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Development Planning, Politics and the Bureaucracy: The Liberian Experience

J. Mills Jones

Introduction

Most developing countries practice planning of one kind or another, supported by donor countries and multinational institutions. Some countries have adopted centralized planning, with the state being given the major role in determining the allocation of resources. In the market-oriented economy of Liberia, planning can only play an indicative role. This means that the plan tends to serve as a guidepost, indicating the broad direction in which the economy is expected to proceed.

Liberia has seen more than three decades of planning, but this has not made much difference in terms of the economic and social development of the country. While acknowledging that exogenous and other technical factors have helped to complicate the planning process, our focus will be on the role played by the political and administrative system. The main argument is that the high degree of centralization of authority, a political structure built on patronage and a weak civil service are at the heart of the planning problem in Liberia. Even in 1986 it appears that not much is being done to change the situation despite public pronouncements to the contrary. If recognizing a problem is halfway to solving it, then this paper is relevant by emphasizing that planning can be a useful tool only to the extent that it is supported by a country's political leadership together with an efficient administrative system.

We begin with a brief discussion on some of the obstacles to planning in developing countries, illustrating these with the relevant Liberian experience, followed by a consideration of the effort in the 1940s by the government to formulate a national development strategy under the umbrella of the Open Door Policy. The remainder of the paper is organized as follows: We will consider the period from 1951, the beginning of the planning effort, up to 1967 when the first comprehensive plan was produced. The main point to be highlighted about the 1967-1970 plan is that it was never adopted by the government despite the fact that it was the first major work of the newly established cabinet-level Department of Planning & Economic Affairs. This will be followed by a discussion of the planning effort in the 1970s. This was, perhaps, the most significant period in the history of planning in Liberia, the highpoint being the decision of the government to adopt and implement a medium-term plan covering the years 1976 through 1980. Then we will deal with planning in the 1980s, stressing the shift to crisis management. The paper concludes with some suggestions pointing in the direction in which solutions might be found to make the planning effort in Liberia more effective.

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Obstacles to Effective Planning: An Overview

It is widely recognized that the record of planning in developing countries has been disappointing.¹ The reasons for the deviations between plan objectives and actual accomplishments are varied. In some cases the problem is reflected in technical deficiencies in the plan due to a poor statistical base or weaknesses in policy formulation which might arise because of lack of sufficient trained manpower. Exogenous factors can also influence the outcome of the planning process, such as the sudden and precipitous decline in a country's terms of trade, or a drastic change in climatic conditions like the recent drought in Africa. The most serious problem, perhaps, is political and administrative. The leadership in many countries has given too much attention to political maneuvering, resulting in frequent changes in policies, inefficiency in the government bureaucracy and the erosion of public order. These have tended to make the environment less conducive to economic progress.

These observations are applicable to Liberia. Statistical deficiencies, for instance, have been a problem since the first development program was prepared in the early 1950s. National accounts data were compiled for the first time in 1962, and it has taken some time to improve the reliability of these and other socio-economical statistics because of the shortage of trained manpower. Also, the country remains vulnerable to adverse developments in the world economy, reflecting its dependence on the export of iron ore and rubber. The debt crisis of 1963 resulted in large measure from the significant decline in Liberia's terms of trade in the early 1960s, and the global recession which began in 1980 was a major reason for shelving the plan which was adopted in 1981.

The relationship between politics and economic development in Liberia was the basis of the "growth without development" thesis that was expounded by Robert Clower and his associates based on a study that was conducted in the early 1960s.

The economic backwardness of Liberia is attributable neither to lack of resources nor domination by foreign financial and political interests. Rather, the underlying difficulty is that the traditional leaders have not permitted those changes necessary to develop the society and its economy.²

Although such description might be considered the extreme view of the adverse role of politics in Liberia, suggesting a conspiracy on the part of the political leadership to stifle the process of modernization and economic progress, it nevertheless served to draw the attention of the government to the need for political reform. Lowenkopf has taken a moderate view in acknowledging that while elitism in Liberia has tended to restrict "vertical mobility" it did not prevent "horizontal movement" of people into the modern sectors, where they could also participate in the political life of the nation.³ It must be kept in mind, however, that political activity was confined to the True Whig Party which was dominated by a centrally administered patronage system presided over by the President.

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Toward a Development Strategy

For a Republic i
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concession
activity i
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red years after the establishment of the
griculture was the mainstay of the Liberian
, an American establishment, was granted a
er and it developed into the major business
overnment's financial position was continually
equate to cover basic expenditures, and its
of holding the country together as one
attention was given to the question of
gy, much less to initiating the planning

The Open Door Policy announced by William Tubman when he became President in 1944 was the first attempt by the Liberian government to outline a strategy geared toward the development of the nation's economy. Backed by an open market system and the use of the American dollar, the Open Door Policy sought to make Liberia an attractive venue for foreign investment for the purpose of exploiting its agricultural and mineral resources. Laws were passed, among others, which granted tax incentives to new investments and permitted freedom to repatriate profits. As a consequence, Liberia was able to divest itself of near total dependence on Firestone and the export of rubber and to begin to establish the foundations of a more diversified economy. The exploitation of iron ore resources led to increased revenues for the government which enabled it to undertake extensive infrastructural investment programs.

The implementation of the Open Door Policy, however, was not without difficulty and the weaknesses in policy formation began to serve notice that the government bureaucracy was unable to cope with the pressures forced upon it by rapid economic changes. There was no priority as to the type of investments that should be encouraged, concession agreements were concluded largely on an ad hoc basis (it was not until 1963 that a formal investment incentive code was established), and very little effort was made to develop an indigenous entrepreneurial class. The latter, even in recent times, has remained a major shortcoming of economic policy in Liberia to the extent that the country's economy is largely dominated by expatriates.

Planning Experience: 1951-1985

The Early Period: 1951-1965

Liberia's earliest experience with development planning dates back to the preparation of a five-year development program in 1951 under the auspices of the Joint United States-Liberia Commission for Economic Development. The program was subsequently extended to cover the period up to 1960. Although this effort helped to provide some basis for rational decision-making, the concentration on isolated investment projects meant that the planners were not directly concerned with charting a global strategy for the economy. Moreover, the coordinating capacity of the government remained weak, reflecting in part the difficulty it experienced in improving budgetary procedures and its inability to structure expenditures based on priority needs. As a consequence, a considerable portion of government's resources was used to support a large bureaucracy where rewards in terms of jobs and promotions were based on loyalty to the one political party controlled by the President and personal connections rather than competence. The Department of Planning

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observed that "because of the absence of effective systems of budgeting, accounting and expenditure control, government was unable to foresee the magnitude of its financial commitments as they evolved."4

It was in recognition of this problem that a Special Commission on Government Operations (SCOGO) was created in 1961, headed by a chairman with cabinet rank, the task being to improve the organization and efficiency of government departments. The Commission, however, did not have the ability to enforce institutional change and could do little more than point out deficiencies and recommend reorganization.

The financial problem that began to emerge after 1960 with the slowdown in the growth of revenue exposed the fact that the finances of the government had been poorly managed. Public investment had been financed almost entirely by borrowing, much of which was in the form of short-term credits from suppliers and contractors. In retrospect, the government recognized that this type of financing had some serious disadvantages as noted in a report of the Department of the Treasury:

It does not permit of free international competitive bidding which, from acknowledged experience, is a principal method of reducing prices. Besides that, in the anxiety to proceed quickly with agreed upon programs detailed costs for completing projects are not always ascertained in advance because of the inherent delay in obtaining engineering data. This has often resulted in severe difficulties due to final costs proving to be completely out of line with original estimates. Another factor is the invariably short-term maturity of loans.5

By 1963, the deteriorating financial position of the government had reached crisis proportions, with debt service representing over 60 percent of the total estimated revenue for the year.6

The government had no alternative but to formulate an adjustment program in 1963, which was supported by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) with a stand-by arrangement in the amount of \$5.7 million.7 This made it possible to reschedule most of the debt falling due. Nevertheless, the program had a major shortcoming in that it did not give attention to the longer-term issues of economic diversification and structural change, or to the integration of the export enclaves into the rest of the economy. The "Operation Production" program announced by the government in October 1963 with much fanfare aimed at increasing agricultural output and, in particular, achieving self-sufficiency in rice production not only lacked direction (the program was administered by a two-man staff for the entire country) but was also deprived of budgetary appropriations for its activities until around 1970.8 Agricultural planning has not improved much since. A recent report for the United States Agency for International Development concluded that "agriculture in Liberia represents a case where authority is distributed among competing agencies while the so-called key ministry (Ministry of Agriculture) is the weakest of all". The report further noted that among the constraints in the Ministry of Agriculture is the "paucity of staff yet gross overstaffing", and suggests that the Task Force on Mechanized Farming set up by the then ruling Military Council, rather than being an instrument for reform, was instead another control organ of the Council.9

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The elevation of the Office of National Planning to cabinet status in 1966, transfer of the Department of Planning and Economic Affairs, was an attempt to give a broader perspective to the planning process with the decision to separate the national budget from recurrent expenditure and the development programs.

The newly created Department of Planning was to prepare a national development plan to help sectoral departments develop their own plans. A five-year term plan was produced in 1967, covering the period up to 1972.

Three major developments can be attributed to the planning effort during this period. First, work on the plan provided an opportunity for the government to take a more sober look at national priorities compared with the ad hoc approaches which characterized the situation in the 1950s and early 1960s. Second, the development budget was created, distinct from the recurrent budget, providing a critical link between the preparation of the plan and its implementation. Third, there was considerable improvement in the collection of data, which enabled the government to get a better picture of socio-economic trends in the country.

The problem, however, was that the enthusiasm with which the plan was prepared was not matched by the willingness of the government to accept the discipline that was required for its implementation. The plan was never officially adopted,¹⁰ and the National Planning Council (NPC), the highest economic policy-making body, showed no interest in its implementation. As a matter of fact, the NPC did not meet for two years after 1968. Neither was there any serious attempt to improve the administrative capacity of the government bureaucracy with a view to making it act as a catalyst for development and social progress. That the civil service continued to operate on the basis of patronage is evident from the fact that at the beginning of the 1970s about 40 percent of all employees working in the civil service were employed without the knowledge of the Civil Service Commission, while those employed through the normal channel were mostly junior clerical personnel.¹¹

Planning Effort in the 1970s

The early 1970s saw a renewed attempt by the government to place planning at the center of its development strategy. This heightened sense of awareness of the need to take a more rational approach to tackling Liberia's development problems through the planning process owes much to the three National Conferences on Development Objectives and Strategy which were sponsored by the Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs between 1969 and 1973. The first conference, which was held in October 1969, provided an opportunity to assess the 1967-1970 Plan and to set an agenda for exploring ways of making the planning process more responsive to the needs of the entire population.¹² Participants acknowledged that many plans in developing countries are put aside after they had been prepared because they are mainly made for propaganda purposes, a reminder that the 1967 Plan was never given any formal recognition and for the most part was confined to gathering dust on the shelf. The second conference was held in 1971. One of its main concerns was to assist the government in mapping out a program of action aimed at developing an administrative system that was better equipped to translate the development

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Table 1
Allocation of Resources, Development Plan 1967-70
(\$000)

	Budget Appropriations	Other Domes- tic Sources	External Assistance	Percentage Distribution
Agriculture	5,556	1,522	3,215	10.5
Transport	7,063	4,359	25,051	37.1
Communications	1,011	110	310	1.5
Public Utilities	1,790	3,257	18,880	24.3
Natural Resources	2,546	-	4,963	7.7
Education	5,950	-	3,157	9.3
Public Health	4,531	-	4,427	9.2
Other Services	290	-	100	0.4
Total:	28,737	9,248	60,108	100.0

Source: For Year 1967-70, Table 3.2. v l en 6 -

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goals into reality.¹³ The shortage of trained manpower at all levels of the system was one of the major factors retarding economic development. The government therefore considered it necessary to move ahead with a new system of Public Administration which had been established in 1968, but had not become operational. As for the future, the government's intention was to assist the government in establishing institutions that would ensure balanced growth and the development of the natural resources of the country. This was the main challenge coming out of a report that had been prepared by a team of the International Labor Organization (ILO).¹⁴

During the period, a number of concrete steps were taken aimed at strengthening the planning process. The National Planning Council was reactivated, and an official statement on development policies and priorities was issued by the government. The latter emphasized the government's commitment, inter alia, to integrated rural development, manpower training, improvement of existing institutions concerned with development planning and the establishment of new ones where necessary, and increased mobilization of domestic resources. The statement also reaffirmed Liberia's commitment to the free enterprise system and the Open Door Policy which had been responsible for attracting foreign investment into the country. Meanwhile, effort was made to reorganize certain key implementing agencies, such as the Ministries of Public Works and Agriculture and to strengthen the technical capability of the Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs. A Concessions and Investment Commission was established, headed by the Minister of Finance and supported on the technical level by its own Secretariat, for the purpose of ensuring uniformity in the granting of concessions to investors. Under this arrangement, the Government was able to renegotiate a number of concession agreements.¹⁵

The National Bank of Liberia was established in 1974 as the nation's Central Bank, following much discussion as to the pros and cons of establishing such an institution. Up to that time the Government had relied on the Bank of Monrovia, an affiliate of a U.S. based bank, to import and distribute the U.S. dollar which was, and still is, the circulating currency in Liberia, and provide minimal central banking services. Liberia therefore could not use monetary policy to influence economic development such as promoting savings and directing them to priority areas. The National Bank of Liberia was expected to fill this void, although the U.S. dollar remained the medium of exchange.¹⁶

With all the energy expended in the early 1970s in an attempt to improve and institutionalize the planning process, and given the government's formal acceptance of the 1976-80 Plan, unlike its predecessor, it appeared that the situation had changed for the better. President William Tolbert (1971-80) described the plan as "a systematic course of development" which would maximize returns from the use of Liberia's scarce resources. But this did not happen, and by the end of the period the plan had been reduced to serving mainly as a showpiece to donor countries and aid-giving international institutions.

The ability of the 1976-1980 plan to have a positive impact on the Liberian economy was limited in two respects. The first was that not enough

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attention had been given to including the private sector in the planning process, despite the Government's commitment to the free enterprise system and its expectation that the private sector would serve as the engine of growth. Consequently, not only was there no consensus on the assignment of roles, there was also a breakdown in the confidence of private investors concerning the economic policies of the government.¹⁷ Economic growth fell far short of the 6.8 percent projected for the plan period, since the level of private investment in other productive activities could not make up for the slack caused by the recession in the iron industry.

The other more important problem was that the traditional governmental structure made it almost impossible to transform the plan into an operational document. The political leadership, while long on paying lip service to the virtues of planning, once again came up short in providing the direction and support needed to sustain the plan. As with the previous plan, the National Planning Council under the chairmanship of the President was largely inactive, and this was bound to hamper the implementation of the plan given the high degree of centralization of power in the office of the President. It became the rule rather than the exception for ministers and heads of autonomous agencies to circumvent the planning guidelines by seeking approval for projects directly from the President who could then dispense patronage to whomever he favored. This diminished the role of the Ministry of Planning, and it became virtually impossible to monitor the implementation of the plan, especially since many in the executing agencies thought that there was no need to provide the Ministry with the requisite information on their development programs.

The breakdown in the implementation machinery reduced the effectiveness of the development budget, the primary instrument for implementing the plan on an annual basis, and in turn distorted the objectives of the plan. It was not that the budget permitted flexibility in programming that mattered; in fact, a plan ought to be sufficiently flexible in order to cope with changing circumstances. The problem in the Liberian case was that adjustments were made too often and without systematic evaluation. It was quite common to have extra-budgetary expenditures and transfers from approved on-going projects, usually without the knowledge of the Ministry of Planning which had primary responsibility for preparing the annual development budget. As the original investment program escalated, jumping from \$415 million to \$712 million in just one year, the government, faced with sluggish growth of revenue, borrowed extensively from abroad to cover the financing gap of the plan (see Tables 2 and 3).

Many of the new projects in the revised plan were implemented for political reasons and were of dubious economic and social value. For instance, a large part of the investment program (about \$100 million) comprised infrastructure projects related to the hosting of the meeting of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1979. It was obvious that this had nothing to do with increasing production in vital sectors such as agriculture, although one of the expressed goals of the government was to make Liberia self-sufficient in rice production by 1980. Moreover, the Government's development policy continued to favor the urban areas, particularly Monrovia, although the Plan had aimed at "providing social and physical infrastructure so as to improve the quality of life in the village where most Liberians live".

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Table 2
Investment Program 1976 - 1980

	Original Estimate (\$million)	Percent ^{1/}	Revised Estimate (\$million)	Percent ^{1/}
Agriculture and Forestry	80	19.3	112	19.1
Infrastructure	174	42.0	191	32.6
Utilities	48	11.6	61	10.4
Human Resource Development and Social Services	68	16.4	91	15.5
Industry	17	4.1	16	2.7
Rural Development	6	1.4	17	2.9
Miscellaneous	22	5.3	97	16.6
Total:	415	100.0	585	100.0

^{1/} Rounded.

Source: National Socio-Economic Development Plan, July 1973 - June 1980, Table 6
Report of the Ministry of Finance: Fiscal year ended June 30, 1978, p.75

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Table 3.
Financing of Investment Program
(\$million)

	Original Estimate (\$585 million)	Revised Estimate (\$585 million)
Domestic Revenue	802	770
Less: Non Project Expenditure	<u>638</u>	<u>604</u>
Domestic Savings	164	166
Plus: Foreign Funds	<u>326</u>	<u>290</u>
Total Funds Available	490	456
Cost of the Plan	<u>585</u>	<u>585</u>
Gap	\$ 95	\$129

Source: Report of the Ministry of Finance, year ended June 30, 1978, p.77

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Liberia's external public debt rose rapidly during the plan period, with disbursed debt outstanding increasing from \$175.7 million in 1975 to \$561.3 million in 1980. Since a large proportion of the debt originated from private suppliers and the financial market, the concessional element dropped from 64 percent to about 48 percent, while the maturity period narrowed from 23.8 years to 15.4 years (see Tables 4 and 5). This helped to set the stage for the external debt servicing problems that emerged in the 1980s in the wake of the prolonged global recession.

From Planning to Crisis Management: 1980-85

By the time work began on the plan for the period 1980-84 it was generally realized that the planning effort in Liberia had yet to become a meaningful tool for economic development. In particular, administrative procedures remained in disarray, making it almost impossible for the bureaucracy to become an effective manager of the country's scarce resources.¹⁸

The basic strategy for the new plan was that the planning process would begin from the bottom up, reflecting concern over the practice of having the central authorities in the capital dictate development priorities to the rest of the population. One of the specific actions in this connection was the establishment of a Rural Development Task Force for the purpose of making recommendations that would lead to a framework for decentralizing the decision-making structure of Government. This approach to planning would have made it necessary to redeploy trained personnel to the local level where they would be responsible for working with local people subject to guidelines from the central authorities.

The plan was completed by the Military Government in 1981. Although there had been some delay - the original timetable was for the plan to be put into effect in July 1980 - it was taken as an indication that the new authorities intended to build upon the planning process inherited from the civilian regime. Indeed, the early months after the coup saw much attention being given to the economy, with emphasis on restoring public finances, reducing corruption and improving efficiency of the government bureaucracy.¹⁹

There was also a reaffirmation of the Government's commitment to the free-enterprise system. However, uncertainties with regard to the political future of the country after the coup and the belief that the government "permitted, if not condoned, direct harassment of private individuals and enterprises" led to a loss of confidence in the economy and "exacerbated the deterioration of modern sector investment and activity".²⁰

One of the first problems encountered in implementing the plan was the lack of adequate counterpart funding for projects receiving external assistance, partly because of the difficulty in controlling recurrent expenditure and the inability of the authorities to effectively implement existing tax measures. In 1983 the plan was scaled back and stretched to cover a six-year period, 1981/82 - 1986/87, but the problem persisted of the authorities not adhering to policies which they had designed and agreed to implement in order to ensure financial discipline. Guidelines for effective

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Table 4.

LIBERIA: Public/Publicly Guaranteed Debt

	Debt Outstanding Including Undisbursed (U.S.\$ millions)	Debt Outstanding Disbursed (U.S.\$ millions)	Concessional Loans Relative to Disbursed Debt %
1975	276.7	175.7	64.3
1986	302.1	206.3	58.8
1977	375.4	264.7	53.3
1978	652.0	346.8	48.0
1979	740.1	467.9	45.2
1980	773.6	560.7	47.9
1981	819.4	627.1	49.5
1982	893.4	630.3	49.7
1983	911.3	699.1	47.4

Sources: World Bank, World Debt Tables 1983-84 (Washington, D.C., 1984), pp. 68-69.

World Bank, World Debt Tables 1984-85 (Washington, D.C. 1985), pp. 74-75.

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Table 5

Liberia:

Average Terms of Public Debt: New Commitments

	1973	1975	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983
Official Creditors									
Interest (%)	3.8	6.4	3.6	3.9	5.1	4.3	5.0	4.2	8.4
Maturity (years)	34.8	25.9	29.8	21.0	22.8	17.1	22.1	30.6	16.5
Grace Period (years)	8.5	5.8	7.8	6.3	6.6	4.9	6.2	7.3	5.5
Grant Element (%)	51.3	27.1	50.4	42.0	33.2	35.6	39.1	48.0	12.1
Private Creditors									
Interest (%)	6.2	7.3	8.0	12.1	8.0	18.0	8.0	18.6	9.7
Maturity	7.1	7.6	6.9	7.6	11.0	5.1	2.3	5.1	5.8
Grace Period (years)	1.9	2.1	1.9	2.6	2.0	0.6	0.3	0.6	1.5
Grant Element (%)	12.7	8.4	6.0	-9.5	8.2	-20.9	2.2	-20.9	0.4

Source: World Bank, World Debt Tables, 1983-84 and 1984-85

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budgetary control, which formed the core of successive stabilization programs agreed with the International Monetary Fund, were honored more in the breach, even after the establishment of an interministerial Economic and Financial Management Committee whose primary purpose was to contain the growth in expenditure and minimize waste. The budget deficit remained at unsustainable levels, rising to about 15 percent of GDP in fiscal year 1984/85 with nonbudgetary and unallocated expenditures accounting for about 23 percent of total outlays.

The large borrowing requirement of the government is reflected in the sharp increase in net claims on the government by the National Bank of Liberia, rising from \$58.9 million at the end of December 1979 to \$208.9 million at the end of 1983 and to \$306.2 million by the end of June 1984. Because of the large increase in credit to the Government, the National Bank of Liberia encountered difficulties converting into cash claims presented to it by the rest of the banking system. It also led to the crowding out of the private sector from domestic credit. Claims on the private sector by commercial banks which amounted to \$181.1 million at the end of December 1979 declined to \$70.2 million at the end of December 1983.

Meanwhile, not only did the plan cease to be operative, but the development budget largely became a residual item and did not reflect a coordinated set of policies which could bring about structural change and sustained economic growth. The government shifted its attention to short-term crisis management as the economy continued to deteriorate (see Table 6).

There is no doubt that the economic problems of the military authorities have their roots in the policies of the previous civilian regime. Rapid increases in public expenditure in the late 1970s had considerably weakened the financial position of the government. The severe shocks since 1980 - the prolonged recession, high interest rates and low prices for Liberia's major export commodities - have also played a major role. Nevertheless, the impact of these factors was compounded by both an inefficient management system and inappropriate policies of the new government, such as the decision to double the minimum wage for civil servants and military personnel while permitting a substantial increase in the number of public sector employees. With regard to the issue of management, one can recall the problems of the supervisory committee system under which each member of the ruling People's Redemption Council (PRC) was given some responsibility for supervising one or more of the ministries and agencies. The situation has been described thus:

It created a shadow cabinet in which the chairman of the respective PRC committee was constantly counterminding the decision of both civilian and military cabinet officers with respect to policy matters, personnel appointments and the general administration of the ministries.²¹

Because the committee system did more harm than good, it was abandoned. However, this did not produce much improvement in public administration, as noted in a report prepared for the USAID in 1983:

The team heard repeated reference to problems of serious and pervasive lack of management capability and effectiveness in both the public sector and the private sector. In the public sector this deficiency is

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Table 6.

15

Selected Economic Indicators
(\$ millions)

	1971	1973	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983
GDP at factor cost	342.5	427.3	559.1	568.6	633.2	670.0	777.0	800.0	764.0	779.0	730.7
Exports	246.6	324.0	394.4	457.1	477.4	486.4	536.6	600.5	529.2	477.4	427.6
Imports, c.i.f.	162.4	193.5	331.2	399.2	463.5	480.9	506.5	533.9	477.4	428.4	411.6
Fixed Investment	73.4	97.5	161.2	206.4	234.3	260.1	277.6	196.1	184.4	194.8	189.2
External Current Account					-140.3	-158.2	-135.6	-104.5	-77.3	-78.2	
(Factor payments)					(-68.9)	(-95.9)	(-87.7)	(-83.7)	(-72.0)	(-64.0)	
(Workers remittances)					(-27.5)	(-32.5)	(-35.0)	(-32.0)	(-33.0)	(-50.0)	
(Interest payments)					(-7.8)	(-10.8)	(-13.7)	(-23.9)	(-20.2)	(-31.9)	
Budget Surplus/ deficit (-)						-96.8	-145.6	-125.1	-72.7	-123.8	
<u>Percent Change</u>											
Real GDP at Factor Cost	5.5	4.2	-3.7	4.0	-0.8	3.9	4.0	-4.7	-5.0	-4.0	-3.7

Sources: Ministry of Planning & Economic Affairs.

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compounded by reported widespread lack of commitment to public accountability. Related attributes said to characterize the Liberian work forces, especially in the public sector, include low work discipline, excessive absenteeism, tardiness, bribery, nepotism and payroll padding for personal and kinship gain.²²

Looking at the experience of public administration in Liberia over the last three decades one has to conclude that old habits die hard. For one thing, political interference continues to stand in the way of administrative efficiency. To be fair, however, it should be mentioned that such problems diminished somewhat during the 1970s, reflecting the desire of the government at the time to inject a greater degree of professionalism into the civil service. But it is also true that further progress in this direction has been slow, and the bureaucracy has become overburdened by indiscipline. Public corporations have been no exception, and this is one of the reasons for the worsening performance of a number of them in recent years. It is no surprise, therefore, that the bureaucracy under the military regime also has been unable to serve as a catalyst for development.

Conclusions

The preceding sections highlight the need for the Liberian authorities to give priority to establishing an appropriate framework aimed at helping to ensure the successful implementation of their development programs. In this connection, the importance of strengthening or establishing relevant institutions and improving the decision-making process cannot be overemphasized. By way of conclusion, therefore, the following broad propositions are being offered pointing to some of the elements to be considered in mapping a planning strategy for the future:-

1. Much of the success with planning will depend on the extent to which the political commitment to planning is developed and nurtured. We have seen that even when rules and policies have been established they have not been followed because of the inability or unwillingness of the political leadership to exercise the discipline that is required. In short, what is needed is a political system which will permit institutions to function as agents of economic development.
2. Development of a good public administration system should be a priority. This includes the continual and comprehensive exchanges of information both during the preparation of the plan and during its implementation. Procedures for the transmission of information should be enhanced and if necessary appropriate disincentives need to be established to encourage executing agencies to abide by them. This could be difficult in the absence of the exercise of firm political leadership, possibly through an effective National Planning Council. Moreover, review of the performance and even the relevance of existing institutions is much in order, and greater attention than in the past must be given to reducing the role of political patronage in the system so that reward and promotion can be made largely on the basis of competence.
3. The coordinating role of the Ministry of Planning & Economic Affairs must be strengthened. Two important considerations are the need for

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the Ministry to screen all development projects and proposals in light of the government's overall objectives and financial resources and the importance of it being in a position to effectively monitor the implementation of all government programs. The adopting of rules and procedures to achieve these ends is crucial if adequate stress is to be placed on the use of economic criteria in the decision-making process.

4. Prudent fiscal management is important for the successful implementation of the government's development programs. Since the annual budget is the instrument through which the plan is implemented in Liberia, it will be necessary not only to streamline the budgetary process in the interest of consistency and efficiency but also to establish appropriate control over all expenditures. Perhaps, thought should be given to the possibility of merging the Bureau of the Budget, which is an autonomous agency, the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Planning into one agency responsible for finance and development planning.
5. Given the Government's commitment to the free-enterprise system, the planning strategy must focus on the development of the private sector more than in the past. The participation of all sectors ensures that plans and programs reflect the preferences of all economic units and are acceptable to them.

FOOTNOTES

¹See Albert Waterston, Development Planning: Lessons of Experience (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1965). Ann Seidman, Planning for Development in Sub-Saharan Africa (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1974); Reginald H. Green, "Four African Development Plans: Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria and Tanzania," Journal of Modern African Studies, 3, 2, (1965), 249-279; T.Y. Shen,

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²Robert Clower et al. Growth Without Development: An Economic Survey of Liberia (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1966), p.4.

³Martin Lowenkopf, Politics in Liberia (Stanford, California: Hoover Institution Press, 1976), p.2.

⁴Government of Liberia, Four-Year Plan for Economic and Social Development 1967-1970, (Monrovia), p.5.

⁵Department of the Treasury, Report of the Treasury Department for the Period October 1, 1961 to September 30, 1962. (Monrovia 1962), p.5.

⁶Department of the Treasury, Report of the Treasury Department for the Period October 1, 1962 to September 30, 1963. (Monrovia 1963), p.3.

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⁷For the salient features of the adjustment program see Moeen A. Qureshi, Yoshio Mizoe and Francis d'A Collings, "The Liberian Economy", IMF Staff Papers (Washington, D.C., July 1984), pp. 304-307.

⁸Lowenkopf, Politics in Liberia, p.74. The author also noted the inability of the Liberian Development Corporation, which was mandated to provide technical and financial assistance to small industry and promote investment possibilities in Liberia, to function properly because of insufficient funds.

⁹John R. Eriksson, et al, U.S. Economic Assistance Strategy Assessment: Liberia: Report prepared for U.S.A.I.D. February 1983, pp. 30-31.

¹⁰As an indication of the lack of official status of the 1967-1970 plan, the 1976-1980 plan was considered by the government to be the first national development plan.

¹¹H.W. Yaidoo, Development Policy Orientation for Liberia. Paper presented at the Third National Conference on Development Objective and Strategy, March, 1973, pp.10-11.

¹²See Curtis Campaigne, Kirk Wolfson and Carl Anonsen, Report on Conference on Development Objectives and Strategy (Monrovia, 1969).

¹³See Campaigne, Report on Second Conference on Development Objectives and Strategy (Monrovia, 1971).

¹⁴International Labor Organization Human Resources Development Mission to Liberia, Total Involvement: A Strategy for Development in Liberia, (Geneva: ILO), 1974.

¹⁵One of the concession agreements that was revised was that of the LAMCO Joint Venture Company, the largest iron ore company operating in Liberia. A critical review of the relationship between LAMCO and the Government of Liberia, which is a fifty percent partner in the joint venture, is provided by Jerker Carlsson, "Granges and the Undermining of Liberia: A Critique of a Joint Venture Arrangement". Review of African Political Economy, (January - April, 1982), 72-84. The author points out that between 1963 and 1976 LAMCO produced a total surplus of \$484.7 million, of which only 27 percent was received by the Liberian Government.

¹⁶In practice, the National Bank of Liberia has been ineffective as an institution concerned with mobilizing savings and making them available to the community for purposes of economic development. Although the 1976-1980 Plan called for the diversification of production and greater participation of Liberians in the economy, commercial bank loans were geared toward trade which is largely dominated by Lebanese and Indian traders. With regard to the use of the American dollar, it is significant that Liberian coins in circulation have increased substantially in recent years, now comprising 23 percent of recorded money supply compared with 9 percent in 1980.

¹⁷See Report of the Private Sector Commission on Improving Investment Possibilities in Liberia, (Monrovia, 1979), part II.

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18For a general discussion of the management role of government in developing
Developing argument is resources,
Graves, "A New Concept of Government for development, (February 1974), 69-70. The basic un r es are to make the most of their must, above all, be one of management.

19For ch of the Head of State on the economy made
on November

20Erik sistance Strate Assessment: Liberia, p.7.

21J. G "Dr. Doe" and the Demise of Democrac ,
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22Eriksson, U.S. Economic Assistance Strategy Assessment: Liberia,
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AN HISTORICAL EXAMINATION OF LIBERIA'S ECONOMIC POLICIES, 1900 - 1944

Yekuti'el Gershoni

Liberia under the leadership of President William V. S. Tubman (1944-1971), was seen by many as a "success story," its achievements surpassing those of the past. In the sphere of internal affairs, it seemed the gap between the ruling repatriate minority and the indigenous majority was being bridged; in the sphere of foreign relations Liberia attained a position of prominence among the new African states and in the economic sphere, Tubman's policy, named the "Open Door Policy," seemed to be working well. The Open Door policy principles, as defined by the President himself, were: "We shall encourage foreign investments and the granting of foreign concessions where Liberians have not reached the position where they were capable and competent to explore and exploit the potential resources of the country. We shall continue to guarantee protection to investors and concessionaires of all investments and concessions. All concessions, I stress again, must be on the basis of mutuality."¹

Ten years later Tubman, still President, could point to remarkable achievements resulting from his Open Door policy. When the policy was initiated, there had been three concession companies operating in the country. In 1961 Liberia had 23 agreements with large concession companies, eight of which were in operation at that time. The companies managed rubber plantations, iron ore mines, export of timber and other products. The investments of foreign firms in Liberia grew considerably. In 1956 the sum total of foreign investments was 60 million dollars, while in 1961 the sum rose to 162.7 million dollars.²

Tubman presented his Open Door policy as a drastic departure from the economic policies of previous administrations. Not being content with stressing the differences, he went further to denounce and condemn his predecessors' policies as a "Closed Door" policy, stating: "I will never subscribe to such supercilious shortsighted, contracted and phobic policy that paralyzed industry and investment and kept the nation in poverty, suspicion, despair, commotion and turmoil."³

The purpose of this article is to examine Liberia's economic development from a historical perspective and to analyze the processes that brought them about, as well as examine the economic plans of Liberian leaders from the beginning of the century up to World War II.

1. Economic Development Through British Assistance

The economic situation of Liberia in 1900 is depicted in a report on the Liberian economy written by French Admiral Richard for his superiors in Paris. According to that report, most of the crops exported were those harvested as they grew naturally, without cultivation, ginger, rubber, palm

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oil and palm fibres were cited as instances. Only two crops were grown on plantations -- coffee and cocoa -- but the largest and most successful coffee plantation was the one owned by the German Consul Humpelmayer.

Although government income was based exclusively on customs duties and taxes collected from various licenses, their collection was so backward that fifty percent of the government revenues never reached the Treasury. Export and import were managed by the British shipping company of Elder Dempster and the German company of Woermann. These companies, which also owned the big warehouses, were the largest financial concerns in Liberia and often procured loans for the Liberian government. In 1900 there was no one legal currency in Liberia, and the government used to pay for services with bonds, by which the trader could pay the various customs duties.⁴ Furthermore in the beginning of the 20th century, Liberia was still burdened with heavy debts, \$800,000 out of which \$500,000 represented money due on a loan provided by British financiers back in 1871.⁵

Severe political problems added to the gravity of the economic situation. The black republic was obliged at that time to prove its effective control over its hinterland in order to stop its colonial neighbors, Britain and France, from occupying territories which Liberia claimed. The subordination of the hinterland to Liberian authority necessitated the establishment of army units and the enlargement of the scope of activity and powers of the various Liberian government departments. All these required expenses beyond the republic's means.

The leaders of Liberia were aware of the gravity of the situation. They understood well that recovery of their country's economy was their major task, as expressed by President Garretson Gibson (1900-1904): "The world is moving and Liberia must move too or be trodden under foot. . . . What the world wants now is to see a nation that can make money and take care of itself."⁶

Gibson's successor, President Arthur Barclay (1904-1912) believed that the republic's economic difficulties could be resolved by means of the development of agriculture. In his speeches and letters he mentioned several times his conviction that Liberia should base its economy on a market crop like cotton or palm oil.⁷ As part of his efforts to develop agriculture, he decided in his first year of office to establish a department of agriculture which was to instruct and aid the farmers in the cultivation of market crops. For instance, he promised assistance to farmers who would grow cotton for export.⁸ One of the obstacles on the way to development was lack of capital and the government tried to attract it from abroad in two ways. The first was by enlarging the scope of trade and encouragement of foreign traders to trade in the hinterland. Thus in 1904 the president abolished the restrictions on trade companies (which limited their operations to the ports of entry), and opened the whole coast to them.⁹ The next step came at the end of 1908 when foreign traders and companies were permitted to move their activities from the coastal strip to the hinterland.¹⁰

The other means of development would be attracting investment by foreign companies. Arthur Barclay was not oblivious to the fact that European powers having much greater resources used to grant concessions to private companies in order to induce them to invest money in development projects of their

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colonies in return for commercial monopoly, and he wished to follow in their footsteps. In 1904 he got in touch with the Liberian Development Company, a corporation of several British companies directed by Harry Johnston who once was an official of the British Foreign Office.¹¹ In July the company received the right to establish a bank in Liberia, to import goods without customs duties, to build and operate telegraphic and telephone services, to build and maintain bridges, roads and canals.¹² First priority was given by the President to the plans dealing with reorganization of tax and customs collection and establishment of a standing army in Liberia which could be entrusted with the task of improving Liberian control in the hinterland. These plans could not be realized without assistance of a foreign power. Liberia did not possess the finances and the skilled manpower necessary, and therefore it welcomed in 1907 the British offer to send financial advisers and military personnel who were to assist the government in executing the reforms and establishing the Liberian Frontier Force.¹³

Unfortunately, most of Barclay's attempts to boost economic development of his country failed. The "Liberian Development Company" encountered many difficulties from the outset, and by the end of 1907 there was a considerable reduction in its activity. Development projects, plans to establish a bank and communication facilities were neglected and eventually abandoned altogether.¹⁴

As in the case of foreign companies, the efforts to put Liberian agriculture on a modern basis, develop commercial crops and provide proper instruction to the repatriate-Liberian and indigenous-Liberian farmers were mostly unsuccessful, and the hopes to increase the volume of Liberian trade were only partly realized. Some of the causes of the failure were the absence of and insecurity of roads as well as inadequate port facilities. As a result of this situation, Liberian exports were much smaller than the exports of similar products from neighboring territories in West Africa having better communication and transport facilities. Liberia had no control over shipping lines; the ships calling on her ports were mostly British or German and no Liberian line existed.¹⁵

The series of economic failures was accompanied by a crisis in Liberian-British relations, a crisis started by the growing interference of British officials serving in Liberia (the consul, customs receivers, army officers) in her internal affairs, which reached its peak in the unsuccessful attempt of Major Cadell, the British officer who organized and commanded the Liberian Frontier Force, to incite his soldiers against government authority.¹⁶

The Liberian leaders faced a difficult situation; they were reluctant to receive further British aid which proved disappointing and even threatening for them, but their grave economic problem was still unresolved. Moreover, the economic failures prevented them from pursuing their plans to impose political control over the interior. They could not afford a failure of that kind and so they intensified their efforts to try to find another solution for the deteriorating economic situation. They did not give up the notion that only massive outside aid would resolve the difficulties, and when the British proved unable to provide the requisite assistance, the Liberians turned to the United States.

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2. Economic Development Through American Assistance

In 1908 the Government of Liberia approached the United States Government requesting political and economic aid. Following the request an Inquiry Commission was sent by the American Government to the Black Republic in 1909. It arrived in Liberia immediately after the failed coup of Major Cadell, which the Commission members interpreted as a British plot to overthrow the Liberian authority and impose British rule. Moreover, they felt that the United States had a moral commitment towards the Black Republic's welfare and independence and thus they supported the grant of comprehensive aid to Liberia. The Commission recommended inter alia that the Government of the United States should help the Black Republic cope with the problems of repaying its internal and external debts and in maintaining its sovereignty and independence.¹⁷

The American Secretary of State P.C. Knox adopted the Inquiry Commission's recommendations, but because of internal political reasons,¹⁸ decided to divide the burden of the assistance and persuaded American, British, French and German bankers to establish a financial organization that would grant a two million dollar loan to Liberia. Each of the parties involved was to send a representative who was to act as a customs receiver, the four customs receivers constituting an international controlling body which would manage the Liberian customs and would ensure the regular repayment of debts to creditors. The American customs receiver was to head the controlling body and act as financial adviser to the government of Liberia. At the same time Liberia was to sign bilateral agreements, according to which American experts would assist it in agricultural development, construction of roads, demarcation of the border, training and commanding the Liberian Frontier Force.¹⁹ In the autumn of 1912 the four states came to an agreement as to the tasks and powers of the receivers. The bankers decided to grant a loan of 1.7 million dollars, out of which a sum of 15,000 dollars was allotted for the payment of debts; the remainder, assigned for development projects, was deposited in the banks belonging to the group. It was agreed that this sum would be released only upon recommendation by the customs receiver.²⁰

The loan and assistance proposed had several negative aspects from the Liberian point of view. The number of foreign officials was to be increased, the scope of their activity and their powers were to be extended far beyond those of the British officials in 1908. There were severe limitations as to the use of the loan; Liberia was obliged to receive approval from the receivers for every expense suggested.

However, there were considerable advantages as well. The international control should serve well the Republic in organizing tax collection, advising on financial management of the state and directing funds for development of agriculture, communications and roads. At the same time Liberia would be able to pay its creditors and free itself from oppressive debts. American aid in other spheres -- establishment and training of the Frontier Force, advice in agricultural matters, the sending of surveyors to demarcate the boundary -- all these would give Liberia the means to control its hinterland, increase trade and develop agriculture. The advantages outweighed the disadvantages, and in November 1912 the Liberian legislature approved the aid and loan

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agreement.²¹ For two years it seemed that Liberia's expectations from the international receivership and the American assistance in general were coming true. Unfortunately the incipient process of recovery came to an abrupt end as a result of happenings far away from Liberia's borders.

3. The Influence of World War I on the Liberian Economy

Liberia was removed from the focus of events which brought about the outbreak of World War I. It declared its neutrality at the outset of the war (a position changed later). In spite of its neutral stand and its distance from the battlefields, Liberia suffered from the economic repercussions of the war. In order to appreciate the harmful effects, it should be remembered that Liberian exports and imports were entirely dependent on foreign, mainly German, companies.²² As a result of the outbreak of the war, the British and German shipping lines going to Liberia ceased their activities.²³ The British Consulate in Monrovia exerted heavy pressure on President Daniel Howard (1912-1920) to cause Liberia to limit the activities of the German traders.²⁴ As a result of the pressure, the Liberian legislature issued an order during its 1914-1915 session by which the 1908 act allowing foreign trade companies to operate in the hinterland and along the whole coast line was suspended.²⁵

The consequence was economic disaster; the export on which Liberia's prosperity depended was almost completely halted, cash crops like coffee, palm-oil, palm fibres, rotted away in the Liberian depots, and import of basic supplies like rice, flour, meat and oil stopped, their shortage being felt throughout the war.²⁶ Liberian Secretary of State C.D.B. King wrote about the influence of the situation on the Liberian economy in a letter to his American colleague: "The sudden outbreak of the European war, like a clap of thunder from a clear cloud, shook Liberia to its foundation and arrested the Republic from that era of national prosperity and development upon which she was just entering . . . the Government therefore not only found itself unable to pay the salaries of its officials, but was also faced with the probability of defaulting in the payment of the charges on its foreign loans."²⁷

The government of Liberia had to seek ways to extricate itself from the economic difficulties. It tried to obtain loans from the National City Bank of New York and from the Bank of British West Africa. The number of government officials was reduced, their salaries cut and paid half in cash and half in government bonds.²⁸ A compulsory "Emergency Relief Fund" which affected mainly the repatriate Liberians was introduced and a hut-tax of one dollar on each hut was imposed on the indigenous-Liberians.²⁹

However, all of these measures did not bring the expected results. The banks refused to grant a loan; the new taxes and cuts in workers' pay were not enough to enable Liberia to repay its debts and overcome loss of revenues. As the situation deteriorated further, Liberia decided on 1 June 1917 on taking the plunge and joined the Allies. Soon afterwards it requested again a loan from the U.S., this time as an ally in the war effort, eligible for assistance. The American Department of State approved in principle a five million dollar credit.³⁰

World War I brought Liberia to the brink of economic disaster. The Black Republic, which was on its way to economic recovery after receiving the loan

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and other assistance from the United States in 1912, found itself by the end of the war y, large debts and even worse, all its plans and interna ended null and void

Liberi c situation was symbolized by the fact that
the United to release a sum of 26,000 dollars from the
future loan the sending of a Liberian delegation to the
Peace Talks es after the war.³¹

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The affi 1 f the American Government to the loan request of September 1918 was given in principle only. The road from consent in principle to acceptance of the loan was long. Liberia, wishing to accelerate the process, instructed its delegation to the Peace Talks headed by Secretary of State and President-elect King to try to conclude the matter of the loan with the American delegation there. In the course of talks the Liberian commission came to realize that the American terms for the grant of a loan were tough; Liberia had to accept control by an American receiver not only on its customs, as was done according to the 1912 agreement, but on all its revenues. American citizens were to serve in the hinterland administration as District Commissioners, and Commissioner General. The Financial Adviser was to determine the budget and his approval was needed in order to grant concessions to foreign companies. At least four American army officers were to serve in the Liberian Frontier Force.³²

In spite of the tough conditions, King sent his recommendation from Paris to President Howard. He referred to the agreement as a bitter pill Liberia had to swallow in order to recover. In his opinion there was no other choice but give up part of Liberia's sovereignty in order to receive five million dollars.³³ Not all Liberian leaders accepted King's evaluation and conclusions. Although all were aware of their country's desperate need for funds, some of them objected strongly to the terms of the loan as proposed by the Americans. However fiery defence of their national honor was no substitute for the money so badly needed by their government.

Edwin Barclay, Secretary of State in King's cabinet, expressed the feelings of the Liberians in a private letter:

When we approached the American government for the loan it was not with the object of handing the country over to them in return for five million dollars, but rather to bind them by virtue of the material stake which they would thereby have in the country to assist it on the progressive road and to support it diplomatically against any possible aggression.³⁴

The Liberian legislature, under pressure of strong opposition, decided to send a delegation headed by President King to the U.S. in an attempt to modify the loan's terms. The delegation stayed in the U.S. from March to August 1921 without achieving anything. Now the Liberian leaders were forced to decide whether the loan as it was should be accepted or not. President King persisted in his support, put pressure on the members of the legislature and

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recruited the press to assist him in the campaign.³⁵ His efforts brought the desired results and the agreement was finally approved, but while the discussions in Liberia were going on, the emergency regulations which had enabled the President of the United States to grant loans to allied countries without the approval of the Senate were not in force any more (since 1921), and so the agreement had to be approved by the American Senate, which turned it down on the 27th of November 1922.³⁶

The rejection of the loan by the American Senate brought an end to the discussions between the Liberian leaders, but both supporters and objectors to the loan were faced with the unresolved problem and had to seek other ways for a prompt recovery of the Liberian economy. A new plan was worked out with the assistance of the American financial adviser to the Liberian government, Sidney de la Rue. The main point of the program was balancing Liberia's budget at all price. To achieve this goal government expenses were cut, welfare and health services were reduced, paragraphs dealing with sanitation, public buildings, etc., were omitted from the budget and the education budget was cut and then abolished altogether. Revenues were carefully calculated to pay the debts and the running expenses of the government.³⁷

De la Rue suggested ways to increase trade activities and improve port facilities in order to make the revenues grow. Thus the 1916 ban issued during World War I to prevent foreign traders from operating in the hinterland was abolished; the interior was again opened to trade.³⁸

Another act provided funds for the improvement of port facilities and imposed a payment of anchorage fees on foreign ships to be paid in advance in the beginning of every year by the shipping companies, according to the number of ships expected to call at Liberian ports.³⁹ According to the British Consul General's evaluation, the act would enable the Liberian Treasury to gain in 1923 25,195 dollars.⁴⁰

Sidney de la Rue described the years 1923-1925 as the most difficult years for the Liberian economy, almost as difficult as the war years. At the end of that period Liberia succeeded in balancing its budget. It was not a balance achieved by juggling with figures, short-time loans and inflations, but a real balance.⁴¹

While the economic program was being put into practice, the Firestone Tyre and Rubber Corp. of Akron, Ohio, one of the largest rubber companies in the U.S., became interested in the development of rubber plantations in Liberia. In 1924 the company owned by Harvey Firestone presented three agreements to the Government of Liberia. One of the agreements dealt with the enlargement and development of Monrovia harbor; the other two dealt with the lease of territory for the purpose of rubber plantations.⁴²

The government of Liberia welcomed the Firestone proposals as from their standpoint there were definite economic advantages. Lease of territory would bring immediate revenues to the Liberian Treasury. Development of Monrovia harbor and opening of roads in the hinterland would enlarge the volume of trade. Furthermore acceptance of the Firestone proposals seemed the final realization of a long coveted aim of the Liberian leaders -- from the beginning of the century they wished to base their economy on a market crop

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which was to ensure revenues, enlarge the scope of trade and enable development true; ther the most s

Arthur Barclay's dream of 1904 was coming to invest in Liberia more than ever before and s found.

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before ratification of the three agreements consent to the five million dollar loan from reed between Liberia and the American tting the paragraph dealing with the ators and a Commissioner General for the

It seem Firestone had decided to add the loan agreement for several reasons. The agreement terms were intended to provide Harvey Firestone with power over the Liberian financial system by means of his own control mechanism. Control of that kind was intended to ensure his investment against losses which the inefficiency of the Liberian administration could bring about.

The mention of the loan agreement gave rise to renewed dispute, similar to that of 1921, between the supporters and objectors to the loan proposals. One of the main opponents was a senior Liberian politician, Thomas J. R. Faulkner, who headed the opposition "People's Party." He argued that King and his cabinet were selling Liberia to the U.S. and warned that the "white people, . . . the Americans . . . were coming to rule Monrovia."44

At the head of the loan supporters stood President King. He persisted in his 1919 view that Liberia had no choice but to accept the loan in spite of the need to give up some of its sovereign rights. The government of Liberia did prove its ability to balance its budget by means of severe austerity measures, but there was no doubt that it had no means of mobilizing the finances required for development and for repayment of its external debts. These two problems could have been solved with the help of the loan offered by Firestone, and the concession agreements could have provided an opportunity for developing an export crop thus establishing the Liberian economy on a sound basis, in a similar way to cocoa on the Gold Coast or groundnuts in Senegal. King persevered and eventually he succeeded in overcoming the opposition and attained his goal -- on the 1st September 1926 the loan agreement, and on the 18th November 1926 the concession agreements were ratified.46

The Crisis of the Thirties

In the beginning of the thirties a major political and economic crisis emerged in Liberia. The political problems started in 1929 when rumors began to circulate that slavery existed in Liberia. Under pressure of the U.S. government Liberia requested that a League of Nations Commission of Inquiry be sent to Liberia to examine the accusations. The Commission of Inquiry conducted an investigation and published its findings on 8 August 1930. One of the report's articles stated: ". . . classic slavery . . . no longer exists in Republic of Liberia, slavery as defined by the 1926 Anti-Slavery convention does exist insofar as inter and intra-tribal domestic slavery exists."47

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The Commission's findings had severe repercussions on the external and internal political situation of Liberia; U.S. and Britain withdrew their diplomatic recognition of the black republic, President C.B.B. King and Vice-President Allen Yancy resigned on 2 December 1930 and Secretary of State Edwin Barclay became president of the republic. The investigation and its aftermath caused unrest among indigenes, and the group most concerned, Kru-Liberians, revolted in 1931.⁴⁸

The political crisis came on top of a severe economic situation. The loan received from Firestone by means of the Finance Corporation of America and the concession agreements, did not bring about the expected recovery of the Liberian economy. As a matter of fact the economy deteriorated even further. At the end of the twenties the balance of trade was negative and the excess of imports over exports amounted to \$3,018,778. Liberia accumulated a floating debt and its deficit increased from \$61,648 in 1927-28 to \$220,000 in 1930-1931.⁴⁹

There were several reasons for the deterioration. The export of raw rubber by means of which Liberia hoped to enlarge its revenues was on the decline, because in 1929 the fall in price of raw rubber on the world market brought about the curtailment of Firestone's activities in Liberia.⁵⁰ The economic depression of the thirties in Europe and U.S. deteriorated further the Liberian economy.

In order to extricate itself from this predicament Liberia turned to the League of Nations for assistance. In 1931-32 the League and U.S. Government proposed plans for far-reaching reforms in the economic, administrative and judicial systems of Liberia. One of the terms for the execution of these reforms was the involvement of European or American representatives in the affairs of the republic, involvement which came close to foreign control. Strong opposition to reforms on these terms gave an impetus to the Liberians led by President Edwin Barclay to initiate recovery plans of their own for the economy. The first step was to try to alleviate the burden of the 1926 loan by requesting the Finance Corporation to modify the terms of the payments and to advance additional sums under the loan still held by the corporation. When their request was turned down, the Liberian legislature decided in 1932 to pass a moratorium on the 1926 loan and the American financial advisor was dismissed.⁵¹

The second step was to try to interest other foreign investors in the natural resources of the country. Between 1931-1934 Liberia contacted and signed agreements with five companies originating from Denmark, Holland, Britain and Poland.⁵² These companies received concessions to operate in the republic mainly in two spheres -- prospecting for minerals and precious metals and development of market crops like rubber, cocoa, castor oil plants, etc. At the same time President Barclay launched in 1934 a three-year development program aimed at mobilizing resources for economic development and for introduction of administrative reforms.

The program stressed the development of agriculture, plans were prepared for instruction of farmers in modern methods of cultivation and incentives were granted for growing more rice. There was an extensive survey for discovery and mapping of minerals throughout the country and attempts were made to manufacture soap, distilled spirits, sugar, etc.⁵³

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The problems Barclay had to cope with were similar to those of his predecessors: lack of funds, negative balance of payments and balance of trade. His answers to these problems were similar as well, at first at least -- attracting funds by means of foreign investors, basing the economy on an export crop or minerals. However he went further; he realized that one of the main objectives on the way toward economic recovery should be making Liberia self-sufficient in as many spheres as possible. Therefore his development plans concentrated on agriculture for internal consumption, mainly rice, and manufacture of various goods. Wishing to stop the vicious circle of new loans in order to repay debt on former loans, he tried to reach an agreement with his country's main creditors -- Firestone and the Finance Corp. of America.

On 1st January 1935 a Supplementary Agreement No. 1 (to the 1926 agreement) between the Government of Liberia and the Finance Corp. was signed. According to it Liberia would not have to pay current interest on the loan when its annual revenues fall below \$450,000. The interest rate was lowered from 7 to 5 percent.

Liberia on her part agreed to repeal the 1932 moratorium. Two months later Liberia signed a supplementary agreement with Firestone which extended the exemption from customs duties to the company, and in return Firestone turned over to Liberia bonds worth \$650,000.⁵⁴

These moves improved the economic situation of Liberia, and as a result its administration and welfare facilities improved as well. This, in turn, improved the republic's image in the eyes of the international community, a change which led to renewal of diplomatic recognition by the U.S. on 11 June 1935 and later by Britain on 16 November 1936.⁵⁵

The real impetus to the Liberian economy came during World War II. Liberia became almost overnight an asset of importance. It became the major supplier of raw rubber to the Allies (after Malaya had been occupied by the Japanese), and its strategic location made it an important site for military bombers and supply planes enroute from the U.S. to the Middle East and to frontiers in Europe. The importance of Liberia to the Allies was manifested in the beginning of 1943 when for the first time in its history an American president, F.D. Roosevelt, visited Liberia. Edwin Barclay and President-elect William Tubman were invited for a return visit to the United States. Both leaders promptly accepted the invitation, visited the United States and in the course of their stay signed an agreement in the confines of the lend-lease program, promising American investment for the construction of a harbor in Monrovia for the use of the American Navy, an airfield for the American Air Force, the sending of agricultural experts to introduce new agricultural methods and better land utilization, and a team to conduct a geological survey.⁵⁶

In 1944 Tubman succeeded to the Presidency, and a new era started for the Liberian economy.

"Closed Door Policy"?

Tubman's critical attitude towards some of his predecessor's mistakes can be accepted, but it is doubtful whether his naming their policy "...

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supercilious, shortsighted, contracted and phobic" can be fully justified. Many of the principles upon which Tubman based his policy had already been applied by his predecessors. The idea of "Open Door" was initiated during Arthur Barclay's tenure, and later Edwin Barclay, although on a smaller scale. Harnessing foreign trade companies and investors to the objective of developing Liberia was the central theme of the economic policies of Arthur Barclay, Daniel Howard, C.D.B. King, and Edwin Barclay. Arthur Barclay's feat in opening the hinterland to foreign trade companies at a time of constant disputes between Liberia and its colonial neighbors over the control of its hinterland, is to be fully appreciated.

Tubman criticized harshly his predecessors' policies, but in the beginning of his presidency, he followed in their footsteps. In his first years of office he concentrated his efforts on receiving American aid as part of the lend-lease program. When the American experts conducted a survey in Liberia and discovered rich deposits of iron ore in Bomi Hills, a concession was granted to one company only -- the Liberian Mining Company (headed by Landsdell K. Christie) and the concession's terms were similar to those granted by former presidents to foreign companies.⁵⁷

When criticizing his predecessors, Tubman ignored the fact that the various Liberian governments did not perceive the severe economic problems of their country as needing separate treatment, but viewed them in a wider political context. The central question which interested these governments was how could Liberia keep its sovereignty and territorial integrity and impose its rule over the hinterland. Thus every suggestion to solve economic problems was examined first and foremost in the light of its contribution to the advancement of political objectives. When President Tubman accused his predecessors of adopting a "closed door policy" he conveniently disregarded the difference between their problems and the relatively secure political situation of his time.

Another change was the reassessment of west Africa's strategic importance in the context of international politics. In the pre-Tubman period, Liberia was a remote spot on the west African coast and great effort was required to persuade foreign governments or financiers to invest there. Every government or private financier ready to invest in Liberia requested and received substantial guarantees to protect their investments. The most demanding were the Americans, who wanted control over the entire administrative system.

During World War II the Allies realized that Africa was located on Europe's doorstep. The withdrawal of political control of the colonial powers and the emergence of independent African states did not bring similar withdrawal of the involvement of international economic interests. In the case of Liberia the involvement was even reinforced. The more the strategic and economic importance of Liberia grew, the easier it became to persuade companies and private entrepreneurs to invest in Liberia and Tubman's government indeed took advantage of the situation.

Tubman condemned in harsh terms the economic policy of his predecessors, but his "Open Door" policy did no better in solving the economic problems of the country. Liberia in Tubman's time enjoyed an impressive economic growth, but no real economic development, as rightly stated by the economists of Northwestern University in their 1966 study, Growth Without Development: An Economic Survey of Liberia.

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The relationship between Liberia and foreign companies in the beginning of the sixties was on the basis of partnership or the grant of government concessions. Suggesting an economic agreement on terms resembling those proposed by the Americans in the beginning of the twenties was unthinkable in the later period; but the dependence of the Liberian economy on foreign financing and initiative was no less than in the pre-World War two period.

It seems that Tubman's condemnation of his predecessors and designating their policy a "Closed Door Policy" does not convey the true economic reality of Liberia from the beginning of the century until World War II.

Footnotes

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General Thomas Quiwonkpa
and
His Quest For Democracy in Liberia:
Personal Reminiscences

Edward Lama Wonkeryor

I had the highest esteem for Thomas Gunkama Quiwonkpa from our adolescent years in Nimba County up to the time he joined the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) and became its first youngest commanding general after the violent April 12, 1980, coup d'etat. He was one of the major characters of the revolutionary event. Others included Thomas Weh Syen, who became vice head of state and co-chairman of the ruling military People's Redemption Council (PRC), and Samuel Kanyon Doe, the head of state and chairman of the PRC.

Born in Zuolay town, a rural Liberian agricultural town east of Lamco-Yekepa, a mining community, Quiwonkpa was a well-disciplined and loyal army officer of integrity. His ambition was to achieve quality education; however, he did not realize this goal because of the limited financial resources of his parents who lived mainly on subsistence rice farming.

In spite of the hardship, he persevered in his attempts to finance his own education. Like other underprivileged young Gio and Mano Liberians, Quiwonkpa was compelled to leave school and join the army in order to earn some money to return to school. This he did in 1970, never once dreaming about staging any coup d'etat to depose any government in Liberia. However, the economic and political situation which including gross human rights violations in Liberia of the late 1970s soon led him to join other non-commissioned army officers of indigenous background to overthrow the undemocratic civilian government of President William R. Tolbert, Jr., who was killed in the process.

Upon assuming power through the barrel of a gun, Quiwonkpa observed that he took part in the coup d'etat to "promote a change in the living condition of the common people who were economically and politically exploited for more than a century." He also noted that he would discourage corruption of all sorts because it is not only an annoyance but a threat to the development of the country and its people. Such sentiments become the guide for Quiwonkpa's political conduct. From April 1980 to October 1983, the general remained faithful to these sentiments. To demonstrate his determination he distanced himself from corrupt practices, and was widely perceived as a symbol of the revolution. However, most of his colleagues in the ruling PRC deeply absorbed themselves in the cascade of corruption, greed, graft, nepotism and tribalism. Quiwonkpa and Doe initially maintained an amicable relationship. This relationship turned sour when Chairman Doe began reneging in 1983 on the

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PRC's collective promise to return Liberia to constitutional democracy on April 12, 1985. Because of his insistence on the need to live up to the sacred pledge, Quiwonkpa was quickly regarded by Doe and his cronies as an outright obstacle to the continuity of their misrule and rampant corruption.

Consequently, upon Doe's orders, the defunct Executive Committee of the PRC, inadvertently transferred General Quiwonkpa to the bureaucratic position of secretary general of the PRC - a position which Quiwonkpa firmly rejected. A professional soldier and patriot, he could not countenance accepting the political and selfish purpose implicit in the offer.

Henceforth General Quiwonkpa would combat the Doe regime because of its uniquely barbarous character. In my book, *Liberia Military Dictatorship: A Fiasco 'Revolution'* (Chicago: Struggler's Community Press, 1985, pp. 84-85), I noted that Quiwonkpa maintained that he would accept the position of secretary general of the ruling PRC if the following conditions were met: (1) that good and valid reasons be given for his transfer; (2) that the military government return to the barracks by April 12, 1985 as promised; (3) that clarification be made as to the accusations made against him by some members of the PRC and government officials that he contemplated overthrowing the government. In view of these allegations, Quiwonkpa insisted that Doe should point out those who made the charges, institute an investigation and the guilty be made to bear full revolutionary penalty; (4) that because he considered himself a soldier, he be allowed to dress in his military attire at all times instead of wearing the Doe-inspired three-piece suit; (5) that he be allowed to remain in his barracks quarters with the soldiers, and (6) that Doe clarify why he had not and continued not to discipline Council members considering that he wielded tremendous power as head of state and chairman.

In a private conversation between Quiwonkpa and me at his barracks quarters in June 1983 regarding the sincerity of the PRC in upholding its promise to return Liberia to constitutional democratic government in 1985, I sought to explain to the General the trail which led inexorably to the promise made by Chairman Doe on behalf of the PRC government for the establishment of a democratic government. I recalled the startling and disquieting execution of Major General Thomas Weh Syen, vice head of state and co-chairman, Captains Nelson Toe, Henry Zuo, Robert Sumo and Harrison Johnson, all members of the PRC, for allegedly attempting to overthrow the PRC government in August 1981. My own feeling at the time as expressed to Quiwonkpa was that Doe and his cronies were determined at all cost to remain in power beyond 1985, and that whoever attempts to thwart this process will suffer the inevitable consequences - abrupt dismissal or summary execution.

I asserted that having been irrecoverably engrossed in "rampant corruption", Doe and his cronies were and are still afraid of losing power because of the great likelihood of national reprisal. Thus, they would seek to maintain power at all cost, rather than relinquishing it to the Liberian people for the enhancement of democracy.

Quiwonkpa was left before long with limited options: (a) he was to either accept, without preconditions, the disfunctional position of secretary general of the PRC, thereby being reduced to a "yes sir" official for the

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tyrannical Doe government, assimilate in the inescapable corrupt practices like his PR
 his own val ion which would have completely contradicted
 To achieve uphold and defend his principles at all cost
 Option (b) have been compelled to make a bid for power
 e, decisive, committed action

But u retreated into silence, not making his eerie
 views kno rs, trusted friends, admirers and the
 Liberian s between himself and Doe which had by now
 become a s festered on as he prolonged his silence
 Doe moved sing him from the army and the Council with
 the forfeit no genuine probable cause than that he had
 "adamantly refused to re ect the office of the head of state, chairman of the
 PRC and commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces of Liberia "

Doe suspected that as long as Quiwonkpa was alive and well he would attempt to stage a coup because of the manner in which he was treated by the PRC. Doe then decided to kill Quiwonkpa and his support staff - prominent military and political leaders as well as intellectuals from Nimba County. Soon Quiwonkpa and several other Nimba citizens would be implicated in a fake coup plot in November 1983. Many soldiers from Nimba County were brutally killed. Intellectuals were severely flogged and jailed. Young girls and women were violated by Doe's soldiers. Quiwonkpa and his spouse would escape unhurt to the United States.

Because of the threat demonstrated by the evil actions of Doe's murderers, I thought Quiwonkpa would have adopted a firm stance to deter genocide and further intrusion into Nimba County by Doe's death squad. Quiwonkpa did not act. I wondered for nearly three years why the general refused to take appropriate action against Doe knowing full well that he was marked to be eliminated on grounds that he was an obstacle to Doe's maintenance of power beyond 1985. In fact, besides Colonels Harrison Pennue and David Kemeh, members of the PRC, Quiwonkpa was the only member alive from the original group that staged the April 12, 1980 coup d'etat. And had Quiwonkpa been killed then, Doe and his cronies would have "all the power" to themselves. Doe bitterly resented Quiwonkpa's insistence that the PRC observe human rights, as well as his stand against unjustifiable secret executions. Quiwonkpa chastised the Doe regime on several occasions for secret executions of innocent civilians and paramilitary and security officers. The general persisted in asking Doe about the whereabouts of twelve persons arrested in 1983 for allegedly attempting to overthrow the PRC Government. Prominent among the 12 men who were arrested and summarily executed without due process of law by Doe's death squad killers headed by Colonel Alfred Menyea were: Captain Andrew Jones of Lofa County, 2nd Lt. Reginald Zarwolo (Nimba), Ex-Master Sergeant Mohammed Sirleaf (Lofa), Samuel Peters (Grand Gedeh) former SSU Director, Captain Arthur Quiah (Grand Gedeh), and Sergeant D.C. Nornoh (Kru Coast).

When Doe and Quiwonkpa separated militarily and politically in 1983, Quiwonkpa went underground in Monrovia with the help of some freedom loving people. While Doe's soldiers were carrying on the killing spree in Nimba County, Quiwonkpa and his wife were in safe hiding in Monrovia. However,

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after they had spend some time in Movrovia and the situation had calmed down, Quiwonkpa and his wife left Liberia and resurfaced in the United States.

Having arrived in the United States it became quite clear that he never had the desire to revenge the notorious regime of which he was once a major part, for at the time he considered such action showboating, especially in a Liberia where the current repressive Doe regime has created an atmosphere of gross human rights violation and disregard for the rule of law. Quiwonkpa felt that the unconducive political quagmire in Libéria was going to take care of itself in due time. But this perception of the political situation in Liberia was soon to change.

The most urgent question which faced Quimomkpa in 1984 and 1985, was what to do in the event Doe forces himself in the presidential chair against the will of the Liberian people. Almost all the time during the crucial political transition in Liberia in the preceding years; Quiwonkpa dramatically reversed his inactive approach when he discovered that Doe had banned the United People's Party (UPP) and Liberia People's Party (LPP) on unreasonable grounds that "the philosophies and ideology of these two parties were alien to the Liberian way of life." The truth of the matter was that these two parties attracted intellectuals, students, market women, and a significant element of the labor force of Liberia. And that had these two parties been franchised to participate in the election, it is common knowledge they would have beaten Doe's National Democratic party of Liberia (NDPL).

After banning UPP and LPP, Doe arrested and imprisoned leaders of these two parties on fake "treason charges." UPP and LPP leaders were freed after insufficient evidence was found to condemn them to death. It can be succinctly recalled that in view of the confused attitude of Chairman Doe concerning the establishment of political parties by opposition groups, the Catholic Bishops of Liberia were motivated to issue a statement in 1984. They spoke out about "the people's right to form political parties, not to be detained without trial, and the right to a just distribution of the country's goods and resources." Article 21 of the new Liberian Constitution indicates that "persons or property cannot be searched without a warrant; that every person accused of committing a crime has the right to counsel at every stage of the investigation; that no person in confinement be subjected to torture or inhuman treatment; that a person who is arrested must be charged within 48 hours and that there shall be no preventative detention." Article 77 indicates: Since the essence of democracy is free competition of ideas expressed by political parties and political groups, parties may freely be established to advocate the political opinions of the people." I cite the foregoing statements to demonstrate the non-existent legal and moral bases of Doe's actions in banning LPP and UPP from participatory politics.

The bureaucratic redtapes designed by Doe's Special Elections Commission (SECOM) to prevent other parties from participating in the elections, notwithstanding, three parties besides NDPL were eventually allowed to register. During the election, however, there were outright fraud, intimidation, and harrassment by the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL). A case in point was an illegal voting booth established at the Barclay Training Center (BTC). However, the Liberian people voted collectively and elected Jackson F.

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Doe of the Liberia Action Party (LAP) as president, clearly the "People's choice."

In a relatively short time, Chairman Doe realized that he had lost the presidential gamble. To remain in power, he ordered SECOM to recount the votes. During the recounting, by a commission of fifty persons (mostly Doe loyalists), SECOM and Doe connived to deprive the Liberian citizenry of their presidential choice. The commission unanimously agreed Doe was the winner, making a mockery of the democratic process. Doe thus had himself forced into the Liberian presidency through deliberate fraud, continual harassment, and flagrant irregularities in the handling and counting of the votes.

Hearing the cry of despair of the Liberian people and frustrated by the likelihood of the continuity of Doe's brutal and incompetent regime, General Thomas Quiwonkpa decided to take the ultimate gamble to free the Liberian people from anarchy and tyranny. Presuming Doe's intention was to hold on to power indefinitely whether he wins or loses in the election, Quiwonkpa cited the following in closing remarks in a June 17, 1985 interview with West Africa magazine: "I thought I staged the 1980 coup to free the people of Liberia from 133 years of oppression, but now Doe has declared war on our people again. I have no other choice but to join my people in their struggle for another freedom." (West Africa, June 17, 1985, p. 1204).

Quiwonkpa took the ultimate gamble because he strongly believed that the only viable solution to Liberia's economic, social and political problems was vitally linked to the removal of the Doe regime through force and replacing it by a representative government consisting of dependable, progressive, nationalistic, honest and committed Liberians from all ethnic groups with differing political views.

Quiwonkpa did not stage the November 12, 1985 coup attempt primarily because he wanted to become the new head of state. No; it was Quiwonkpa's intention not to spend more than a year in office. He wanted to see the establishment of a genuine democratic government in Liberia, as well as an end to injustice and brutality.

It was because of the crying of the masses of the Liberian people that Doe had stalled the process of democracy which impelled Quiwonkpa to leave his quiet life in Maryland, U.S.A., to put his life on the line. While it may be true that Doe was prepared with the help of Israeli security advisers to meet any force which may try to destabilize his regime, Quiwonkpa did not care about the risks involved for he saw it as a moral obligation to attempt to liberate the country from Doe's military dictatorship.

Realizing the significance of United States position in keeping Doe in power through the so-called policy of "not to abandon our allies, even if they are corrupt and unpopular," Quiwonkpa left the United States with some patriotic Liberians, joined other freedom-loving Liberians in Africa and together they planned the coup d'etat against the Doe regime and sought to implement it on November 12, 1985.

The question which frequents my mind is, why did the coup d'etat fail, considering the fact that it was well-planned and co-ordinated? The coup failed, as stated by Joe Wylie, a Liberian student leader and political activist who also actively participated in the execution of the coup, because of two reasons: (1) "First, the Israeli intervention on the side of Doe. Our

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communication system was jammed by the Israeli embassy and Israeli agents wearing Liberian Army uniform planned and recaptured the radio station with the First Battalion composed mainly of Doe's tribesmen. Our forces at the station did not shoot at the Israeli agents because they mistook them for members of the U.S. Military Mission who were impartially assessing the situation. (2) "Secondly, General Quiwonkpa's premature attempt at reconciliation spared many criminal elements of the Doe regime. This allowed Doe's forces to mobilize in order to save their people who were in prison. Had we been ruthless with them, they would have fled. But then General Quiwonkpa was a decent Christian gentleman who did not want a bloodbath. On reflection, this was a mistake as a bloodbath did follow after Doe regained power. His Krahn tribesmen slaughtered over 1,500 Liberians." (West Africa, February 17, 1986).

Another question which triggers my mind is where do we go from here as Liberians after six unpleasant years of military rule? As we all know, the Doe regime continues to violate human rights in Liberia, executes government officials, military personnel, politicians and suspected radical intellectuals after arbitrary arrests and unfair trials. In his testimony entitled: "Recent Developments and U.S. Foreign Policy," before the U.S. House of Representatives Subcommittee on Africa and the Subcommittee on Human Rights and International Organizations on January 23, 1986, The Rev. Dr. Thomas Hayden, eloquently stated: "Prior to 1980 the soldiers were poorly paid, insufficiently trained and inadequately housed. they were held in little regard by most Liberians. The U.S. realized that changes needed to be made and we participated in the training and equipping of the Liberian army. Too much training, too much equipment and too much power has been given to the Liberian army under the rubric of USAID. The army is now not a protector of the people but a group of well-trained men who have almost absolute power to intimidate, arrest, beat and even execute Liberian citizens. From having no power under President Tolbert they have become the enforcers of arbitrary use of power under President Doe. Prior to 1980, injustices under Presidents Tubman and Tolbert deprived many Liberians of their right to free speech and led in a few cases to the loss of life. Under Dr. and now President Doe, thousands of Liberians have lost their lives. They were killed by guns and bullets provided by the American taxpayer. Before the U.S. entered the scene with its massive aid Liberians were concerned with issues such as freedom of speech. Now they fear for their very lives."

"This untenable situation is compounded with the government of Israel taking an increased interest in providing military advice and training for Liberia. Israel is providing training for the personal protection of President Doe. It is financing a \$20 million Ministry of Defense building. On December 31, 1985, Israel's major general Sha'ad completed a visit to Liberia by promising to assist the Liberian government in training security forces. I question whether Liberia needs military assistance and advice from two military powers, Israel and the United States."

On the downside, Doe's regime has become increasingly unpopular for it actively participated in election fraud and deprived the Liberian people of their presidential choice. To me, the stability of Doe's government is in serious question given the fact that he had abandoned, since 1981, the concept for which the Liberian "revolution" was accomplished on April 20, 1980. Another point of interest is the great reluctance of the Liberian people to accept Doe as the "legitimate" president of Liberia because of fraud committed during the election and the horrendous human rights violation record of his

GENERAL THOMAS QUIWONKPA

six years military rule. It is time that the United States, given its interests in Liberia, asks or pressures Doe to step down while at the same time encouraging a democratic opposition acceptable to the Liberian people to assume power. If nothing is done, freedom loving Liberians may resort to an armed struggle to complete the quest for liberty and justice for which General Thomas Gunkama Quiwonkpa had to make the supreme sacrifice

REPORT FROM MUSARDU (LETTER TO AN AMERICAN FRIEND):
REFLECTIONS ON THE LIBERIAN CRISIS*

C. E. Zamba Liberty

Sometime in May a friend asked me to describe the political situation presently obtaining in Liberia and what I could offer as a practical solution to the present impasse if somehow the military factor ceased to be paramount.

I tossed the idea about and finally decided on the device of an open letter to an American friend as a means of attempting an answer to a quite complex problem.

What follows is that construct.

In the 1860s trading along the Liberian coast had drastically declined from the levels it had attained in the 1820s and 1830s. In an attempt to revive the trade by reaching an understanding with the indigenous ethnicities of the interior, the trader B. J. K. Anderson was accordingly commissioned by the government of Liberia to journey into the far up country until he touched base with the fabled Malinke kingdom in the Futa Jallon.

Anderson undertook the journey in 1869. It lasted a year. In a book published in 1870 and titled, Narrative of a Journey to Musardu, the Capital of the Western Mandingoes, he described his exploits.

Later European travellers in that region could not locate the Musardu as pictured by Anderson. Whether Musardu ever existed, had been destroyed, or had been abandoned after Anderson's visit in the tumultuous upheavals of that time has never been explained.

* Liberty's Reflections predate the October 1985 elections and the Quiwonkpa putsch of November 1985. Although a topical piece, its breadth and depth of analysis justify publication a year later.

C. E. ZAMBA LIBERTY

Dear Martin,

I know that by now you must be sick unto death with the Liberia problem. Who would not be with so intractable and persistent a subject? A subject that delights in evading ready analysis and comparative studies? And yet, I cannot help but disturb your pleasant Bethesda calm with these obnoxious rumblings from a far away country that should probably be rolled up and consigned to the dustbin of history. For what else is Liberia if not a bothersome collage of history that messes up the marvelously constructed and formidable arguments of learned academicians of the African world. Fathom the labyrinth, Martin, and you may yet discern the way out of the quicksand that frustratingly confines so many of us

LIBERIA'S PRESENT POLITICAL REALITIES

I

Today, it is but accurate to note that the Samuel K. Doe regime stands at the apex of power. In spite of a calamitous economic fact that is the worst since Liberia entered the modern economic world under Tubman, a gravely depressing social environment fostering fear and resignation, Doe has succeeded in fastening on Liberia a personal dictatorship. For the first time in Liberian history, and in a most cavalier manner, an autocratic regime has been imposed without the ameliorating constraints of the pressure of peer groups, church leaders, social codes, or political tradition. This consolidation of absolute power was adroitly maneuvered. In the beginning . . . as it is always said, "in the beginning" . . . there was the mild reluctant, generous and firm young leader who brooked no nonsense and represented sanity and reason against wild, woolly-eyed, and doped military and civilian iconoclasts. But slowly there came the steady progression up the greasy pole and the callous baring of the hidden autocratic personality. The rumored coup attempts and sinister plots produced the dead who were neither rumors nor plots. The show of brute and naked force against public institutions and persons were not imagined acts . . . Yes, Doe is indeed at the apex of the power triangle. Only the American presence prevents him from going overboard a la Idi Amin or Marcias Nguema or Bokassa . . . Still, some would wager that only the massive American financial aid sustains him.

Doe did not originate the use of terror tactics in Liberian politics. First systematically adapted by Tubman in the last quarter of his 27-year rule, it was subsequently abandoned by Tolbert as a deliberate instrument of state policy and control. With a brutality and crudity that belied Tubman's finesse, Doe has driven underground or effectively silenced those forces whose efforts made the continuation of the Tolbert regime inoperative. The University of Liberia which played a unique role as "conscience of the country" during the Tolbert years lost its autonomy via a vicious physical assault. The institutional churches are constantly threatened and harassed. As might be expected, military and civilian rivals have been eliminated, intimidated into acquiescence, exile, or incarcerated and tortured. The electoral registration process of people and parties is proving to be a colossal farce, an exercise in futility and a device for ferreting out and dealing with those "recalcitrant" civilians who still refuse to see the light. As for those newspapers who enjoyed a field day under Tolbert, they have been compelled to toe the line.

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Doe is now surrounded by an impressive coterie of sycophants and campfollowers drawn from the professionally qualified bureaucrats and technocrats who understandably think in terms of personal and family survival above all else. Political opportunists and habitual timeservers who lack training and skills find the situation most delightful for personal enhancement. The common refrain of all these people is that as Doe is America's choice, and America foots the bill for his charade, then perforce they will dance by Doe's music so as to partake in the substantial largesse America is putting forth. Doe craftily plays on this perception. For the American provider, he seemingly impresses that only his iron rule stands between order, however, imperfect, and satanic socialism.

Certainly, Doe is at the pinnacle of his power. Like St. George, he has slain the mighty dragon of Americo-Liberianism; savaged the rampaging hydraheaded socialism; preserved the Liberian maiden in all her primordial innocence.

Martin, I have focused on the intimidatory feature of Doe's rule not because it is the monocausal reason of what is all wrong with Liberia today. You are too familiar with Liberia for such a trite explanation. I have not concentrated on it because such tactics may not arise again. The security apparatus is perhaps a permanent part of any Third World government. I do so because it has now become an end in itself. Tubman employed terror as a tactical device for the strategic objective of preserving the state structure and system he had inherited and modified. Tubman's use of terror supplemented the political and administrative organization; a means towards an end. Doe's terror is his sole instrument of state power. His whims and caprices determine its use. Totally absent is a vision of what Liberia should become five, ten, or twenty years from now. Beyond venal pursuits of the moment, the vacuous perquisites state power offers in an underdeveloped country like Liberia, Doe has neither prescience nor wile to project a new construct.

Doe's attempt to reconstruct Liberia as the traditional Congo state minus the Congo seems to be the cornerstone of whatever political ideas he possesses. In the Congoes' place, he would gratuitously insert himself. He apparently seeks to do, on a strictly personal level, what the blacks did after the death of Joseph Jenkins Roberts: substitute a black-dominated oligarchy for a mulatto one. "Same taxi, different driver." Herein lies the rub.

In his attitude towards the reconstructed state and the principal instrument of state power, Doe has encountered the most passionate resistance from those forces whose combination successfully took on the Tolbert Administration. Why? Because, in the long run, his approach will preserve intact all the negatives of the old order without any of its redeeming graces. Some of these forces are prepared, despite the odds, to continuously and persistently challenge Doe. They know what Doe's response will be. But going to jail for political offense no longer carries the social stigma it once did. And exile, however tenuous and impecunious, is no longer a dreaded pill.

II

Although at the summit of state power, Doe is currently weaker than ever. Admittedly, he has at his disposal the most powerful security and military

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network in Liberian history. Admittedly, he still carries the aura of being the first insertion into the Americo-Liberian list of rulers. Admittedly, he is truly of the bowels of the land, a concept dear to the hearts of reformers. Admittedly, he has exhibited an indomitable will to survive and a certain mastery of the rudiments of his job. Notwithstanding, these do not obfuscate glaring chinks in his armor.

First, it is arguable that Doe, like Tubman, has the incontestable loyalty of his amorphous security and military apparatus. Their indiscriminate and random employ augurs desperation, not confidence. Repeated purgings indicate stress and apprehension. Internal rivalries may serve to induce cohesion but this also leads to widespread lying and rumor-mongering which is oftentimes counter-productive to good government and public confidence. External social fissaporous tendencies have permeated the ranks. At the slightest indication of disintegration, there is apt to be the scattering effect as happened after the coup. Only a hard core, bound by sentiments of ethnicity, greed, or retention of ill-gotten gains, remain indisputedly committed.

Second, the loyalty of government personnel, even at the highest rung, is questionable. These persons feel that they are on a ship with a slow irreparable leak that is destined to sink sooner or later. While paying lip-service, they become Nicodemuses at night. Nothing governmental is confidential; anything can be had -- not necessarily for money, but for future security.

Third, Doe is not believed. To operate a system such as the one presently in Liberia, the leader must be totally believed. Doe has played the "plot" trick once too often. He has cried "wolf" so much that when the wolf does come, he will not be believed. There are no controversial figures of substance left in his government to cast blame on for asinine mistakes. He is an emperor without clothes, the worst scenario for an aspiring dictator. Consequently, he is not trusted. His willingness to sacrifice his closest friends and associates at the slightest sign that the mud is about to splatter on him reveal base cowardice in a man who delights in exuding dash and bravery.

Fourth, Doe possesses two major leadership defects which appear to be irreparable: (a) He exhibits certain traits of the warrior chieftain. There is the daily posturing of calm and innocence then the exploding into a paroxysm of rage before the deadly attack; the concentration of all actions in the person of the leader without any reference to institutions, however tenuous; the cursory dismissal of consensus, compromise and coalition as non-macho; and, above all else, suspicion against one and all, a super sensitiveness and temperamentalism that defies rhyme or reason. Doe is not tomorrow's Liberia but day before yesterday's. (b) He has gone as far as he will in his educational growth. His success in surviving has led him to believe that he knows all there is to know. Apply the same methods used to seize and hold power to the aches of civilian life and all will be right. His limited formal education is only a part of the problem. Rather, it is the mounting frustrations of coping with the myriad complexities of modern Liberia. And Doe desperately yearns to be considered a "civilized" man. But "civilization," in the Liberian context, befuddles and eludes him. He cannot grasp its finer points and nuances nor the intricacies of its symbols. Thus his strivings are mocked: "C-I-C" ("Commander-in-Chief") becomes "Country-Imitating-Congo." He is most uncomfortable with the intelligentsia

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whom he admires but instinctively distrusts. A few members are kept around as glorified clerks, to show his importance and to display mastery over.

Fifth, the Doe coup has not, ironically, resolved the "national" issue. It opened up a Pandora's box. It exacerbated matters by suddenly elevating to the top of the social pyramid a small peripheral ethnicity, the Krahn, not known for their educational attainments, industriousness, or the natural resources of their lands, over larger ones with an intelligentsia equal or superior to the Congo (the Kru), or were the instruments of state expansion (the Lorma), or possessed substantial natural resources (the Gio and Mano), or were very industrious (the Lorma, Gio, Mano, Kpelle, Kissi, Gbandi), or were perceived as instinctively intelligent and had been the progenitors of state-building in the Liberian region (the Vai). This did not sit well when one considered that the Congo and Kru had been at each other's throat for over a century and a quarter.

Who should be the logical heirs to the Congo? In this question lies the crux of current Liberian dilemma. Though other ethnicities had been coerced into accepting Congo primacy in the Liberian state, at least it could be argued that the Congo had nucleated the state and directed its affairs for 133 years. Could the same be said of the Krahn? The appointment of unqualified Krahns to a plethora of government posts has not proved administratively sound or politically wise. This is even more questionable in a time of economic recession and job scarcity, especially for college graduates. Thus the classic Americo-Liberian/Indigene divide has been transformed into a Krahn/Other Indigene one. More invidiously, and for the first time in Liberian history, there is a rampant growth of ethnicity. The country is literally splintering along ethnic lines. In the continuing struggle for limited jobs, titles and privileges, the intelligentsia and other power seekers are ruthlessly employing the ethnic catapult. Tragically, the army itself is not immune to the game. All indications are that it has been very thoroughly infested. In a situation where academic qualifications or on-the-job experience amount to nil, the individual naturally falls back on the security blanket of the ethnic group for support. The aspirant dreams of how the ethnic group can propel him to national prominence; and through him, the ethnic group can succeed to the Monomakh's Cap of Congodom. These dreams converge through individual actions on the national scene. The suppressed beast in the Liberian people has been lamentably released.

Sixth, the prospects for minimal alleviation of the dismal economic picture during Doe's stewardship is definitely out of the question. The rut has gone too far and the Doe team is totally incapable of even arresting it. "Fish gets rotten from the head," said the late President King. Doe is perceived by the Liberian people as excessively greedy and grasping, a venal young man who is swiftly out-Tolberting Tolbert. He is no free enterprise version of Rawlings or Sankara, who are respected for their honesty if not for their policies. Where corruption once seemed to be a monopoly of a few, it is now the standard of the many. Doe has democratized corruption. Not only is it rife, it is open and direct. No longer an extra-curricular, it is the means for survival for many government employees who have to wait two or three months to receive paychecks. "What to do," is the common refrain. "When in bat town, hang like a bat." Unlike the corruption of Tubman's time, people are not ploughing their money back into the economy in income-generating, and subsequently revenue-generating, activities. As a consequence of bitter

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experiences garnered during the coup when personal bank accounts were frozen and, in some cases, released after paying a ransom to the appropriate military authority, homes looted and occupied, assets attached or confiscated, and personal vehicles seized and damaged, Liberians with money are either taking it out of the country or "sitting" on it. Doe and his cohorts, the prime beneficiaries of the previous confiscatory measures, are now the main practitioners of this art. Like the others, who may or may not have deserved those harsh punitive acts, the parvenues are unwilling to be victims should the tide turn. In the present climate, everyone is lying low. A few hardy souls are building homes in the suburbs of Monrovia with an eye over the shoulder. The public blames the military for the collapse of an already dying economy. "Native woman born soldier/Congo woman born rogue!" sang some market women after the coup. Last year, a friend heard this modification: "Native woman born soldier/But some native woman born rogue too!"

Finally, Doe has made a mockery of the electoral process. High expectations exist among the Liberian people. Ever since 1980 they have believed, and been led to believe, that the principal obstacle to their material well being, Congo hegemony, had been removed. It was only a matter of time before everyone would live as well as the Congo upper class. There was a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. Then the rainbow slowly began dissolving. For a while, the Congo factor was used to explain the intolerable economic difficulties people were enduring. But then that bubble burst. As the contradictions in military leadership became increasingly glaring, people transferred their high expectations from the incompetent military government to the promise of a freely elected civilian one. Doe has now made mincemeat out of this prospect.

It seems to me that the constitution-making exercise was undertaken with the following in mind: (a) providing a face-saving withdrawal scenario for the military, even to the extent of guaranteeing their lives and acquisitions; (b) offering an alternative through which the high expectations of the public could be peacefully channelled; (c) becoming the vehicle for the development of a new political consciousness and class, rooted in the democratic process and transcending the particularistic ethnic tendencies; and (d) hopefully laying the basis for a reconstituted Liberia. I do not think that most of the participants of the initial constitution-making exercise envisioned Doe as the J. J. Roberts of the Second Republic. They prayed that aware of his limitations, he would play the umpire role, the honest broker above the fray. But they did not reckon with Doe's ambitions and self-image. An early indication was his breaking of Quoiwonkpa in 1983 and his manipulation of the constitutional convention in Gbarnga. Doe rightly interpreted the referendum on the new constitution as a plebiscite on military rule. He tried to have it rejected at the polls but somehow the signals got mixed up and the message was late in arriving. The sure way out was outright cancellation. But this would have incurred damaging international repercussions, especially from you Americans who were talking "this elections business" all over the world. And everybody knows how these "damned foreigners" like to poke their noses into matters that do not concern them, matters like human rights and basic freedoms. So, Doe was coerced into swallowing that disgusting tonic ...

Alas, he had something up his sleeves. Our Hero who did in Tolbert, Weh Syen, Tipoteh, Matthews, Quoiwonkpa, et al., was not going to be caught with his pants down. He reacted in the usual way. ("You like it/You don't like/Doe likes it!") He went one-up on those smart-alecky "Americo-Liberians and socialists" who wanted to sneak into power via the back door after he had

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so effectively sealed up the front. He taught them a thing or two. After all, "book knowledge" was not everything. Doe appointed an Interim National Assembly to replace the moribund People's Redemption Council while simultaneously designating himself as its President, formed a political party (National Democratic Party of Liberia), and announced his candidacy before a military gathering at Camp Schifflin

Once Doe entered the race, the entire electoral process was sabotaged. The elections balloon was punctured. Doe and his military henchmen would simply change hats, and the Liberian people had better believe it. With the full powers of government at his disposal, it was futile to think otherwise. Members of the Special Elections Commission were appointed by him to be beholden to him. He fired those members whose sense of fairness seemed to him to compromise his chances of overwhelming victory at the polls. The aged chairman, a relic from the old order better known for his sycophancy than integrity, genuflected appropriately. Next to Doe, Ambassador Harmon has earned the right to be known as the second most unpopular man in Liberia with his chairmanship. The NDPL began rolling along as the party of government. All government employees who did not find the NDPL to their liking were now on the outside. The NDPL quickly assumed the role of the "indigenous" version of the old True Whig Party. History repeated itself: the first time as tragedy; the second, as farce. The proposed nationwide elections, which have been broadcast worldwide as the first truly free elections in Liberian history, is turning out to be the greatest fraud perpetrated on the Liberian political scene. This monumental fiasco is precisely that because the people have been led to believe that genuine electoral reforms were at hand. But even the cynics did not anticipate the mockery Doe would make of the exercise before the campaigning began. At least Tubman tolerated Barclay and his party through election day in 1955 before lowering the boom. Ah, I forgot that that was in the bad old days, long before the advent.

Frankly, Martin, in spite of the repetitive purges, plots, bannings, dismissals, arrests, tortures, harassments, and God knows what else, Liberians have shown an unforeseen resolve to be rid of Doe and his gang by boldly putting their names on party registration rolls, paying their hard cash, and putting up their beloved properties, so that the costly registration requirements of at least four creditable opposition parties (Liberia Action Party, Liberian People Party, United People Party, and Unity Party) could be fulfilled. Whatever the eventual outcome may be, this much must be noted for the record: that Liberians stood up and were counted when the opportunity arose. Their subtle defiance has not been lost on Doe. It has aroused his ire and triggered that spark of irrationality for which he is famous and careful public relations gimmickry have always endeavored to keep hidden.

III

Liberia is at an impasse. The military cannot effectively govern but will not abdicate power. The civilians who can are unable to come to power. And Liberia wallows in the trough.

It may be asked why Doe does not just leave well enough alone, take what he has already gained by fair or foul means, cry a plague upon the Liberian house, get on a jet and depart the scene before time runs out? To answer that, I will venture the following:

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First and foremost, Doe fears retribution. He understands that the world is small and there is no hiding place from hard pursurers. No palliative, however, sugar-coated (luxurious exile, round-the-clock protection, constitutional guarantees), can erase the obsession. He was a participant in and witness to the eruption of horrendous passions that engulfed Tolbert and his people and realizes that same, or even worse, could be visited upon him and his people should he be ejected from office. Doe knows Liberia is paying an inordinately high price in life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness to keep him in power. He comprehends that one day an accounting will have to be made. He dreads that day of reckoning. Second, he honestly believes that after him would come the deluge: that having enjoyed the sweet taste of power, the army -- however reconstituted -- would topple any civilian government that would follow. In fairness to the man, it should be admitted that he possesses a deep insight into the psychology of the army's rank and file; that he knows its predatory nature when allowed to run wild. Third, he feels cheated: that if he were good enough to be accepted and acknowledged as Head of State, then he should be good enough to be legitimately elected President of Liberia. In other words, however good a "countryman" is, he is never good enough. Fourth, Doe is most definitely of the opinion that his administration is a success story: he destroyed a corrupt and decadent class, stabilized the country, distributed wealth, titles, jobs, and privileges among the ordinary people. He is hurt by what he considers to be the ingratitude of the Liberian people. They do not deserve a kind benefactor like him. They are only worthy of a Tolbert. Fifth, he holds an abiding suspicion that the Americans are insufficiently dependable. He contends that he has done all their biddings: smashing the raucous rabble, recognizing Israel, protecting American interests, promoting and defending free enterprise, and maintaining law and order. Now that he is threatened by what he feels is a resurgent radicalism, the United States keeps badgering him about human rights, elections, Congress, and the loss of aid. Did they interfere like this in Liberia when the Congos were in charge? Where were they when Tolbert raged hell on April 14, 1979 and over a hundred rice demonstrators were shot? Let them leave him alone so he can teach these agitators a dirty lesson Doe worries that when the die is cast, he will be left in the lurch as he thinks Tolbert was. Sixth, Doe believes he deserves the presidency as a reward for toppling the Americo-Liberians, liberating the Indigenes, and fostering a more egalitarian society. What did those nineteen other Congo men do that was so much better than that to deserve the presidency? Is it because he is a country man that all the new standards are being made now?

If Liberia should not bestow this highest garland upon him, then he is prepared to destroy the country then rebuild it. The presidency is now a matter of pride for Doe. And the wounded pride of an armed man and his thugs among unarmed civilians with a basically non-militaristic tradition is a most intimidating threat indeed. I dare say Doe's warning of impending doom should he be denied the presidential prize is no idle threat that can easily be brushed aside. Rule or ruin is Doe's motto today.

IV

So, Martin, what do the Liberians do, especially those who were active in the reform movements in the 70s? Where do they go from here? Is this the end of change and progress in the Republic? Do they simply knuckle under preponderant force and bow to what seems the inevitable while waiting for God's time, a notion being currently embraced by many serious-minded Liberians? Can Doe be gotten rid of without the predicted death and

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destruction? How certain can anyone be that a post-Doe era will not be one of internecine strife and social upheaval? Can a truly civilian government be comparatively honest, competent, cohesive, and coherent? What about the centrifugal forces at large in the country? And more importantly for you, Martin, what assurance does the United States have that its vital interests in Liberia will be protected under the new order as they are under the existing one? How can Liberia be reconstituted in harmony within the generally recognized macro-Liberian traditions?

LIBERIA AND THE MECHANISM OF CHANGE

V

Martin, I begin this section with much trepidation as to whether Liberia can be saved, if she is worth saving, and how she can be saved. In these times when changing nationality is as commonplace as changing shirts, the argument is readily made that blind loyalty to a country is not in vogue and insufficiently meritorious to justify bargaining away one's sanity. Confronted with the harsh Liberian realities, not a few Liberians are opting out. But there are many others, at home or in exile, who still adhere to the ancient "idea of Liberia," the concept that black men in Africa can indeed create a modern civil society ennobled with a certain modicum of decency and integrity and capable of withstanding the depressions societies periodically go through. This belief, as old as the Republic, is not the sole preserve of the descendants of the emigrants. Beyond a doubt, it is the shared heritage of Indigenes whose ancestors challenged Congo hegemony or associated with it. Such individuals consider abhorrent the thought that a civil community of national pretensions can bear fruit under the overlordship of a military government, however benign. You may say that this smacks of sheer romanticism and naivety. You may be correct but do you know of any community that uplifts itself without an ennobling vision?

Is Liberia saveable? And is Doe that savior? You already know what I think about the first question. As to the second, it is possible that through some miracle, Doe -- who at present seems destined to "win" his elections and continue dominating Liberia for an indefinite period -- will alter course and embark on a genuine transformation of the country. This is what those who have a say in current Liberian affairs want to believe. Conversely, as is more probably, after his "victory" Doe will just sit tight, survive, and say to hell with it all; after all, he is no better or worse than the present run of African military rulers. And staying in power, not how you govern, is the name of the game. And once the alternatives have been made unpalatable, you are protected against all vexing intrusions.

Is it worth the effort to save Liberia? I believe it is in the interest of all who have commitments in or are committed to Liberia to see that she is saved. Let us consider just a single possibility should the question be answered otherwise. A friend said this to me a month back, which I will paraphrase: If forces beyond our control compel us to suffer the unendurable, we as the weaker will accordingly comply. We will not promote a suicidal violent course. Instead, we will react with the key weapons of the powerless: noninvolvement, minimal cooperation, and that most effective weapon of all, complete indifference. With these we will make the state unworkable. Those of us who remain here will make this place an insufferable bore that will defy

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the imagination of all those who knew Liberia before. So negative will the shining model become that even a tattered doll will look most patrician. Liberia will be an embarrassment not only to Liberians but also to her mentors.

How can Liberia be saved? It is in response to this question that my remaining pages will be addressed. Events in Africa have developed the habit of suddenly proceeding so swiftly that before the ink has dried on the paper, new realities emerge that render obsolete the previous assumptions. How to save Liberia? I think it wise to begin with a trite statement, Martin, that only Libeians know how to save Liberia. They can be assisted but not guided; advised but not controlled; maybe pushed a little but not powerfully propelled. As they are doing now, however reluctantly and tangentially, they can start by being themselves. They must reactivate their liberality of spirit, openness and easy-going approach to life that stamped their singularity. They have to continue the extensive self-criticism to find out what went wrong, if anything did, and why. Such a process is not intended to simply cast blame, God knows that enough of that has been done and is going on, but to find a way out of this morass. Casting out Doe is an imperative first step but not the last. Salvation comes about when there is general recognition of what ails the spirit. Doe is merely the present supreme reflection of what ails Liberia; he is not the exclusive devil. The chinks in his armor are perhaps equally the chinks in the collective Liberian armor. The mad pursuit of unbridled materialism and all its assumed benefits at the expense of the national psyche being made by the Doe regime would not seem so invincible if Liberians themselves were not so equally enamored of these things and in the same hot pursuit. Impatience, intolerance, greed, ostrich-like attitude before the facts, an abiding craving for power, figure prominently among Liberia's ills. Were Doe to disappear tomorrow, there is no certainty that these ailments would vanish immediately ...

Perhaps Doe may have a point when he objects that the opposition to him is motivated solely by envy; that the demands for his removal emanate particularly from a similar love of pomp and power and does not hail from altruistic principles of representative democracy, rational government, populist strivings, or what have you. He contends that most of his critics, if they are not now outside the pale because of "ideological" reasons or because of "loss of face", would gladly serve him with all his impediments were he to summon them to high office and allow them free play with corresponding pomp and corruption. They would thereafter find some rationale for their collaborations to give to critical friends. After all, who had not worked for him? He had seen them all: so-called progressives, so-called intellectuals, old True Whig Party hands, well-known and well-connected Congoes. He had weighed them all. And in his eyes, none of them was worth a farthing

To me, Doe and his apologists miss the boat here. If his detractors are "jealous" of him, as he claims, it is perhaps because as the national leader and example-setter, he has made respectable and acceptable all the negative traits in the collective character that are detrimental to the spirit of Liberia. What may have been tolerated by stealth, silence, and darkness, is now openly permitted as part of the national norms, without the slightest tinge of conscience. The Liberian state revolves around the presidency, or whoever occupies that seat. This has been true from the time of Arthur Barclay. An ineffectual and stained president adversely affects Liberians in a manner that he does not in other African states. Among the several hats he

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wears is that of personification of the state. If the Liberian leader encounters difficulties in adjusting to that hat, he is apt to be discredited. A major flaw of Tolbert's was this. And so is Doe's. I wish to recall an observation made by a University of Liberia student on how to legally and quickly amass a fortune and power simultaneously, "or killing two birds with one stone," as the parabolical young man put it: "You are poor, powerless. Nobody gives you the time of day. You want to get rich quickly and enjoy life. No problem. Instant remedy ... go kill the president." There, Martin, goes the personification of the state.

VI

In my wildest fancy, good sir, I have dared envisage a post-Doe Liberia (Lord, what heinous treasonous act have I committed by having dared to imagine the forbidden? Will it be banning, house arrest, Post Stockade, or Camp Belle Yallah?) as being led by a transitional team of two possibilities, a military-civilian dyarchy or a purely civilian arrangement.

To be honest, I personally dread a dyarchy because as it is with Doe so will it again be as civilians are made subservient to the military, unless -- and here is an interesting caveat -- the military involved has acted as an instrument at the behest of the participating civilians. If, on the other hand, the military should secure the upper hand initially, then woe betide us. We will definitely be in for another long haul. The country will have to be kept frozen in fear and sterile in performance while the new military bosses learn the rope. They will have to first "enjoy themselves" as Doe "enjoyed himself" as Tolbert "enjoyed himself" and as Tubman "enjoyed himself," then and only then can other trifling matters of state be considered. Liberians will be told as they are now being told to "bear patience" and "all will be right" after Doe masters the art of government under civilian rule during the next six years as he has spent the preceding five dexterously mastering the control of government under military rule. (Yesuah, help us!)

And what an expensive proposition this would be for us, and for you too, Martin. Consider: thus far, you have spent or will have spent at least \$400 million while Doe learned the control of government during his military phase. To buttress him during the civilian phase, you may have to put in at least another \$400 million so that he can more quickly and efficiently learn the artistry of political consensus and compromise. You will have spent almost a billion dollars in a decade, Martin, almost a billion! For what? What a lucky man, Mr. Doe is, what a lucky man! Where in Africa has any other coup-maker met with such good fortune?

As for the Liberians who have to endure the learning process of Doe, what else is left for them to do but to vote, where possible, with their feet. How many Liberians have visited your country on a semi-permanent or permanent basis since 1980: five, ten, twenty thousand? What will the number be like by 1992 when Doe's first civilian term comes to an end: ten, twenty, forty thousand? And who are these people? Congoes making the reverse migration? Perhaps. Having messed up Liberia after a century of misrule, they are skedaddling to the land which first "expelled" them for being the rascals they are.

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Among these feet-voters is it possible that there are innumerable
indigenous ocrats, bureaucrats, students? Alas, such
people ca people". They must be those "socialists,
rabble ro anarchists and the like" who are busy
masqueradi ". True "country people" are those helping Doe
construct Better for Liberia that these malcontents get
themselve gotten rid of so that the Liberian experiment
can be pu , unadulterated materièl. These people will
conclusiv e problem of Liberia was those "degenerate
rejects" tifully prepared plans of the American
Colonizati Liberian experiment a failure because it was
unworkabl ed because the leadership was lousy! That's
all!

No, Martin, no dyarchy. The sheer thought of the thing gives me the
shivers, although as things stand it is probably the more likely of the two
possibilities. No, my friend, once is certainly enough. Spare us the tender
embrace of our gallant and glorious redeemers and liberators who are ferocious
against unarmed citizens but who were silent in 1979 when two companies of
Guinean troops arrived in Monrovia to defend the Tolbert regime, a gift from
Sekou Toure to his friend and brother.

A common cliché in the early Tolbert years was the "you can't make an
omelet without breaking eggs." A whole lot of Liberian eggs have been broken
to fix the wonderful omelet. And for the life of me, neither I, in
particular, nor the Liberian people, in general, have ever seen this omelet,
or any kind of omelet; nor have we tasted a piece of omelet. Still Liberian
eggs are being broken with the promise of the taste of omelet. This
egg-breaking business is threatening to send all Liberians to the Catherine
Mills Rehabilitation Center in Congotown.

Life being what it is, with the future bleak and the present uncertain, a
fairly good number of sober Liberians from varying walks of life would
entrench the military as the fulcrum of the new political order in Liberia.
Out of profound good intentions, they would place the military on a pedestal,
as once before the presidency held sway. They would gladly abandon their
responsibilities to this new fait accompli. Such citizens honestly believe
that like the ancient presidency only the military can provide the centripetal
power required to stamp out or contain the ascending tribal centrifugalism ...
And something can certainly be said for this outlook. It is better, they say,
to make a compact with the victor while still on your feet than deal with him
when you are on your back. The genie is out of the bottle, they continue, and
whether one likes it or not, the military is here to stay in Liberian
politics.

But these good citizens are no experts at tiger riding. And the
articulation of "really trying and means well" do not deny that Liberia is in
a hell of a mess because our "beloved military" just "can't do." The road to
hell is paved with good intentions. Yes, the road to hell is paved with
imagined good intentions. Oh, yes, the road to hell is paved with transferred
imagined good intentions.

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No, Martin, no dyarchy, please. As the middle-aged lady in Sinoe said in 1980 after the Weh Syen shock wave passed through the area: "If you call this the Promised Land, then take me back to Egypt's bondage." The Promised Land! The Promised Land. The Promised Land?

Please, Martin, no dyarchy. The economic pinch is turning into a drought. How long, oh how long, does it take to get the monthly check? Remember the jingle, "Thirty days hath September ..."? Liberians rephrase it thus:

"Ninety days has September
April, June and November
All the rest have ninety one
Except February, which has eighty eight."

Dyarchy? No, Martin, please. Have the tale of the last five years not said anything? My friend, our eyes have seen the horrors ... and we pray to be spared the Second Coming.

VII

And now for the civilian possibility. How I fear entering this realm. Perforce, it is an ideal realm. Under existing circumstances, it is virtually an unattainable realm. Notwithstanding, for Liberia to go forward, for her political institutions to manifest themselves and gain some measure of respectability and stability, it is imperative that a genuine, not a counterfeit, civilian political order emerge out of the languid decadence. The issue of rebirth and re-invigoration is an age-old one in Liberia that seems to surface every generation. But, as in no other time, there are enough trained Liberians of talent, specialization, perspicacity, sobriety, and drawn from every ethnic group to make implementable the operations of a new civilian order. What is lacking for them is the empowerment and harnessing of their potentials. Intimidation and vacuous hortation will only produce the hiding of candles under the bushel. Example-setting at the top is what is required. Considering that the extraordinarily expensive tutelage of the military to play this role is proving to be a colossal fiasco and is drawing to a close, however grudgingly and acrimoniously, it is evident that the hour of the new civilian political order is arriving and should be brought to fruition through careful planning so that it does not go the way of a Shagari or a Limann. Otherwise, the whole exercise could die of stillbirth in the tangle of conflicting ambitions.

For there to be a new civilian political order rooted in reality and strategically defined, there has to be a civilian transition arrangement. The latter would help make feasible the implantation of a mood of modest expectations that would temper the climate of divisive competitiveness preceding national elections of a new civilian order. Through its composition and policies, it would try to diffuse the explosive centrifugal ambitions of emergent ethnicism or village-minded Bonapartism, the twin scourges that would confront any new civilian regime in Liberia. The short duration of its tenure would negate the adoption of rash tactics that often accompany the desire for entrenchment. However, its authority should be sufficiently puissant to give muscles to its writs and ward off interruptions by violent

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means. It would borrow from the Liberian political tradition, a corpus too lightly dis-ians and foreign experts on Liberia, those ideas of L en deeply etched into the national political consciousness y been erased by the terror of the M-16 and Uzi, by the s on crowded beaches, by the languid authoritari hegemony, or the arrogance of a supercilious "gentility

What a beria" which have survived like the Liberian people? Fi beria should be governed by civilians, who in turn would rder. Second, the idea that the governing civilian e eneous in composition and there should be some formula or process whereby its membership is sequentially changed, augmented, or reinforced. And third, the idea that the primary objective of such a governing unit should be to actively foster and promote a more egalitarian social and economic system that would reduce the social classes' frictions and correspondingly lessen the widening gap between the haves and have nots.

How does one translate this into a concrete course of action? How can the civilian possibility be definitively focused? To be more precise, what should be the nature, tenure, composition, objectives, and policies of a civilian possibility? Consider these thoughts on the matter:

1. The civilian possibility should be constituted in a committee that would be provisional with a transitional intent. It would be a genuinely temporary administration designed exclusively to pilot the country from a military status to a democratically elected civilian one.

2. It would serve a minimum of twelve months and a maximum of twenty four, with a fixed agenda and time schedule.

3. Membership would be limited to seven, with no more than two from any one ethnic group. A military person could be co-opted but not qua military. Each member would sign a statement stipulating that at the end of the committee's tenure, he would voluntarily absent himself from the country for at least two years. No member would be eligible for a political appointment by the incoming administration for at least three years after the team had disbanded. The chairmanship of the committee would be rotational, on a quarterly basis, with no reelection. Policy decisions would be adopted with five members in assent; operational, with four.

4. The policies would be: (a) preparing and conducting the general elections that would return the country to genuine civilian rule by functioning as a special elections commission; (b) boosting the public morale by a relaxation of the terror; (c) laying the basis for the reorganization of government administration (which has been made inoperative by overstaffing with incompetents, aimlessness and despondency) by a systematic streamlining effort designed to bring as much competency to the fore as possible; (d) providing the groundwork for an economic uplift to at least the pre-1979 levels by creating a positive environment which will make Liberia attractive for new investments; (e) neutralizing the military's political interventionism by the process of demobilization, reorientation and redeployment; (f) reinserting Liberia into the affairs of the councils of Africa by

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substantiating that when the Liberian government speaks, it knows what it speaks of and it does so from the stance of inner conviction and resolve; and (g) reemphasizing the historical "special relationship" obtaining between Liberia and the United States so that it is perceived as being operational between two political entities and not between the United States government, on one hand, and a Liberian individual or group of individuals on the other.

VIII

More on politics.

To start with the subject of general elections.

It seems to be that an essential facet of elections in Liberia has been missed amid the acrimonious bickerings among contestants taking place there. In 1980 one political order simply ran completely out of gas and was consequently swept out of power. Its successor has proved incapable of positing another political order that would outlast its champion. As I see it, the issue is not merely an instance of one regime routinely succeeding another in the same political series, a Barclay administration being followed by a Tubman and a Tubman by a Tolbert. It is more fundamental than that. The extensive and intensive politicization of the 1970s which culminated in the 1980 coup and the Doe regime shook the entire social fabric at its base. It produced a new social reality that has in turn spurned a new political series. This fact seems to be lost on Doe and his faction who behave as if whatever was wrong with the old political construct had been magically corrected by the Doe ascendancy and now the Liberian car can be driven safely without major alterations. I think nothing can be further from the truth. The constitution-making exercises were an admission that something was indeed amiss and sadly removed from Liberian political reality. It therefore laid the groundwork for the birth of a new political series. The crucial thrust in this series was to add flesh to skeletal ideals of the new compact among the Liberians and consigning to history the archaic and particularistic understanding of 1847 that had been addressed to matters intrinsically different from those arising in post-1945 Liberia. The new constitution could be viewed as attempting to instill among the varied peoples of the country the unity that emerged among the Congos after 1847. From another perspective, it invoked popular representative government, a system in which the old political order rooted in superordinate and subordinate ethnicities would be supplanted by another rooted in a different configuration of power-sharing.

The singularity of the proposed special general elections seemed to be: (i) to create a sense of national (not ethnic) consciousness through mass participation via national parties in the process of leadership selection and certification with the expectation that once the dish of elementary democracy had been tasted, it would prove too sweet to be easily discarded. It was further hoped that the exercise would be free of compulsion and notions of sudden magical enrichment and would instead emphasize voluntary participation and realistic development; (ii) to give the new national leadership that would emerge after the process a meaningful mandate for governing as well as a sense of accountability to something other than itself or its weapons; and (iii) to provide the site for the erection of the new foundation stone upon which the new political series would be built.

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Central to the implementation of the special general elections is the concept of the impartial umpire concept is embedded both in the hip that would direct the affairs of state up to the executive and in the executing agency, the special elections ial transitional leadership and a partial special el negate the concept; so too would the reverse leadership outweighs the latter as the national leadership has none owers while the special elections commission leadership is an active , who constitutes the sole national is an active considered as impartial not simply because he is an active uissant incumbent but because he has failed to comprehend the operations of the state the intent and design of the process in its totality and is too deeply immersed to be sufficiently detached. No matter how technically competent the staff of his special elections commission may be, it dare not deviate from his dictates or will be "move(d) or remove(d)" as the University of Liberia students and faculty were so ordered by Doe on August 22, 1984.

An argument of the Doe camp holds that were he denied the umpireship, impartial or no, it would call into question the legitimacy of the events of 1980. Thus, to repudiate Doe's impartiality is tantamount to repudiating 1980. This contention fails to hold water. 1980, 1955, 1929, 1909, 1870, 1847, 1822, are all watersheds of varying importance in Liberian history. However, to authenticate 1980 is not necessarily the same as authenticating the continued rule of Doe. Not by a long shot. Whether acknowledged or not, Doe and 1980 did not drop out of thin air on the Liberian scene. Nor did Liberian political life begin in 1980. Doe and 1980 were the result of the interaction of certain forces in Liberian history which have been discarded so that Doe may be substantiated. 1980 was made possible because of the political activities of the 1970s. Doe was made possible because none of the contesting factions was prepared to ride to power in puddles of blood. All major actors in that decade have been cast out of the national political life and into the political wilderness. Still Liberia endures. By what rhyme or reason is it to be believed that were Doe to cease to be the umpire in the electoral process Liberia would wither away? By what stretch of the imagination is it to be believed that Doe, in the improbability of his losing the elections on October 15, would supinely acquiesce to the fact and passively turn over the government to the winner on January 1986 without resorting to true form, i.e., striking another bloody blow in defense of the power he already has? And to what avail would the election of a few symbolic legislators do except to legitimize the farcical elections? What could the Liberians expect of these persons after they were elected, given the presidential absolution of the True Whig Party tradition which Doe and his partisans adhere to? Perhaps the symbolic co-optation of these persons would palliate the conscience of those who have tried to make of Doe that which he is most decidedly not. Perhaps it would "conclusively" prove that Doe is, beyond all doubts, taking Liberia on the first step of the long road to a democratic society. But, as former President King said, "Leopard cannot change its spots." The unscrupulous use of force got Doe where he is today. Compulsion is a language dear to his heart. Why now should he allow this tactical "elections business" to be transformed into a strategic democratic endeavor? Why should he listen to the perpetual malcontents and mess his tidy conduct of Liberia's affairs? It is clearly predictable what will befall

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Doe's special elections commission, winning opposition party, the disgruntled Liberian people in general should they dare embarrass the CIC with such an unsavory outcome.

As its final priority, the provisional committee should attend to the subject of the special general elections. It should right away undertake to establish the appropriate climate for building a national consensus and laying the foundation for a new political order by systematic consultations with the political parties who had registered for the previous contest. It should make these parties look at the ensuing special general elections not as a definitive winner-take-all solution to who and what will constitute the new political order, a final answer to who will consume what Doe and his henchmen have left in the national gravy pot, but as a first step towards a reconstituting of the Liberian state. Along these lines, it should consider granting subsidies to all eligible parties. It should also involve the parties so as to make them their own arbiters in the competition. The moral authority of the provisional committee to handle this most intricate matter would derive from the fact that it is truly transitional and interim and that it had devolved upon itself the responsibilities of being the special elections commission.

IX

More on policies.

To continue with the subject of the boosting of national morale by the relaxation of terror.

Morale of the Liberians is presently at rock bottom. Everyone who has a stake in the future through his children, peace of mind, or economic security, wants to pull up sticks and get out. The future is, to say the least, bleak. To combat this depressing outlook, the provisional committee should, after abolishing all irrelevant PRC and INA decrees (especially the notorious 88A), proceed to alleviate the pressure on the society caused by the present murky climate of unrelenting fear. Fear of being arbitrarily arrested, imprisoned and tortured. Fear of being unjustly dismissed from a job whose pay may be oftentimes delayed and irregular but which provides the sustenance for rental payments, supporting the immediate family and assisting the extended, sending the children to school, making progress. Fear of being banned (and we thank our dear enlightened and dynamic young leader for introducing this security lexicon to our already saturated security vocabulary). Fear of being compelled to call a lie a truth, of living a lie. Fear of being misquoted and misinterpreted. Fear of being held responsible for what a kinsman or close associate may or may not have said or done. Fear of being stigmatized, of being branded a "socialist" or some other God-forsaken term we can't even pronounce and scare others away. Fear of talking loudly, of being overheard. Omnipotent fear.

Liberia has not known such a state of fear since the heady days of the Bestman-Campbell team in the later sixties. Those were the halcyon days for the security forces, the most glorious "you-lie-on-me, I-lie-on-you" decade. Today, fear is all the more vicious because it is naked. The monetary rewards of the Tubman years are not to be found in the tight financial squeeze of

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today. The largesse of Tubman's Public Relations Officer is gone. Today, there may be a government post which can be as easily lost as won. The pervasiveness of this intimidation permeates the elections process supposedly taking place now. Pray tell me, Martin, how a man with Doe's record -- decline in the quality of education, decaying infrastructures, plummeting standard of living, rampant corruption, and massive unemployment -- can have the audacity to campaign on more of the same if the fear factor was not so paramount? Without terror, Doe's candidacy would be laughed off the stage. It would be considered a colossal joke, a fantasy. But the Liberian public is being propagandized to accept it as something positive, something constructive, something beneficial for Liberia and Liberians. And Doe believes the tale. What is the NDPL's platform? Who cares? Will a Doe victory mean that in 1988 the economy will be where it was in 1978? Who cares?

The gains made during the Tolbert administration in the area of freedom of speech and of press have all been cancelled. ("Shut up, child, the Emperor is splendidly regaled.") The Tolbert administration has to be credited for diminishing the prominence of the security forces in the daily life of Liberians. ("Yes, Musu, Tobert did have a good side.") He persevered despite the protests of conservatives who argued that he was planting the seeds of destruction for him and his social class by not adapting terror in the new circumstances. ("Play with the puppy, it licks your mouth.") Now, there is a plethora of security agents whose motives are suspect. It were as if Liberia was in a state of war or was confronted with local insurrections. And who are these enemies our Smileys are busily unclocking? Anyone who dares question Doe's edicts. And who dares question our beloved leader's edicts? Any Liberian who is conscientious enough to look beyond his nose at Liberia's future.

To directly deal with the terror issue, the provisional committee should immediately proceed to dismantle the security apparatus. A streamlined unit should be established in its place. Crimes of treason and sedition should be handled through the civil courts and not be viewed exclusively as lese majesty. Newspapers, which abounded during the last days of Tolbert, should be allowed to publish again within the context of the press freedom tradition that evolved in the seventies. Similarly, the freedom of responsible speech, not the freedom to inflame, intimidate, or blacklist, should be allowed. Mass demonstrations or other public gatherings that would not be in the best interest of public order and calm should not be permitted except at nominating conventions of parties.

X

More on policies.

To continue with the subject of the reorganization of government.

The mood of exhilaration that accompanied the coup has proved most baneful to the conduct of good government. The pandering for a government sinecure and quick material satisfaction could be summarized in this way: "My people, you all come down to Monrovia, oh. Come get job, yah. Those damn Congo bastards have been sitting on the money, eating everything by

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themselves. This is our thing. This is our time. So, let everybody come down and enjoy themselves." And everybody came.

The consequences of "dis we'al ting" attitudes may be tabulated as follows: (a) the almost doubling of Monrovia population since 1980, more related to migration than to natural increase; (b) the hurried swelling of an already enlarged government and parastatal bureaucracy; (c) the excessive addition of a large number of semi-skilled or unskilled personnel at the lower rungs that occasioned the swelling and the subsequent displacement of the skilled and professionally qualified by the lesser or least skilled and qualified; (d) a rapid turnover at the highest level of the government and parastatal bureaucracy together with a lack of grip and guidance from the center of the state.

In 1958 it was speculated that Monrovia had some 41,000 inhabitants. On the eve of the coup, that number had risen to somewhere between 250-300,000. This engendered immense pressure on the City's utilities. Light, water, sewage, and garbage collections systems had been stretched to their limits and were barely making it. It is suggested the Monrovia today is approaching the half-million mark, if that point has not already been exceeded. Electricity is on a rotational and fluctuating basis; water is spasmodic and its quality is sometimes debatable; the sewers are kaput; and the garbage collection is a dead art. Although never the cleanest of cities, Monrovia is now numbered among the dirtiest. The march to Monrovia has not proved to be the ennobling and enriching experience that many migrants thought. The ranks of the unemployed and unemployable have expanded far out of all proportions. The hoi polloi silently wait for another summoning from their messiah to unleash their thwarted dreams in the next round of full-scale looting where, as in 1979, they will serve as the shock troopers. In the meantime, they dabble in petty crimes, marking time, and preparing to teach the parvenus what they taught the ancien regime.

There is a tendency to equate the Liberian situation today with those obtaining in other African states like Togo, Zaire, Mali, or Guinea. That may be true but there are some major differences. One such difference is the size, character and role of the professional stratum. 1980 Liberia was, in terms of manpower development, considerably ahead of where those states happened to be at the time of their first military intervention. It was not the lack of professionals that impaired, retarded, or impeded Liberia's physical and social development objectives (the question of resources excepted) but their proper deployment guidance, indoctrination, and use of advice proffered. The Liberian military did not have to construct a professional bureaucracy in its image as the military did or is attempting to do in the other countries. It met an entrenched bureaucracy and has sought to bend it to its interests. It has definitely tampered with and lowered that bureaucracy's spirit but has dismally failed to invigorate or uplift it.

The twenty five year period before the coup marked a substantial growth in quantity and quality of trained Liberians in the professional and technical fields: education, sciences, business, management, medicine, engineering, law, and social sciences. Many of these individuals had been trained at the most prestigious universities in the United States and Europe. They were au courant with activities in their respective fields of competence. In the

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seventies, members of this stratum were increasingly impressing their varied capabilities on the national scene as the old political tradition steadily found itself unable to deal with the technicalities of modern development. This stratum stood as the logical heirs to Congodom, or so they considered themselves and were so considered by a few other Liberians. this was the national stratum on the make.

Its members tended to be reticent about public issues, highly self-centered and acquisitive, ostentatious in life style, and gregarious in social matters. They were opportunistic with regards to career advancement. Nothing was impermissible as far as progress up the career ladder was concerned. They owed loyalty to no man, cause, or institution. Their preeminent interest was I, Myself, Me. Ethnically heterogeneous, but predominantly indigenous in origin, they played ethnic politics selectively and advantageously for the expressed purpose of individual enhancement. But, in the main, it could not be characterized as primarily ethnocentric. Much cross-ethnic but intra-stratum marriages obtained within the group. Their children attend the same private, religious-oriented primary, elementary, and secondary schools that were notable for their expense and excellence. They were members of the same social clubs, frequented the same nightspots, had the same associates. They were often officers on the rolls of institutional churches. They were joining fraternal crafts in those localities where upward mobility was faster and easier. They did not outwardly participate in whatever activities the True Whig Party had. A few progressive or aggrieved elements dabbled with the politics of emerging radicalism, or what transpired as radicalism in the Liberian context. But the vast majority were too occupied with getting ahead to be involved with such "absurdities". When induced to respond to political events, their reactions were usually of a conservative or moderate nature.

Tolbert stood in awe of this stratum. Their knowledge intimidated him. And he deliberately cultivated them. They would unlock for him the secrets of development that had escaped Tubman. They were the new elites, to be protected, even pampered, especially when they played the game and conformed to the rules. The new salary scale introduced in 1976-77, and patterned after the Udochi awards in Nigeria, was designed to appease their lack of empowerment. They were the new miracle workers. Their talents were their strength. They reacted in kind. A modus vivendi was reached: for the respectability and opportunity that the regime offered, they exchanged their challenge to it. This was not to be construed, however, as a personal endorsement of the regime. Tolbert never received their undivided personal loyalty, a commitment so central in a pre-industrial society like Liberia.

If the coup knocked the last prop from under Congodom, it battered and broke the myth of the emerging class. In the first aftershocks of the coup, a vast number of this stratum were incarcerated and handled with the mailed fist of the military. To regain old portfolios, or just to get a job, obeisance had to be made to the new ruling class, the military elite, who did not have the slightest idea of the professional stratum's significance in the making of the new Liberia and did not care one iota about that. The former heads of ministries, public agencies, and parastatals may have been the boot-lickers, as was claimed; but, minimally, they understood the rudimentary art of their responsibilities. Lamentably, most of the new appointees did not even possess

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that. The military solution to the bureaucratic tangle was simple and poignant: what did those so-called "book" people do anyway in those big jobs except write the "I have the honor ..." letters to each other and to the President; so, put anybody in charge of a big job, give him a clerk who knows how to write the "I have the honor ..." letters and, presto, the whole problem is solved.

Overnight the national bureaucracy was turned on its head. Without the preparatory training, learning and discipline necessary for minimal performance, clerks and messengers felt that the changing environment had provided them with the wherewithal to man and properly operate the junior, and sometimes senior, levels of the ministries, public agencies, and parastatal because they had typed, filed, or carried the letters. When queried about the trend, the general response was that since the new military leadership itself was at best functionally literate, why should they, who had some kind of secondary education, not be considered qualified to run lesser entities? A hoi polloi coup was supposed to serve the interests of the hoi polloi. They too had suffered the years of Congo oppression and suppression and were accordingly entitled to whatever benefits were coming the people's way. Besides, they were more apt to be beholden to the new order than their predecessors. And who was the coup intended to help anyway? The haves or the have nots? Throw the damn rascals out! They had enjoyed enough. Give other people a chance. How will man learn, if he can't get on the job? To hell with book business. So-so book business got this country in the mess it's in. Same old Tobert talk. So-so talk. Time for Liberia to do something different ... Easily persuaded by this line of reasoning, the military leadership compensated the hoi polloi for their patient long suffering by flooding the national bureaucracy with them. This was usually done irrespective of ethnic background. The Congo hoi polloi joined the act too. What had taken place was a great cultural hoi polloi revolution of sorts, Liberian style, with all the emphasis on jobs and none on cultural. Who eats culture?

To the hoi polloi surge was added that of the returnees, those Liberians who had been students or who were working in the United States at the time of the coup and decided to give up all their wonderful privileges there in order to come back and make their sterling contributions to genuine national development, claiming sound academic qualifications, enormous marketable skills, and fantastic contacts in high places in the United States which would be of tremendous benefits to the revolution. Their rage against the past was mighty to behold; their appetite for high office, perks and power was insatiable; their plans for reconstructing the new Liberia were imaginative and intelligible only to themselves. These were the new advisors, the new social planners and development experts. And Liberia had better believe it! Their righteous indignation, long suffering and selfless devotion to the cause of the Liberian people also had to be rewarded. And, more often than not, the compensation for all wrongs done them and theirs by the defunct True Whig Party regime was equal to their expectations.

Government employees had numbered 17-18,000 on the eve of the coup; after, it shot up astronomically to 47-48,000. Alas, the people had demanded...

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What had taken Liberia two and a half decades of much trial and error, pushing and pulling, hauling and shoving, coming and going, was dealt its come-uppance in less than three months. As was to be anticipated, the national bureaucratic machine ground down to a crawl, necessitating a complete overhaul instead of the patching here and there that has thus far failed to recapture the little elan or power that stratum once wielded. What had been gained in terms of a questionable loyalty had been done so at the expense of what little competency existed before in that sector.

"Anything you say, Bossman," became the standard cry of the day as the professionals cut their sails to the new wind. Sensing the direction in which it blew, many of these well trained individuals plunged headlong into the trough, scrambling to secure and advance their positions in a free-for-all atmosphere. ("Everybody for self, God for all." "What's good for Peter, good for Paul.") These "helicopter" people became entangled with the intrigue of short circuiting their way to the top. Once before they had been the cultivated; now, they did the cultivating. Shaken by the uncertainties of the post-coup world, consumed by petty personal rivalries and jealousies, embittered by the striving to keep up with the Joneses, the fractured professionals were ripe for the picking. And this the military men swiftly proceeded to do. However, everything was not what it seemed to be. Given their skills and intelligence, the military elite soon found out that they were becoming or had become unwittingly entangled in the convoluted antagonisms of the professionals, antagonisms that readily lent themselves to exploitation but also defied simple reconciliation. Instead of taming the professionals as seemed apparent at first sight, they discovered that more often than not they had become the hammers of contesting factions. The forest could not be seen because of the trees. If the soldiers could be said to be corrupting the professionals by holding forth the vision of bigger titles, greater possibilities of illegal wealth and absolute bureaucratic power, the professionals could not be classified as innocents. They were non-protesting allies, showing the soldiers how to manipulate the instruments of power, how to grasp, secure, and even secrete, ill-gotten fortunes. Herein could be found the saddest of the many post-coup tragedies.

The turmoil in the national bureaucracy traveled all the way to the top. A rough tabulation of cabinet ministers (between April 1980 and August 1985) shows that the 19 governmental ministries have been headed by 60 ministers, at least six of whom held two or more ministries at different times. The average stood at 3.16 ministers per ministry. Every 1.06 months a new cabinet minister was appointed. There were five turnovers each at ministries of Commerce, Information, Labor, and Post and Telecommunications; four each at Justice and Presidential Affairs; three each at Foreign Affairs, Education, Finance, Planning, Defense, Agriculture, Public Works, and Rural Development; two each at Health and at Lands, Mines & Energy; and one each at Youth and Sports (hived from Labor in 1981) and at National Security (abolished in 1980; reactivated in 1984).

The turnover also affected the sub-cabinet levels (the deputy and assistant ministers). After a settling-in period that could run up to six months, a new minister usually tried to bring in a team of his own coloration, if Doe did not elect to directly give him his staff. The better the contact with Doe, or in 1980-1981 with the People's Redemption Council, the better his

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chances of recommending and securing the appointment of anywhere from three to six immediate assistants. What happened when he left office? It all depended on the contact and adjustability of the assistants. If good, they survived or found equivalent posts elsewhere. If not so good, they joined the ranks of the unemployed. Since 1980 anywhere from 250 to 500 persons have participated in the revolving door drama as ministers, deputy ministers, assistant ministers. In this respect, the coup had been faithful to its creed: "Let everybody get a chance." But at what a price!

You already know enough about governmental paralysis, the indifference to efficiency and improvement, for me to further reiterate. You may ask why Doe makes so many changes? I can only guess why. Perhaps because he enjoys it. Perhaps because he wants to show that he is most certainly numero uno. Perhaps to be rid of those of wavering loyalty. Perhaps to compensate his personal, ethnic, or political supporters. Perhaps to give the cabinet a better ethnic balance. Perhaps the offending minister stepped on wrong toes, got the signals mixed up too often. Perhaps there were external pressures, or so he claimed. Perhaps he just woke up on the wrong side and the doomed minister chanced to disturb his tranquility. Perhaps because the incompetency of the particular minister could not be hidden anymore. Perhaps because the dismissed minister was insufficiently pliable, a bit too independent, too know-it-all. Perhaps...

When addressing the problem of governmental reorganization, the provisional committee should keep the following in mind: (1) the influence and latent power of the national bureaucracy far exceed its numbers; (2) it is a key, though unstable, element in the formation of any future national consensus; (3) it has become increasingly ethnocentric in the struggle for jobs and titles; (4) at present it is devoid of ideals wider than self, group, or ethnicity; (5) under present circumstances, it is most unlikely for that amorphous stratum to be fused into a cohesive unit with a set of goals; (6) although no babe-in-the-wood prior to the coup, it has been very badly corrupted by the post-coup developments; no reorganization is feasible unless a committed section of this stratum is actively involved in the exercise.

The provisional committee should straightaway reduce the 19 ministries to 10, or 12 at most. Relevant sections from the abolished ministries should be merged with those retained, or if strictly technical in nature, should be returned to their original autonomous status. I think that the ministries of Information, Labor, Land, Post, National Security, Presidential Affairs, Public Works, and Youth & Sports should be denied cabinet status, their relevant sections transferred to retained ministries, or in their structural entirety be granted autonomy. A similar approach should be adopted towards the existing public agencies and parastatals, especially the parastatals which have been victims of systematic plunder. The provisional committee should apprise the political parties of its intent in this respect, noting the absence of a permanent bailout mechanism to continue financing budgetary deficits and that a contraction policy may be essential to adjusting the bureaucracy on the right track.

The proliferation of cabinet portfolios has had a debilitating effect on government efficacy and thrust, concentrating more and more minor decision-making into the Office of the Presidency. Tubman started with a

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cabinet of 7 which reached 13 at the end of his administration. Tolbert expanded it to 18. Doe has made it 19. It is arguable whether or not the cabinet functions appreciably better today, as the highest level of decision-making, than it did at the start of the Tubman era. Tolbert was the father of the parastatal system in Liberia. Designed to be self-supporting and revenue-generating, the parastatals were barely efficient during his time, although a few like the National Port Authority and the Liberia Produce Marketing Corporation did contribute significantly to government revenues. Today, these parastatals have become the last reserves to be exhausted by the Doe clique. Never profitable before, the Liberia Electricity Corporation, the Liberia Water and Sewer Corporation, the Liberia Telecommunications System, Air Liberia, and the Liberian Broadcasting System are among the public corporations that are bankrupt and a constant drain on the public coffers. To poor, irregular and inadequate services rendered by most of them must be added the exorbitant cost to consumers.

Just as a properly conducted general elections scheme could be made the basis for providing national consensus and uplifting the national spirit, so could a complete revamping of the national bureaucracy serve as the first mark on the road to reconstituting the Liberian state. As previously stated, the bureaucracy's present dilemma is not the result of the absence of trained personnel. Under Doe, a dozen of the 54 persons who have served as cabinet heads have held the terminal degree or its equivalent. Misplacement, lack of administrative or political savvy, or personality quirks may have accounted for their inability to lift their ministries out of the doldrums. I strongly believe that the system they operated in have made them dysfunctional. A similar argument could be made for them under the Tolbert regime. This may sound like passing the buck but it does contain a kernel of truth.

I do not contend that by nature a Ph.D. or M.D. holder has in the Liberian setting proved not susceptible to the corruption flowing around. Far from it. Some may have been among the architects. Notwithstanding, in a situation where everything goes, the temptation to join the club can be most alluring, however badly the conscience twinges. Doe hoisted many of them up to the mountain top, then left them there high and dry. ("An' you say you know book.") His undisguised contempt may be construed as that of the tough semi-literate for the indecisive literate. (As he often publicly observes, his "M-16 not a Ph.D." produced the monumental change in Liberia and catapulted him to the summit.) It is the braggadocio of the man of brawn and action, who gets immediate results whether favorable or not, against the man of thought and inaction, a wood Hamlet; the macho-man of the rough countryside against the sissified man of the city; the post-Murtala Muhammed charismatic military leader par excellence, the military man of mass appeal who believes in his destiny and raises the standards of a simpler more orderly past. No military personality in Africa epitomized this better than Rawlings of Ghana in his first seizure of power (1979), the inspirational figure for the 1980 Doe. But Rawlings is a man of the middle stratum who grew fed up with the antics of his class and deliberately elected to champion the hoi polloi. If he seems to portray an anti-intellectualism, it is more theatric than substantive, more tactical than strategic, more of a political mean than a political end. Rawlings' moral mandate derives from his integrity, his total indifference to values of great wealth. This, as much as his grip on the military, has enabled him to withstand the vicissitudes of empowerment. Doe has not digested this fact.

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The provisional committee should seek men of character to be the leaders of the national bureaucracy during the transition. It is men of character more than anything else that the committee would need in order to be effective.

The provisional committee should thoroughly understand the need for disciplining the bureaucratic machine. Training without commitment and direction is worthless. In an environment where skills cannot be meaningfully applied, the tendency is for those skills to be deployed in a counter-productive manner. Liberians have seen too much of this.

XI

More on policies.

To continue with the subject of the effort to revitalize the economy.

Economic progress can come about with a two-steps-forward and one-step-backward approach. It cannot with a two-steps-forward and three-steps-backward. When backward progression exceeds the forward by two or more steps, then calamity strikes. Calamity has struck the Liberian economy.

At least for the last two years, Liberia has known progressive negative growth in its economy. The signs were hovering on the horizon in 1980. Until recently, they had been successfully disguised by an infusion of capital and other assistance from the US, other major Western donor countries, the IMF, the World Bank, and other international donor agencies which permitted the continuance of many pre-coup projects offering development aid and employment opportunities and which subsidized the government operational budget during the heavy stress periods. Now the indicators are all glaringly visible. Liberia has been living in a fool's paradise.

First, Liberia is saddled with a national debt of \$1.2 billion, a sizeable obligation for a country of its size. The Tolbert administration inherited a fair sum, added its part, and left some \$750 million. Perhaps the highest single expense incurred during its time was the loans negotiated to finance the 1979 OAU Summit. The Doe administration jumped on the loan band-wagon and is contracting its fair share too. (What's good for the goose is good for the gander.) Second, there was a massive flight of capital after the coup and its aftermath of public executions. Third, the government monthly payroll skyrocketed to almost twice its usual maximum when the government minimum monthly salary leaped from \$100 to \$200. Fourth, the money sector of the Liberian economy was literally swamped by a mammoth movement of persons in the subsistence sector without any kind of commensurate increase in productivity. Now the entire economy, except for the enclave (the iron ore mines and the rubber plantations) economy, is steadily shifting backwards from the money to the subsistence. Fifth, petty but consistent and continuous harassment of the business community, a mostly foreign group, had engendered a lingering crisis of confidence. Sixth, there has been a gross mismanagement of public resources induced by bad appointments in some of the key economic areas, a negative pattern of unappropriated for and questionable disbursement of public funds, excessive private profiteering, little or no comprehension by the military establishment of what is happening economically, and that

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establishment's utter disdain for the economic facts of life. ("Push come to shove, I'll take my cutlass and go in the bush and make farm.") Seventh, with no new significant investments coming in and the existing ones becoming exhausted, with the downward spiral of prices for primary commodities (iron ore, rubber, coffee, timber), the tax base upon which all government revenues are predicated has dwindled dramatically. Eighth, money -- as represented by the US dollar -- has become increasingly scarce in circulation. The non-convertible Liberian currency ("Soldier Five," as Monrovia's dub the five-dollar coin) has rapidly become almost the sole medium of exchange. People hoard the US dollar as if it were a prohibited species. And ninth, the development component of the national budget has virtually ceased to be. It has been devoured by the manatee appetite of the recurrent expenditure component.

In the 1970s foreign banks in Liberia backed by the proverbial Liberian stability and use of the almighty US dollar served as magnets attracting depositors from other west African states whose national currencies were weak and political situations unstable, or so I have been informed by those more conversant with the matter. The personal contact between the apex of the then elite structure in Liberia and their counterparts in other West African states helped to reinforce this trend. The money brought in by this transaction signified that much more capital was available to offer investors coming in. This money was swiftly transferred out to parent banks after the coup. I draw this analogy to allude to the intricate relations between politics and economics in an economy like Liberia's.

There is some talk floating around about divorcing economics from politics in Liberia. This talk would purport to show how the economy can be revived under a Doe presidency, the same Doe under whom it collapsed in the first place. Anything is possible in our world, Martin, but in light of past events, I do not see how this can come about. Anyone knowledgeable about the modern Liberian economic past, especially the 30-year interval between the introduction of Firestone to Liberia and that of Bong Mines, will be sensitized to the abiding interaction, for good or ill, between the Liberian political and economic spheres. Revenue-generating schemes like that of the much debated "flag of convenience" did not originate in Liberia's natural resources but in the national leadership of the day and resourcefulness in maximizing the utility of a concept.

I note this to say that the barrenness of Doe's military rule indicates that a Doe presidency will be incapable of unleashing the imaginative bold new ventures conforming with Liberian realities that will be necessary to get the economy back to where it was in 1978. Rehashing the ideas adopted by the Tubman presidency in the 1940s to capture the country's imagination and to mobilize its people for a defined limited objective show a paucity of thought in tackling present exigencies. The quest for an economic elixir, that perennial pursuit of Liberian politicians, has so infested the regime that it has lost sight of what once was its capacity to deliver: galvanizing, mobilizing and directing the Liberians in a concerted thrust.

Permit me to offer further explanation by a rough inadequate graph. On an economic scale of 0 to 10, Tubman met Liberia at a 0.3 or 0.4 and left it at a 2.7 or 2.8. For a while, Tolbert managed to keep things on an even keel.

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At his demise, the pointers were probably at a 2.2 or 2.3. Under Doe the pointers have steadily moved downward and are probably fixed at a 1.1 or 1.2. If the existing economic infrastructures were not there, the pointers would probably be at even low marks. And this after the infusion of your almost \$400 million plus IMF and World Bank and Club of Paris and all the other international assistance which should have alleviated some of the pressures on the economy. What kind of economy is Doe running? The man does not know himself.

Economy recovery is normally a long process. When combined with political uncertainty it becomes a much longer process. The provisional committee cannot in its time frame of twelve to twenty-four months achieve a complete rehabilitation of the economy. It takes years to build a good house in Liberia; it takes a few days to destroy it. The committee's primary objective should be to lift the economy to the 2.2 or 2.3 mark of 1978. I have deliberately used 1978 because it was the watershed year in Liberian political and economic history. On April 14, 1979, came the great rice riots; on April 12, 1980, the coup. (Alas, T.S. Eliot's "April is the cruellest month" has proved so true for Tolbert.)

What can the provisional committee do under these circumstances?

In consultations with the political parties, it should lay down the basis for an agreed premise on what constitutes the Liberian economy today and the minimal steps necessary to spark the recovery process. During the consultations, it should be noted how the Liberian economy, the enclave economy excepted, has evolved in its bisppheres: private ownership of property, farm land, most businesses, and "almost everything above the ground;" and public ownership of the utilities, parastatals (public corporations), plus "everything under the ground." It should stress support for private initiatives in the first; and in the second, innovative, imaginative, and moral management, even if it entails temporary foreign supervision. Attention should be paid to the special socio-economic and other difficulties encountered by those making the transition from the subsistence sector to the money sector.

The provisional committee should also consider the following:

(i) Liberians should be disabused of the belief that great wealth lies locked beneath the soil or the continental shelf awaiting the prizing of over-eager foreign investors with unlimited bank accounts. The investors' entrance on the national scene would immediately arrest the downward trend in the economy and set it aright. This may or may not be true. But neither deals with the here and now. The belief smacks too much of waiting for Godot. Tolbert waited and now Doe waits. Meantime the economy plummets;

(ii) Liberians should also be told that in all likelihood the era of massive capital investments à la the Americans in Bomi Hills, Firestone, B. F. Goodrich, Lamco, the Germans in Bong, and the Swedes in Lamco, is probably over. The boom cycle is being followed by a bust cycle;

(iii) it should be made clear that dependency upon external sources (primarily the United States) for continued assistance in matters like

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budgetary support is not going to be a permanent fixture of donors' policy and is politically detrimental to the national psyche. The trimming of the national bureaucracy has to be substantive and definitive;

(iv) it should also be made clear during the consultations with the political parties that the perception of government as the employer of first and last resort is momentarily suspended. The vast patronage network or "pseudo-welfarism" of the Tubman years has finally run its course. An understanding should be arrived at with the parties that this will not be a divisive tactic of electioneering, another promise incapable of being redeemed now or in the foreseeable future;

(v) Liberians must be authoritatively informed that they must adapt themselves to efficiently working in those sectors currently dominated by foreigners like trade, services and agriculture;

(vi) intermediate and family-oriented enterprises that are labor-intensive and family-oriented should be encouraged and promoted;

(vii) cognizance should be taken of and remedy sought to counteract the timidity of Liberians of means to venture out with their capital, a sad consequence of the anarchic interventionism of the immediate post-coup period. The political parties should offer assurances of a firm nature to this group so that they can help spark the drive towards a meaningful domestic capital formation;

(viii) the problem of the unemployed and unemployable poses a continuous threat to rational government operations in Monrovia. Consultations with the political parties as to a practical means for alleviating the pressures from this group should be initiated. The provisional committee should be categorical so that it will not be held hostage to the whims of this group; and

(ix) it is very important psychologically to show that only with a civilian government can Liberia again know relative prosperity. The democratization process will be enhanced by this association and the theory of violence as the art of government will be proved dysfunctional. The biggest fiasco of the military regime for the ordinary person has been the collapse of the economy during its tenure. Terror and intimidation may unnerve the intelligentsia and cow it, but to the ordinary people these are merely facts of life. It is when ordinary people find it most difficult to make ends meet that they consider a regime objectionable. If Tubman is fondly remembered today, it is because his was a time of plenty. The terror and intimidation of his last years are dismissed as inconsequential to his historical image. Doe's bungling record on the economy will be as much a deterrent to future coups, if not more so, than any preventative measure. It has succeeded in making the ancien regime, for all its inequities, look like a Camelot by comparison.

XII

More on policies.

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To continue with the subject of military interventionism in political affairs.

The Liberian military, as a distinct semi-professional arm of the Liberian government, has been in existence for more than three quarters of a century. For almost seventy years it was kept subordinated to the civilian authorities. Then came the eruption. Permit me, Martin, to offer these meager observations on the military.

Let me note that at no time in the past was the Liberian military ever perceived as a community unto itself, uniquely separate and autonomous, a parallel government, a world within a world as may be found in some Latin American countries or as is rapidly evolving in certain African states. The Liberian Military was recognized as just another institution of government like the national bureaucracy, the judiciary, the chieftancy system, the police. It had never evolved as an organic branch of the state.

The Liberian military did not come into existence because of an invasion of the country or because a government of the past decided to conquer another country or hold a piece of land of another country. Since its existence, the Liberian military never had the occasion to save the state from an external peril.

The coming into being of the Liberian military was the direct consequence of the expansion of the Liberian state-building process during the penultimate stage (1890-1930). When proclaimed in 1847, the confines of the Liberian state were not precisely delimited. Existing evidence indicate, however, that at best it was perhaps a tenth the size of today's republic. During the next fifty years it would be enlarged to its current dimensions. The Liberian military was not the instrument that produced the positive results of the expansionist policy. It was the instrument that greatly facilitated the consolidation of the state.

These are not esoteric points I am making, Martin. They are crucial in understanding how the military was perceived by the power brokers and those who aspired to be power brokers as well as how the military interpreted its role in the structure of the state and the national society.

From 1847 to the end of the first decade of this century, the military arm of the Liberian government consisted solely of an irregular militia composed of Congoes with their indigenous allies. This militia was used exclusively to attain the subordination to the state structure of adjacent coastal indigenous ethnicities or segments thereof who held contravening ideas about their political autonomy. During the partition the Liberian authorities occupying slivers of land along the littoral elected to claim a huge chunk of territory of the hinterland. Through negotiations with the British and French, who were pressured by the Americans, a reduced but fairly large area was designated as Liberia's. This hinterland was primarily desired by Liberian traders for trade purposes and not as a domain for control and incorporation into the core polity. Control over this "unknown" region went far beyond the ability of the irregular militia to handle. Its lands were heavily forested and easily defended. It took months to traverse the area by foot. The diversity, paucity and population of its ethnicities far exceeded anything on the coast.

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Traditionally, the pattern of relations that had evolved between the government and the indigenous ethnicities was a *laissez faire* one. Once acknowledgement had been made of Liberian suzerainty, internecine raiding reduced, and trade and free passage of Liberians agreed to, the government usually guaranteed non-intervention in the activities of the ethnicity or a segment thereof.

The post-partition world demanded "effective control" over territory and population claimed. The Liberian government through its irregular militia was unable to provide this. Charging in 1908 that the time had passed "when Liberia could re-enact the part of a hermit kingdom," British Consul Wallis presented the four conditions his government had set for continuing its recognition of Liberia's independence. The third condition was the immediate establishment of a police force under European officers. This point of the Wallis Memorandum gave rise to the creation of the Liberian Frontier Force, progenitor of the Liberian National Guard, under the command of a British officer in 1909. Based at Monrovia, the Force was initially a contingent of Mende from Sierra Leone. Jurisdictional and pay conflicts resulted in the recall of contingent and British officers a year later.

The semi-professional Force was employed in the hinterland and along the coast in the same manner as had its antecedent, the irregular militia. At first the new Force was drawn from centrally located ethnicities like the Kpelle and led by Congo officers of the irregular militia. By the 1930s it would be largely manned by the Lorma, who were believed to be the best warriors in the country. Like the interior bureaucracy (the provincial, district, county, and assistant district commissioners, the clerks, the chiefs, the interpreters, and the other supernumeraries), whose auxiliary arm it formed, the Force was directly attached to the Presidency. Unlike the irregular militia, however, the members of the Force had no direct relationship with the political configurations of the Congoes. It was preeminently the president's "Force." As "Commander-In-Chief" in name and in fact, he looked after its sustenance and welfare. In return it protected him and empowered his office. Through his person it reinforced the internal stability of the state.

In its early days the Force lived off the fat of the land like armed bands traditionally did in that time. As the economy became partially modernized and state management improved, members of the Force became salaried personnel. From headquarters in Monrovia, the Force was disbursed at strategic points along or near the borders. Except in 1955 (when Tubman used it to smash to opposition) and 1979 (when used by Tolbert to restore calm after the riots), the Liberian Frontier Force was never used in Monrovia to either crush or contain resistance to the government of the day. In 1929 King ordered it out to prevent his ouster in wake of the Fernando Po Slavery Scandals. But the militia and other official and unofficial organs of the state were still sufficiently powerful to checkmate King's move. In 1955 there would be no such challenge to Tubman's thrust. And in 1979 the army was clearly in sympathy with the opposition to Tolbert.

With the consolidation and unification of the state and the development of a fairly adequate police in the mid-sixties, the rationale for the army's existence as originally conceived ceased to be. Yet, there was never thought

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of disbanding or demobilizing the army. Every state worth its salt had an army, why shouldn't Liberia? And who could predict what that erratic Sekou Toure might just "up and do with all his communism talk over there"? Liberia had to keep an army as she had to have a flag, an anthem, a seal. The army provided employment, brought more people into the money economy, created a sense of nationality. These were the days of good times and everybody had to enjoy something, even if it were just a little bit. Besides, there was a deep conviction in the political establishment of that time that a debt of gratitude was owed the army for its loyalty to the state and for helping keep stability in the country.

There was a direct correlation between the decline in effectiveness of the irregular militia and the ascendance of the semi-professional army. Although never officially disbanded, the irregular militia had for all intent and purpose gone down the drains when Tolbert assumed office. The irregular militia seemed an even greater absurdity in those modern times. Who or what could checkmate the army if it made a bid for power? What army? ... How would it rule? ... Where would it lead us? ... Don't think about the unthinkable? Neither Tolbert nor the opposition to him ever seriously spent a second on military intervention in political matters. It was beyond the military's ken! The officers wouldn't dare and the rank and file will follow where the officers led.

But something dramatically and quietly was happening in the army of the 1970s. Slowly and imperceptibly its character and composition was being altered. So too was its blind loyalty to the presidency and its apolitical nature.

The officer corps remained relatively intact. The changes were occurring at the lower levels, among the rank and file. Until Tolbert, the army had remained predominantly Lorma and deeply rooted in the village and clan network of western Liberia (especially Lofa and Bong counties). Tolbert reversed this recruiting pattern. He retired a good number of the older soldiers and in their stead brought in the unemployed urban youths drawn to Monrovia because of its better opportunities. Emphasis shifted towards eastern Liberia (especially Nimba, Grand Gedeh and Sinoe counties) whose restless young were visibly numerous on Monrovia streets. No longer bound by the constraints of rural traditions and lacking the skills to compete in the modern marketplace, they faced a bleak future. The army seemed to provide an outlet from street peddling ("yannah boys"), loading ("grona boys"), house work (houseboy), and petty crimes. (Hadrn't Tolbert designated the youths as his "precious jewels"? Let him "show down" with jobs for his young people.)

Where the old army of Tubman was weighted towards the illiterate and tradition-rooted, Tolbert's was directed towards the urban semi-literate who were keenly observant of the power elite and very street-smart. When the circumstances allowed, the young soldiers attended night school to further their fragile education. Activities of the reform movement in Monrovia were kept abreast of. The young soldiers were enthralled by the passionate rhetoric of the movement calling for instant social justice, immediate revolutionary action, populist measures, a more egalitarian society. They marveled at how all of this was expressed in a simple language accessible to the common people. They were eminently of the hoi polloi, fascinated by the

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cult of violence then permeating the urban life and percolating in the countryside. Their role models were the flamboyant articulators of the *hoi polloi*, those individuals who ably matched great physical courage with fiery words. They stood in awe of the arrogant behavior of enraged educated youths.

The passivity of old age and "its 'cowardice' masquerading as mythic wisdom" were contemptible to them. Having little to do in the way of soldiering, they often found their duties relegated to serving as guards of the residences and persons of prominent political and government officials. They observed the impotency of these seemingly powerful figures as these officials groveled before Tolbert in order to retain sinecures or plead for better ones. They saw the peccadilloes and passions of these "big people" to be hardly different from their own. The haughtiness, indifference and lack of generosity of some of these officials were considered as deep-seated character flaws similar to Tolbert's and just as detestable. An atmosphere of stinginess seemed to engulf most of these officials. What had been a highly personalized society had become overnight an impersonal one. The idealized relation between patron and client no longer obtained between official and soldier.

From behind the scenes the young soldiers sensed the hollowness of the socio-political hierarchy and realized that a determined shove would topple everything. What had once been admiration turned to outrage, outrage to concealed violence ready to be unleashed at the first opportunity. If they did not yet know what they wanted, they definitely knew what they did not want.

The Tolbert administration had failed to familiarize the new soldiers with a *raison d'être*, if one could be found beyond the standard duty, honor, loyalty, country. The army lacked an *esprit de corps* in the seventies. Even the jingoism of the Tubman years was absent. If in the thirties, forties, or fifties, the soldier symbolized upward mobility to the rural folks, this was definitely not true in the seventies. The status of the army parallelly declined with that of the interior bureaucracy after the creation of the four interior counties (Lofa, Bong, Nimba, and Grand Gedeh) in 1964. For aspiring young men from these areas, the army was now a career of last option. To join the army was tantamount to an admission of the lack of formal education and its concomitant social respectability. It meant failure to obtain any of the new administrative assignments opening up in the new counties, posts requiring some education and being filled by not necessarily better men. No compensation lay in sight for the army's declining fortunes. Tolbert was shifting presidential favors toward the professional stratum, the educated folks. A power vacuum was developing among the men with guns. No one in authority really thought about addressing the vacuum. No one in authority knew how to fill it.

The army felt slighted when it was not included in the 1976-1977 salary and allowances awards, whose principal recipients were the upper and middle levels of the national bureaucracy.

The army felt slighted as construction at the housing estates of Gardnersville, Barnersville, Cabral, Matadi, and New Georgia for the middle and lower levels of the national bureaucracy proceeded on an apparently even

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keel while those for the soldiers at Camp Schifflein and the Barclay Training Center seemed to advance at a snail's pace.

The army felt slighted at being left out of Tolbert's total involvement package, whatever it was.

The army felt slighted as consumer goods flooded the market, as members of the middle stratum snatched up items like automobiles and television-video sets while the soldiers lacked the means to buy any.

The army felt slighted when rumors circulated to the effect that the Tolbert administration was preferring the police to it.

Naturally the army refused to join the police in opening fire on demonstrators on that fateful April day in 1979. Soldiers sided with the rioters and participated in the looting. Rumors were rife that some soldiers had approached the then head of the army, General Henry Korbo Johnson, and insisted that he take power. Monrovia was bereft of the presence of civil authority and almost anyone could have seized power on the 15th or 16th. Johnson refused.

Tolbert literally recovered his power behind two companies of Guinean troops dispatched urgently to Monrovia by Sekou Toure. The army had been slighted again. And publicly humiliated and ridiculed. The Liberian intelligentsia was humiliated. Never in the history of Liberia had non-Liberian troops been brought into the capital city to preserve order and restore the authority of government. The Congos had been humiliated and enraged. Quietly the Congo establishment began to disengage itself from Tolbert and his antics. Quietly, powerful Congo individuals began extending feelers out to the progressives. Suddenly Tolbert began realizing that he had lost the last-ditch commitment of his ethnic group.

What had been done to King fifty years before could not now be done to Tolbert by the Congo establishment. The muscles were not there anymore. Tubman had broken whatever power remained in the hands of the oligarch in 1955. It could grumble and mumble. But it could not bite, could not rid itself of Tolbert. Its fate was now irretrievably linked with his.

Only two combinations at the time had the potentials of formulating a coherent program and governing Liberia. The army was neither. The first was in the position to rule. It could not because to rule entailed the seizure of power, a revolutionary act beyond its non-revolutionary capabilities. The second had no such qualms about seizing powers but could not. It was fundamentally split and realized that though the will to power existed, effective governing without considerable input from the first would be an impossibility.

The first combination was contained within the government: the mixture of Congo-Indigene professionals who worked for the government but were not in synchronicity with its policies. They were not fatally tarnished by Tolbert's mistakes. They had the managerial skills required to handle the bureaucracy and direct the economy. They lacked the political skills needed to defuse the explosive political situation obtaining in 1979 Liberia. The group was a bit

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too amorphous, without consensus as to who should be its primus inter pares. A case of many chiefs, too few Indians.

The second combination was the nucleus, the principal articulators and organizers of the reform movement in the seventies: the so-called progressives. The progressives were divided into two wings: the Movement For Justice in Africa (Moja) led by Togba Nah Tipoteh, and the Progressive Alliance of Liberia (PAL) led by Gabriel Baccus Mathews. Founded in the early seventies, Moja was a protest-pressure group that evolved into a mass movement composed primarily of intellectuals, professionals, university and secondary school students, and industrial and agricultural workers in the enclave economy. Its long-term objective was the reconstituting of the state; its short-term, pressuring the government into effecting reforms (labor rights, electoral, income distribution, etc.) by a series of speeches and advisory services. Moja had quite a few of the young, brilliant and independent personalities around. It stressed the group-approach to decision-making. PAL originated among Liberians in the United States in the mid-seventies. It was a more politically-oriented group with special appeal to the hoi polloi, the intermediate and low levels of the bureaucracy, the career-oriented students. PAL emphasized immediate direct action in politicizing the urban masses and a confrontational attitude towards the Tolbert government. Everything seemed geared only towards the removal from office of Tolbert and his clique. PAL was heavily dependent upon the charisma of Mathews. Moja could exist without the physical presence of Tipoteh; PAL could not without Mathews. Tipoteh was well known throughout Liberia in the seventies; Mathews received his annointment after the rice demonstrations, which PAL had called for. A case of two incompatible strong-willed chiefs, far too many Indians.

Having done the unthinkable with the introduction of foreign troops to Liberia, Tolbert failed to follow through and prop up his power. This was perhaps his biggest blunder after approving the order to open fire on the demonstrators. With the Guinean troops to back him up, he could have copied what Siaka Stevens did in Sierra Leone in 1970 when Guinean troops were invited to stabilize a potentially anarchic situation. Tolbert could have disbanded those units whose loyalty was questionable and restructured the entire army. Had his back been up the wall as Tolbert's was, I think Tubman -- who would never have allowed matters to reach that point -- would have pursued such a course. Tubman would have said bedamned to Congo or the intelligentsia sensibility about foreign troops in Monrovia. Tolbert always hesitated at the crucial minute. He permitted the army to remain as it was, a status quo ante. He did lightly shake up the officers corps, assigning to the oblivion of presidential advisor on army matters the loyal General Johnson. Johnson's successor may have been a technically competent officer but General Smith, who headed a minuscule air force, lacked the powerful ethnic base that the Lorma Johnson possessed. The vacuum among the men with guns grew wider and wider. Into this space stepped the determined Mathews.

Looked upon by the Monrovia hoi polloi to be their preeminent representative, Mathews, after relentless pressuring, successfully achieved the recognition of this group by the government as a legal party, the Progressive People Party, in January 1980. The hoi demanded more direct action. Smelling the kill, Mathews obliged. On March 7, 1980, he demanded the resignation of Tolbert and his True Whig Party government, charging the administration with, among other things, "corrupt practices, conflict of interest, misuse of public office and the general inability to govern. The

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government reacted with mass arrest of the PPP leadership and "sympathizers" inside the government. The issue had finally been joined.

On April 12, 1980, the army's rank and file resolved the issue by deciding against Tolbert.

In the subsequent tangle of interests and emotions, most analysts have not bothered to ask what the military really wanted when it carried out the coup. The motive all agreed upon was the desire to be rid of Tolbert and his close associates. A second motive was to free Matthews and the PPP leadership from prison where rumors had it that they were to be executed when Tolbert left for Zimbabwe on a state visit scheduled for April 16. Beyond these there is much debate.

It seems to me that these analysts have focused too much attention on what the military leadership said. But what did the military leadership say? I contend that the military leadership said what the dominant civilian faction of the hour composed for public consumption or what that faction thought the military leadership ought to say. The various civilian factions -- progressives, in their various colorations; moderates, in their contrasting stripes; conservatives, of vying ethnic persuasions -- have always endeavored to remake the military leadership according to their individual ideological images. All have failed. Their failure can be attributed to the fact that at rock bottom there was not an ideological content -- left, center, or right -- to the military leadership. The military leadership suffered from tunnel vision. What was not there could not be put there by the logics of persuasion.

What were the actual measures taken by the military leadership? First, there was the doubling of the monthly salary for enlisted men to \$250. Then the introduction of a salary scale for officers along the lines of the 1976-1977 awards to the national bureaucracy. The Matadi housing project was literally taken over for the soldiers' occupancy. So too were the more ostentatious private homes of those charged with capital offenses. Then came the raiding of the public coffers. The pattern was clear. What the progressive intelligentsia were enunciating and the soldiers were doing were as contradictory as day and night.

In the beginning the progressive intelligentsia tried to imbue the military with a sense of public spiritedness, accountability and nationalism. The military wanted nothing to do with such nonsense. Soon the factional conflicts among the progressives got intertwined with the military and murderous purging ensued. With the dismissal from the government of the leading progressives ("We are tired of this Moja-PPP thing"), the moderates and ethnic conservatives came to the fore. Their theme became the recreation of the Tubmanic Camelot. This is the theme Doe is now using as a tactical ploy.

The military has turned upside down every civilian plan that did not accrue immediate direct material benefits to the military leadership. The military has effectively compromised all civilians who served in high positions under it.

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The army evidently had no quarrel per se with the historic Liberian system. ("Only with Tolbert and his Congo people.") The army wanted status, wanted to be prominently represented in the higher echelons of state power. ("And that stingy old Tolbert did not want to give the soldier people what was due them!") It seems to me that had Tolbert understood and been prepared to do what the army wanted in the way of status, it would have played ball with him as it did with Tubman. Until recently, most progressives were reluctant to admit to this. Anything originating from the people cannot be bad, they have asserted. Hogwash! Doe has daily proved the absurdity of this premise. The mercenary content present in most of the African states' army exists also in the Liberian.

The massive (in the Liberian context) external assistance of the United States to the Liberian military has regrettably only resulted in the further nurturing of this mercenary tendency. The Americans' intentions are laudable; the effects, debatable. A "do nothing" army becomes an occupation force when it is in absolute control of a country and has most of its basic needs met with minimal exertion. The military governments in power in most African states are examples of this.

His ethnic group excepted, Doe's main constituency is naturally the army. Continued military enhancement in the Liberian power configuration is the central pillar of his survival tactics. If advancing the military means a lowering in the norms of civility once common to Liberian life, then so be it. If it means greater crudity and suspicion in interpersonal relations, then so be it. If it means deterioration in the quality of performance by government personnel, then so be it. So be it as long as the army stays up there.

The provisional committee should understand that any attempt at reconstituting the Liberian state must now begin with a reconstituting of the Liberian Army. Without some form of drastic overhaul, the army will be forever prone to recurrent bouts of couplitis, the wakening up to the morning broadcast that yet another Doe has seized power to remedy the ills of society.

The provisional committee should fully understand that Liberia has for too long been held hostage to a band of bandits pretending to be samurai of liberation when in reality they were ronin of destruction. These ronin have very successfully camouflaged their true intentions by feigning ignorance and naivety about state governance. They have blamed their civilian appointees for all the negative acts of their regime. ("We didn't know nothing about this thing here. Those Moja-PPP boys fooled us. They pointed out the people to be arrested and executed. They told us to go round taking cars and occupying homes. They told us plenty money was here in the country for us. They were our "book people." Now that everything chakla, they take their hands from it. 'Not me, oh,' they say. 'That those soldier boys.' They act like virgin, like water can't touch their mouths. Everything now, that we the soldier people spoil it. They spoil our name then they run away or shut their mouth when other people ask, 'Who spoil the country?')")

And the Liberian ronin have been believed because evil cannot come from the minds of the uneducated innocent. Which expert is prepared to admit having been bamboozled by Doe? Beg your pardon, sir? Authenticity, not those phony Ph.D., M.D., LL.B., M.A., M.Sc., who can't show you the road to Ziggida

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and would be worse tyrants than those gallant men in arms! Alas, our dear Sammy is also teaching them a thing or two. If he only knew how many writers of the Ph.D. dissertation he has compromised with his shenanigans, he would quickly shape up. How can these scholars explain and defend Sammy's cause when the man messes up like that over there? He has those degenerate Congoes laughing at them.

The provisional committee should take into consideration the fact that the Liberian coup is unique to Liberia as are Liberian political realities. It must beware of the temptation to equate the Liberian coup with similar events taking place elsewhere in Africa. It must remember that the singularity of Liberian history was not altered by the act of 1980. There is a "Liberian way" to life, the result of a long past with its ups and downs, by-ways and side-ways. Liberians may run away from it, may pretend that it does not exist, but they cannot hide from it. If the whole past, and not selected slices, had been served up, then Liberians would have better adjusted to the shock of Doe.

Barring an outright dissolution of the army, Costa Rica style, the provisional committee should consider the concept of a civilian-based army. Reactivation of the militia and a program of continuous military training may be beyond the resource capabilities of the country. But some variation should be considered.

Some serious questions need to be asked and answers sought. Why should one-eighth (c.6000 out of c. 48,000) of all government employees be in a sacrosanct section that is non-productive? Is the army productive? How productive is it? In the present Liberian environment, can an army be productive? Why have an army today? What is the Liberian military defending the country from? Is Liberia being threatened by Guinea, or Sierra Leone, or the Ivory Coast? If so, then Liberians should be informed of the threat. Is there a communist underground or armed ethnic dissidents out there in the forests, or in Monrovia, or in towns trying to destabilize the state by insurrectionary tactics thus necessitating the keeping of thousands of young people in arms so as to uproot these evils? If so, then the Liberians should be told in straightforward language. Or, and here comes the heretical thought, is the army itself the institution with the potential for banditry and social instability in Liberia? Is this a threat of blackmail that partially sustains the maintenance of the present order? These are hard questions serious-minded Liberians should reflect on.

(By posing these questions, Martin, I am in breach of Decree 88A. Worse than this, I have committed treason, the penalty for which is the firing squad. For saying much less than what I have written in this letter, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf got ten years. And it is taking the mustering of enormous international pressures to get her out. Think Martin, what I will get should I venture into Doeland? And I do not possess a hundredth of the international influence Ellen possesses. I would just be disposed of into the smoke of history ... And yet the unexpressable must be uttered aloud so as to initiate a silent debate. Yesuah, help me!)

XIII

More on politics.

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To continue with the subject of Liberia and her role in African affairs.

"Ho hum," I hear you muttering, "so what? Of what practical functionality are the councils of Africa? Where are their identifiable achievements, besides a tentative pax Africana which obtains primarily because African states are too bogged down with their individual problems of internal stability and economic growth to pursue expansionist visions and 'empire-building'? How would Doe have benefited by following such pop-dreams?" Tough questions, Martin, hard questions that evade smart answers. But Liberia is in and of Africa, Martin, whether she likes it or not, and has to answer present to all Africa's positive, not negative, endeavors. A simple fact of political geography and history, Martin, a simple fact.

From preliminary activities leading to the foundation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1963 to the hosting of the 1979 OAU Summit in Monrovia in 1979, from the formation of the subregional Mano River Union (MRU - Liberia-Sierra Leone customs union later joined by Guinea) to the regional Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Liberia's participation in the councils of Africa far exceeded her size and resources. The steadfast pursuit of consultations, cooperation and involvement have created a condition of non-belligerency, enabling Liberia to maintain safe defined borders and amicable relations with her neighbors, irrespective of contesting ideologies. Neither Liberia's outright alignment with the conservative bloc of African states under Tubman nor her quiet but firm move towards the center and center-left blocs under Tolbert deviated from this pattern.

The best I can say about the continuation of this pattern is that in one shape or another it continues. And I am saying things in a most favorable light.

The aimless drift characterizing Liberia's participation in the councils of Africa today does not emanate from a calculated policy of neglect. Nor does it arise from a response to the confused realities affecting many of Africa's organizations. (Again, Martin, too much credit.) It seems to me that Liberia's drift without mastery derives from an indifference occasioned by an incoherence and meandering about among the priorities of her foreign policy, the external reflection of the sad state of her domestic realities.

Since 1960 Liberian foreign policy has been built around two foci. The first and more important has been the historic "special relationship" with the United States; the second, the network of bilateral and multilateral alliances, agreements, and understandings with other African States. The events of 1980 did not give rise to a third focus, posturings to the contrary. Under Doe, the African focus has become off-balance.

The African political establishment did not take kindly to the assassination of the sitting OAU Chairman (Tolbert) and Liberia took a few nasty knocks at the OAU and one or two international bodies for "embarrassing" Africa. ("Those s.o.b.'s, who do they think they are? Who has "embarrassed" Africa more than they? Didn't they know Tolbert was suppressing and oppressing the Liberian people before they came to Monrovia for their OAU? They ate our chop, drank our liquor, so-so fine time. They left behind this

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helluva debt. We didn't eat anything, didn't chop a small piece, 'self. They are all doing to their part of people what Tolbert was doing here. They are all so-so Tolbert.") The reaction by the African political establishment was predictable. (Who don't fear the sound of gunshots at midnight arriving to judge your sins of omission and commission?) The controversy was quietly resolved. (Let him who is without sin cast the first stone Sometimes the bastard with the most blood on his hands, lifts the heaviest rock and sends it flying in your direction ... Run, brother, run.)

But Doe's skepticism towards that "OAU bunch" has remained firmly intact. He has been unable to establish the kind of meaningful personal relationship with his colleagues in the neighboring countries that obtained between Tubman or Tolbert and the African leaders of their time.

Thinking Liberians felt uncomfortable when the army was put on full alert and units forwarded to the borders of Sierra Leone because a newspaper in Freetown falsely printed that Doe had killed his wife in 1983. ("Would they have printed that kind of news about Tolbert? That Pa Siaka should be taught a dirty lesson!") Our gallant men in arms did not cross and Pa Siaka did not have to do what Nyerere did to that other gallant soldier, Idi Amin Dada.

Thinking Liberians wondered when Liberia nominated a candidate to head the African Development Bank in Abidjan, a man who had served as head of the ECOWAS Fund in Lome, and not a single other African country supported the nomination in 1985.

Something is indeed amiss and sadly removed ...

The provisional committee should thoroughly review Liberia's role in African affairs to maximize whatever benefits that may accrue. It is important that the new generation of Liberians understand how their survival interlocks with those of their neighbors. Liberia is unique in how its state-building process evolved and how its people have interacted with each other and developed their distinctive style of life. Ideas and trends happening elsewhere in Africa sooner or later have an impact on Liberia. How prepared the country is to receive, adapt, or reject these ideas and trends will have an important bearing on its future development.

XIV

The concept of a provisional committee is only a "holding" idea. As such, it is viable until arrangements have been made for installation of a new political leadership based on popular assent. Thereafter, its functionality ceases. It must lower the temperature raised by the high expectations of the late seventies and beginning eighties. It must seek a national consensus on what is achievable in existing circumstances. It must be exemplary by abandoning power after having tasted it.

XV

And so I bring this letter to an end, Martin. I apologize for having taxed your patience. I have reached my Musardu and forwarded my narrative. Others following me may see Musardu in another light. Let them. Or they may

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claim that Musardu does not exist. Let them. Or they will wait until another Samoury Touré sweeps the area, vaingloriously attempting the reconstruction of Mali. Let them. But our experiences with our Musardu has awakened us to yet another reality.

(August 29 - September 30, 1985)

MILITARY RULE AS A POLITICAL FIASCO IN LIBERIA:
A Review Article

Similih M. Cordon

The demons descended upon Liberia on April 12, 1980, demolished the first republic, promised a second one but shamefully defaulted on their promise, and soon set themselves up as rulers of the Liberian society. And the full story of the regime set up by a handful of soldiers out of the debris of the demonic invasion of 1980 is now being told rather slowly by Liberian scholars. A few Americans and other non-Liberian scholars produced some studies almost immediately after the military coup, but Liberians should be in the forefront of the study of their society especially during these difficult years when an examination of events from the vantage point of a national is urgently needed. Fortunately, a few Liberian scholars have begun the journey into the heart of the military regime established by Samuel K. Doe and his colleagues. One of these Liberians is Edward Lama Wankeryor whose book, Liberia Military Dictatorship: A Fiasco 'Revolution' (Chicago: Strugglers' Community Press, 1985), is the subject of this brief review article. The article seeks to discuss the current Liberian situation within the dimensions of Wankeryor's analysis.

The military regime as a national nightmare in Liberian history will continue to have far-reaching effects on the society because of its devastating blow on the development of the country, a nation that has been struggling for growth and development over the last one and half centuries. The military leadership has taken the country backward many years. Though the Doe regime has accumulated more national debts than any other government in Liberian history, it has little or nothing of substance to show for the huge indebtedness. Instead, the main fruits of the regime have been chaos, gross violation of human and civil rights, the ruining of the national economy, and the shrinkage of the national image.

It is these and other tragic events that have characterized military rule and brought disappointment and indignation among many Liberians. The story has yet to be fully chronicled. Perhaps events are unfolding so rapidly that scholars are waiting for the possible development of patterns. Though Liberian intellectuals, writers, journalists, and educators are not very fond of writing book-length studies of their society, events associated with military rule may impel many into "scholarly analysis" of their country. Momo Rogers, a Liberian journalist and university professor, noted in 1978 in the Liberian Outlook magazine that most Liberian scholars and "writers have been in a state of literary pregnancy for quite some time now," with only "a few deliveries," some of which have been "marked by miscarriages and abortions." But I gather the cataclysmic changes Liberia is presently undergoing will produce many more deliveries soon.

In fact a number of Liberian scholars have been writing on their society during the past few years, though not particularly on the current situation in the country. Togba-Nah Tipoteh released a little book that was critical of President William R. Tolbert, Jr. whom the military leaders have almost made a

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saint if one compares his deeds with those of the present political leaders. Then George S. Boley published a book on the rise and fall of the first Republic of Liberia, not a serious research exercise. We have a shortage of books on Liberia, but the shortage of scholarly work on the first republic is not as acute as on the military government which Boley knows much better than the first republic. Now H. Boima Fahnbulleh has produced a study of foreign relations of a period during the first republic. We may have to wait a while for a Fahnbulleh study on the foreign policy of Samuel K. Doe whom Fahnbulleh served as a foreign minister. Joseph S. Guannu has been quite prolific in recent years, but most of his analyses exclude the post-1980 coup period. Most Liberian scholars seem to be stopping to 1980 or dealing with subjects before the advent of the military coup; perhaps 1980 is the temporary road block for the intellectual pursuit of Liberians--especially those still living in the country.

But now we have a new book that not only goes beyond 1980 but strikes deep into the Doe military regime. This book, Liberia Military Dictatorship: A Fiasco 'Revolution', is a cross between a scholarly study and journalistic reporting. After completing his graduate studies in mass communications in the United States, Wonkeryor ran home, as most of us Liberians abroad would like to do. He then became a radio manager with the Liberian Broadcasting System in Monrovia, but he soon got caught in a crossfire when he was implicated in an alleged coup attempt to overthrow Doe in 1983. This incident forced him to flee the country for his life. But he has produced a book that tells the story of some aspects of the military regime and his escape from the brutalities of that government. The best parts of the 252-page book include the chapters on Doe's consolidation and abuse of power, the plight of General Thomas Quiwonkpa (one of the main architects of the April 12, 1980 coup), the gross violation of human and civil rights under the military rulers, and the bleakness that surrounds the future of the Liberian nation.

When the soldiers seized power in 1980, mounting scathing criticism on the regime of assassinated President Tolbert quickly increased in both quantity and intensity. But it was not long before such attacks abated. Charges leveled at Tolbert such as corruption, nepotism, greed for power and money, accumulation of wealth from government funds, and mal-administration, became rampant under Doe. The soldiers almost succeeded in giving Tolbert an angelic appearance. Though scholarly studies will continue to put much blame on Tolbert for the circumstances that provoked the military coup, Wonkeryor cleverly dismissed the demise of the Tolbert presidency in only a few pages. Like many other writers, he did not find much good in Tolbert's administration, though Tolbert was not without some positive characteristics and good intentions.

After warming up in the first two chapters, Wonkeryor convincingly takes off with the discussion of the tactics employed by Doe to consolidate and mis-use power. First, Doe eliminated the major opponents to his rule including his vice head of state, General Thomas Weh Syen (who had nearly usurped power from Doe and who had been suspected of a connection with a Libyan interest in post-coup Liberia). Thomas Quiwonkpa (the powerful Commanding General of the Liberian army), and other members of the ruling junta were to follow in brutal succession. Second, Doe made his regime repressive by abusing civil and human rights as a way of subduing the citizenry. Then he unleashed witch-hunting on the society and engaged in

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constant purges of government officials. His consolidation of power is now complete. In terms of exercising power by brute force, Doe is presently one of the most powerful leaders in Liberian history, and he is sure to be remembered primarily for his ability to survive numerous intrigues to unseat him. His major achievement to date is his political survival.

Though many abortive counter-coups and fake coup attempts, public and secret executions of alleged plotters, and frequent clashes between Doe and various segments of the Liberian society such as students, teachers, journalists, political activists, and religious leaders have taken place since 1980, Wankeryor chose to discuss only the major ones. His chapters on the Thomas Weh Syen affair, Thomas Quiwonkpa's confrontations with Doe, the Moses Flanzamaton incident, and the University of Liberia's confrontation with the military rulers chronicled some of the upheavals Doe has been experiencing in his political survival pursuit. The net effect of these developments, often accompanied by hasty trials and executions, has been chronic political instability and economic decline. Such a situation has a great adverse impact on the people, causing some to leave the country and leaving those at home to live in fear. The impact is even greater on the national economy and visible through the flight of capital, slow circulation of money within the country, and very little economic growth and development. The instability and the chaos have also taken their toll on the national image which is at one of its lowest ebbs in Liberian history.

Some readers might think that Wankeryor did not strike too deep into the heart of the military government, but he did note that the Doe government is a national disgrace, a disaster, and a great disappointment to many Liberians. In fact many Liberians believe that certain characteristics of Doe's personality and leadership are definitely un-Liberian. The brutal, insensitive, and murderous (if not genocidal) acts of the military regime do not seem to have much resemblance to deeds of past political leaders, though corruption, nepotism, greed for power and money, and mismanagement of national resources have been part of the national and local political scenes for a long time. The bloodthirsty releasing of violence on society and the open confrontations with church leaders are not very characteristic of previous heads of state. Because of these and other tragic results of the Doe leadership, some scholars might be tempted to compare his acts with leaders of such countries as Haiti (especially the brutal disregards for civil and human rights by soldiers and security forces), Zaire (with particular reference to frequent and erratic cabinet reshuffles and constant purging of government officials), Chile (with regard to brutal confrontations between military rulers and students and intellectuals), and South Africa (because of the suppression of free expression, the ruthless handling of journalists, and the gross abuse of human and civil rights). Whatever one's views may be regarding such comparisons, what is certain is that a number of personality traits and actions of Samuel K. Doe are un-Liberian or do not seem to have much precedence in Liberian political history.

While one part of Wankeryor's book is about the study of the Liberian military government, the other part is about his own experiences with that regime and his difficult escape to exile. This journalistic reportage of his fear, flight from home, and life outside Liberia is autobiographical or personal reminiscences, but it has some connections with the contemporary

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events in Liberia. Most probably readers on Liberia will continue to see similar works by Liberians who will tell their own stories within the context of contemporary Liberia--as Wunkeryor has done. These stories will constitute examples of the activities of the military government as well as of its abuse of power and the rights of the citizens.

Literary works tend to appeal to readers differently. Thus, what reviewers (who themselves are readers) consider as strengths might not be so strong. Also, what they consider as weaknesses may not be so glaringly visible to many readers. However, reviewers must state their estimation of the books they review.

The strengths of Wunkeryor's book can be categorized into three areas. First, the writer's ability to blend scholarly analysis with journalistic reportage seems fascinating, though in some places the mere reporting of details overshadows conceptual analysis of events. The second quality is the number of insights Wunkeryor has included in the book. Because of his position as a broadcasting executive in Liberia, his close personal and ethnic relations with General Quiwonkpa, and his many contacts with government officials in Monrovia, Wunkeryor was able to include many insightful comments on several events and activities in his book. Perhaps some readers with knowledge of inside facts may not find all of Wunkeryor's insights too new, but they are interesting and they indicate that the writer was an active participant in the events that transpired.

The third principal interesting point about Wunkeryor's study is the projection of his own personal tragedy as part of the Liberian national crisis. This concept of super-imposing personal predicaments over social, economic, cultural, and political crises and issues indicates how the intellectuals or Western-educated of modern Africa perceive their nationalism and role in their societies. Most educated elites see themselves not only as legitimate leaders of action and thought, but also as national symbols. Consequently, the exclusivist tendencies of political leaders strike deeply these elites. This attitude may not always be openly expressed by the educated groups, but one can always sense it from their views, activities, and reactions to national events.

The book has its shortcomings as well. My quarrels relate primarily to the author's inability to do justice to all the subheadings or chapters of the study. Though I like the juxtaposition of his scholarly pursuit and personal reminiscences, it reduced the quality of conceptual analysis and interpretation of some events and activities discussed in the book. While chapters on Doe's rise to power and his eventual mis-use of that power, the gross violation of civil and human rights of the Liberian citizenry, Thomas Quiwonkpa's plight, the disappointment of Liberians over the coming of the military government, and the bleakness of the future of the Liberian nation are much better in analytical framework, a few of the other chapters were lacking in effectiveness.

Another quarrel I have with the writer is the inclusion of too many irrelevant details. Perhaps this is also an apparent characteristic of the journalistic trivial pursuit. If the entire work was personal reminiscences or autobiographical sketches, perhaps I could have overlooked this, but as a

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blend of scholarly and autobiographical work, the emphasis ought to shift towards conceptual analysis. Examples of irrelevant detail include minute descriptions of certain events and activities particularly about his escape from Liberia to the Ivory Coast. Though some readers might find these details and descriptions interesting or useful, selectivity of facts, conceptualization of analysis, and proper interpretation of data are positive marks of professional scholarly writers.

Yet Wonkeryor's book is worthy of reading and digesting as scholars and other groups of people interested in Liberia continue to grope for explanations of events that led to the emergence of a regime that is now the embodiment of disillusionment, frustration, and indignation among many Liberians. An interesting study, the book is a unique journey through the land of the soldiers in Liberia.

The story of the Doe tyranny must be told by Liberian scholars for all their people to know and remember. History must pass judgment on the first principal attempt of the indigenous Liberians at the helm of the Liberian state. History must remember Liberia during these difficult years, but that act of remembering comes through analysis or examination of the activities of Doe's government. And Edward Wonkeryor has made a contribution in this direction.

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BOOK REVIEW

WESTERN AFRICA TO c/ 1860 A.D. A PROVISIONAL HISTORICAL SCHEMA BASED ON CLIMATE PERIODS. by George E. Brooks. Indiana University African Studies Program Working Papers Series, No. 1. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University, 1985. Pp. xv, 213 (Does not include 18 pages of footnotes), 19 Illustrations; no price, paper).

This publication is the first in a series of working papers to be published by the African Studies Program of Indiana University. Brooks's thesis is that climate changes in the last two millennia have been a significant factor in the history of states in West Africa. Through the use of archaeological and biological data, he suggests that the periodic shifts from wet to dry periods, and the consequent shifting boundaries of desert, sahel, and savannah, have affected the rise and fall of states, the spread of language, culture and political institutions, and commercial relations. Historians often ignore such data and Brooks provides convincing arguments for his thesis.

The schema divides West African history into six periods: (1) a dry period from c300 B.C. - 300 A.D., with (2) increasing rainfall from c300 A.D. - 700 A.D.; followed by (3) a wet period from c700 A.D. - 1100 A.D.. This was followed by (4) a dry period from c1100 A.D. - 1500 A.D.; (5) a wet period c1500 A.D. - 1630 A.D., and (6) a dry period c1630 A.D. - 1860 A.D.

Into these approximate periods, he fits the changes in climate and the movement of forest, savannah, and desert into historical data on state formation, the collapse and decline of empires, the spread of languages, and changes in trading routes, commodity production and their effects on political fortunes. For example, a decrease in rainfall led to an increase in savannah area at the expense of forest. This enabled cattle and horses to survive further south. In turn, this affected the movement of pastoralists, enabled states to maintain cavalry, and dominate their neighbors. These shifts also indicated changes in production, from more or less cattle, more or less cotton, and so forth, depending on rainfall, grassland available, and the moving tsetse fly line. Brooks tracks the fortunes of the empires of Ghana, Mali, and Songhai in terms of these changing lines of production and cavalry maintenance and use, charts the shifting agricultural production, and the resulting changes in trade patterns and language use.

The book's relevance to Liberia scholars is that a significant portion of the latter half of the book is devoted to these climatic effects on trade, movements of people, and the spread of political institutions within the area now known as Liberia. The spreading desert, the decline of Mali, and the movement southward of peoples led to migrations into the Liberia area. The search for forest products and ultimately access to the sea, prompted movements with which we are now familiar. What is new about this interpretation is his focus on long term climatic changes and their impact on language, trade, and political institutions. Brooks attributes the spread of Poro institutions to the movements of Mande speakers into Liberia in the wake of the massive political upheavals resulting from these climate changes.

Whether or not one can make such a case definitively must await future research, but when one charts these changes geographically, and compares them with the rise and fall of kingdoms and political changes, a convincing case

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can be made. But this volume is short on political economy and the framework of international trade and economic issues, and their ultimate impact on events in West Africa.

The major weakness of this publication, however, is that it is not in fact a working paper. At two hundred plus pages, it is book length, and yet it tries to present ideas that would be better discussed in a working paper or article. The background data for the author's thesis are from the works of others and do not need to be elaborated in such detail. Interested readers can check the originals for comparison and for the evidence. In addition, the repetition of accepted general information in West African history is unnecessary. In order to make his point, the author does not need to discuss at length the rise and fall of Ghana, the Mane invasions, or commerce in a particular period. This would be a more useful contribution to scholarship if the ideas were condensed into thirty or forty pages of ideas, with brief references and the appropriate notes.

One hopes that Indiana will continue to bring us new research and fresh interpretations of older scholarship in future working papers, but they ought to truly be working papers, not books in disguise.

Jo Sullivan
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BOOK REVIEW

D. Elwood Dunn and Svend E. Holsoe, eds., *HISTORICAL DICTIONARY OF LIBERIA*. African Historical Dictionaries, No. 38, (Metuchen, N.J. and London: The Scarecrow press, 1985).

Who were the Chief Justices of the Liberian Supreme Court in the nineteenth century and what years did they serve? What are the names of the decorations and orders established by the Liberian government? When did the Liberian government grant the first concession to an iron mining company? How did the Liberian constitution of 1839 adopted by the American Colonization Society differ from the constitution approved when the country became an independent republic in 1847? Where did B. F. Goodrich Company establish its rubber plantation in Liberia? These questions, and others like them, are not examples of trivial pursuit for those with a serious interest in Liberia. Rather, they are the kinds of questions that frequently crop up in the course of research or teaching and, nearly as frequently, launch a "search of the literature" that consumes more time than is often reasonable. In short, both researchers and students have long labored without the benefit of an up-to-date, authoritative, reference work on Liberia; a reference work that can answer a relevant question or offer directions to other works when more elaborate details are required. Happily, as of 1985 the Historical Dictionary of Liberia provides such a tool in a format convenient for frequent consultation.

As part of the Scarecrow Press general series on African Historical Dictionaries covering the continent country by country, the Liberia volume results from the collaboration of political scientist D. Elwood Dunn and anthropologist Svend E. Holsoe. Utilizing their rich personal files developed over the many years of their professional involvement with Liberia as well as a wide-range of both primary and secondary sources, Dunn and Holsoe have compiled a reference book with concise entries "on major historical events, important places, leading figures, and significant aspects of culture, religion, economics, and politics." The entries are arranged alphabetically and each one is generally accompanied by one or more appropriate references. Moreover, a good subject index is included that further aids users. Although there is only a general statement regarding selection criteria, this reviewer did not notice any obvious omissions that would require direct explanation.

The Historical Dictionary of Liberia is enhanced by other components besides the entries themselves. Dunn and Holsoe include an balanced historical overview of Liberian history in two, complimentary forms -- a short narrative introduction and a selected chronology of historical events through 1983 when Liberia restored previously severed diplomatic relations with Israel and exchanged ambassadors. The dictionary also contains a bibliography listing all sources used in the text. These additions to the dictionary will likely be most useful to students and general readers who will consult the work; especially if they have little previous background knowledge.

Most scholarly reference works tend to find homes in the shelves of research libraries more readily than in the private libraries of academics. It would be regrettable if that happened to the Historical Dictionary of Liberia because it should be equally welcomed in both places. The volume has many attractive qualities commending it to the general public. It is handy,

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accurate, and relatively inexpensive, costing less than many monographs today rather than more as is customary for reference works. Also, it clearly supersedes other comparable sources available such as the U.S. Army's Area Handbook for Liberia. Scarecrow Press seems to have designed the general series with this "dual market" clearly in mind. We can hope that as time passes and the Liberia volume is used, the press will keep it in print. Meanwhile we can be grateful to Dunn and Holsoe, two able and well-known scholars of Liberia, for having taken the time and care to produce a valuable reference tool.

Tom W. Shick
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BOOK REVIEW

H. Boima Fahnbulleh, Jr., The Diplomacy of Prejudice: Liberia In International Politics, 1945-1970, Vantage Press, New York, 1985, pp. 234. \$12.95.

From 1944 to 1970, the Republic of Liberia was ruled by strongman William V.S. Tubman. During the same period many African countries gained independence followed by massive political and social upheavals. The oldest and most influential of African statesman at this time was President Tubman of Liberia. The concern of H. Boima Fahnbulleh, Jr., former Foreign Minister of Liberia, is to examine the evolution of Liberian foreign policy and discuss the rather nebulous and tenuous relationship that existed between the Liberian leader and Africa's leading Pan Africanists, Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana and Guinea's Sekou Toure.

Fahnbulleh commences his study with a presentation of some familiar historical facts of Liberia's origins. The author explains the roles of the American Colonization Society and the United States Congress in the founding of Liberia. He refers to the Republic's numerous problems with European powers, the native Africans and the split that developed between the dark-skinned and fair-skinned repatriates. Fahnbulleh also mentions the Firestone investments and the League of Nations' Commission of Inquiry into charges of slavery and forced labor practices in Liberia. The Commission published its report in 1930, and confirmed that Liberian officials were in fact maintaining a system that was hardly distinguishable from institutionalized slavery. Thereafter, several government officials including President C.D.B. King and his Vice President resigned. Edwin Barclay, Secretary of State, became president, and subsequently blocked efforts to impose a League of Nations' Plan of Assistance on Liberia. President Barclay was succeeded in 1944 by William Tubman.

Fahnbulleh analyzes the forces that influenced Liberian foreign policy during Tubman's presidency. He points out that the Republic's policy was conceived and executed by one person, namely Tubman. The writer states that Tubman considered himself the champion of conservatism in Africa because he was very religious and belonged to a group of repatriates who had opposed Pan-Africanism and thoroughly distrusted advocates of Socialism and Communism. Furthermore, according to Fahnbulleh, the Liberian president solidified his position with the Western bloc by supporting every American issue that came up for debate in the United Nations. Also, Fahnbulleh notes that Tubman openly challenged President Nkrumah's policy of an African Union under a central government, and that the current O.A.U. (Organization of African Unity), charter reflects the conservative views of the Liberian President.

Taken as a whole, The Diplomacy of Prejudice, is tremendously useful, instructive, and timely. It is well written and contains a fascinating account of how one leader was able to manipulate his people and eventually a whole continent. Though primarily informative, Fahnbulleh's text contains a number of problems. It is not at all clear whether Tubman's diplomacy was due to his religious and social idiosyncrasies or merely a product of traditional repatriate leadership survival techniques. In order to ensure the maintenance of their republic in an obviously hostile environment, Liberian leaders learned quite early to cooperate with the Western bloc. For example, when President King successfully thwarted efforts by Marcus Garvey's supporters to

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establish themselves in Liberia in 1925, his actions were warmly applauded by the British Governor of Sierra Leone, Sir Ransford Slater. Also, in 1928, after Raymond Buell published *The Native Problem in Africa*, which was very critical of the Firestone and U.S. State Department positions in Liberia, William Castle, Acting United States Secretary of State, cabled President King asking him to refute Buell's charges. King did, and subsequently expanded on those denials in his inaugural address.

Moreover, to project Liberia into the African scene, as the writer has done, and compare it to other emerging African nations is to deny Liberia of its unique history both externally and internally. No other country was ruled by a group of people of African descent but not of African culture. In fact some of those who emigrated to Liberia were educated in the United States and England. They wore long coats and top hats, and bragged about their settler heritage and American family connections. To expect those people (or their descendants) to espouse Pan-Africanism or Socialism was unrealistic. President Tubman was very aware of the peculiar position of the repatriates and what had to be done to ensure their survival. Therefore, he openly opposed "apartheid", but got along very well with known American segregationists such as Senator Ellender of Louisiana. He ended his speeches with quotations from the Bible because that was the one book most old-line repatriates read and liked. Tubman championed the "Israeli cause" while at the same time he courted Arab merchants to open shops and engage in other business enterprises in Liberia. He hated revolutions but embraced the revolutionaries who had overthrown his arch rival, Kwame Nkrumah. During the Congo Crisis, Tubman joined the Western powers in supporting Moise Tsonbe, while most African governments sympathized with nationalist Patrice Lumumba.

In short, Tubman's conservatism was more a matter of tradition, national survival, and a deep desire to express the collective will of the repatriate-Liberians rather than a product of Christian or sociological background. His diplomacy contains the same devious and hypocritical element that is often discernible in much of the pronouncements of the so-called advocates of democracy, who in one breath support majority rule, and in another defend "friendly tyrants," and South Africa's repressive regime.

These points notwithstanding, Fahnbulleh's book contains valuable information that can be of immense use to those interested in African history. It would also be very useful to students of Black-American studies.

Hassan B. Sisay
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BOOK REVIEW

Black Scandal: America and the Liberian Labor Crisis, 1929-1936. I. K. Sundiata. Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1980, pp. ix, 230, \$15.00.

I. K. Sundiata's *Black Scandal* is a study of an accusation of Liberia of domestic slavery by the League of Nations, Britain, and the United States in the late 1920's and the early 1930's. Besides the League of Nations, Britain, and the United States, other key players in the study include the Liberian Government, Afro-Americans, Pan-Africanists, and the Firestone Rubber Company.

The study begins with an historical background of the charge and then is followed by the roles of the main players. Although he agrees that the practice of labor abuse in Liberia was certainly not distinguishable from a kind of slavery, Sundiata points out that the United States waited to protest in 1929, and the League of Nations in 1930, when indeed the practice had existed before and was reinforced immediately following the inception of the Firestone Rubber Plantation in Liberia in 1926. To Sundiata, while humanitarian sentiment was invoked by the British and to a lesser degree the Americans to rally world opinion against Liberia, this was not the main force that precipitated their responses to the Liberian labor crisis. Sundiata sees the League's increasing involvement with the crisis as a British inspired strategy to restore its economic and political interests and to contain the Americans' new aggressive economic initiative in Liberia.

The foregoing explanation is sanctioned by other scholarly works. [See the following works: George Brown, *The Economic History of Liberia* (Washington, 1941); Allen McPhee, *The Economic Revolution In British West Africa* (London, 1926); and Raymond L. Buell, *The Native Problem in Africa* (New York, 1947)]. Following its independence in 1847, Liberia's major trading partner was Britain. This was later followed by Germany and France. Indeed, before 1912, nearly all Liberia's major loans came from British banks. Accordingly, British influence in Liberia was predominant. This continued up to 1912 when American economic challenge began to be aggressively evident. Indeed, by 1926, the Americans, through the Firestone Rubber Company, had reestablished themselves as the most influential external force in Liberia.

But one may wonder why the British decided to work through the League to contain the neo-American expansion in Liberia. Although the reason for this is not stated by Sundiata, it is well implied. By working through the League, the British seemed to have wanted the world to view their response to the Liberian crisis as an altruistic act. Evidently, they succeeded in accomplishing the above objective. The fact that they were able to rally world opinion against Liberia bears testimony to the success of their strategy. But as Sundiata illustrates, the success was not to last long. It was soon recognized by the Firestone Company that the main British objective was to undermine the interest of Firestone in Liberia. Following this, we are told that the Company now embarked on counteracting the British move. Sundiata sees this as a new dimension in the history of the Liberian labor crisis. This position is supported by the fact that the United States Government, being influenced by the Firestone Company, was able to establish a power equilibrium to counteract the British predominant role in Liberia.

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Although President C. D. B. King and several officials of the Liberian Government were pressured by the League and the United States to resign, Sundiata maintains that Liberia successfully exploited the above equilibrium. This strategy, Sundiata argues, contributed to the political survival of Liberia. It is argued that by 1932 the Firestone Company, backed by the United States, had succeeded in off-setting the British and the League in Liberia.

Firestone's success was not, however, without reactions. The new reactions are said to have come from Pan-Africanists and a group of black Americans. These groups, we are told, viewed the designs of the British, the League, later the Firestone company, and the United States as attempts to destroy the sovereignty of Liberia. The former group, spearheaded by George Padmore and Benjamin Nnamdi Azikiwe, and the latter group, by W. E. B. Dubois, held that should Liberia lose its independence, it would not only be a blow to that nation, but it would also be a great defeat for the entire black race's struggle against colonialism and racism. Sundiata points out that this sentiment played a crucial role in rallying the two groups against the various imperial moves against Liberia. We are told that opposition to these attempts was not, however, unanimous among black Americans. Sundiata illustrates that some supported an active American involvement in Liberia. The activities of this group, it is suggested, were sanctioned and later sponsored by the Firestone Company.

What then helped to save Liberia's "flag independence?" The following reasons are implied in Sundiata's evaluation: the United States viewed Liberia as a country that was outside its main sphere of interest; Liberia became more and more receptive to the economic interest of the Firestone Company; and besides, the crisis became a power struggle between the United States and Britain. This last factor was cleverly manipulated by both the Firestone Company and the Liberian Government to promote their respective interests. Indeed, the political survival of Liberia and the reinforcement of Firestone's domination of Liberia were largely facilitated by the foregoing strategy. But as Sundiata clearly shows, the big losers in the Liberian labor crisis were the indigenous Liberians whose oppressive labor conditions never improved when the crisis was finally over in 1936. The continuation of the forced labor system in Liberia up to the 1960's testifies to Sundiata's position here. This also supports Sundiata's central theme that the crisis was not about improving the conditions of the natives as implied; it was a politically and economically inspired self-interest seeking move by the big powers and the Firestone Company. In this sense, even the Pan-Africanists and the black Americans who spoke on behalf of Liberia ironically contributed to the long oppression of the natives of that nation. What judgment can therefore be passed on Sundiata's study? Unlike most works on the topic, Sundiata's work is critical and analytical. His insightful investigation coupled with his scholarly reduction of the various multiple sub-themes into one supreme theme provides for an easy understanding of a complex subject. Nevertheless, the book is based on a vast amount of primary and secondary sources. Above all, the book, though written about an event that occurred some 53 years ago, has an enlightening message for the present Third World countries: that whenever big powers fight over a country, particularly in the so-called third world, their ultimate objective is not usually to advance the interest of the masses as they often tend to morally emphasize.

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