. Its basic roles of informing and educating its audience about issues of public interest must take on other dimensions: Those of preparing the Liberian electorate, and itself, to make informed democratic decisions for the 1991 election. The outcome of the election will set the agenda for the decade of the nineteen nineties.

The unprecedented efforts of the Liberian press to cover the controversial November 1985 general elections is one that cannot go unacknowledged. The Press Union of Liberia and some media institutions are still doing fine jobs in the midst of adversities. However, with some opposition parties still crying foul play from 1985, it is obvious that as we look towards 1991, the watchdog role of the press should grow more teeth. It shall not be sufficient for the media institutions to simply report the "5W's and H"[1] of the election process. They, and all others with a genuine interest in the outcome of the election, will have to operate at a level of vigilance which will ensure that the will of the electorate prevails.

The information and communications revolutions in the world at large are moving at a velocity which does not allow for mediocrity among those who assume the important task of assembling and disseminating information to the public. Transfer of technology is taking on a new meaning. Information flow both across national boundaries and within national borders have become very politicized. The Liberian journalist[2] covering the 1991 elections will need a level of sophistication which will allow him/her to comprehend the juxtaposition of many forces and complex circumstances.

Just how is the Liberian press going to cope with this monumental task which has been allocated to it by history? What are some of the preparations, pre- and post election strategies and methods that the press will have to adopt if it is to perform its role efficiently and effectively? These are some of the questions and issues this paper proposes to deal with.

The paper is not intended to be an indictment of the 1985 elections. Neither is it intended as a comprehensive analysis of the problems and prospects of the

Liberian Press. It does not pretend to suggest either that the press can do for opposition parties and their supporters what only they can do for themselves. The role of the press as an impartial participant in the society must always be preserved. Notwithstanding, the Liberian fourth and fifth estates must be adequately equipped to call the proceedings from the sidelines. Most importantly, they must be capable of causing their findings to be *enforced*.

Because Liberia is an economically developing country,[3] it is safe to say that the media subscribes to the developmental theory of the press as a philosophical basis for its existence. Even though there is much muddling over the exact definition of development journalism, many scholars in the field agree on three fundamental articles of faith which define the perimeters of development journalism:

> Belief in the press as a unifying rather than a divisive force;
>
> belief in the press as an instrument of social justice and a device for beneficial social change;
>
> and the presumption that the press is properly an instrument of a two–way communication, with equal importance assigned to the writer and the reader, to the broadcaster and the listener.[4]

Whereas all three of these fundamental articles of faith are of equal importance, this paper focuses on the second.

The press has always played an important role in the Liberian political process:

> . . .beginning with the nation's first newspaper, *The Liberia Herald*, [newspapers] affected public opinion and were supported by the community. They exposed both public officials and private citizens who thwarted the morals and laws of the country. . . .
>
> There was no overt attempt by the government to muzzle the press until the 1950s, when the Tubman administration began a systematic suppression of opposition newspapers. Up to this time, press freedom was tolerated and the Liberian press was most vigorous in its coverage.[5]

The Liberian press has a legacy to live up to. It is perhaps the first attempt by Africans south of the Sahara to establish a press in the contemporary sense of the word:

> [Blacks] returning from the Americas to the West African coast soon established local papers. Of these, the earliest was probably founded in Liberia, where in 1826 Charles Force started the

monthly *Liberia Herald*, whose motto was "Freedom is the Brilliant Gift of Heaven."[6]

Even though the press in Liberia has been in existence for a long time, it has not attained the concomitant level of sophistication which should ordinarily evolve with time. There are many reasons for this. Some of these reasons are real and some are conjectural. It is important to address some of these reasons and advance suggestions as to what needs to be done to reverse the situation. A reversal is truly necessary if the press will be adequately prepared to serve as a watchdog on the powerful, and act as an instrument of social justice and a device for beneficial social change.

Training and Manpower Development

Many Liberian journalists are eager to perform well, curious to learn and very well meaning. They seem prepared often to sacrifice even to the point of self-denial of some of the finer pleasures in life; but generally, they need additional training. This is not to suggest that there are not some very competent Liberian journalists both in and outside of the country. There are indeed many good Liberian journalists who for personal, political and professional reasons have choosen to practice outside the country. Many of the best qualified ones are involved in jobs as editors and managers and thus are not engaged in the actual craft of story writing. It is certainly not the fault of some journalists that they have been victims of poor training. Journalism as a profession was discouraged for most of the twenty seven-year rule of President Tubman. Gangster tactics were used against critical independent newspapers after the notorious "Plot That Failed," in 1955.[7] Most persons who practiced journalism after 1955 did so with the permission of the government. Many either had no formal training at all or had attended crash courses at the (West) Berlin Institute of Journalism and other similar foreign institutions which specialized mostly in short-term refresher seminars. In fact, a phobia was created around the practice of the profession to a point where for most of the latter part of the Tubman administration, many journalists practicing in Liberia were from Ghana, Nigeria and other African countries where journalism training was more readily available. Most Liberians who ventured into degree programs in the field, upon returning home, were quickly absorbed into the hierarchy of government public relations programs run by the then Bureau of Information. Some sought employment in areas other than active jounalism. Despite these shortcomings, Rogers says of some of these early pioneers:

> While early Liberian journalists were not professionally trained, they were as experienced as any trial-by-error, on-the-job (trained) journalist one could find anywhere. . . .Besides the editors, there were many people connected with these papers who had [a] literary and journalistic flare. Most were trained in

the printer–editor tradition reminiscent of early American journalism.[8]

The Tolbert government (1971–1980) which followed Tubman was more tolerant of press freedom, but many Liberians, still influenced by the experience of the Tubman era, were suspicious of this new opportunity.

The Doe government (April 1980–present) initially allowed much more press freedom than either the Tolbert or Tubman government. This tolerance however was very short lived as journalists were quick to use their pens to expose the early excesses of the regime. Newspapers and radio stations are now routinely closed upon the whims and wishes of government officials. Editors and reporters are jailed without due process of law. In November 1985 one TV journalist, Charles Gbeyon died under mysterious circumstances after he was last seen in custody of government troops.

In March, 1990, the Chief Justice of Liberia ordered the detention of journalist Klon Hinneh "for subordinating his opening statement at the March term of the Supreme Court to the remarks of the Justice Minister. The Justice Minister had referred to the Liberian judicial system as 'the best money can buy.[9]'" Also in March, the offices of the *Daily Observer* was burned by an arsonist who apparently did not like the stance of the paper on the current armed conflict involving government troops and the "National Patriotic Front" led by Charles Taylor.[10]

The problem of the shortage of adequately trained manpower remains. A department of Mass Communication was established in 1983 at the University of Liberia to help remedy this problem. Prior to the establishment of the department, media institutions, both government and private, had to conduct in–servce training for their employees at their own expense. It is too early to determine the impact of the department on the quality of the media professionals practicing in the country today. To date, fewer than ten (10) graduates have received bachelor degrees in print and broadcast journalism. The department holds a key to the development of Liberia's media personnel. The combination of its four year degree program and one–year certificate sequence represents an admirable effort. However, for this to mean anything, the department must have more support. The department remains inadequately equipped while the national soccer team gets $1,000,000.00 (one million dollars) for winning a game against the Black Star of Ghana![11]

Between now and the 1991 elections, Liberian journalists will have to be prepared to use such tools as opinion polls, quick statistical analysis and on–the–spot surveys. They will also have to be schooled in investigative and in–depth methods of reporting, advanced interviewing techniques designed to extract information from sometimes elusive government officials who are charged with the responsibility of supervising the election process. To some

extent, they will have to walk a tight ethical rope because at times it may be to use unconventional, but professional methods to acquire and present the truth in their attempt to serve the right of the public to know about the government and its functionaries. Those editors, professional organizations (particularly the Press Union of Liberia), and trainers who are in supervisory, accreditation and training roles, will have to come up with specific blueprints of how to approach the problem so that the press corps will be prepared. The press should be prepared to the point *where they can announce the results of the election within 24 hours or less after the polls close,* based on their vigilance. They should not wait for official press releases from the Elections Commission. Most importantly, they should be accurate and be able to back up their findings.

The Paradox of True Independence

The argument has been advanced that the press, whether in Western democracies, Communist nations, or in the economically developing world, is neither free nor independent. Those with this view assert further that the press is an agent of power; an instrument used by the ruling elite to maintain the social order and the status quo. The content of press reports is determined by the "paymasters", those who finance the media through advertising, or governments that bankroll the press. But the press is also controlled by the reading, listening and viewing publics which serve as consumers of the product of information.[12]

It is no secret that the independent press (as opposed to the state–controlled press) in Liberia has suffered from economic reprisals taken against it by some who felt it was too critical of government policies. Much of the advertising in independent newspapers come from public corporations which are quasi–government institutions. Even though the Liberian people are the real shareholders in these public corporations, this point is often ignored. Withholding of advertising by some public corporations is not an official policy but has been used in an attempt to force the independent press into less critical coverage. To some extent, even private companies have employed this method when they consider it ill–advised to be seen as supporters of the press.

The Liberian press must clearly establish its political, economic and ideological independence. This is easier said than done. The public which benefits from the information many of the young journalists run risks to provide will have to assume a more supportive role in the process. With Liberia boasting a literacy rate of about twenty–five percent[13] (about 500,000 people), the circulation figures of daily newspapers (1,000–10,000) is not encouraging. People should buy more newspapers so that whatever revenue independent papers lost through government reprisals, they can make up for in circulation sales. The Liberian public will have to support the press. Their

support so far leaves much more to be desired. A few years ago the Press Union of Liberia established a Legal Defense Fund to assist journalists who fell into trouble in the exercise of their profession. Even though people could contribute anonymously, the response of the general public was disappointing. This writer is not insensitive to the economic austerity most of the Liberian people are facing, but a burden does indeed become lighter when shared by many. The consumers of information can no longer remain complacent while journalists risk their all in an effort to adequately inform their publics. The public must provide both monetary and moral support.

Government's Commitment or the Lack of it to a Free Press

The Liberian constitution which ushered in the second republic in January 1986, is perhaps one of the best documents for a democratic government on the African continent. It clearly establishes a framework for a free, independent and vibrant press.[14] Unfortunately, the government has not always practiced what it preaches. Some newspapers and a radio station after remaining closed for long periods on orders of the executive branch of government, were recently ordered reopened. The infamous Decree 88A[15] which many agree is a flagment violation of the constitution remains on the books. Government officials are quick to point to the proliferation of independent newspapers as a barometer for measuring press freedom. That a country claims to have freedom of expression does not mean that it exists in practice. The concomitant existence of other freedoms—freedom of association, freedoms to assemble and to demonstrate for redress of grievances, freedom to join trade unions are all essential components of peoples' right to communicate. Obstacles to these freedoms mean that freedom of expression is thwarted.[16]

Liberian journalists know only too well that self–censorship is a criterion for remaining in business. They know also that they can be subject to closure without due process of law for provoking the wrath of some authorities. These conditions are less than desirable.

These and other conditions suggest that the government has a lot more to do if it is to convince people that it is truly committed to the ideals expressed in the constitution. It must be remembered that "Freedom of government and freedom of the press prosper together or die together . . . ."[17] Additionally, if Liberia is a democracy, then the government must be prepared to accept the so–called democratic assumption which can be summarized as follows:

> In a democracy, it is the people who rule. The voice of the people is heard in the voting booths. The decisions made by the people in the voting boots are based on the information made available to them. That information is provided primarily by the news media. Hence, the news media are indispensable to the survival of democracy.[18]

The words of two friends, Thomas Jefferson (USA) and the Marquis de Lafayette (France), drives the point home a little more:

> In keeping government honest and unoppressive (Lafayette said in 1823), the only security for all is a free press. The force of public opinion cannot be resisted, when permitted freely to be exercised.[19]
>
> . . . and were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers, or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the later, (Jefferson said in 1787, years before he became President of the United States).[20]

In addition to demonstrating a firm commitment to the due process of law in situations where press freedom may be abused by journalists, the government must move to formulate a clear communications/information policy. It must also include the role of communication in whatever integrated development plans it has. Such a plan must include concrete steps for involving the rural and urban masses in the information process so that they may make informed democratic decisions about their welfare. Such measures should include, but not be limited to, reducing duties and tariffs on items such as newsprint, radio receivers, television sets, printing and broadcast equipment and other materials that are vital to the communication process.

The Role of the Broadcast Media

Radio has proven to be the most effective medium of communication in countries where the literacy rate is low and cost of living is high. This is primarily because radio breaks down literacy and language barriers. The Liberian Rural Communications Network (LRCN), if properly utilized, can be very effective in bridging the information gap between the rural and urban populations.

Conclusion

This paper has identified four principal actors in the communication process in Liberia–the government, the press, the public and advertisers.

Each has a vital role to play. It is in the interest of the nation for all four to collaborate and cooperate.

The present situation is one in which the government does not trust the press, and the press is equally skeptical of the government, given past experiences. The public in such an instance could either be reduced to passive recipients in the whole process of mutual suspicion or they could become active participants and assist in mitigating the suspicion.

The 1985 elections must now be relegated to the archives of history. It was a learning experience for the government, the press and the public. That there were mistakes made is evident. History ought not be allowed to repeat itself in 1991. The government must be prepared to abide by the will of the voters. The press, in addition to its traditional roles, must be prepared to fulfill its role of acting as an instrument of social justice and a device for implementing beneficial social change. The people must be more than just pawns in this seemingly complicated process. As the ultimate custodians of power, the people have and must receive the right to information which will enable them to make informed democratic decisions which affect their lives. We submit that a free, independent, well trained and vibrant press is our best option to accomplish this important task. This is the challenge of the Liberian press in the nineties and beyond.

Endnotes

[1]The 5W's and H of journalism are: *who, what, where, why, when,* and *how.*

[2]Journalist is used here to refer to those professionals in both the print and electronic media.

[3]The term *economically developing* is preferred to other terms like *Third World, underdeveloped, Less Developed Country*–LDC, and others which carry a derogatory overtone and undermine our centuries–old cultural and social institutions which in some cases are much more advanced and desirable than some of the so–called industrialized nation states.

[4]J. Herbert Alschull, *AGENTS OF POWER: The Role of the News Media in Human Affairs,* (New York: Longman, 1984), p. 149.

[5]Momo K. Rogers, "THE LIBRIAN PRESS: An Analysis," *Journalism Quarterly,* No. 63, 1986, p. 275–281. This article by Rogers which is an extract from his Ph.D dissertation, is a very thorough account of the long and courageous history of the Liberian press.

[6]Graham Mytton, *Mass Communication in Africa,* [London: Edward Arnold (Publishers) Ltd., 1983], p. 38. See also Rosalynde Ainslie, *The Press in Africa,* (London, 1966), and William Hatchen, *Muffled Drums,* (Ames, Iowa, 1961). Even though Mytton suggests that the early press in Liberia was established by [slaves] as opposed to our preference for [blacks] returning from America, it is important to note that thorough research of Liberian history would suggest that many of the blacks who returned to the West coast of Africa in the early 1800s were in fact freed men and women of color who in some instances had never been slaves.

[7]William V. S. Tubman, Liberia's 18th president ruled from 1944 to July 1971 when he died in London, England. In 1955 he and his political cronies

accused the opposition Independent True Whig Party of S. David Coleman, Nete Sie Brownell, et al, of plotting to overthrow the government when it became clear that Tubman was going to lose an open election. The office of *The Independent Weekly*, the paper of the opposition was ransacked, the pressed destroyed and its editors jailed and tortured.

[8]Rogers, "THE LIBERIAN PRESS: An Analysis . . . ," p. 280. The role of some contemporary stalwart journalists cannot go unmentioned. Many journalists have stood up to the system despite possibilities of reprisals. Some have lost their lives (eg. television journalist, Charles Gbeyon for his coverage of the November 12, 1985 "attempted invasion" by the late Gen. Thomas Quiwonkpa, former Commanding General in the defunct People's Redemption Council military government). Others like the late Albert Porte, Rufus Darpoh, Kenneth Best, Lamini A. Waritay, Momolu Sirleaf (publisher of the banned independent *Footprints Today*), Klon Hinneh, Isaac Bantu, the staff of *The Revelation*, 1975 (K. Neville A. Best, Carl Patrick Burrowes, Victor Weeks, Willard Russell, Othello Brandy and Ernestine Cassell) have sometimes served jail terms. There are others. This list is by no means exhaustive.

[9]"Journalist speaks from Prison," *The News*, Vol. I No. 217, [Monrovia: Monday, March 19th, 1990], p. 1

[10]"Observer Office Set Ablaze," Ibid., p. 1

[11]Bradley Martin and Jane Whitmore, "TREASURE FOR PLEASURE: Libera's American money managers gave up," *Newsweek*, February, 1989, p. 39.

[12]J. Herbert Altschull in *Agents of Power*. The book is recommended reading for anyone who needs a different perspective from the traditional four theories of the press option of explaining and classifying the world press.

[13]U.S. Department of State, Bureau of African Affairs, *LIBERIA: Background Notes*, September 1987.

[14]The term "independent press" is used here to distinguish it from the government and state controlled press. Article 15 of the constitution states:

> a) Every person shall have the right to freedom of expression being fully responsible for the abuse thereof. This right shall not be curtailed, restricted
>
> or enjoined by government save during an emergency declared in accordance with this constitution.
>
> b) The right encompasses the right to hold opinions without interference and the right to knowledge. It includes freedom of speech and of the press, academic freedom to receive and impart knowledge and information and the right to libraries to make

such knowledge available. It includes non–interference with the use of the mail, telephone and telegraphs. It likewise includes the right to remain silent.

c) In pursuance of this right, there shall be no limitation on the public right to be informed about the government and its functionaries.

d) Access to state owned media shall not be denied because of any disagreement with or dislike of the ideas expressed. Denial of such access may be challenged in a court of competent jurisdiction.

e) This freedom may be limited only by judicial action in proceedings grounded in defamation or invasion of the rights of privacy and publicity or in the commercial aspect of expression in deception, false advertising and copyright infringement.

[15]Decree 88A was passed by the military government in 1984. It declares the spread of "rumors, lies and disinformation a felony." It is important to note that the government has never successfully persecuted anyone for a violation of the decree even though at least one case, involving the acting chairman of the banned independent Liberia People's Party, Dusty Wolokolie, has been tried using the infamous decree.

[16]McBride Commission, *Many Voice, One World*, Paris: Unesco, 1984. pp. 39–40

[17]Altschull, *The Agents of Power*, p. 12, as quoted from a series of essays by John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon, who, over a ten year period dating from 1720 , penned a series of essays published in London newspapers under the byline Cato, a Roman statesman–writer of the fifth century, B. C. celebrated for impeccable honesty and renowned as a stubborn foe of the imperial Caesar.

[18]*Ibid.* p. 19

[19]*Ibid.* p. 31

[20]*Ibid.* p. 28

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Peace Corps Service in Liberia, 1965–1966: Reflections of an African–American Volunteer

Carl E. Meacham

Introduction

This article is an attempt to place in perspective my Liberian experience during the mid–1960's in order to: 1) focus attention on an African country still in the process of nation building and, 2) remind African–Americans that their links to the "old world" are permanent and should be assessed every so often to understand better that the struggle for self–determination of all people of color is continuous, and often wrought with obstacles of their own making. This does not mean that external factors are not pivotal but that taken together with the inability and/or refusal of national leaders to agree to common concerns dooms nation–building or conciliation. Yet, Liberia is an excellent example of a nation struggling to gain its own identity.

I do not possess any unique or extraordinary ability to predict the future, but it seemed obvious to me and others that the political and caste system in place in Liberia in 1965 and 1966 would not survive another decade. Indeed, I believed that immediately after President William Tubman's death, "Americo–Liberians", descendants of African–Americans who founded the country and installed a political system based on ancestry, would lose much of their political and economic power. I was not surprised therefore to learn in 1980 that President William Tolbert and many of his political associates had been brutally assassinated, and a Sergeant Doe, a member of a tribal group, had replaced him as President. Tolbert's death was senseless, but considering the extent and level of violence that had been inflicted on the "other Liberians" during his administration and prior years, another alternative may have been worse than death. Unlike Duvalier of Haiti and Marcos of the Philippines, the United States did not intervene to save Tolbert's life, either because it was not known that his life was in danger or little could be done to alter events.

As a Peace Corps volunteer in Liberia, I was in an advantageous position to observe the dynamics of Liberian cultural, social and political life. Assigned as a teacher to the government school in Pleebo, Maryland County, I became part of the community (as much as any outsider~ and to a certain degree members of that community shared with me directly or indirectly their political and social concerns. They were a microcosm of all of Liberia, a country whose problems they shared disproportionately but whose benefits eluded most of them because of their tribal background.

As an African–American I empathized with the Kru, Grebo, Vai, and other powerless people. At the same time, I was proud to observe descendants of African–Americans exercising political and economic power. They were symbols of achievement and independence on the one hand, and oppression on the other. I was, regardless of my empathy for the powerless, a man caught in the middle of a protracted battle between the haves and have nots, both victims of oppression. However, on occasion I felt the urge to become involved, for my skin color would have provided the appropriate entree. But, reason always prevailed, (I was one of them, but still an outsider) and I managed to consciously exclude myself from the political thicket except when others inadvertently included me. I quickly extricated myself when this occurred for fear of getting involved in a dispute which would have consumed me and made my life impossible as a volunteer.

Now, two decades later, as a political scientist I believe that I can assess objectively a period in my life which I still remember sometimes with fondness and others with exasperation because I could merely act as a gadfly. My personal views notwithstanding, as I stated at the outset I hope this article assists us in assessing contemporary political events in Liberia in a historical context, albeit from a political scientist whose views may be a bit "colored" because of his special mission in Liberia during the latter years of the First Republic.

Liberia: The "First United States Colony"?

Arriving in Liberia, one cannot help but reflect on its origins. The idea for a "Liberia" had been an old one in the United States. Thomas Jefferson and other leading Americans in the 1700's considered the colonization of emancipated African slaves an attractive alternative.[1] They were convinced that free African–Americans and whites could not and would not co–exist peacefully, and that the social and cultural intermingling of Africans and Europeans would spell doom for both races. More importantly, Europeans considered themselves superior to Africans and despite race mixing initiated and perpetuated by them producing a "new race" of people, the notion that persons of African descent were inferior to whites remained dominant throughout America. While slavery was viewed at the same time as a bane and necessary economically, many white Americans, slave and non–slave–holders, lived in fear of African–American emancipation. Accordingly, the founders, through their actions, even in the Constitution extended protection to the institution of slavery.[2] As American wealth increased, so did the African population, growing from about 757,000 in 1790 to 1.7 million in 1820.[3] Approximately ten percent were considered "free people of color," the group from which the first settler–Liberians were drawn.

As early as 1773, religious leaders like the Reverend Samuel Hopkins of Newport, Rhode Island, had promoted African–American colonization in West Africa. Hopkins and other congregationalist ministers although against slavery, shared the prevailing opinion about the inferiority of African–Americans, but believed that emancipated blacks, "returning" to Africa where they would be more comfortable than in the United States, could spread Christianity.[4] Hopkins died in 1803, several years before his dream became a reality. Ironically, it was an African–American who initiated one of the first back–to–Africa movements. Using his own funds, Paul Cuffee transported thirty eight African–Americans to Sierra Leone for colonization purposes in 1815. Cuffee, a New England Quaker and owner of a small fleet of whaling ships, also believed in the perpetuation of African–American Christianity, but more strongly in freedom and in ending the slave trade.[5] Transporting African–Americans to Africa would accomplish these objectives. Other free African–Americans, like James Forten of Philadelphia, proposed in 1816 that "black states" be created "in Louisiana, along the Missouri River, (or) in the Pacific Northwest..."[6] Although white proponents of colonization agreed in principle with Forten, they objected strenuously to establishing "Black States" so close to the United States. They thought that free African–Americans would endanger the peace of the country by agitating for total black emancipation.

In December 1816, encouraged by intense and expanding discussions on African–American colonization, a group of distinguished white American supporters of colonization met in Washington, D.C. where they founded the American Society for Colonizing the Free People of Color of the United States which became popularly known as the American Colonization Society. Established as a private group without official links to the United States Government, it was not difficult, however, for one to assume that the U.S. Government endorsed its objective of "repatriating" free African–Americans to Africa. The Society's founders included Supreme Court Justice Bushrod Washington, a nephew of the nation's first President, Henry Clay, Francis Scott Key, and Robert Finley, a religious leader from New Jersey. Advocates included President James Monroe, Andrew Jackson, Daniel Webster and Secretary of the Treasury William Crawford.[7] The Society also secured financial backing from the U.S. Government.[8] These funds were used to purchase land and equipment, pay teachers, and outfit the *Elizabeth*, the ship used to transport African–Americans to Sherbro Island, near Sierra Leone in 1820.[9] This settlement scheme failed. But on April 25, 1822, after long and heated negotiations between Americans and Africans, African–Americans landed on Cape Mesurado, near what is now Monrovia. The American negotiator, Navy Captain Robert F. Stockton, was an agent of the U.S. Government. And until 1847, when Liberia declared its independence, representatives of the U.S. Government acted as colonial officials.

The U.S. Government's involvement in the negotiations with the Africans did not mean the new territory would be treated as an American colony. The American government, despite extending financial assistance, essentially left the colonists to the mercy of the Colonization Society. In effect, they were stateless, vulnerable to attacks from European powers and indigenous people in their new homeland. Nonetheless, the process of nation-building proceeded. Free people of color from Mississippi, Virginia, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and New York arrived, settling in Monrovia, Bassa Cove, Caldwell, and Millsburg. In 1824, Robert G. Harper, a white Marylander conferred the name of Liberia on the settlement.[10] Monrovia was named in honor of U.S. President James Monroe.

Free African-Americans, however, did not flock to Liberia. Only about 4,500 of them immigrated during the first twenty-three years of the territory's existence.[11] There were several reasons for this apparent lack of interest. One, abolitionists viewed the society's objective as a means of undermining their movement and fought against colonization. Two, slave-holders thought colonization represented a threat to the un-holy institution of slavery. Three, enlightened free people of color were determined to improve their lives in the United States where they also could lobby against slavery. Finally, stories about life in Liberia were not encouraging. Infectious diseases devastated settlements; hostile indigenous people attacked poorly defended colonists; and there existed the ever-present danger that settlers would be sold into slavery. Those few who, nevertheless dared to settle began to build a country where African-Americans could find refuge from slavery, earn citizenship, and determine their destiny.[12] There was a great deal for which an African-American could be proud.

There was only sporadic conversation as Peace Corps volunteers disembarked from the Pan American airplane at Robertsfield near Monrovia. I was aware that Pan American Airlines managed the airport, but I was more interested in the people who worked there. Were they Kru, Grebo, Vai or Americo-Liberian? Obviously, after twenty-three years, I do not recall exactly the physical appearances of the custom officials or airline employees, but my perceptions of them are very clear. That is, somewhat aware of Liberia's past, especially interrelations or lack of them between the settlers and their descendants and the indigenous people, I expected some striking physical differences. I was surprised to observe that few existed, if any. I would learn later that some Americo-Liberians would identify themselves by mentioning their links to Virginia, Maryland, etc. as a means of setting themselves apart from the Kru or Vai. Our brief stay at Robertsfield did not allow me sufficient time to observe the actual interactions among the various groups to enable conclusions to be made about their ethnicities. Nonetheless, I was aware that dangerous social tensions existed in Liberia, and that the caste system initiated

by the white and black American founders had made Liberia a powder keg ready to explode at any time. In time, Americo–Liberians would establish their own ante–bellum system on Africa's west coast.

The Americo–Liberians viewed the tribal people in exactly the same light as they were perceived by whites in the United States. They were considered innately inferior to them. Because they were beneficiaries of western culture and in many instances, the offspring of wealthy slave owners, they did not (perhaps could not given their mis–education) appreciate the rich history of the indigenous people whom they had come to "civilize," Christianize, exploit, and remove. While little was known about their cultural links to West Africa, except as inaccurately recorded and interpreted by Europeans during the nineteenth century, Americo–Liberians in 1965 were, I thought, too well–educated and sophisticated to be ignorant of *their* past. Rather, like many of their ancestors, they preferred to identify with their American past and to refer to the "special" relationship between Liberia and the United States when it was convenient to exploit tribal people. But, stories of this American past had long become mainly the sources of myths, and the "special" relationship had yielded the Republic few benefits. Liberia was more of an unwanted stepchild than a colony. While the United States had on occasion defended her from European imperialists, economically Liberia had benefited more from Firestone and other Internationals than from the largesse of the United States Treasury. Indeed, most of the financial assistance from the United States to Liberia had been in the form of loans.[13] But, in 1965, given my limited knowledge about Liberian–U.S. relations I was convinced that Liberia was a colony. Although it had declared its independence in 1847, it was not recognized as a nation by the United States until 1862. The inevitable ending of slavery made it politic to recognize the existence of a black–ruled country. More important to President Abraham Lincoln at that time was that Liberia could be the answer to his dream of colonizing freed slaves. Only in this sense, could white American leaders perceive Liberia as being an "American colony" a haven for inferior persons of African descent.

Lincoln's dream of transporting freed American slaves to Liberia *en masse* did not materialize. One of his advisors, Carl Schurz, explained that logistically it was impossible, and moreover, the newly freed slaves would not, in general, support their own removal. In fact, between 1865 and 1904, only 4,093 immigrants to Liberia had their origins in the United States.[14] As freed slaves acquired a measure of political power and economic freedom in the United States, Liberia became an unattractive alternative. Additionally, upper–class Americo–Liberians did not urge African–Americans to immigrate for the status quo as they had developed it could not accommodate the intrusion of African–Americans who had recently discovered democracy and freedom. Their demands for equality would upset the tenuous balance of power between Monrovia and other parts of Liberia.

Moreover, in spite of the fact that Liberia would have provided African–Americans an opportunity to participate fully in self government, they resisted efforts to immigrate. Well–known blacks, like Richard Allen, an American Revolutionary War hero and founder of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, campaigned intensively against colonization. He, James Forten and Martin Delaney, a newspaper publisher, led the opposition that spread to Boston, New York, Hartford and Pittsburgh. Delaney, for example, claimed that "the main motive of colonization was to eliminate Negroes from the United States, and for that purpose a government had been set up in Africa that was not 'independent but a poor miserable mockery – a burlesque on a government.'"[15] Yet Delaney and others, opposed to emmigration to Liberia, were not totally against colonization. They favored sites in Central and South America where, supposedly, they would not have to adjust to the harshness of conditions like those in Africa. Their opposition to Liberia as their chosen homeland had its effect.

When I arrived in Liberia in 1965, less than ten percent of the population could claim American black ancestry, but in terms of economic and political power they reigned supreme. Although I could have become "one of them," I had, because of my appreciation for ideas like equal opportunity and the influence of the nascent American Civil Rights Movement,ruled out participating in any situation which smelled of elitism. The discriminatory system in Liberia reminded me of racism and segregation in Alabama. I could not support Americo–Liberians in their continuing struggle to retain power. Yet, there was an internal conflict. I liked the fact that blacks were in control of their political destiny, although economically they were dependent on western capitalists.

My stay in Monrovia was brief. As previously mentioned, my assignment was at a government high school in Pleebo, Maryland County, not far from Cape Palmas, the home of President William Tubman.

Service in Pleebo

Maryland County, where Pleebo is located, is important in Liberia's development. Established in 1831 by the Maryland State Colonization Society, it became, next to Monrovia, the most important settlement on the coast.[16] Like Monrovia, it progressed economically and politically with assistance from its benefactor. Additionally, many settlers in Monrovia migrated to Maryland County because of personal difficulties and disputes with Monrovia leaders like John Pinney, the white agent for the American Colonization Society. One of the malcontents, John B. Russwurm, left Monrovia to accept the governorship in Cape Palmas in 1836.[17] When Liberia declared its independence in 1847, Maryland County continued as a separate state, primarily because the Maryland Colonization Society had little confidence in the American

Colonization Society's ability to provide effective leadership. In 1854, it became an independent republic, and three years later in 1857, it joined the Liberian republic because its inclusion would provide a bulwark against European encroachment on Liberian soil, and enhance the county's ability to defend itself from hostile tribes. During its first thirty years (1831–1862) of settlement just over 1,000 immigrants made the County their home, establishing tenuous relationships with the dominant Grebo tribe which in the early 1960's made up about eight percent of Liberia's population.

Although the Maryland settlement eventually chose to join the Republic of Liberia, its inclusion was never a foregone conclusion. Marylanders were influential members of the American Colonization Society, and envisaged freed African–Americans establishing their own state in Africa. Francis Scott Key, for example, was instrumental in persuading the Maryland legislature to appropriate funds to be used "for the establishment (of a state) on the African coast for free people of color who had been actual residents of Maryland during the twelve months preceding their embarkation."[18] In 1831, Robert Finley, an agent of the American Colonization Society, intensified Maryland's participation in the "back to Africa" movement. An effective orator, he persuaded his audiences to join the colonization movement. The fact that Maryland's African–American population made up a substantial minority of the residents was threatening to whites. In 1830, the population consisted of 291,108 whites and 155,932 blacks, "of whom 102,994 were slaves."[19] Even more significant was the position of free blacks and their potential to alter the status–quo. While not permitted to vote or attend school, they "could acquire and dispose of property and bring court action."[20]

Maryland slaveholders and those favoring slavery, indeed, were uncomfortable with this situation and apprehensive about how the free African–Americans could challenge the "holy institution." After an expedition to Liberia by Eli Ayres in 1821, and Nat Turner's rebellion, the colonization movement assumed increasing urgency. Several politicians urged that African–Americans be colonized; other Marylanders lobbied for the abolition of slavery; and free blacks protested against colonization. In response to the Turner rebellion and milder hostilities in southern Maryland, the Maryland legislature enacted laws further restricting the rights of free blacks, i.e., forbidding them from owning firearms. In the wake of these hostilities the proponents of colonization became even more convinced that the removal of black Marylanders would serve their interests and those of blacks. The initial result was feeble: the "Orion" carried 31 emigrants in 1831, and the "Lafayette" transported 146 in 1832, all bound for Monrovia. All individuals were promised land and financial support from the state of Maryland. But, they fared very poorly in Monrovia, succumbing to diseases and dealing poorly with the abuses of agents of the American Colonization Society.

Disappointed with the conditions of the Monrovia settlement, an idea that had been suggested in 1829 by John Latrobe that Maryland establish its own West African colony was advanced again. Incorporated by the Maryland legislature in 1831, the Maryland Colonization Society finally made Maryland in Africa a reality when the brig, *"Ann"* anchored at Cape Palmas on February 11, 1834.[21] The journey of the *"Ann"* had begun on November 28, 1833 from Baltimore. Only nineteen colonists were on board, accompanied by James Hall, "the white agent in charge, John Hersey, the assistant agent, and two missionaries of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions" (ABCFM).[22] They were later joined by thirty Monrovians, and five from Bassa.

Early in the history of the settlement, the Americo–Liberians had confronted massive resistance from the Grebos. According to some, they had "more costly wars and conflicts with the government than any other tribal group in the history of the nation."[23] The initial meeting between the colonists and their representatives, however, was one of tranquility and apparent respect. As strangers, they were greeted with curiosity. After an exchange of pleasantries and gifts presented by Hall and his fellow negotiators, they engaged in discussions with the African leaders, all Grebo, about the "sale" of territory to the society and settlers. The African leaders were king of Cape Palmas, dubbed King Freeman, the Grahway headman, referred to as King Will, and the King of Grand Cavally, renamed by the negotiators, King Joe Holland.[24] Hall promised large quantities of goods, i.e., rum, guns, cotton, tobacco, and iron pots, in exchange "for land extending twenty miles along the seashore and twenty into the interior."[25] He never delivered, earning the reputation as a shrewd and cunning negotiator. The colonials settled in and began the process of nation–building, expecting their numbers to grow later. In 1835, other immigrants arrived: fifty–eight aboard the "Bourne"; twenty–seven on the "Harmony"; and thirty–nine on the "Fortune."[26]

As the colony grew, so did the hostility between the Grebos and the immigrants. The Grebos were not only resentful of their new neighbors, but dissatisfied with the way in which the agents had taken advantage of them. Promised goods were never delivered in the amounts agreed on; yet, the number of "interlopers" continued to increase. The interest, however, of African–American Marylanders in immigrating began to wane as resistance to colonization intensified in Maryland. Agents of the Maryland Colonization Society, not yet willing to concede that their "back to Africa" movement was close to failure, looked more and more to other states for recruits. One of the most notable examples was their success in persuading the widow of Richard Tubman of Georgia to permit her slaves to resettle in Maryland County. In 1837, forty–two slaves from the Tubman plantation left Baltimore destined for Cape Palmas.[27] By the end of 1840, 424 descendants of African–Americans were residing in Maryland County in Africa.[28]

Despite efforts to reach accommodations with the Grebos, the colonists did not escape armed conflicts with their neighbors. In part, the indigenes were not pleased with the immigrants' lack of respect for them and their customs. Additionally, the Grebos had been "hoodwinked" by Hall and other agents in their negotiations which had resulted in their ceding land in exchange for a few gifts, and the sporadic awarding of "dash." Confrontations occurred in 1836 and 1838, fueled in part by a few colonists who chose to threaten the Grebos with physical harm instead of peacefully settling disputes. The Grebos, nevertheless, were not innocent victims, although they could argue that their land had been "stolen" by more enlightened and skilled adversaries. In any event, Grebos robbed colonists' warehouses, and reluctantly dealt with Governor John Russwurm. The fact that Russwurm was black did not sit well with the Grebo leaders, who preferred to "palaver" (negotiate) with whites. Russwurm's authority also was undermined by various representatives from the ABCFM, because they resented the fact that a black had so much power. The threat to the security and survival of the colony, however, was more important to Russwurm, the immigrants, and the Maryland Colonization Society.

In addition to training and arming themselves, the colonists through the Colonization Society requested assistance from the U.S. Navy. Convinced that a show of force, other than from slave ships, flying the U.S. flag, would deter attacks by the indigenes on the settlers, the Colonization Society requested that periodic patrols be made along the Cape Palmas coast. By 1843, the immigrants' request was granted. A fleet, headed by Commodore Matthew Perry, began to make frequent patrols along the coast, and on occasion, using force to control the activities of hostile tribes. In the meantime, Russwurm purchased new territory and a few additional emigrees arrived from the United States. But the colonists did suffer a number of losses as they engaged in battles against the Grebos. The Tubman family, for example, the most famous and notorious in the region suffered greatly at the hands of the Grebos. William Tubman, the president's grandfather, was beaten to death in 1874; his great uncle was killed in the battle of Wrukeh in 1875; and the President and his brother had been wounded in battle against Grebos in a later tribal war.[29] Yet, President Tubman was given a great deal of credit for improving relationships between Americo–Liberians and Grebos, making it possible for them to begin to share in the political and economic rewards of the country. For example, the District Superintendent who resided in Pleebo was a Grebo.

I arrived in Pleebo approximately one month prior to the opening of school in March, 1965. One of the volunteers, an African–American from Chicago, (my arrival doubled the number of African–American volunteers) briefed me about the town and school and introduced me to the "honorables," as leading citizens were known. Most were Grebos, a few belonged to other

tribes, and a few others were Americo–Liberians. All appeared to get along amiably. They greeted me as a "returning son" which made me feel at the same time uncomfortable and proud. The Americo–Liberians were quick to point out, to the chagrin of the tribal people, that we were brothers in several ways. They smiled proudly as they reminded themselves and whoever listened that they had roots in Virginia or North Carolina. This did not usually go over well with the Grebos who reminded them they were Liberians. And while all of them would laugh, as if at some private joke, I could not help but think that the Grebos still considered the Americo–Liberians their enemies. Indeed, the District Superintendent still had vivid memories of outright repressions by them, and only spoke positively about one Americo–Liberian, William Tubman. This fondness for Tubman also was expressed by other tribal people who believed that the President's interest was a unified Liberia where accident of birth would not automatically determine a person's destiny.

Next to Cape Palmas (Harper), Pleebo was the most important town in the County. A Firestone Rubber Plantation was near as was President Tubman's farm. (I visited with the President along with several others at the farm. It was largely uneventful. Tubman talked incessantly about same innocuous subject while the rest of us listened.) And while Grebos made up the majority of its population there was a smattering of other tribes and "Congos" whose ancestors were the "recaptured Africans" bound for North America. The owner of the principal bar in Pleebo was a "Congo" whose brother sat on the Liberian Supreme Court. Most of the small businesses were operated by Lebanese, many of whom had taken advantage of Tubman's Open Door Policy as a pretext for entering the country primarily during the 1940's and 1950's.

The Lebanese Factor

While Firestone and the Liberian–American Swedish Mineral Company (LAMCO) were the largest and most visible beneficiaries of Tubman's Open Door Policy, I got the impression that the small Lebanese businessmen collectively played a greater role in controlling the economy in Liberia. For whatever the reasons, Liberians had allowed them to control retail and wholesale businesses. Tubman thought Liberians were not good businessmen or competitors, and made the point several times that the country was fortunate to have the Lebanese. Although a few Americo–Liberians benefited from the rents collected on leased property, an avenue of opportunity was denied Liberians who may have had the ability and inclination to operate similar establishments. Additionally, Liberians who worked for the Lebanese were accorded few benefits; job protection and security were not among them; these practices were tacitly endorsed by the government. Indeed, when I was in Liberia, Lebanese merchants "conducted more than half of all middle–level commercial activities in the country."[30] In short, Liberians in Pleebo and other

similar towns were at the economic mercy of a group which had neither a political nor social interest in helping Liberians to control their economic destiny.

To a large extent, the Lebanese acted more like colonial rulers than any of the other foreign employees who lived in the area. While Firestone employees would occasionally socialize with the "honorables," the Lebanese, for the most part, isolated themselves. They provided services and sold goods for a specified period during the day and retired to their homes ostensibly, as many Liberians joked, to count their American dollars. Surprisingly, they were not the major targets of ridicule as were the Americans and Europeans who worked at Firestone. Perhaps, I thought, the Lebanese escaped criticism because they were so important to the local economy, providing goods and extending loans and credits to citizens. If the pressures on them were too excessive, the entire town would suffer and those who depended on jobs in their establishments might have found themselves unemployed as the shopkeepers looked for more palatable locations. Neither Firestone nor its white employees was afforded similar treatment despite efforts by a few of the employees to reach out to Pleebo.

The Firestone Factor

At one of the nation's most vulnerable economic periods, Firestone negotiated an extremely favorable deal with Liberian officials in 1927. Following the rejection of a $5 million loan from the United States by Congress in 1921, Firestone, in 1927 "entered into (a) contract with Liberia for a loan of $5 million on the condition that Liberia would give two thousand acres of land for experimental purposes, that the company would be given the opportunity to lease up to one million acres of rubber land, and that the company would construct a harbor at Monrovia out of its own funds and with its own engineers."[31] What appeared to have been a good deal for Liberia was just the reverse: the expenditures for the harbor were paid by the Liberian government.[32]

Unquestionably, Firestone's presence and investments in Liberia benefited the country economically. But, Firestone, like other large companies operating in developing countries, was more concerned about reaping huge profits than helping the host nation to resolve its economic problems. Firestone's initial deception regarding the construction of the harbor was followed by similar acts. For example, between 1932 and 1943, mainly because the demand for rubber was in great demand by the Allies during the Second World War, export of the product increased "from 60,000 pounds in 1932 to 32.1 million pounds in 1943 even though the returns to Liberia were negligible."[33] Individual Liberians, however, did benefit; President Tubman at one time owned a 1,600 acre rubber estate; his successor, William Tolbert, owned a 600 acre farm.[34] The rubber giant's importance to the Liberian economy also was manifested

in another way. It was a leading private investor in the country, and in 1970 accounted for a large portion of the 8% monetary Gross Domestic Product (GDP) contributed from rubber exports.[35] To the country's credit, the 1927 loan was retired in 1951, and an increasing number of Liberians began to benefit from the rubber industry.

Firestone, nonetheless, was viewed with disdain by most of the people with whom I came in contact in Pleebo. It was at the same time viewed with respect, and a possible place of employment. Liberians, especially those who held supervisory positions proudly were pointed out. Some of my students were children of unskilled Firestone employees and those who had no connection with the rubber giant dreamed of working there. But they knew that their chances of securing supervisory or well paying jobs at Firestone were difficult or non–existent. White foreigners were brought in to fill the most coveted positions. Obviously, this was resented by Pleebo residents as well as other Liberians. Their resentment was further exacerbated by the perceptions that the unwelcomed visitors had of Liberians. Not only were jobs taken away from them by expatriates, these same expatriates, with a few exceptions lived in tight enclaves, much like upper–middle class American suburban areas, where usually Liberian servants were not welcomed. The Firestone supermarket, for example, was opened to only a few outsiders, including Peace Corps Volunteers, a few "honorables" and Lebanese shopkeepers. At weekly movie parties given at the Firestone Plantation, Liberians, except for the lone one in a key position at the company, were seldom seen. This Liberian, unlike his white colleagues, was never accompanied by his wife or a Liberian guest; some of us surmised she would have felt uncomfortable in the sea of Europeans. On rare occasions two or three Americo–Liberians from Cape Palmas were present. They were involved in business deals with Firestone or used to facilitate the resolution of problems with the government.

In spite of the love–hate relationship exhibited by Pleebo residents toward Firestone, Peace Corps volunteers developed what some Liberians referred to as a "cozy" relationship with employees of the multi–national. African–American and white volunteers were invited to any of their parties, dinner in their homes, and to compete in spirited soccer games. I, like many of my colleagues, found the invitations welcome,respites from our daily routines as teachers or community developers. We learned, after I had been in Pleebo for about six months, that the Pleebo "honorables" considered our relationship with Firestone unacceptable. The messenger was an Americo–Liberian agricultural official stationed in Pleebo. A self–appointed guardian of Peace Corps Volunteers, friend, and facilitator, he maintained that our mission could be undermined if the relationship was not cooled. We disagreed with him, but in the end decided it was in our best interests to follow his advice; the Firestone connection or the perception of it was not important enough to jeopardize our

cordial relationship with Liberians. The four male volunteers acquiesced to his request but the three female volunteers did not based on their own personal reasons.

The memory of the "Firestone incident" as I shall refer to it has remained with me for a long time. I objected to our friend's interference in our personal lives. But, to him and perhaps to other Pleebo residents, especially the "honorables," Peace Corps Volunteers were there to serve their interests, although they came from a country which treated Liberia as an unwanted stepchild since its creation. Like American politicians, our personal lives were part of the public domain. Firestone personified exploitation, imperialism, and a tool of repression for the Liberian government, while Peace Corps Volunteers, although Americans, represented the best of their country in terms of idealism. My purpose is not to bestow self-serving plaudits on volunteers but to attempt to explain why the friend objected to our association with Firestone.

In a larger sense, it is not now difficult to understand their apprehension about the volunteers' contacts with Firestone. Through their work and association with Liberians the volunteers had demonstrated a sense of understanding about their culture that no other foreigners had shown. They were not interested in proselytizing but in sharing their know-how. They did not ridicule their way of life but sought to adjust to it. And as an African-American volunteer, they may have thought my role was different, and may have legitimately raised a question as to my sincerity in working with and identifying with Africans. Why would I, many could have asked and did not, (at least, not directly) find satisfaction in socializing with Europeans or white Americans when their views about me were similar to those they held about them? I am not sure how best to answer this question even twenty years later. The importance of a response considering the totality of my experience is questionable. In any event, my teaching assignment, while discussed at this junction in this essay is not indicative of its significance. Rather, it helps to place the entire experience in the proper perspective.

The Peace Corps Volunteer as Educator

In 1965, when I began my teaching assignment at Pleebo Government High School, the Tubman Administration was in the midst of a program to improve its educational system qualitatively and quantitatively by extending services to tribal people in the hinterlands. Growth had taken peace in government schools to such an extent that "more than half the primary and secondary teachers and students were in government-operated schools."[36] These schools were operated essentially for tribal children as some Americo-Liberians sent their children to mission or other private schools or institutions outside of the country. Preparing to assume positions of leadership, the Americo-Liberians could ill-afford to fraternize with their future subjects.

In 1944 when Tubman was elected President he made access to education a priority.[37] Although the Liberian founders had required that education be provided for school aged children, largely Americo–Liberians were affected and even they could not be serviced effectively for lack of facilities. Tubman, like his predecessors, was aware that Americo–Liberians had access to education to their group as a means of maintaining the caste system and status quo. But, Tubman also cognizant of the rumblings in tribal circles for better opportunities realized that the country could no longer ignore the vast majority of the populace if he was interested in maintaining peace and discouraging violent demonstrations. By expanding educational opportunities, Tubman's promise of unification could be achieved as tribal peoples acquired the tools to prepare themselves to participate fully in all of the country's activities. At the end of 1964, 107 government secondary schools were in operation compared to about 78 in 1944.[38]

Since 1962, Peace Corps Volunteers had been members of the faculty at Liberia's government schools. When I arrived in Pleebo two were in the elementary school and one in the high school, a single building for both. As the second high school teacher, volunteers made up one–third of the faculty. The high school convened during the morning, the elementary school during the afternoon, and an adult school, made up mostly of Firestone workers, was in session at night. All students were required to pay a small fee and those in attendance during the day were required to buy uniforms as well. These requirements obviously acted as disincentives and impediments to acquiring a so–called "free education," and while all of the students were members of tribal groups, they were considered "elites" by the community because they could afford to attend school. Other school aged children or young adults had to work to supplement the meager incomes of their families living either in Pleebo or in nearby communities. If provided with the opportunity, there was no question that most of these children or young adults would have sought an education.

The education of the Liberian teachers varied. The principal and one of the teachers had attended the Rural Teachers Training Institute in Kakata. Another had received some education in the United States, and still one had graduated from high school. Ostensibly, volunteers acted as replacement teachers for those Liberians who left to further their education in Monrovia or elsewhere; most of them never returned.

All of the Liberian teachers appeared to owe their jobs to the True Whig Party, the party of the government, to which they "donated" a month's salary for the privilege of working. This made it difficult for them to oppose or question certain policies or attempt to exert pressure on educational officials to secure promised books and/or equipment. Even when their paychecks were late, they waited patiently for them to arrive. Volunteers suggested

sometimes subtly that they place pressures on government officials who were sympathetic to their concerns. But when it was perceived by them that the volunteers were interfering in internal matters they responded that they had to worry about job security, a concern not required of volunteers. The tacit message was clear: people in power would respond to only limited pressure from them, and if they became too aggressive, not only would they suffer, but also the students they were committed to serve. For example, they would be fired and not replaced. Moreover, the teachers and especially the principal did not wish to be perceived as Peace Corps' pawns, unable to make decisions without the advice and guidance of a volunteer. All had heard rumors about the control volunteers exercised in some schools, and the unwanted advice given by them, especially African–Americans who considered themselves "honorary Liberians," or "returning sons or daughters."

For the most part, volunteers viewed themselves as apolitical irrespective of race. Because some were black, they may have been drawn into or included in situations which appeared to be political. For example, the other African–American volunteer in Pleebo was gregarious and extroverted, and appeared to be close to several "honorables." He spoke freely, oftentimes criticizing some government official or policy, but few Liberians in Pleebo took him seriously since they realized he lacked political influence although he claimed friendship with a number of important Americo–Liberians in Cape Palmas (the administrative headquarters for Maryland County) and Monrovia. In the school, he was well respected because of his interest in the students' education and his willingness to defend them and his colleagues in obvious partisan battles with townspeople or government officials. Like other volunteers, he understood the political culture, the basis of the demands placed on the system by tribal people, and the difficulties confronted by non–Americo–Liberians in the society. If the volunteer were unique, the best summation of his/her work is captured in the following:

> The Peace Corps volunteer provided one of the few examples to tribal children of a dedicated and impartial teacher who had no ulterior vested political or religious interest to pursue. The volunteer served as a full–time instructor rather than one who had to "moonlight" (often at the direct financial expense of his students) to secure a living wage. The Peace Corpsman's use of standardized English better prepared the student for his advanced studies at the university level. Significantly, the impact of the Peace Corps presence was frequently as strong upon the Liberian teachers as it was upon the students.[39]

Indeed, at the time I served as a volunteer teacher, I did not imagine that I was a role model of any kind, although some of the Liberians with whom I worked pointed out that my race set me apart from other volunteers, most of

whom were white. I was not the first African–American volunteer, but the students identified with African–Americans, viewing them as "successful g sons and daughters." However, like white volunteers, even today African–Americans claim they learned more than they taught or conveyed about their Americanism or the values and skills they imparted. Reflecting again on my experiences, one anecdote illustrates what Liebenow makes reference to regarding the impact of the Peace Corps presence in Liberia. I served as a kind of assistant to the night school principal, a scholar who spoke in Latin phrases when he became agitated with some student or government policy. Affectionately called the "old man" by students and teachers alike, his primary interest was in providing education to Liberians. Once I wrongly, he said, questioned his integrity in what I thought was a tactful and correct manner. The issue related to the use of fees paid by night school students who asked me how their money was being used since they did not know. I asked the "old man" because he collected and disbursed the money. In anger, he responded that the funds had been used for several purposes, reciting them and amounts spent. For example, the Lebanese firm which provided electrical power was paid an exorbitant fee. Afterwards he berated me for questioning his integrity, but added in a calm voice that he trusted me as he had other volunteers, understood the rationale for my question, and then placed me in charge of collecting fees and helping him to allocate them. I did not want the responsibility, but he insisted, explaining that I demonstrated concern for the students and would not steal or misuse the funds. He flatly stated that he could not trust some of his colleagues who were more concerned about their own interests than that of the school. Prior to my leaving Liberia, the night school purchased an electrical generator with some of those funds. The event was a time for celebration, a victory over the intruders and a demonstration of what Liberians could accomplish on their own.

As far as the students were concerned, former volunteers have written and spoken ad infinitum about them. I agree with those who saw them as eager learners, struggling with a foreign language, English, which was considered the national language. Less than ten percent of all Liberians spoke it fluently. But "they were trying," a Liberian expression denoting a serious effort to accomplish a goal. They understood that they were victims of an invidious caste system, but proud of their tribal heritage. Americo–Liberians also were "exploiters and foreigners" who had stolen their land, and in barbaric religious ceremonies sacrificed their tribal brothers. (One celebrated case involving an Americo–Liberian occurred in Maryland County in 1965. The accused was arrested, tried and found guilty of murder. He appealed the verdict, but I am not sure of the final disposition of this matter.) They appeared to trust Peace Corps Volunteers, many of whom they thought would pave the way for them to travel to the United States to pursue dreams which eluded them in Liberia. They affectionately referred to us as Teacher Meacham or Teacher Sweeney,

always willing to please in the classroom. But, in some respects regarding my performance, they expected more from me than my white counterparts. Although "a returning successful son" they were not always willing to accept my faux pas about their country as easily as they did with whites.

As did other volunteers, I challenged them and provided whatever out of class assistance I could. I reopened the library and attempted to instill in them an appreciation for reading and learning. However, most remained pessimistic about their future in Liberia. Their greatest concerns were earning a livelihood and helping their families. They ignored promises from politicians that a new Liberia was in their future. The few who were optimistic believed that their only way out of poverty was to secure teaching degrees from Kakata or obtain a government job in Monrovia. After obtaining a measure of economic security in Monrovia, they would bring their families to live with them. They did not wish to return to their tribal villages where unemployment was rampant despite political speeches to the contrary. In Monrovia, oftentimes the conditions were not much better, but the opportunities, few as they were, were greater. Some spoke of running for political office as a means of helping their people and replacing the "big men" in Monrovia.

Not surprisingly, many of the students were aware of the Civil Rights Movement in the United States and the independence movements in neighboring countries. They often asked me to relate stories about my own experiences in Alabama, living in a racially divided environment. After listening to them, they would invite me to "return" home for surely in Liberia blacks would be treated as human beings. Kwame Nkrumah was a hero. It was thus not difficult to infer that they yearned for a Liberian President who was one of them, in spite of the positive speeches Tubman delivered about their playing an important role in making Liberia an economically independent state, taking advantages of its own natural resources. Progress in their view nevertheless, was painfully slow. The older students especially were well aware of the role internal politics played in their education. They knew that private and mission schools received the best equipment, and recruited the best Liberian teachers. When they competed with those schools in sports contests, they seemed reluctant and insecure about their ability to perform well. After the games ended, they went their separate ways, believing that they had few things in common with their well–off peers, some of whom came from the same tribes. I encouraged them to socialize with their competitors, but they demurred. It was the same as asking African–Americans and whites to socialize after a sporting event in Alabama.

Twenty years ago, one did not have to be a soothsayer to predict that a Samuel Doe would emerge and lead a "revolution." Any of my more aware and intelligent students could have been a Sergeant Doe. The conditions were ripe for creating and following such a leader. The psychological, political and

economic repression was enormous, and if Americo–Liberians were apprehensive about their ability to retain control over tribal people, they were correct.

Retrospection

Obviously, there is a great deal more I could convey about my Peace Corps experiences in Liberia. It was for me a period of maturation. I learned more than I transmitted. I was tested as a human being. I did not go to Liberia with great expectations about changing the world, although I had hoped I would be a good teacher. More often than not I felt guilty about being there especially because of the events occurring in the United States in 1965 and 1966. Nevertheless, as an African–American, living and working in a country governed by blacks, my guilt in some ways was assuaged. Let me place this in perspective.

As a southern African–American, outside of the political and economic mainstream, it was gratifying for me to observe blacks in real positions of power, making decisions about their lives and future. While the decision makers were not always the best models and I had difficulties with some of them, they demonstrated what I had been taught that African–Americans could not do on their own, plot their own destinies. In my home state of Alabama, African–American soldiers returning from the battlefields after World War II had vowed to demand full participation in the American political and economic systems. I, too, made a similar promise to myself. I had represented my country abroad, enjoyed the euphoria of being accepted and/or rejected on a basis other than the color of my skin, and believed I had earned the right to full citizenship. There were some other things, however, that may be troubling to some African–Americans.

First, the idea that Liberia or any African country is a place where African–Americans can easily "return" must be reconsidered. To be candid, living in Liberia provided me with a greater appreciation and understanding of my heritage. I often fantasized about what it would be like living as a Kru or Grebo in a hut. I even came to accept the differences in styles of living, finding half dressed women less objectionable, and boys holding hands as they strolled down the street as a genuine sign of friendship instead of a manifestation of rampant homosexuality. When some whites criticized Liberian backwardness, I defended the Liberians because I believed they were attacking me. Such criticism reminded me of similar statements directed at African–Americans in America. But I never felt Liberian or African. I could not place myself in the Liberian's shoes. I had been shaped by Americanism, something I could not escape even as a "second class citizen." African–Americans, more willing to identify with Africans than me, I learned in Liberia and Ghana, found great difficulty in adjusting to Africa. Many in

Ghana, for example, established their own expatriate community where they could share the "American black experience." The notion of "returning home" to Africa, for most African–Americans is idealistic to say the least. This is an extremely significant lesson. People of color can identify with Africans, Asians, etc. without dismissing their particular characteristics; the struggle is the same for all, regardless of the location.

That Liberia, however, never became the refuge for African–Americans is as much a part of the American black experience as racism. Free African–Americans, in general, were against colonization, believing that they had earned the right to full citizenship in the United States. Indeed, as far as Africa was concerned, "(b)lack people in America have never been united in their thinking about Africa."[40] The continent was not regarded as the "motherland," nor was there "the pull of Africa" even during the worse days of slavery.[41] However, following the demise of reconstruction, a number of African–Americans began to view settlement in Africa favorably. One notable example was the Liberian Exodus Company, founded in South Carolina in 1877 by H. N. Bouney, a black Republican judge.[42] The company collapsed in 1879 after an ill–fated trip to Africa in 1878. Afterwards, at least until Marcus Garvey's activities in the early 1900's, African–Americans were not interested in going to Africa, concentrating on eking out livings in large urban areas where job opportunities were available.

A Jamaican by birth, Garvey is considered the "modern mentor of black nationalism."[43] In addition to advocating self–pride and self–determination among African–Americans, he called for them to "flee America and return to Africa."[44] He implored them to be proud of their African heritage, reminding them that they were part of a noble people. As the leader of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), "he appealed to the League of Nations for permission to settle a colony in Africa and opened negotiations with Liberia. Failing to secure entry into Africa by peaceful means, he organized the Universal Africa Legion to "drive the white usurpers out."[45] He, obviously, did not succeed, but his emphasis on the African past raised the consciousness of African–Americans about Africa. They no longer had reason to be ashamed of Africa, for Garvey and his followers, many of whom were not intellectuals, were made aware of its glorious past in the arts, literature, and commerce.

Later, during the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements of the 1960's, Malcolm X inspired a new generation of African–Americans regarding their links to Africa. Visits to Africa in 1964 by Malcolm had a "profound impact on his thinking."[46] A Pan–Africanist, he, unlike the free blacks in the early 1800's, did feel the pull of Africa. While Liberia was not necessarily one of those countries he felt most attracted to, his respect for the leaders of the so–called emerging nations of Nigeria and Ghana and their political platforms, was reflected in his ideology of black nationalism. He saw the struggle for self

determination in international terms; persons of African descent were inextricably linked in their quest to determine and control their own destinies. He did not advocate immigration, but advocated building and expanding contacts of all kinds, including educational exchanges and sharing technologies. In essence,

> The significance of Malcom's work represents a new relationship between African people in America and Africans on the continent. In all of the prior periods of the Back–to–Africa movement, the African–American had always been himself in the leading role to free Africa and all her people. From Cuffee to Garvey, the Africans in the West were considered the helmsmen in the redemption of Africa. But as Africa becomes an important area in international events the African–Americans now look to progressive African leaders for ideological direction and inspiration in the struggle against racism and capitalist exploitation in an age of imperialism. Consequently, the pull of Africa has reemerged in the formations of Pan–Africanism throughout the Black diaspora.[47]

The "pull," however, for me, like probably millions of other African–Americans, is an intellectual one. I enjoyed living in Liberia, but did not like the manner in which many of her citizens were treated. My commitment to democracy and equal rights, then, was tested as much in Liberia as it had been in Alabama. I could never bring myself to identify with Americo–Liberians, the group which felt most identified with me. They were as "racist" as many whites as I had encountered in the South. They treated tribal people sometimes as though they were animals, and at best, as children. In animalistic rituals, Americo–Liberians killed tribal people to satisfy conditions established by "witch doctors," related to the purging of sins to gain some economic or political advantage. Americo–Liberians used tribal women in the same sexual way as white plantation owners in the Old South had used African–American female slaves. In political matters, Americo–Liberians manipulated the political system to restrict the participation of tribal people. All of these factors contributed to the demise of their political power years later. Unfortunately since 1980, the new tribal leaders have imitated their former rulers in the exercise of brutality and barbarism. The experiment continues.

Endnotes

[1]Tom Shick, *Behold the Promised Land: A History of Afro-American Settlers in Nineteenth–Century Liberia*, Baltimore: Johns' Hopkins University Press, 1980, p. 4.

[2]See William W. Freehling, "The Founding Fathers and Slavery," *American Historical Review*, Vol. 77, No. 1 (February 1982): 81-93. Relevant clauses in the Constitution are Article I, Section 2, paragraph 3, regarding the basis of representation; Section 9, paragraph 1, regarding the endorsement and end of slave trade; and Article IV, paragraph 3, regarding the return of runaway slaves.

[3]Shick, *Behold the Promised Land: A History of Afro-American Settlers in Nineteenth Century Liberia*, p. 11.

[4]See Stanley R. Schultz, "The Making of a Reformer: The Reverend Samuel Hopkins As An Eighteenth-Century Abolitionist," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, vol. 115, No. 5, (1971):350-65.

[5]Shick, *Behold the Promised Land: A History of Afro-American Settlers in Nineteenth Century Liberia*, p. 5.

[6]J. Gus Liebenow, *Liberia: The Quest for Democracy*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987, p. 12.

[7]Ibid, p. 13.

[8]Ibid.

[9]Ibid, pp. 13 and 15.

[10]G. E. Saigbe Boley, *Liberia: The Rise and Fall of the First Republic*, London: Macmillan, 1983, p. 17.

[11]Shick, *Behold the Promised Land: A History of Afro-American Settlers in Nineteenth Century Liberia*, p. 27.

[12]Boley, p. 23. Bushrod Washington believed that this was a primary reason for colonization since he, like so many other whites prior to the 14th Amendment, did not consider free people of color U.S. citizens.

[13]Ibid Appendix I.

[14]Liebenow, *Liberia: The Quest for Democracy*, p. 19.

[15]John Hope Franklin and Alfred A. Moss, Jr., *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of Negro Americans*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1988, p. 157.

[16]Shick, *Behold the Promised Land: A History of Afro-American Settlers in Nineteenth Century Liberia*, p. 34.

[17]Ibid.

[18]Penelope Campbell, *Maryland in Africa: The Maryland State Colonization Society, 1831–1857*, Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1971, p. 11.

[19]Ibid, p. 16.

[20]Ibid, p. 17, 21.

[21]Ibid, p. 72.

[22]Ibid, p. 58.

[23]Robert A. Smith, *William V. S. Tubman: The Life and Work of an African Statesman*, Van Oitman: Amsterdam, 1966, p. 33.

[24]Campbell, *Maryland in Africa*, p. 74.

[25]Ibid, p. 75.

[26]Ibid, p. 84.

[27]Ibid, p. 112.

[28]Ibid, p. 123.

[29]Smith, *William V. S. Tubman: The Life and Work. . .*, p. 33.

[30]Harold Nelson (ed.), *Liberia: A Country Study*, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1985, p. 33.

[31]Franklin & Moss, *From Slavery to Freedom. . .*, p. 276.

[32]Ibid.

[34]D. Elwood Dunn and S. Byron Tarr, *Liberia: A National Polity in Transition*, Metuchen: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1988, p. 58.

[35]Ibid, p. 64.

[36]Ibid, p. 135.

[37]Ibid.

[38]Smith, *William V. S. Tubman: The Life and Work. . .*, p. 162.

[39]Ibid, p. 163.

[40]Liebenow, *Liberia: The Quest for Democracy*, p. 85.

[41]James Turner, "Pan–Africanism and the Black Struggle in the U.S.A." in W. Ofuatey–Kadjoe (edition), *Pan Africanism: New Directions in Strategy*, New York: University Press of America, 1986, p. 169.

[42]Ibid.

[43]Ibid, p. 180.

[44]Ibid, p.184.

[45]Franklin & Moss, *From Slavery to Freedom*, p. 320.

[46]Ibid.

[47]Turner, "Pan–Africanism. . .," p. 192.

[48]Ibid, p. 199.

Linguistics and Liberian Languages in the 1970's and 1980's: A Bibliography[1]

John Victor Singler

1. The Languages of Liberia

With the exception of Liberian English, the languages of Liberia are all part of the Niger–Congo component of the Niger–Kordofanian language family. Those found in Liberia fall into three branches: Mande, West Atlantic, and Kru. This classification is based on Greenberg's (1963) *The Languages of Africa* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press). In that study Greenberg assigns Kru to the Kwa branch but states that this affiliation is "tentative." Subsequent researchers (Vogler 1974, Bennett and Sterk 1977, Welmers 1977, and Marchese 1979, 1986) have argued that the Kru languages should be separated from Kwa. While these researchers agree that Kru is distinct from Kwa, they diverge as to whether or not it should be placed within another branch (Vogler places it within Mande, Bennett and Sterk link it to the Gur branch). For the present, the tendency has been to treat the Kru languages as their own separate and distinct branch of Niger–Congo.[2]

Within Liberia there are eight Mande languages. Welmers (1971) divides them thus:[3]

Western
- Northern
  - Manya (Mandingo)
  - Vai
- Southwestern
  - Mende
  - Bandi
  - Loma
  - Kpelle
- Eastern
  - Dan (Gio)
  - Mano

Dwyer (1973) divides Southwestern Mande further, separating Kpelle from Mende, Bandi, and Loma. (This latter three, closely related to one another, are part of what he calls Central Southwestern Mande.)

Liberia's two West Atlantic languages are Gola and Kisi. West Atlantic is an especially vast and diverse branch, and these two languages are not very close to each other. In addition to Gola and Kisi, Fula is also widely spoken in Liberia, the Fulani presence a result of massive emigration from Guinea in the 1970s.

The list of Mande and West Atlantic languages corresponds to the list of ethnic groups enumerated in Liberia's censuses from 1962 onwards. This is not so for the Kru languages. The censuses list six ethnic groups: Bassa, Belle, Dey, Grebo, Krahn, and Kru. These are ethnic terms rather than linguistic ones: Kuwaa is the name used to designate the language spoken by the Belle, and Dewoin is the name for the language of the Dey. Because the term Kru designates both a group of languages and a particular one, linguists working on the particular language that Liberians call Kru use the term "Klao", from the speakers' own term for the language, *kla`o–wi.*

From the linguistic point of view, the census designations represent cover terms for clusters of dialects or, in some cases, clusters of languages. (The term "dialect" here is a technical term: it refers to a particular variety of a language, e.g. the Jlao (Sasstown) dialect of the Klao (Kru) language.) The Institute of Liberian Languages (TILL) has carried out a series of dialect surveys of these languages. The results of their surveys indicate that it is appropriate to speak of seven Grebo languages, five Krahn languages, two Bassa languages, and two Klao (Kru) languages:

Grebo	Krahn
Glebo	Gbarzon Krahn
Barclayville	Eastern Krahn
Seaside Grebo	Glaro/Twabo
Gboloo	Sapo
Northeastern Grebo	Glio
Fopo–Bua	Bassa
E Je	Bassa
Klao	Gbee
Klao	
Tajuosohn	

(Note that, despite the political designation of Barclayville as Kru, the language of Barclayville is a Grebo language.)

All the Liberian Kru languages other than Kuwaa are Western Kru languages. Kuwaa is an isolate: that is, while its membership within the Kru branch can be demonstrated, it has no close affiliation to any other Kru language. Classifications of Western Kru identify the Guere Complex (which includes the Krahn languages) and the Grebo Complex. The placement of Dewoin and the Bassa and Klao languages with regard to these two complexes and the rest of Western Kru has yet to be established. Clearly, Dewoin's closest relative is Bassa. My own assumption, based on certain facts about the languages' tone systems, is that the Bassa languages and, therefore, Dewoin, are more closely related to the Krahn languages than they are to the Klao or Grebo languages.

Liberia's non–Niger–Congo language is Liberian English. In addition to Liberian Standard English (the Liberian variety of Standard English), there are two pidgins, Kru Pidgin English and Liberian Interior English. Kru Pidgin English is the language of the "Krumen" who worked elsewhere in West Africa and on ships from the late eighteenth century to the 1960's, and Liberian Interior English is the language developed by rubber tappers and members of the Liberian Frontier Force. A pidgin takes most of its vocabulary from the economically and politically dominant language (in this case English), and it takes most of its phonology, i.e. patterns of pronunciation, from its speakers' first languages (in this case Liberia's Niger–Congo languages); however, it has its own syntax. Apart from Settler English (discussed below), most Liberian English spoken today falls somewhere between the two pidgins and Liberian Standard. Singler (1984) uses the creole–continuum model to show that, for any portion of the grammar, it is possible to establish a chain of intermediate varieties that will span the distance from pidgin to Liberian Standard. In this model, the speech of an individual is represented by a range (rather than a point) on the continuum, reflecting the fact that individuals adjust their speech according to the speech circumstances.

Particularly at its furthest from Liberian Standard, Settler English is a variety distinct from the rest of Liberian English. This is so even though Settler English has shared much with the rest of Liberian English. Even in the light of national integration, the Settler English furthest from Liberian Standard—that spoken by elderly Settlers in isolated settlements—perhaps is still best characterized as a transplanted North American variety.

2. Works on Liberian Languages

A. Ingemann and Holsoe

In the 1970's two bibliographies appeared of works, both published and unpublished, pertaining to Liberian languages. Frances Ingemann's "A Bibliography of Liberian Languages" (1978) concerned itself with articles and

books written about Liberia's languages. Svend Holsoe's (1971, 1976) far-reaching *A Bibliography on Liberia* contained an extensive listing not only of materials about Liberian languages but also of materials written in these languages. Given the comprehensive nature of these works, I have limited the present study to work done on Liberian languages in the 1970's and 1980's. It is intended to supplement rather than duplicate Ingemann's and Holsoe's work.

B. Literacy and Translation

From the 1820's onward, the study of Liberian languages has been preponderantly a missionary venture. The Missionaries' goal was the translation of the Bible. If this translation was going to have practical impact, there had to be people who were able to read in the language in question. Thus, in addition to their efforts at translation, the missionaries also had to teach people how to establish literacy programs and develop materials for new readers.

In 1969 the Lutheran Bible Translators, an American-based organization, established The Institute for Liberian Languages (TILL). At present, TILL is at work on the following languages:

Bandi	Krahn (Gbarzon)
Gola	Kuwaa
Grebo (E Je)	Vai
Kisi	

In addition to TILL, there have been a number of other church-related projects on translation and scripture use. In particular, in the 1970's and 1980's there have been the following:

LANGUAGE	MISSIONARY GROUP
Bassa	Mid-Liberian Baptist Mission World Evangelism Crusade/United Liberian Inland Church Christian Reformed Mission
Dan	World Evangelism Crusade/United Liberian Inland Church
Grebo (Gboloo)	New Tribes Mission
Klao (Tajuosohn)	United Methodist Church New Tribes Mission

Kpelle	Lutheran Church in Liberia
Krahn (Eastern: Tchien) (Glaro)	Assemblies of God New Tribes Mission
Loma	Lutheran Church in Liberia
Mano	World Evangelism Crusade/United Liberian Inland Church

(The New Testaments completed in the 1970's and 1980's include ones in Bassa, Dan, E Je Grebo, Kuwaa, Loma, and Mano. A Kpelle New Testament was completed in 1967.)

In addition the Sudan Interior Mission has been engaged in work on literacy and literature in Bandi and Gola. (Extensive work has been done on literacy and translation on Mende in Sierra Leone; the possibility exists that work has been done in neighboring countries on other languages that are spoken in Liberia as well.)

C. Academic Interest in Liberian Languages

Scholarly interest in Liberian languages has not been extensive. Perhaps the most conspicuous exception has been the study of the Vai script and its use: Scribner and Cole's *The Psychology of Literacy* (1981) has attracted a wide readership. Apart from that, however, Liberian languages have not been widely studied. A reflection of that is the small number of dissertations on Liberian languages. Apart from two dissertations that dealt with Mande languages more generally (Long 1971, Bimson 1978) and one on Kru languages (Marchese 1979), there were three dissertations in the 1970's: Dwyer (1973), Luckau (1975), and Brietborde (1977). In the 1980's there have been only two: Singler (1984) and Childs (1988). The list of authors of these works includes no Liberians, a reflection of the fact that by and large Liberians have not undertaken work on Liberian languages. Instead, the academic approach has paralleled the missionary approach, one in which a non–Liberian with an interest in a particular Liberian language works with speakers of that language.

3. The Present Work

In presenting articles and books on Liberian languages, I will focus on three topics: Liberia's Niger–Congo languages, Liberian English, and language use in Liberia.

The discussion of Niger–Congo languages will be presented by language grouping: Kru, then Mande, then West Atlantic. Since national borders are not linguistic ones, many Liberian languages are also languages of neighboring countries. In the case of Mende, it is widely spoken in Sierra Leone, and a considerable body of linguistic literature exists on it, all of it apparently written on the basis of research done with Sierra Leonean Mende speakers. In

general, I have attempted to include all references to a particular language. Something needs to be said, however, in this regard about Manya (Mandingo), Krahn, and Grebo. In the case of Manya, it is part of an extensive cluster of Northern Mande languages, and I have limited discussion as to what is spoken in Liberia. The Krahn and Grebo languages are part of "complexes" of languages spoken in Liberia and La Côte d' Ivoire, with "Krahn" and "Grebo" referring to the Liberian components. Marchese (1979:13) suggests that "le conglomérat krahn–guéré . . . [est] une série de dialectes qui appartiennent en fait à une seule langue." Even though the TILL linguistics' assessment that "Krahn" is a cover term for five distinct languages might seem to gainsay Marchese's assertion, her point remains valid: that is, the Krahn languages are part of a larger cluster of closely related languages. The same holds true for the Grebo languages.

Endnotes

[1]I am grateful to Karen Hasskamp and Sandra Bata–Green for making the resources of The Institute for Liberian Languages available to me.

[2]Fante, widely spoken in Liberia, is unquestionably Kwa. However, it is not ordinarily considered to be a Liberian language.

Greenberg, following Welmers, posits the first break within Niger-Congo as being one that separates Mande from the rest of the languages. Greenberg then posits the second break as being the one that splits West Atlantic from the rest. These two aspects of Greenberg's classification of languages within Niger-Congo have been widely accepted. In contrast, there continues to be much debate about the rest of his organization of Niger-Congo. In particular, linguists have debated the relationship of Kwa (including Yoruba and Igbo) to Benue-Congo (including the Bantu languages). Various reclassifications are being proposed, reclassifications that would alter the position of Kru languages within the schema.

[3]In Welmers's original designation, the basic division was between "Northern-Western" and "Southern-Eastern" (rather that "Western" and "Eastern"). Inasmuch as the "Southwestern" languages are more closely related to the "Northern" languages than to the "Southern-Eastern" ones, Welmers's designations—though geographically appropriate—were linguistically confusing and have been adjusted.

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The designation "(TILL)" after an unpublished entry indicates that the library of The Institute of Liberian Languages in Monrovia contains a copy of the manuscript; I have not ordinarily used this designation for TILL manuscripts themselves.

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LANGUAGE USE AND LANGUAGE POLICY

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Robert Kappel and Werner Korte, eds., *A Bibliography of Books and Articles on Liberia as Edited in German-Speaking Countries since 1960* . Liberia Working Group Papers No. 3. Bremen, Germany, 1989. 53 pp. Index of Authors and Subjects. ISBN 3-926771-02-X.

Robert Kappel and Werner Korte, these industrious scholar-investigators of the Liberia Working Group in Bremen, Germany, have compiled a very useful and informative bibliography of writings on Liberia produced in the German-speaking countries of Austria, Federal Republic of Germany, German Democratic Republic, Lichtenstein, and Switzerland. The editors' (who are also authors in their own right) compilation centers on works published presumably since 1960 although, in fact, there is at least one entry by Münnich on p. 10 stemming from 1956. The Foreword also refers to the period "since the 1960s." If this statement is correct, a convenient starting point for this bibliography might have been a single year rather than a decade. In any case, this important bibliography supplements nicely Svend E. Holsoe's *A Bibliography on Liberia, Parts I - III* (1971-76). The editors plan a second updated edition of the bibliography about the year 2000.

The range of topics covered in the categories books, statistical studies, Ph.D. dissertations, and articles is considerable. Fortunately the inclusion of key-word citations helps direct inquiry into the desired subject area. Fortuitously also, of the fifty-eight listed books, twenty are in English. The American reader might experience minor difficulties with the sub-categorization of the listed articles; for instance, there is no "Art" category. Given the prominence of art as a means of social control in traditional Liberian society, this is an unfortunate omission. Thus articles by E. Fischer and H. Himmelheber surface in the sections "Anthropology" and "Culture." An article by T. Höllmann under "Sociology" might conveniently have been listed in an "Art" section. Essentially what appears in the sections "Craft" and "Culture" could also be subsumed under "Art."

Some other entries are also puzzling. Why, for instance, is Robert Kappel's article on Liberia after the 1980 coup (p. 30) under "Economy/ Finance/ Industry" rather than under "History" or "Politics/Government" or why is it not double-listed ? There is also no separate section on forestry and geology. As a result, articles about forestry appear in the "Agriculture" section and those related to geology show up under the heading "Geography." The category "Resistance," expressing perhaps the editors' interest in this area, contains articles that might well have been put in the "Politics/Government" section.

The second edition of this bibliography may include a more refined sublisting procedure.

The final nine unnumbered pages contain a very helpful index of authors and subjects.

In , this is an important library and research tool. My minor criticisms should not detract from the value of the work. This critique is made to ease inquiry by the American reader. In the future the editors might consider adding any works in German about Liberia even if they have not been published in one of the five countries listed above.

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Ralph T. Milligan, *Bolahun* (New York, Vantage Press Inc., 1989, 168 pp., $15.85).

In *Bolahun* an American Episcopal priest gives an account of his life and work at the Liberian Holy Cross Mission in 1948–49 amongst the Bandi, Kissi, Loma and Mandingo peoples.

The author uses the Introduction to review the necessity and importance of Christian missions, emphasizing his convictions with successive stanzas of the Choral "Go labor on, who dares stand idle". A concise note on beginning of the Holy Cross Mission in 1922 leads to a description of his own interest and commitment to a two–year contract with the Mission, his voyage on a freighter from New York to Freetown, the two day journey on a narrow guage railroad in Sierra Leone followed by a long day's hike into Bolahun, the central village of the Mission network. The physical description of the village illustrates the evangelistic and educational goals of the American Order of the Holy Cross and of their English Anglican colleagues of the Convent of the Holy Name.

As he describes his immediate work assignments, to instruct village men not yet Christians, to assume responsibility in the education of tribal evangelists and siminarians, the reader becomes aware of the extent and complexity of work done in the first twenty five years of the Mission in establishing working relations with four different sets of tribal leaders, and in preparing course outlines and content at multiple levels in three languages for men and women who had no written language and virtually no English. The tremendous effort was still underway in developing elementary schools for boys and girls as well as a new high school.

Suddenly the young priest is confronted with the mysteries of the secret Leopard Society and its "medicine" necessitating human sacrifice and used as a means to assert power. In following the case of a "lost child", he becomes aware of the powers of evil and of the tense relation between tribal and Government officials, of the disparity of their values and methods as well as his own. This conflict and the movement towards the defeat of the power of the "medicine" form a central theme for the remainder of his story. He reports brief contacts with the District Commissioner who represents the Government in the Provinces and to whom the tribal Paramount chiefs report. The Provinical Commissioner (a devout communicant of the church who attends early Mass at the Mission) became involved in the case of the "lost child", although the chiefs implicated in the Leopard Society by the local " Sasswood" tests had been sent to Monrovia for final judgemnt, much remained for on site resolution by the Provincial Commissioner.

A hodge–podge series of anecdotes follows, ranging from preaching patrols in new tribal areas, description of driver ants, the management of his physical infirmities including use of the new drug penicillin, Christmans celebrations ceremonies associated with baptism, and the problems of alcohol, gambling and women in chapters entitled "Wickedness in High Places". There is a detailed description of the Mission's program in Evangelism providing more historical background with many liturgical details.

President W.V.S. Tubman's visit to the District and his time at Bolahun (a very satisfying one) served to re–install those Bandi chiefs who had been judged in Monrovia as not guilty of involvement with the Leopard Society "medicine" and human sacrifice. Many matters of importance to local personnel were discussed with the President in Council, such as the marriage laws, construction contracts, the misue of government labor, and the upcoming legislation against distillation of cane juice.

The final chapter again related to the problem of evil and the power of "medicine" when he met the newly restored Bandi Paramount chief during a preaching patrol and his suspicion of the deep evil of that chief were reaffirmed.

Bolahun appears to be a recent revision of the 1948–49 diary and private letters written by this young priest during his engagement with the Holy Cross Mission and as such reflects the personal attitudes and practices of many Christian missions of that period. Given the advances in socio–anthropology and theological practice in the past forty years, it is unfortunate that more sensitive editing was not used in the preparation for publication of these private notes. It is not appropriate to chuckle over the stilted English vocabulary of the Liberian, many of whom were fluent in three or more languages having no wirtten form as they struggle with the complexities of English and its vastly different associated culture, particularly when most of the American staff lacked even a modicum of those African languages. The paternalism of the Mission evident in this book, an almost universal practice of Christian missions in the first half of the century, is no longer tolerated in practice or in print. Such editing would have enabled a wider acceptance of the publication. (Additionally there is an average of one copy error for every two pages of the final product).

It is worth noting by students of this area that this is the second time *Bolahun* has been used in the title of a book on this Mission. The first, *Bolahun, an African Adventure* written by Dr. Werner Junge and published by G.P. Putnam Sons in 1952, recounts his life and work in Bolahun during the early thirties as the Mission physician and indicates a far more egalitarian relationship with the Liberians.

Although Father Milligan's *Bolahun* provides an instructive and precious view of the Mission in the late forties, it gives no indication of the significant contributions which the Mission has made to Liberia. Young people from

Bandi, Kissi and Loma tribes have been prepared for responsible positions in Liberian society, from government agricultural extension agents to professors and presidents of universities, from public health nurse midwives to director of the National Health Service, members of the Cabinet and the current Vice–President of the country. Scholars of the impact of Christian missions in Liberia will need to allocate this material to an appropriate position in their studies.

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Moran, Mary H. (1990) *Civilized women: Gender and Prestige in Southeastern Liberia.* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press.)

This book is a unique and significant contribution to Liberian scholarship, particularly in the areas of gender and status stratification. While this anthropological study focuses on the "connections between cultural construction of gender and other means of social rankings" among the Glebo of Southeastern Liberia, the findings have important implications for social stratification in Liberia more generally. In this review, I will first comment briefly on each of the seven chapters of the book. Next, I will critically consider the central issues that the study addresses.

After elaborating on the theoretical framework that guides the study in chapter one, Chapter two examines the traditional Glebo status system. This tion shows that the traditional Glebo status system is of the dual–sex type with three primary sources of power and prestige: gender, relative age, and position in the formal political structure.

Chapter three provides a historical account of the origin of the concept "civilize" and an interpretation of the meaning of this concept in Glebo usuage. The concept of "civilization" (denoting various aspects of Westernization and modernization) was initially introduced to the Glebo by European traders and then later reinforced by settlers from the New World and Episcopal missionaries. Initially, the concept "civilization" appeared to be a single–sex system of ranking which both men and women could attain through formal education and "proper" training in "civilized" ways.

But, the marginal position of the Christian–educated Glebo — forbidden from full assimilation into the local Maryland settler community, despite the superior education of a number of them, and unwilling or forbidden by Episcopal Church doctrine from participating in those practices (i.e., ritual sacrifices, the consulting of oracles, maintenance of community medicines, and the prosecution of witchcraft through trial by ordeal) which would ensure high status for them in traditional Glebo society — led them to establish a place for themselves. And in the process, was laid the foundation for the present "civilized/native" dichotomy among the Glebo. However, the "uneasy fit" between a single–sex system like "civilization" and a dual–sex system like that of the Glebo apparently led (or is leading) the Glebo to merge this area of prestige with gender to the point of constructing it differently for men and women; just as Glebo society merges age with gender in the formulation: "Men are always older than women." This formulation indicates that gender overrides age and other statuses.

Despite status differences, there is considerable cooperation between "civilized" and "native" Glebo women, as noted in Chapter four, especially in the area of child fosterage (wardship). Chapter four further describes the research setting, discusses the ways in which the concepts "civilize" and "native" are applied to residential areas and households, and examines women 's economic strategies .

The consideration of women 's economic strategies and roles is further elaborated in Chapter five as it presents the roles of "civilized" women, "native" farmers, and what appears to be an emerging stratum in the "civilized/ native" dichotomy, namely, "native" marketers. The author notes that economic independence, among other things, sets native Glebo women apart from their "civilized" counterparts, who are economically dependent upon their husbands (for those who are married) . Chapter Six continues this elaboration on the interdependent and collaborative relationships between "civilized" and "native" women, especially in "upholding valued community standards." That is to say, while playing distinctive status defined roles, "civilized" and "native" women cooperate to discharge their obligations to the deceased at funeral ceremonies.

The final chapter presents a summary of the results of the study "as a framework for understanding the differential effects of status distinctions on women and men. "

Briefly, Moran addresses three principal issues: "the intersection of gender and other forms of prestige, the constraining nature of these prestige categories, and the differential impact of prestige distinctions on women and men. "

Some of the generalizations or statements concerning these issues raise some concern for me. For example, in demonstrating the differential impact of prestige distinctions on women and men, the author notes that "a man with four or five years of formal education who is employed as a storeboy may well be considered civilized while a market woman with an equal amount of schooling is not" (P.170). I assume that the implication here is that the young man in this example is accorded the higher status "civilized" primarily because of his gender. But is that really the case? Or, is this young man accorded higher status primarily because the occupation in which he is engaged — storeboy — apparently has a higher status than marketing? If one turns the example around, would a woman with an equal amount of education who works in a store as a (storegirl?), wearing the Western dress and maintaining other symbols of "civilization," be considered "civilized"? I think that the answer will be in the affirmative, especially if the young man in the example above is considered "civilized."

Again, while I agree with the author that prestige categories like the civilized/native dichotomy may have a somewhat more constraining effect on

women than on men, I think that it is rather too strong to suggest from this that "Men acquire civilized status for life and though they may experience downward social and economic mobility... they do not return to the status of native" (P.4). I don't think that such a statement holds generally true for Glebo men, or for that matter for Liberian men. Thus, the author's further statement that "... women, unlike men, can slip from civilized to native status by engaging in the "wrong" type of work" (P.169) is again questionable. I think that a "civilized" man (Glebo or other Liberian) who tly abandons the "civilized" way of life and persistently engages in the "wrong" types of work like subsistent farming and carrying wood on the head would equally slip down to "native" status. And it would equally be said of him, "Poor fella, he used to be civilized, oh." Furthermore, I think that either a "civilized" man or woman could temporarily descend to the "native" status, later acquire white-collar employment and assume the "civilized" way of life, and rise back up to "civilized" status.

These critical comments pertain to a much larger question: Of the many other statuses which converge to produce the status "civilization", which, if any, is the most important? Once this question is explicitly addressed, the answer can be used to help resolve some of my concerns, conceptually, at least. I tend to think that the "civilized/native" dichotomy which forms the basis of the Liberian prestige system is largely predicated on occupational status. Moran (1990: P.xii) seems to partly concur with this suggestion when she notes that "prestige of occupation and social connections continue to count more toward an individual's status than does actual wealth . . . ." Once this position is generally accepted, then we can more realistically proceed to address questions like: Is the "civilized" status of Glebo (and for that matter Liberian) women more tenuous primarily because of their gender, or because of women 's more tenuous position in the high status occupational structure? While the "uneasy fit" between a single-sex system like civilization and a dual-sex system of prestige like that of the Glebo may explain some of these apparent contradictions, as the author clearly notes, the issue concerning the primacy of occupational status or gender in this context nonetheless remains pertinent, even among the Glebo .

Finally, it is unclear what the author means by suggesting that "marketing and subsistent farming are activities in which both civilized and native men, as well as civilized women, do not engage" (P. 5). If this means that these category of people do not explicitly participate in marketing, this is largely correct. But, if it means that native men do not participate in subsistent farming, I think that is incorrect. The author' s later statement that "men help clear the fields at the g of the agricultural cycle . . . felling and burning the trees and constructing fences around the perimeter of the field to keep out

rodents and other pests " (P . 28) seems to attest to the participation of native Glebo men in subsistent farming.

These critical comments do not (and should not) detract from a thoroughly researched and well–written book, which will make a lasting contribution to Liberian and anthropological/sociological scholarship. The finding that "civilized" status, largely a status of economic dependency, is not only ranked higher, but also one to which many Glebo (and for that matter Liberian) women aspire for their daughters, has troubling implications for national development and economic self–sufficiency. In other words, conferring a lower status, "native," on the producers and marketers of Liberia's basic commodities, especially rice, is an attitude that seems quite inimical to economic self–sufficiency, given Liberia's less industrialized position. In short, the findings of this study seem to have far–reaching implications for Liberian society. The author's engaging style makes this book a must reading!

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Recent Publications and Theses

African Women, A General Bibliography, 1976–1985. African Special Bibliographic Series, No. 9. Greenwood Press. 1989. 354 pages. 0–313–26607–7. BAK/ $45.00

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Gebremariam, Yilma. *A multidimensional analysis of regional integration and cooperation: The case of the Economic Community of West African States.* Ph.D., thesis, U. of Southern California, 1989. DA50A:2578

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Hamidian–Rad, Pirouz. *A multisector dynamic optimization model for Liberian economic development.* Ph.D., thesis, Catholic U. of American, 1989. 162pp. DA50A:1392.8917024.

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Kwarteng, Charles Ownsu. "Challenges of regional economic cooperation among the ECOWAS states of West Africa." Ph.D. thesis, U. of Pittsburgh, 1989. 364pp. DA50A:2232.8924306

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Nyong'O, Peter Anyang', "Popular Alliances and the State in Liberia, 1980-85" in Peter Anyang Nyong'O, *Popular Struggles for Democracy in Africa*. The U. N. Univ. Zed Books Ltd. London, 1987 pp. 209-267

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W yake, Marina, *A World In Shadow: The Free Black in Antebellum South Carolina*, Columbia S. C., Tri Centennial Studies #7, University of the South Carolina Press 1973, 219pp

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Zetterström, Kjell, "Die Po llschaft in Liberia", Ur, ed. Männerbande Männerbünde, Cologne, 1990 pp. 275–282

NEWS AND NOTES

Twenty Second Annual Meeting of The Liberian Studies Association

The 22nd Annual Conference of the Liberian Studies Association convened March 29–31, 1990 at the School of International Training of The Experiment in International Living in Brattleboro, Vermont. The theme was LIBERIA: RESTROSPECT AND PROSPECT. Panels included The Military in Liberia, The Current Liberian Situation, Liberia and Education, The Mande in Liberia, as well as a number of special papers and presentations, notably a presentation by Dr. Emmet Dennis of Rutgers University on "Parasitic Hazards of Irrigated Rice Farming in Liberia."

The 23rd Annual Conference (1991) is scheduled to be held at California State University at Los Angeles.

Banks Operating in Liberia 1990

	YEAR	
1. Citibank	1940s	Subsidiary of Citicorp.
2. International Trust Company (ITC)	1950s	Founded by retd. U.S. Gen. George Olmstead as part of Liberian flag-of-convenience open registry program. Acquired by Arlington, Va.-based USLICO in 1987/88.
3. Tradevco	1960s	Subsidiary of Milan-based Mediobanca.
4. Liberian Bank for Development & Investment (LBDI)	1960s	Jointly owned by Government of Liberia, International Finance Corporation (World Bank affiliate), multinationals and private individuals. Originally set up as medium term lender, now venturing into commercial banking.
5. BCCI	1974	Subsidiary of Asian-owned international bank.
6. National Housing & Savings Bank (NHSB)	1976	Government-owned.
7. Liberia Finance & Trust Company (LFTC)	1977	Defunct in all but name. CEO is former Liberian Citibank staffer, C.T.O. King III.
8. Agricultural & Cooperative Development Bank (ACDB)	1978	Government-owned bank, now virtually insolvent.
9. Meridien Bank	1983	Part of Greco-Zambian industrialist Sardanis' ITM empire. Acquired some of

		Chase Manhattan Bank (Monrovia)'s assets.
10. Eurobank	1987	Messrs. Reynolds (American) and Trombetta (Italian, former G.M. of Tradevco and Maridien) are the visible faces.
11. First American United Bank	1988	Headed by William Platt (American), a former ITC executive.
12. Rovia Bank	1989	Headed by Charles Greene, former Governor of the National Bank of Liberia and Clifford Flemister, a naturalized Liberian of American origin.
13. First Merchant Bank	1989	Owned by Indian nationals. Headed by Edwin Goll, former staffer of Chase (Monrovia).
14. First Commercial Investment Bank	1990	Headed by David Vinton, former President of LBDI, and Edwin Cooper formerly of ITC.

DOC

Liberia: Flight from Terror
Testimony of Abuses in Nimba County [Liberia]

An Africa Watch Report, April 1990*

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(The Editor)

I. Introduction

A small group of rebel insurgents attacked the Liberian border town of Butuo in late December 1989, killing an undetermined number of soldiers and immigration officials. The government of Liberia responded to the attack with a show of force, sending two battalions to Nimba County, where Butuo is located.[1] The army used brutal counterinsurgency tactics in its efforts to crush the rebellion, tely killing civilians, raping women, burning villages and looting. Most of the victims of the army abuses were of the Gio and Mano ethnic groups, who traditionally inhabit Nimba County.

The rebel insurgents initially targeted soldiers and local government officials, but later killed several members of the Krahn ethnic group, in retaliation for the army massacres (General Samuel Doe, the head of state, is Krahn). They also killed at least seven Mandingos for allegedly informing the government about their activities.

Over 160,000 people fled the violence into neighboring Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire, where they have ethnic and family ties.[2] Another 135,000, according to the United Nations Disaster Relief Organization (UNDRO), are displaced within Nimba or have fled to other counties and Monrovia, the Liberian capital city, leaving large areas of the county deserted and the population depleted.

The situation is reminiscent of 1985, when hundreds of Gio and Mano soldiers and civilians were killed by government soldiers in the aftermath of an abortive coup attempt by former General Thomas Qwiwonkpa, also from Nimba. Qwiwonkpa had been one of the original 17–man junta who seized power in 1980. He served as Commanding General until October 1983, when General Doe began to view him as a possible rival and attempted to demote him. Subsequent allegations against Qwiwonkpa forced him into exile in the United States. He returned to Africa two years later and attempted, unsuccessfully, to overthrow Doe, only to be captured and killed. In the

aftermath of the coup, Doe's army loyalists engaged in bloody reprisals against real and suspected opponents. Most of those targeted were Mano and Gio soldiers and civilians.

Africa Watch visited the Côte d'Ivoire in late February and conducted interviews with refugees from the Mano, Gio and Krahn ethnic groups. At the end of March there were 63,000 refugees in the area bordering Liberia. The interviews were conducted in the villages of Kpantuopleu, Binta, Glan–Houye, and Gapleu in the Danane p ; and the villages of Klaon and Kpabli in the Toulepleu prefecture. The refugees are scattered in approximately 80 villages along the border in the Danane and Toulepleu prefectures. All spoke of a deep longing to return home, but said they were not sure they would ever be able to do so. They described the hardship of living in unfamiliar surroundings, exacerbated by the fact that often they had to sleep in shifts, because of a lack of houses. Many were forced to sleep in the open. But they said that any hardship in Cote d'Ivoire was infinitely preferable to the terror which had caused their flight.

II. Background

April 12, 1990 was the tenth anniversary of the coup that brought General Samuel Doe to power. Doe's ten years in power have been characterized by a wide range of abuses, including extrajudicial executions of civilians and soldiers, torture, arbitrary arrests, detention without trial, convictions on false charges after trials that lack due process, constraints on freedom of association, a judiciary subordinate to the executive and the suppression of press freedom.

The present conflict erupted between December 24 and December 26, 1989, when a small group of rebel insurgents attacked the border town of Butuo, killing a number of soldiers and immigration officials. The attack at Butuo was apparently designed to procure arms for the rebels, who fought initially with a variety of weapons, including knives and machetes. Additional small bands of rebels are alleged to have previously infiltrated Liberia and attempted to reach predesignated points, where they hoped sympathetic soldiers would either join the insurgency or provide weapons. According to a report in Jeune Afrique, the attack on Butuo had not been previously planned, but information about the arrests of a number of their colleagues in Monrovia created pressure on the rebels to acquire arms.[3]

According to reliable reports, information about a rebel presence, prior to the attack at Butuo, was first given by members of the Mandingo ethnic group living in Nimba, who, in mid– r, reported suspicious activity to Nimba government officials and to the Minister of Interior (himself a Mandingo) in mid–December.[4] The reports were discounted by both the Minister and the Superintendent of Nimba County. In a statement reported in the local Daily

Observer, on December 20, then-Superintendent Daniels assured Vice-President Harry Moniba that the citizens of Nimba would not "subvert the government." He also appealed to the central government to exercise restraint when it heard "false alarms" from Nimba. Both the Minister and the Superintendent were subsequently dismissed by Doe for failing to alert the government to rebel activity. Superintendent Daniels, a member of the Mano ethnic group, was replaced by Jackson Paye, a Krahn.

For the most part, the initial attempts by the rebels to acquire arms from sympathetic soldiers appear to have been unsuccessful. A small number of men reached Monrovia, only to be arrested or forced to escape when they were unable to implement plans for acquiring arms. The arrest of three men suspected of being rebels may have led to the secret executions in January of at least two military officers. The three men, Samuel Dahn, Augustine Gonkanu and George Nuahn allegedly confessed their involvement in the insurgency, described training received in Libya, and implicated Lt. Monroe Railey Sayenneh of the Bomi Hills military detachment and Mayor Gaye of Camp Schiefflin, who were subsequently arrested. Africa Watch has been contacted by relatives of the two men, who say they have not been able to trace their whereabouts and presume that they are dead.

Several of the rebels crossed over into Guinea, only to be expelled later. General Conte has adopted a hard-line stance with regard to the Liberian rebels, consistent with his expulsion two years earlier of a number of dissidents from Nimba who had sought refuge there. Informed observers believe that President Conte is concerned that the overthrow of the Doe regime could encourage attempts by those with grievances against his own government. In addition, he is engaged in negotiations with Doe concerning future mining of the iron-ore rich range of mountains which are located in Guinea on the other side of the almost depleted Liberian Nimba range. An agreement would allow Guinea to utilize the railroad left in place by LAMCO, a Swedish-American-Liberian consortium whose concession rights expired in 1989.[5] Without the use of the LAMCO railroad to carry the ore to the Liberian port of Buchanan, Guinea would be faced with prohibitive costs of transportation.

The rebels do not appear to have been organized under a central command. Rather, reports suggest that Charles Taylor, a former government official under Doe, was instrumental in organizing and providing training for some of the rebels. He subsequently sought to unify the scattered forces, giving them the umbrella name, the National Patriotic Front. Taylor does appear to have an undetermined number of men under his direct control and is responsible for the logistics and the provision of arms to those men. Others engaged in the fighting are loosely linked to Taylor through their common objectives. They include men and women who joined the insurgency after the army massacres

of Gio and Mano civilians. A recent article in the Washington Post described the present situation as "a burgeoning uprising that has become the greatest challenge to President Samuel K. Doe in his ten years in power."[6]

Clearly this is no longer only an incursion, as many of those now engaged in attacks against the army and other targets are villagers who have taken up arms either to protect themselves or to retaliate for the murders of their relatives. Familiar with the terrain, they and the insurgents have been able to mount a serious challenge to the Doe regime's control of Nimba County.

The county has been deeply affected. A curfew was imposed in early January, requiring residents to remain indoors from dusk to dawn. The most recent accounts tell of the closure of a major portion of the county highway, putting further limits on the operations of a number of logging companies operating in the forests of Nimba. Several of those companies had already virtually ceased their activities, due to the fighting. On April 6, the rebels attacked the train used to carry iron ore from the Nimba mines to the port of Buchanan. Three passengers, including a British Journalist, were held briefly and then released. The attack disrupted the transport of iron ore, and two weeks later, the expatriate workers at the mines were evacuated.

Due to the flight of Mano and Gio women, most markets in Nimba are now run by Mandingo women who close their stalls in the early afternoon in order to be home before the curfew. Lebanese shopowners also close in the afternoon to reduce the chances of being harassed by soldiers. A recent robbery attack by a soldier on a Lebanese woman was protested by Lebanese shopowners, who closed their shops until guarantees were given by the army authorities that further ent would be dealt with severely.[7]

The tension is not limited to Nimba. In Monrovia, there is no formal curfew, but few people venture out after dark. Fear of the military was exacerbated by the brutal killing on January 4 of Robert Phillips, an engineer who was briefly active in opposition politics and was tried for treason after the 1985 coup attempt. Although several witnesses are said to have seen men in uniform leaving Phillips' home on the night of his murder, no official investigation is being conducted to find the perpetrators.

In another incident attributed to the security forces, the offices of the Daily Observer, an independent newspaper which has been under constant attack by the government, were severely burned in the early hours of March 17. The security guard at the offices reported four armed men setting fire to the building, after warning him that "this will be the last time *they* will publish our secrets." This is the second act of arson against the *Observer*, the first having occurred in 1986.

In response to local and international pressure, and perhaps in an effort to divert attention from the major problems his regime is encountering, General Doe recently announced the release of a number of prisoners, including Gabriel Kpolleh and Caephar Mabande, leaders of the banned Liberia Unification Party. Kpolleh, Mabande and eight others had been convicted on charges of conspiring to overthrow the government and were sentenced to ten years imprisonment. Their trial had lacked due process and in , the Supreme Court granted them a new trial. In addition to the 10 political prisoners, the government released 65 persons who had been convicted on charges ranging from murder to theft. The government also announced the lifting of the bans on Radio ELCM (the radio station of the Catholic Church), and two newspapers, *Footprints* and the *Sun Times*. Radio ELCM had been banned since June 15, 1989, after a news story about alleged deaths at the Monrovia football stadium during a e. The two newspapers had been closed on several occasions, most recently since April, 1988, after stories deemed critical of government policies.

III. Abuses by the Liberian Armed Forces

The refugees began to flee into Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire soon after the government sent reinforcements into Nimba, at the end of December, to crush the insurgency. The soldiers, a combination of troops from the Special Anti-Terrorist Unit, an elite force, and the 1st infantry battalion from the Schiefflin barracks, brought in mounted machine guns and opened fire on civilians in a number of villages. As they moved from village to village, they shot people indi tely and burned huts and houses, after stripping them of their contents.

Africa Watch received testimony from refugees in the Cote d'Ivoire which clearly indicates that the government forces targeted people of the Gio and Mano ethnic groups, killing them in retaliation for the rebel attacks and burning their villages to prevent them from being used as safe havens by the rebel forces. In several accounts by the refugees, the soldiers are said to have told villagers that they had "come to finish what they started in 1985", a reference to the bloody aftermath of a failed coup attempt by former Peoples' Redemption Council member, Gen. Thomas Qwiwonkpa.[8] Qwiwonkpa was from Nimba and government forces killed hundreds of Gio and Mano soldiers and civilians in retribution for the attempted coup. The refugees fled to Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire, the majority leaving most of their possessions behind.

Africa Watch received testimony of the following abuses by government soldiers.

Extra–Judicial Killings

Several refugees were terviewed in Kpantuopleu, Siapla George Tuazama told his town of Bahn in late January, firing into the air. the community leaders and asked for money. Tuazama h say "If you don't pay, we will kill you!" He then saw d kill three men, whom he named as Nuahn Poquie, the), Nuahn Quoimie, a town quarter–chief (in his late 50's) y, also a town quarter–chief (age unknown).[9]

Many refugees spoke of relatives and friends being killed, "just because they were Gio or Mano." Ex–lieutenant Hargana Pouden came from Karnplay, where he said soldiers killed his uncle and his friend:

> I lost an uncle and a friend. My uncle, McGill Kerle and my friend, John Nuneh, were both killed by Krahn soldiers because they were Gio. No–one is safe from the army, if they are Gio, not even old people. If you and I go to Liberia now, they will put you to one side and then take me and kill me.

Old Man Bhar Sebo underscored the ethnic component to the conflict when he talked about the soldiers killing three old men in his home town of Lapeah. He said their names were Quemie Qruah, Louah Qruah and Woumen Pea and he wondered what they could have done to deserve being killed, besides being Gio.

For some refugees, there will never be peace. One interviewee described herself as "in distress and too sad to think about the future." Meah Boapea had been in Kpantuopleu since early February, after fleeing atrocities by government forces in her home town of Glalay. She recounted hiding in the bush and seeing her mother, still alive, being wrapped in a gasoline–soaked mattress and burned to death. She said she continued to hear gunfire for a long time after she went deeper into the bush, and presumes that other people were also killed.

Cooper Martor came from Boa–Kparlay and told of coming to Nimba from Monrovia in early January, only to "meet the trouble in my home–town." He said he was forced to sleep in the bush for three days while he tried to reach the clan headquarters at Bonglay. He arrived there on January 17, in the wake of soldiers who had killed five people, whose bodies remained where they had been shot. Cooper was unable to name the dead persons but described them as two old women, one middle–aged woman, an old man and a little girl. The army soon returned and the villagers fled, running past the burning villages of Tonwia and Kparnlay before they crossed into the Côte d'Ivoire.

Daddah , a teacher at Kahnplay Elementary School, spoke of fleeing Kahnplay for the relative safety of Pealal. He said when he first heard gunfire, he thought it was the army, since "they used to shoot into the air when they were happy or drunk." The shooting got louder and then he saw a soldier running, without shoes or gun. then ran to Pealal, where he met many people from Kahnplay. People continued to come and told him that rebels had entered the town, but that they had not killed anyone. remained in Pealal for several days. On the fourth day, more Kahnplay residents arrived. These arrivals were eyewitnesses to killings by the army, which had pursued the rebels. They told of the killings of Laurence Flomo, Bishop Gono (an old man), Benjamin Tuo, Patrick Lealah, William Duo and "Lean." The last four were young men, ranging in age from 14 to 23. They had been on their way from Zoktarpa to Zorgowee and they ran into soldiers coming from the LAMCO mining concession area. Patrick Lealah, a soldier himself but in civilian clothes, introduced himself. However, the soldiers allegedly told him that he must have come to help the rebels and they would show him no mercy. They then ordered the four to lie down and shot them in the back. said:

> When I heard this from the people who saw it happen, I was afraid and I came to the Cote d'Ivoire. I also heard that the soldiers brought a caterpillar (tractor) and used it to bury the four men.

Isaac Deemie, from Zeanlay, described seeing soldiers enter his home town and begin to shoot at people. He told Africa Watch:

> I was in town when the soldiers came and I saw them shoot my brother when he tried to run out of a burning house. My brother was called Henry Deemie and he was about 28 years old.

He also told of the soldiers arresting and tying up another brother, Yormie Deemie, who was the town chief. However, they later released him and he fled to the town of Bin-Houye in the Cote d'Ivoire. Isaac also fled, bringing his wife and six children to Glan-Houye. He expressed concern about two children he had left behind in Sanniquelle and about the loss of his two houses, which he said had been looted and destroyed by the soldiers.

The testimony of the refugees made it clear that many people lost their lives because they were unable to flee from the soldiers. Beatrice Geh, a woman in her early 20's, spoke of the army's behavior in her town of Kialay:

> I left Kialay on January 1 with my two children, because the army came and started shooting and burning houses. I saw the soldiers shoot and kill my grandfather, Bishop Barnh (about 75 years old) and one old paralyzed woman-Old Lady .

> When I saw them do that, I ran into the bush and stayed there until I came to Glan–Houye. My whole village was burned down, so I couldn't bring anything with me. I only have what I'm wearing.

Fleeing from Attacks by Soldiers

George Myker, 53 years old, was living near Butuo (the scene of the first attack) and had to leave his town on January 5. He said he had been a teacher in Gblorlay for thirteen years, but had moved to Lepulah and recently been elected as a clan chief. Although he did not witness any violence himself, he fled into the bush on December 26, after hearing accounts of heavy fighting in Butuo. He was later told that his house in Gblorlay had been burned by soldiers and that two old blind men, one known as Old Man Suomie, had been burned alive in their hut, also by soldiers. Interviewed in Kpantuopleu, in the Côte d'Ivoire, he lamented his fate:

> We want to go home because it is home and although we are well taken care of here, we had established ourselves in Liberia. I had to leave my coffee, cocoa and oil palm farms.

When questioned about whether he would ever feel safe enough to return, he responded:

> We trust the BBC and if they say it is safe to return, then we'll go back.

Several refugees said that they had not seen any violence themselves, but had fled when they heard shooting and saw the inhabitants of nearby villages running for cover. A teacher, resident in Kahnplay, told of hearing heavy gunfire on January 1:

> All I heard was heavy shooting and I saw people running, so I fled into the bush. I couldn't even go to my house, so I brought nothing. I didn't see rebels or soldiers, but I heard the fighting. During the time in the bush, I heard gunfire all day. One time it stopped and I wanted to return, but people were still leaving, so I ran too.

An old man, Bhar Sebo, described having been forced to leave his home–town of Lapeah on January 1:

> I saw what the war did, but not the people in the war. I was on the farm and my children came to tell me that there was war in the village, so we took refuge in the bush. I never saw rebels or soldiers, but my children used to go and spy and they saw soldiers setting fire to my houses and the whole village. The

soldiers were dressed in uniforms and fatigues. I don't understand anything about this war, nothing.

Daniel Gblowon was a nurse's aide in the Nyorbutuo clinic:

One morning, I saw people running and I asked what was happening. The people said they didn't know, but they heard gunfire. When I reached the town, I saw only a few people left there. I packed my things and we began to hear gun sounds at about 6:00 in the evening. We went into the bush and turned on the radio. But it didn't tell us anything. Then someone came and said it was serious. One of my uncles tried to go back to town, but ran back when he heard gunfire. We crossed over into the Côte d'Ivoire on r 31st. Where I am sleeping, there are 37 in the house. There used to be 12.

Arrests and Beatings of Suspected Rebels

A resident of Bahn, 20 year–old Dekurah Mah, said he had been at the creek in Leahkplay (a nearby town) when he saw soldiers entering the town. The soldiers forced a number of men to lie on the gravel–strewn ground and "swim." Many of the men injured themselves in their attempts to follow the soldiers' orders. He ran home to Bahn and grabbed his father's hunting rifle, in an attempt to protect himself, only to be disarmed by soldiers, who accused him of being a rebel. They beat him and slashed his head with a bayonet but released him after his father paid them some money.

Jessie Miamie, a 30 year–old teacher of English, came from Sanniquellie (the administrative capital of the county):

I heard on the radio that rebels had entered the county, but I didn't believe it because the soldiers were always saying that dissidents were coming. But this time, the soldiers continued to speak about fighting at Butuo and Kahnplay and one day, they arrested my friend and me, saying we were rebels. I had been staying at home for more than two weeks, because only women could move about freely. The Gio and Mano men were afraid to go out. I was lucky, because one of my friends knew the soldiers and they paid to get me released. I left for Guinea immediately afterwards. The very day I left, six soldiers came to my home to look for me. The girl staying in the house sent me word to remain in Guinea.

Kargo Faryen said he left the town of Biplay in early January after having been arrested by the army and forced to repair bridges and dig ditches. He said the soldiers came in trucks and also had an armored tank, which they were

having difficulty moving over the fragile bridges. They arrested a large group of men and made them repair a bridge and provide them with food. The soldiers then attempted to forcibly recruit the men to fight against the rebels, but allowed them to remain after they received some money.

Lootings and Burnings

Most refugees arrived in the Côte d'Ivoire with only the clothes they were wearing. They said the soldiers had come into their towns and looted their homes and then set fire to many of them. In one typical scenario, the soldiers entered the town of Souplay on January 6. Although they did not kill anyone, they burned many houses and took anything of value with them. Gweh Leaman told Africa Watch that the soldiers destroyed the town, including his two houses and his rice kitchen.

Moses Beongor, a carpenter, described his experience:

> I saw people running from Lapeah No 2 and I saw a lot of smoke from burning houses. When I went to look at my house, it was not burned but the soldiers had taken all my tools and everything I owned. I don't think anybody was killed, but I came to the ivory Coast without anything.

Old Man Gbarlor was the chief of Gbalortown. He said that he jumped into the bush when soldiers fired at him. He escaped but returned to the town, only to see that the houses had been reduced to shells.

> I have never had any previous experience like this. The soldiers used to come before and take my goats and chickens, but this time they took everything. Since 1985, there have always been soldiers in our area. I am happy to be safe, but the journey was difficult and caused me aches and pains.

Julius Tiahton was living in Karnplay, where he had moved after twenty-four years of working at the LAMCO mines. He said that he had invested his considerable retirement benefits in a number of businesses. He owned three houses, two taxis, a car for his personal use, a bus and a video recorder, which he used to copy tapes to rent. In a matter of hours, he lost everything:

> The rebels came first and when they left, the soldiers followed. We hid in the bush, because we heard a lot of shooting. Someone had a small radio and I heard that General Smith, (the former commander of the go t forces in Nimba) was telling everyone to collect their things from Karnplay and go elsewhere. I did not go back but those who did said they saw soldiers riding in my car and that they had taken all of my property and

> burned some of my houses. I told them it is alright, as long as my family is safe. But here, I just sit and think and tears come to my eyes. Not even my eyeglasses could I bring, nothing, nothing. What did I do to deserve this?

Harassment of Gios and Manos Since 1985

Many of the refugees spoke of the years of harassment they suffered solely on account of their ethnic identity. For those in the rural areas, their stories reflected harassment by soldiers at checkpoints when they attempted to travel and constant demands for rice, chicken and goats. A recurrent theme among those living in the urban areas was the daily harassment they lived with since the attempted coup in 1985. Discrimination in the workplace and threats against them by Krahn workmates and bosses were the norm.

Esther T. worked at the customs in Yekepa, the mining concession area. She said her life had been miserable since 1985:

> The soldiers used to come to the customs and abuse me and talk about the Gio people, saying that we are all against the government. They used to say that they were sorry that they hadn't killed all the Gio people in 1985, and they were just waiting for the order. From 1985, the Krahn people began to hate the Gio people and it has been that way since. I am happy to be alive, because I don't think that any Gio people can live safely in Liberia. It is too bad there.

An ex-soldier said he was dismissed from the army in 1985 along with 275 other Gio soldiers. Former lieutenant Hargena Pouden said he and 592 soldiers were arrested and detained after the 1985 attempted coup. After his release, he was dismissed and has been unable to find employment since then:

> When I heard that the army had entered my town, I fled because I knew the way they would treat me. I was sure that they would kill me, because they had almost done that in 1985.

G. Henry Kahn, the only refugee interviewed by Africa Watch who said he knew Charles Taylor, was bitter about his life since the 1985 coup. He had been visiting relatives in Karnplay when the soldiers came and he fled into Cote d'Ivoire. He recounted his humiliation at work at the General Services Administration:

> Prior to going to Karnplay for Christmas, I had had many problems at work. Because of my ethnic background, I always had problems with the authorities. This went back to 1985, when they started calling us troubl s. After the coup attempt, they made a survey of all the Gio and Mano people

working in the government and put us on a list to be fired. They pretended it was due to constraints and a need to reduce the labor force. My boss told me that in order to keep my position, I should give him a cow. But even after I did that, they stripped me of my authority. I was supposed to be Assistant Director for Administration, but they took away my car. Other people who were at my level had cars and other benefits, but I wasn't even allowed to ride the bus which picked up my secretaries. It was very frustrating and unfair. When the rebels came, I was happy because our lives were miserable under Doe, and power concedes nothing without a demand. I knew Charles Taylor well and he was very nice to me when he was the head of GSA (General Services Administration). We are refugees here and our lives are still frustrating.

IV. Rebel Abuses

The first attack by the rebels was at the border town of Butuo. In that attack, an undetermined number of soldiers and immigration officials were killed (some sources suggest 16) and their arms captured by the rebels. The rebels, numbering probably no more than 40, then took cover in the dense forest. Their next attack was at Karnplay on January 1 and the third at Loguatuo on January 2. From then on the picture is less clear. There continued to be sporadic attacks at a number of small towns, such as Tiaplay and Diolay. The rebels targeted soldiers and civilian government officials, and in a number of cases, killed Mandingo men whom they accused of being informers. In one case, in the town of Tiaplay, the rebels are said to have entered a mosque and shot and killed seven Mandingo men at prayer. A Gio refugee in Cote d'Ivoire also saw them shoot a Mandingo man. He described the killing to Africa Watch:

> On January 1, at about 10:00 we heard gunshots at one of the ints of Karnplay. I knew they were rebels because they didn't wear uniforms, only trousers and they covered their bodies with chalk. I saw them shoot one Mandingo man and a police officer who was near me. When I saw that, I ran into the bush and hid. I could hear shooting continue for a long time.

More recently, the rebels reportedly killed a number of Mandingo and Krahn men in Cocopa, a rubber plantation. The rebels went to Cocopa and requested food from the residents. They were fed by some of the Mano and Gio townspeople. Government soldiers reached the town within the next few days and questioned the people of the town about their collaboration with the rebels. Those who had fed the rebels were apparently pointed out by some members of the Mandingo and Krahn communities, and were then shot and

killed. Upon hearing of the killings, the rebels returned and a number of Mandingo and Krahn men in reprisal.

The interviews with Krahn refugees took place in the villages of Klaon and Kpabli. Klaon previously had a population of 300, which had increased to 1,036 at the time of the interviews. Most of the refugees were from the neighboring Liberian towns of Blehwalley, Yorpea, Kpabli and Djukorway, which were attacked on January 14 and 15.[10] The rebels those towns because the majority of inhabitants were Krahn. In the case of Blehwalley, it was the home of the father of the present county superintendent, Jackson Paye. Superintendent Paye's father was reportedly killed. Old Lady Wibli, a woman in her early 60's, described seeing three people killed:

> On January 14, early in the morning, a group of men and women dressed in red entered the town and began shooting. My husband told me to hide under the bed and went outside to see what was happening. The rebels shot him. I could hear the rebels abusing Krahn people. They said if we were brave enough, we should come out and fight. They said that they would not let themselves be ruled by people who eat coals and that they had come to kill us.[11] They killed my husband and his brother. They also killed one man called Dekpah, who was hiding under his bed, and Beyan, the physician assistant who was from the Lorma tribe. They also killed one man's wives and his son. They were in their house and the rebels set fire to it. Other people were in the house but they had run out. The ones who died hid under the bed, where they thought they would be safe. Someone told me that the rebels also killed John Paye, his wife Qwinolin, his son and two of his brother's children. The last person I heard about was Old Man Paye, who was left in his house, which was set on fire.

Old Lady Wibli also spoke about the rebels coming into the town and separating the Gio women from the rest of the residents. She said that one young man was killed when he went and sat next to his mother, a Gio woman. The rebels questioned him as to whether he could speak Gio and when he was unable to do so, shot and killed him in front of his mother. His mother cried out in distress, asking the rebels to end her life also. They declined, explaining that they had come specifically to kill Krahn men in retaliation for army massacres of Gio and Mano people.

Alfred Kpato was one of the elders of Djukorway. He arrived in Klaon with his two wives and five children:

> We came here because the rebels came to our town. Some wore ordinary clothes, some red. But all had something red around

> their heads. In our town we have an airstrip and a motor road from Yorpea. The rebels came from Yorpea and opened fire as soon as they entered our town. They were speaking Gio and there was one woman with them. The woman was using medicine to weaken the people in the town.[12] She scattered medicine in front of the men as they advanced. I knew her from before. The men started killing people and burning houses. I ran into the bush with some other people. We stayed there for a long time. When we came out, we saw several bodies. I saw Old Man Zeatay, who was shot, and Quity, and Gaye, who was crazy and had been tied up. Also they killed Old Lady Deleh and two of her children. They had hidden under the bed in her house and the rebels set fire to it. That's how Esther (ni Mummy) Mator died, because she ran to Old Lady Deleh's house and hid with her. The rebels also shot and killed a young man called Fedesco Dro. It was a terrible sight.

John Karwoeh came from Yorpea Town and saw the bodies of several people killed by the rebels. He told Africa Watch:

> When the dissidents came, I saw then from far away. It was January 14, Sunday morning and it was a small group, but they were armed. When they reached the town, they started shooting and killing people. I ran into the bush, but as I ran I saw people falling down near me. Two days later, I went back to my house to get my things. The rebels had taken some and left some. That's when I saw my brother's body. He had been shot. His name was Gaye Karwoeh. I also saw the dead body of George Wea and Augustus Kare. Other people were wounded, but they didn't die.

Charlie Sandy was in Blewalley when the attack occurred. He escaped, but only after the rebels attempted to shoot him in his house:

> The rebels came early in the morning. We were asleep and thought it was the army. We heard gunfire and saw some houses burning. We heard them speaking Gio and they told all the Gio women to come out and sit to one side, because they would not harm them. My wives and my children managed to run, but I saw a rebel coming towards my house. But before he could reach [the house], another rebel told him to come back, because I might have a gun. While they went for reinforcements, I climbed into a tree and they didn't see me when they came back. I know they caught Old Man Beh, Old Lady Wibli's husband, and he said he was Gio, but one of the rebels knew

> him to be Krahn, so they shot him. They also killed Old Man Tounah, who offered them $400. They told him to get the money, but they still killed him. When I climbed down from the tree, I also saw my father's body lying on the ground. I could only cover it with a chair and then run.

Some refugees were able to speak Gio fluently and passed for members of that ethnic group. Marie Gbah is in her early 30's. She managed to bring 25 children with her. The children belonged to a variety of people, but they sent them with her for their safety:

> When the rebels entered on January 14, they arrested me and my children. Then they burned my house. They began beating some of the bigger children and they were speaking English. I spoke to them in English and Gio and told them I was from Dioplay and that I was actually Gio. Then they stopped beating the children and told us we could go. They guided us to the road and we didn't stop until we came here. I came with nothing and only have what my relatives have given me. This is my first time seeing this kind of trouble.

V. The Role of the United States

Founded by freed American slaves, Liberia was the brainchild of the American Colonization Society, some of whose members were looking for a solution to the "problem" of having large numbers of free black people in the United States. Since then, Liberia has had a "special relationship" with the United States, with many Liberians looking to the U.S. for their political and educational systems.

America's influence is visible and considerable. Although increasingly hard to find, the U.S. dollar remains legal tender. Many towns and streets are named after American individuals and places, including the capital, Monrovia, named after U.S. president James Monroe. The relatively large size of the military mission is justified, in part, by the "historical relationship." That relationship was underscored in 1987, when a seventeen–man team was sent by the Reagan a tion to manage Liberia's The team's two–year mandate was to crack down on fiscal mismanagement and the nation's endemic corruption, but the members of the team were withdrawn a year early as a result of the Liberian government's lack of cooperation. Leaving aside the implications for Liberia's sovereignty, the U.S. tion's efforts at curbing Doe's looting of the would have been better directed at preventing the gross human rights abuses ted by that government.

During its eight years, the Reagan administration missed many opportunities to promote human rights in Liberia. Many of the official

statements appeared to reflect a willful ignorance of past and ongoing abuses by the regime of Samuel Doe, highlighting seeming improvements in the country while overlooking obvious problems. In 1987, then Assistant of State for African Affairs, Chester Crocker, described the human rights situation in Liberia in the following terms:

> We believe there has been a movement in a positive direction. If you take a moving picture, it shows a trend which we think is a good one. If you take a snapshot, then in that snapshot you can see problems. Problems are not absent, but the situation has improved.

This statement was made two years after Doe had used fraud and strong-arm measures to ensure his elections victory and after hundreds of soldiers and civilians had been killed by government forces in the aftermath of an attempted coup. The two years had also seen the continuation of a pattern of repression and brutality which continues to mark the regime.

During the early Reagan years, the U.S. poured money into Liberia. From 1980 to 1985, $500 million was provided to the Doe regime. In the aftermath of the fraudulent election of 1985 and the subsequent coup attempt, Administration spokesmen, in testimony before Congress, obscured gross abuses of human rights and papered over the election results. Despite their efforts, Congress passed resolutions in 1985 and 1986, characterizing the elections as fraudulent and conditioning further Economic Support Fund assistance on a number of steps, including the release of political prisoners. Congress' action was crucial to winning the release of a number of political prisoners and to ending killings by government soldiers in Nimba county. Despite the demonstrable results of Congress' public position, the Reagan administration pursued a policy of quiet diplomacy, which did not improve the human rights situation. The next five years saw a drastic decline in U.S. assistance, largely because of Congressional pressure. The reduced level of aid was not accompanied by the public condemnation of human rights abuses by the executive.

The success of public statements by Congress in contributing to an improved human rights climate should have served as an important model for the Bush administration. Instead, it has continued a policy of quiet diplomacy. In January, in response to the rebel insurgency, General Doe ordered his troops to shoot on sight anyone they deemed suspicious. As evidence mounted of indiscriminate killings of civilians by the army, the State Department appeared eager to downplay the army's role. On January 11, it issued the following statement:

> R ly, in responding to the incursion, elements within the armed forces of Liberia are credibly reported to have ignored

> orders to avoid injury to innocent civilians, a number of which have been killed. We have conveyed to the Liberian go t our concern at this breach of discipline and have urged it to redouble its efforts to see that further innocent lives are not lost.

Since the troops were not ignoring orders, but carrying them out, the U.S. response must be seen as a deliberate attempt at obfuscation of the tragic events and a serious breach of its moral duty to promote human rights.

The close involvement of the United States with the Doe regime was shockingly underscored in late January when two U.S. military advisors were sent to Nimba to accompany the then commander of the forces, General Moses Craig. The Administration insisted that the effort was designed to assist the senior army officers in . . . . g abuses by the army and not to offer advice on how to crush the rebellion. However, informed observers suggest that a more compelling motive was provided by the alleged Libyan involvement in the training and arming of the rebels and that the advisors were sent to ensure the success of the government's counterinsurgency strategy. The advisors were removed after protests by human rights groups.

The United States Congress has continued to respond strongly to events in Liberia. A resolution condemning the Liberian army's behavior offered by Con Ted Weiss rapidly gained bipartisan support and was passed by the House on April 25. It offers appropriate guidelines for U.S. policy to Liberia. These include the prohibition against the involvement of the U.S. military in the counterinsurgency efforts, a request for a fair and inquiry into human rights abuses in Nimba County, and the cut-off of military aid.

Africa Watch supports these provisions and urges the Administration to increase its involvement in the efforts to provide relief to meet the urgent humanitarian needs of Liberian refugees in neighboring countries. We also urge the Bush administration to review its policy towards Liberia and make respect for human rights an integral part of that policy. The historical relationship between the two countries will be served best by a rejection of the status quo and a distancing, in words and deeds, from a regime which has shown itself incapable of respect for the rule of law and human rights. In continuing its support for General Doe and his government, the Bush administration serves neither its interests nor those of the Liberian people.

VI. Africa Watch's Recommendations

Recommendations to the Government of Liberia

Africa Watch urges the Government of Liberia:

1. To end the in te killings of civilians by Liberian troops in Nimba County.

2. To take te steps to investigate and prosecute those individuals, including members of the Liberian armed forces, guilty of human rights abuses.

3. To institute an impartial and independent inquiry into the killings.

4. To allow international humanitarian agencies and human rights organizations full access to the affected region.

5. To take measures to ensure the safe return of internally displaced persons and refugees.

6. To review past abuses and create institutions and administrative procedures which will bring an end to these abuses and enhance respect for human rights and constitutional rule.

7. To issue clear public instructions to the army, police and all security forces, prohibiting abusive interrogation methods, including both the physical and psychological abuse of detainees.

8. To implement measures which will allow Liberians to enjoy their constitutionally guaranteed rights to freedom of expression and freedom of association, thus creating a climate and circumstances conducive to the holding of free and fair elections in 1991.

Recommendations to the U.S. Government

Africa Watch calls upon the U.S. Government:

1. To convey to the Government of Liberia, in clear and forceful terms, the concerns of the United States about human rights in Liberia since 1980, especially since the recent killings of civilians during the counterinsurgency.

2. To prohibit further use of military advisors in the counterins efforts of the Liberian armed forces.

3. To cease all military assistance to the Government of Liberia until it has ended the indiscriminate killing of civilians and has made substantial progress in improving human rights.

4. To suspend all U.S. assistance to Liberia, except humanitarian assistance, until there is a greatly improved human rights climate.

5. To urge the Go t of Liberia to create an impartial Commission to undertake an inquiry into the violence in Nimba and past abuses, with the findings made public.

6. To require the Government of Liberia to honor its commitment to hold scheduled elections in 1991 and ensure that Circumstances in Liberia are conducive to a free and fair election process.

7. To provide all n support to efforts by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees and other relevant international and private voluntary organizations to meet the urgent humanitarian needs of Liberian refugees in neighboring countries.

Endnotes

*Africa Watch is part of Human Rights Watch, and was established in May 1988 "to monitor and promote respect for internationally recongized human rights in Africa." According to the Africa Watch Committee, the current report "is based on research undertaken in late February 1990, in Cote d'Ivoire. Africa Watch is grateful for the cooperation of the Ivorian authorities responsible for the coordination of the relief efforts. In particular, we would like to thank Medecin sans Frontieres, the French medical relief organization, for their invaluable assistance."

[1]There is no standard spelling for many of the towns in Liberia. This is due to the fact that these are words in African languages being translated and spelled phonetically.

[2]The Gio ethnic group is present in Côte d'Ivoire and is called Yacouba; while the Krahn are known as Guere.

[3]Jean-Baptiste Placca, "Liberia, Journey into the rebel stronghold" *Jeune Afrique*, March 12, 1990.

[4]Despite the fact that the Mandingo people have always been present in Liberia, they are still perceived as foreigners. That perception is underscored by the fact that they are Muslims in a largely animist society and by their success as traders, which has created animosity among other groups. In addition to this, the leaders of the community have traditionally aligned themselves

with the government in power. At this time, when General Doe has alienated large sections of the population, this has created friction with other Liberians.

[5]Bethlehem Steel, a major partner before the coup in 1980, withdrew, after selling its shares at a reduced rate to the Liberian government.

[6]Jonathan C. Randall, "Army rampage said to spark resistance," *Washington Post*, March 19, 1990.

[7]Lebanese people have lived in Liberia for many years. They came as traders and gradually became the dominant force in commercial activity in the country. The 1970's saw a tremendous increase in their numbers, not only in Liberia, but in the whole of West Africa.

[8]The People's Redemption Council (PRC) was the name of the military junta which ruled Liberia from 1980 to 1985. The 1985 elections were supposed to have ushered in a civilian government, but the results were fraudulent and Samuel Doe, a member of the PRC retained power and became head of the new government.

[9]The chieftaincy system is an administrative system established by the Liberian government in the early 1900's. It is an adaptation of the traditional administrative system previously used in many parts of the country. The basic administrative unit is the town which is divided into residential areas inhabited by people of related households. Quarters usually are headed by the elders of the combined households. In some areas, the leading elder may be referred to as the quarter chief. Town chiefs are normally elected from among the male elders (On rare occasions, women have been chosen to serve). Clan chiefs are also elected from the male elders of the towns which constitute the clan. Although there are few formal criteria for eligibility, traditional norms are usually applied. In some cases, for example, the town chiefs may only be chosen from particular quarters.

[10]Rice kitchens are the places where harvested rice is stored.

[11]The Krahn people sometimes add coal embers to some of their food.

[12]A reference to "witch doctors." The Liberian government recently passed an ordinance requiring all "witch doctors," or "medicine men," to be licensed.

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